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**Sent:** November 8, 2019 11:33 AM  
**To:** Regional Clerk; [kkitteringham@markham.ca](mailto:kkitteringham@markham.ca)  
**Subject:** Gormley Urban Settlement Area Boundary Expansion for Employment Growth and Greenbelt Enhancement

Please find attached the minutes and report from the October 22, 2019 Council Meeting regarding the Gormley Urban Settlement Area Boundary Expansion for Employment Growth and Greenbelt Enhancement.

Kind regards,

**Kristina Soolepp**

Council Coordinator | Corporate Services

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

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**Report No. DS-052-19 Gormley Urban Settlement Area Boundary Expansion for Employment Growth and Greenbelt Enhancement (D08)**

Moved by Councillor Sherban  
Seconded by Councillor Kroon

- 1) That Council endorse Staff Report DS-052-19 and direct staff to continue discussions with the Province and York Region to adjust the Greenbelt Area boundary for employment growth along the Highway 404 corridor; and
- 2) That Council direct staff to seek the required Provincial and Regional approvals respectively regarding the adjustments to the Greenbelt Area boundary and the addition of lands to the urban settlement area; and
- 3) That Council direct staff to request an undertaking of a joint Municipal Class Environmental Assessment with the Region of York and the City of Markham to determine the most preferred solution for extending full municipal services to support employment growth in the area; and
- 4) That this Report be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Region of York and the City of Markham for their information.

Carried

**12. Notices of Motion/Motions for Which Notice Has Been Given**

None

**13. Resolutions from Council**

None

**14. By-laws**

Moved by Councillor Smith  
Seconded by Councillor Bartley

That Council read the following by-laws a first, second, third time and passed:

2019-105-RD being a By-law to provide for the numbering of buildings along highways and for affixing numbers to the buildings (135 Mostar Street, formerly part of 5769 Main Street)

**Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council Report****Item 7**

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Gormley Urban Settlement Area Boundary Expansion for Employment Growth and Greenbelt Enhancement (D08)</b>
<b>Staff Report No.</b>	<b>DS-052-19</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Development Services</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>October 22, 2019</b>

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That Council endorse Staff Report DS-052-19 and direct staff to continue discussions with the Province and York Region to adjust the Greenbelt Area boundary for employment growth along the Highway 404 corridor; and**
- 2) That Council direct staff to seek the required Provincial and Regional approvals respectively regarding the adjustments to the Greenbelt Area boundary and the addition of lands to the urban settlement area; and**
- 3) That Council direct staff to explore the possibility of undertaking a joint Municipal Class Environmental Assessment with the Region of York and the City of Markham to determine the most preferred solution for extending full municipal services to support employment growth in the area; and**
- 4) That this Report be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Region of York and the City of Markham for their information.**

**1. Purpose:**

The purpose of this Report is to seek Council direction to continue discussions with the Province and York Region to adjust the Greenbelt Area boundary to facilitate a northerly expansion of the urban settlement area boundary in the City of Markham to the northern limit of the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for employment growth, as well as undertake a joint Municipal Class

Environmental Assessment to determine the preferred solution for extending full municipal services to the area.

## **2. Executive Summary:**

The Highway 404 corridor provides a valuable strategic economic resource, which has not been utilized to its full potential. The current Provincial planning framework does not provide sufficient flexibility for the Town to designate additional strategic employment lands.

This Report outlines a preliminary proposal to adjust the Greenbelt Area boundary in order to facilitate employment growth along the Highway 404 corridor. It proposes approximately 153 ha of employment area, between the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan area and the City of Markham, to be transferred from the Greenbelt Area to urban settlement area, while transferring a similar amount of land from the Town's "Whitebelt" areas to the Greenbelt Area. It further proposes that the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area be redesignated from rural settlement area to urban settlement area. This adjustment will allow the Town to meet its forecasted employment growth to the 2041 planning horizon and bring full municipal servicing to the area.

Town staff is seeking Council direction to undertake further analysis and consultation to determine which of these "Whitebelt" areas may be most appropriate for inclusion within an enhanced Greenbelt Area and pursue all available options for designating an additional employment area with full municipal services.

## **3. Background:**

The Highway 404 corridor provides a valuable strategic economic resource to the Province, the Region of York, and the Town, which to date has not been utilized to its full potential. The current Provincial planning framework does not provide sufficient flexibility for the Town to designate additional strategic employment lands, and Provincial intervention is required to realize these economic development opportunities.

