

May 10, 2021

MGP Files: 11-2003,
13-2174, 13-2175,
14-2314, 16-2511

Members of York Region Council
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

via email: regionalclerk@york.ca

Dear Chairman and Members of Regional Council:

**RE: May 13, 2021 Committee of the Whole
Item C.3: Information Report for Public Meeting- Proposed Amendment No. 7 to
the York Region Official Plan**

Malone Given Parsons Ltd. (“MGP”) is the land use planner to the Block 41 Landowners Group in the City of Vaughan and the Angus Glen Landowners Group and the Robinson Glen Landowners in the City of Markham. Collectively, the landowners submitted an application for Regional Official Plan Amendment to re-designate the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside Areas within the New Community Areas from “Agricultural” to “Rural”. This re-designation will allow portions of these Greenbelt Plan Areas that are outside of natural heritage features to be used for parkland, trails, and other recreational uses, which support the creation of complete communities in accordance with Greenbelt Plan policies.

As part of the application circulation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (“MMAH”) reviewed the request and provided written comments dated April 30, 2021. In that letter, MMAH confirms that parkland and recreational uses are permitted within Rural Areas of the Protected Countryside within the Greenbelt Plan. A copy of the MMAH letter is attached for your review. Please refer to the bottom of page two for their comments on Parkland Uses in the Greenbelt Plan.

Yours very truly,
Malone Given Parsons Ltd.



Don Given, MCIP, RPP

Att: Letter from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, dated April 30, 2021
cc: Paul Freeman, York Region
Sandra Malcic, York Region
Silvio DeGasperis, TACC
Jack Eisenberger, Fieldgate Developments
Block 41 Landowners Group
Robinson Glen Landowners
Angus Glen Landowners Group

Ministry of Municipal Affairs
and Housing

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By email only

Augustine Ko, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Community Planning and Development Services
Corporate Services Department
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

RE: Regional Official Plan Amendment to Redesignate Prime Agricultural Areas

Dear Mr. Ko,

Thank you for circulating the regional official plan amendment (ROPA) application to the Ministry for our review. We understand the application was submitted by a consortium of private landowners seeking to change an Agricultural Area designation to a Rural Area designation in the Regional Official Plan.

The subject lands are comprised of separate areas of land located in both the City of Vaughan and the Town of Markham. The intent of the proposed change is to accommodate parkland, trails and other recreational uses within the Protected Countryside area of the Greenbelt Plan. Those proposed uses are permitted by the Greenbelt Plan.

We note the subject lands are located entirely within the Protected Countryside, are subject to the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System, and are further identified as part of the provincial Agricultural System – being designated as a prime agricultural area on provincial mapping of the agricultural land base.

MMAH REVIEW:

The following comments are provided for your consideration. As part of our review, we have shared the ROPA application with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Approval Authority:

In accordance with the *Planning Act* and O. Reg. 525/97, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority with respect to any amendment that is adopted to designate a prime agricultural area, or amends or revokes a prime agricultural area designation other than for the purposes of including all the applicable land within an area of settlement within the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan Area. Accordingly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for such a Regional Official Plan amendment regardless of whether it was initiated under section 17, section 22, or section 26 of the *Planning Act*.

Redesignation of Prime Agricultural Areas:

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (APTG) sets out in policy 4.2.6 that provincial mapping of the agricultural land base is in effect within the Greenbelt Area. As such, municipal decisions within the Greenbelt Area must conform with the Agricultural System policies in APTG. It is noted that the subject lands are within the Greenbelt Area and thus the Greenbelt Plan applies to them.

The refinement can occur either as part of a Municipal Comprehensive Review or outside of that process, provided the policies are properly implemented.

Policy 5.3 of the Greenbelt Plan states, “Within the Protected Countryside, upper- and single-tier municipalities shall refine and augment official plan mapping to bring prime agricultural areas and rural lands into conformity with provincial mapping and implementation procedures. Until the province has completed mapping and the Agricultural System implementation procedures, municipalities shall continue to retain existing designations for prime agricultural areas within the Protected Countryside.” The implementation procedures are discussed below.

The province released Publication 856, being the Implementation Procedures referred to in Policy 5.3 of the Greenbelt Plan, in March 2020. The Implementation Procedures apply to an official plan or official plan amendment which refines the boundaries of the rural areas and agricultural system in the Greenbelt Plan Area.

Section 3.3.2.3 of the Implementation Procedures (Adding Candidate Areas to Rural Lands Within the Agricultural Land Base) states: “By definition, the agricultural land base includes rural lands. The rural lands policies in the PPS, A Place to Grow and Greenbelt Plan apply and allow for a wider range of uses than in prime agricultural areas. This includes cemeteries, fairgrounds, campgrounds and recreation sites. Rural lands provide opportunities to locate rural, non-agricultural uses where appropriate, outside of prime agricultural areas. [...] Identification of rural lands within the agricultural land base is left to municipal discretion, as long as the Agricultural System purpose and outcomes are met.”

Parkland Uses in the Greenbelt Protected Countryside

Parkland and recreational uses are permitted within the rural areas of the protected countryside within the Greenbelt Plan Area. These uses can be an important and essential element of complete communities and provide important benefits to support

environmental protection, improved air quality and climate change mitigation (Policy 3.3.1). They provide essential recreational opportunities for Ontarians. There are many policies in the Greenbelt Plan which permit parkland and recreational uses within Protected Countryside. These policies could permit camping, golf courses, ski hills, hiking trails and larger parks or other recreational uses.

Thank you for circulating the proposed ROPA to Ministry staff for our consideration. If you have any questions or require any further information, please contact Laurie Miller at laurie.miller@ontario.ca

Sincerely,



Hannah Evans
Assistant Deputy Minister
Municipal Services Division

- c. Paul Freeman, Chief Planner, York Region
Laurie Miller, MSO-C
Jocelyn Beatty, OMAFRA
Maria Jawaid, MNRF
Sean Fraser, PPPB