

Appendix D

Natural Heritage Discussion Paper Town Responses to Discussion Questions

The following Discussion Questions are taken from Halton Region's Technical Questionnaire posted at halton.ca/ropr.

1. As required by the Growth Plan, the new Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan mapping and policies must be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan. Based on options outlined in the Natural Heritage Discussion paper, what is the best approach in incorporating the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan into the Regional Official Plan?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 13-20 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper (options appear in Section 3.3)

Response: In Oakville, the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan lands are intended to be identified on lands outside the Settlement Area boundary. For these lands, town staff prefers Option 2 in the NHS Discussion Paper where Provincial layers are harmonized but function as an overlay/constraint.

2. Regional Natural Heritage System policies were last updated through Regional Official Plan Amendment 38. Are the current goals and objectives for the Regional Natural Heritage System policies still relevant/appropriate? How can the Regional Official Plan be revised further to address these goals and objectives?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 21-23 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response: Town staff supports the Region in updating the goals and objectives for the Regional Natural Heritage System to conform and to be consistent with provincial planning documents.

3. To ease the implementation of buffers and vegetation protection zones, should the Region include more detailed policies describing minimum standards?

For more information on this topic, please see page 23-27 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response: The ROP policies should clearly describe minimum standards for buffers and vegetation protection zones. This will give clarity from the beginning of a planning process.

The policies should also provide for some flexibility later in the planning process to allow for minor refinements as appropriate, once details are known about the sensitivity of the natural feature and the surrounding land use.

4. Given the policy direction provided by the Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial plans, how should policy and mapping address the relationship between natural heritage protection and agriculture outside of the Urban Area or the Natural Heritage System?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 38-45 and of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper (options appear in Section 5.3) and/or pages 17-27 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.

Response: Policy and mapping considerations regarding natural heritage protection and agriculture outside of the Urban Area are not land use matters directly affecting Oakville. Of course, these matters are of interest to the Region and the other local municipalities and Town supports a harmonized and flexible policy approach.

5. The Greenbelt Plan 2017 and Growth Plan 2019 require municipalities to identify Water Resource Systems in Official Plans. Based on the two (2) options provided in the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, how should the Water Resource System be incorporated into the ROP?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 46-48 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper (options appear in Section 6.3).

Response: Town staff supports Option 1 in the Discussion Paper which is to combine the NHS and WRS into an integrated policy.

6. Preserving natural heritage remains a key component of Halton's planning vision. Should Halton Region develop a Natural Heritage Strategy and what should be included in such a strategy?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 49-50 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response: Town staff supports the development of a Natural Heritage Strategy. It could identify goals and objectives for the short to long-term and set out actions that could be monitored and measured for success in implementation.

7. Should the Regional Official Plan incorporate objectives and policies to support/recognize the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 53-54 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response: This is a land use matter that does not affect Oakville directly, but that is of importance to the City of Burlington. Town staff supports the directions on this matter provided by Burlington.

8. The Regional Official Plan is required to conform to applicable Source Protection Plans and must be updated through this Regional Official Plan Review process. What is the best approach to address Drinking Water Source Protection policies and mapping?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 54-55 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response: Town staff supports the Region updating the ROP policies to conform to the applicable Source Protection Plans (SPP). Perhaps a stand alone section in the ROP would be the best approach, containing potentially complicated mapping and attempting to clarify overlapping of similar policies and areas.

The concerns expressed in the Discussion Paper regarding changes to SPP mapping during the life of the plan could be addressed through annual review and housekeeping updates, like that suggested for the RNHS mapping in the body of this report.

9. The Regional Official Plan is required to conform to the updated Natural Hazard policies in the PPS. What is the best approach to incorporate Natural Hazard policies and mapping?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 55-56 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response:

The ROP should contain updated and strong natural hazards policies. In terms of mapping hazards, town staff supports an approach like that of the Livable Oakville Plan where Natural Features and Hazard Lands are identified town-wide on one OP schedule.

The Region should consider the development of an online mapping tool with elements of the map linked to relevant ROP policies. A system like this will help to overcome issues of map scale and assist in a consistent policy interpretation.

10. How can Halton Region best support the protection and enhancement of significant woodlands through land use policy?

For more information on this topic, please see pages 57-58 of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

Response: Town staff supports the Region in updating significant woodlands definitions and policies to conform and to be consistent with provincial planning documents. Town staff recommends the policies acknowledge the connections between significant woodlands and climate change including the impacts from severe weather events.

11. Are there any additional considerations or trends that Halton Region should review in terms of the Natural Heritage component of the Regional Official Plan Review?

Response: Town staff recommends that the Region maintain the current approach in the ROP for refining the limits of the Regional Natural Heritage System. The current approach is based on technical work and detailed review associated with development applications. Town staff are of the opinion that this is the most accurate approach.