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has been proactively working to promote its economic development objectives and investment readiness by pursuing the provision of full municipal services to the Town's existing employment areas, and the designation of additional employment areas along the Highway 404 corridor.

On December 11, 2018, Town Council passed a resolution requesting the Province to consider designating appropriate lands abutting the Highway 404 corridor as "Provincially Significant Employment Areas" within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. It is a strategic priority of Council to advance the servicing and development of the Town's proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs) and identify potential expansion areas for employment area development.

In January 2019, the Province released Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and introduced a framework to identify and protect “Provincially Significant Employment Zones” across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. On February 19, 2019, Town Council endorsed [Staff Report DS-006-019](#) regarding the Town’s comments on Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan which recommended that:

*“Council request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to extend the proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zone along the Highway 404 corridor to include the Gormley Industrial Area, Vandorf Preston Lake Employment Area, and the proposed Davis Drive Employment Area...” (Attachment #1).*

[Staff Report DS-006-019](#) also provided comments to the Province which reiterated the need for greater flexibility in contemplating settlement area boundary expansions within the Greenbelt Area, provided the lands were not identified as Natural Core Area or Natural Linkage Area within the ORMCP, or the Natural Heritage System identified in the Greenbelt Plan. It is recognized that the Countryside Areas identified in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) provides for a buffer area between settlement areas and Natural Core Areas and Natural Linkage Areas, and the Countryside Areas do not comprise significant environmental features or linkage areas. It was staff’s comment that settlement area boundary expansions should be contemplated within the Countryside Areas of the ORMCP, particularly within lands adjacent to the Highway 404 corridor which are ideally suited for future employment development and would support Provincial policies to designate and preserve lands adjacent to major transportation corridors for employment uses and promote economic development and competitiveness.

Furthermore, these comments are consistent with [Staff Report #5](#) which Council endorsed on May 19, 2015, as the Town’s comments on the Province’s 2015 Coordinated Review of the Provincial Plans. The Town’s comments emphasized the need for permitting logical settlement area boundary expansions that are arbitrarily constrained by the restrictive policies of the ORMCP and the Greenbelt Plan. The Report also contemplated a framework for “growing the Greenbelt” by recommending that a process be established for swapping “Whitebelt” areas within the Town to facilitate opportunities for adjusting the Countryside or Protected Countryside Area boundaries in order to accommodate logical settlement area boundary expansions.

On March 21, 2019, York Region Council supported the Town’s request and unanimously passed a similar resolution requesting the Province to designate the three areas identified on Attachment #1 as PSEZs in the Town, under the new Growth Plan.

In addition, on August 27, 2019, Town Council passed a motion to request the Region to *“aggressively plan, design and construct infrastructure to support employment growth along the Highway 404 corridor in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.”*

In September 2019, Mayor Lovatt and CAO Rob Adams met with Minister Clark and senior Regional staff to discuss the potential Gormley Employment Expansion Area and

opportunities for enhancing and expanding the Greenbelt Area within the Town's existing "Whitebelt" areas, in exchange for an equivalent amount of additional employment area lands being designated within the Greenbelt Area. The Whitebelt areas generally include agricultural lands within the Town which are located outside of the Province's Greenbelt Area, and are generally viewed as the most appropriate areas for considering potential settlement area boundary expansions. Within the Town, the Province's ORMCP and Greenbelt Plan comprise the Province's Greenbelt Area. The Provincial Plan land use designations and resulting Whitebelt areas within the Town are shown on Attachment #2.

In November 2019, Town staff will be meeting with Provincial and Regional staff to further discuss the rationale for identifying these three areas as PSEZs under the Growth Plan, as part of the Province's work plan to assess municipal requests for modifying and/or identifying new PSEZs.

#### **4. Analysis and Options:**

The following section outlines some considerations for enhancing the Greenbelt Area to facilitate an expansion to the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area. This includes a preliminary assessment of the extent of the potential employment area expansion and the existing Whitebelt lands in relation to the Town's preliminary employment land needs to the year 2041. Furthermore, this section outlines recommendations and next steps for further assessment of the employment expansion area and considerations for potential adjustments to enhance the Greenbelt Area.

##### **4.1 Potential Gormley Employment Expansion Area**

As part of Town Council's resolution of December 11, 2018, Council directed staff to report back with a detailed proposal for an employment area expansion surrounding the Gormley lands along the Highway 404 corridor. Town staff prepared a preliminary Concept Plan for the potential Gormley Employment Expansion Area which is shown in Attachment #3. The Concept Plan was presented at a landowner's meeting on July 18, 2019 to discuss the Province's framework for identifying additional areas as PSEZs under the Growth Plan, and to understand landowner interests in developing employment uses within the Town's proposed PSEZs.

Based on the preliminary Concept Plan for the potential Gormley Employment Expansion Area, Table 1 summarizes the land area in gross hectares that may be available for additional employment development.

**Table 1 – Employment Expansion Areas**

	<b>Proposed South Expansion Area (ha)</b>	<b>Potential Future North Expansion Area (ha)</b>	<b>Total Expansion Area (ha)</b>
Additional Employment Area	153.3	92.2	245.5
Existing Employment Area (Cardico Drive)	0.0	35.0	35.0
Existing Greenbelt Area	71.5	20.7	92.2
Non-Developable (i.e., cemetery, institutional, environmental lands)	7.6	40.6	48.2
Existing Whitebelt Area	14.1	0.0	14.1
<b>TOTAL Area</b>	<b>232.4</b>	<b>188.5</b>	<b>420.9</b>

The potential Gormley Employment Expansion Area could accommodate a total additional employment area of 245 gross ha, which consists of approximately 92 ha in the north expansion area and 153 ha in the south expansion area, of which, 14.1 ha comprise the Whitebelt area straddling Woodbine Avenue. As further discussed in Section 4.4, the proposed south Gormley Employment Expansion Area is the most preferable and logical location for a settlement area boundary expansion to accommodate the Town's employment area growth to the 2041 planning horizon.

#### **4.2 Enhancing the Greenbelt Area (Whitebelt Areas)**

The Whitebelt areas are identified on Attachment #2 and include predominately agricultural lands that are located outside of the Province's Greenbelt Area, which include the ORMCP and Greenbelt Plan. The Whitebelt areas are generally viewed as the most appropriate areas for considering potential settlement area boundary expansions, over lands located within the Greenbelt Area, subject to the settlement area boundary expansion and adjustment policies of the Province's Growth Plan.

Table 2 summarizes the land areas in gross hectares of the Whitebelt areas within the Town, which generally include portions of the lands between Stouffville Road and the municipal boundary.

**Table 2 – Whitebelt Areas**

	<b>Whitebelt Area (ha)</b>
1. Woodbine Avenue	14.1
2a. West of Warden Avenue (North)	20.4
2b. West of Warden Avenue (South)	3.8
3. East of Warden Avenue (North)	64.7
4. West of Kennedy Road	95.1
5. East of Kennedy Road (North)	12.4
6. East of Kennedy Road (South)	26.9
7. West of McCowan Road	43.0
8. East of McCowan Road	47.1
9. West of Highway 48	86.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>414.0</b>

Whitebelt area #1 (14.1 ha) straddling Woodbine Avenue would not be considered in an enhancement to the Greenbelt Area, since these lands are already located within the proposed Gormley Employment Expansion Area. Furthermore, Whitebelt areas #8 and #9 (133.6 ha), located between McCowan Road and Highway 48, would not be considered in an enhancement to the Greenbelt Area, since these lands are located within the Town's Highway 48 Visioning Study Area, which will provide recommendations with respect to the long-term vision and potential land uses which may be considered for these lands.

The remaining Whitebelt areas, which amount to 266 ha, may provide suitable opportunities for enhancing the Greenbelt Area and should be further considered for any potential adjustments to the Greenbelt Area, in exchange for an equivalent amount of land being designated for employment area development within the proposed Gormley Employment Expansion Area.

Further analysis is required to determine which of these Whitebelt areas may be most appropriate for inclusion within an enhanced Greenbelt Area. The analysis will need to consider such factors related to:

- the identification of existing environmentally sensitive features, and associated buffer areas;
- the continuity and establishment of natural linkages with the Greenbelt Area and the natural heritage system;
- the existing land uses and land use compatibility;
- the agricultural capability of the land and agricultural fragmentation;
- the potential development opportunity and potential to accommodate future settlement area boundary expansions; and
- the existing parcel size and lot configuration, among other matters as deemed appropriate.

#### 4.3 Employment Land Needs

The Town's [2014 Growth Management Strategy \(Step 1 Report\), April 7, 2014](#), identified a need for an **additional 84 gross hectares** of serviced employment land to the **2031 planning horizon**. As part of the Town's on-going Official Plan Review, the Town has retained Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. to undertake a Growth Management Assessment to identify population and employment forecasts and updated land needs for the Town to the 2041 planning horizon. The updated preliminary employment land needs for the Town are forecasted to be approximately **167 gross hectares** of serviced employment land that is required to the **2041 planning horizon**.

This work is intended to inform the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), as the Region is responsible for allocating population and employment growth to the local municipalities and justifying the need for any required settlement area boundary expansions, as per the Province's Growth Plan. The justification for designating additional employment lands within the Town will be an integral component in supporting a potential settlement area boundary expansion as part of the Region's MCR.



#### 4.4 Recommendations and Next Steps

Based on the preliminary employment land needs assessment, it is recommended that at this time, the Town pursue a settlement area boundary expansion to generally include the proposed employment expansion area located to the south of the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area and bounded by Highway 404, the municipal boundary, and mid-block of Concession 4 between Woodbine Avenue and Warden Avenue, as shown on Attachment #3. The expansion shall also include a redesignation of the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area from rural settlement area to urban settlement area to allow for the expansion of full municipal services to the area.

The south Gormley Employment Expansion Area is preferable for a settlement area boundary expansion to accommodate employment development to the year 2041 for a number of reasons, which include:

- The lands abut both existing and planned employment areas to the north (Gormley Industrial Area) and to the south in the City of Markham, which are designated Employment Area and Future Employment Area in the Markham Official Plan;
- The lands provide for a logical extension of employment development along the Highway 404 corridor which is supported by Provincial policy;
- The lands provide for the most logical and cost effective extension of full municipal services from the abutting urban settlement area in the City of Markham, and would provide the opportunity to extend full municipal services and facilitate development within the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area;
- The majority of lands within the proposed south employment expansion area comprise the Countryside Area designation within the ORMCP. The lands designated Natural Core Area and Natural Linkage Area within the ORMCP, and the Natural Heritage System within the Greenbelt Plan, would remain protected within the Greenbelt Area;
- Within the proposed south employment expansion area there is opportunity to expand the Greenbelt Area by including significant environmental features as part of the Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System and/or the Natural Linkage Areas within the ORMCP;
- Certain existing land uses within the proposed south employment expansion area are industrial in nature and are not compatible with the Greenbelt Area, and may pose a risk to the environment. Such uses would transition over time to cleaner and more prestige employment uses on the basis of full municipal services;
- There are existing Whitebelt areas located within the proposed south employment expansion area which are currently suitable to accommodate a settlement boundary expansion;
- There is a sufficient amount of Whitebelt areas located elsewhere in the Town which could enhance the Greenbelt Area (by protecting more sensitive environmental features), while maintaining an equivalent amount of land within the Greenbelt Area; and
- The proposed south employment expansion area may be reasonably justified from a land needs perspective.

Based on the foregoing, Town staff is seeking Council direction on the following:

- To undertake further investigations and discussions with the Province and Region for advancing a settlement area boundary expansion to include the proposed south Gormley Employment Expansion Area;
- To redesignate the Gormley Industrial Area from a rural settlement area to an urban settlement area to provide a focus for more intensive future employment growth on full municipal services;
- To determine the most appropriate Whitebelt areas for enhancing the Greenbelt Area, to ensure that an equivalent amount of land would be maintained within the Greenbelt Area. In doing so, staff will continue to investigate and pursue all available options as provided by the *Planning Act* for designating an additional employment area and expanding the Greenbelt Area through the Region's ongoing MCR, and/or through a Provincial Minister's Zoning Order (MZO); and
- To continue discussions with the Region and the City of Markham to expedite a joint Municipal Class Environmental Assessment to determine the preferred solution for extending full municipal services to the existing Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area and the proposed south Gormley Employment Expansion Area.

## 5. Financial Implications:

Should Council provide direction to expedite a joint Municipal Class Environmental Assessment to determine the preferred municipal servicing solution, a budget of \$100,000 will be included in the 2020 Capital Budget for Council review and approval.

## 6. Alignment with Strategic Plan:

2. Expanding the tax base through a growing, diversified economy  
Building and maintaining a tax base that supports the highest quality program and service delivery.
  - Focus on servicing and development of Provincially Significant Employment Zones
  - Identify expansion areas for Industrial / Commercial growth
4. Asset Planning, Maintenance and Development  
Successful stewardship of the infrastructure and facilities required to support a growing community and vibrant economy.
  - Address / plan for maintenance of existing assets & infrastructure; Create new infrastructure

## **7. Attachments:**

1. Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones
2. Provincial Plan Designations and Whitebelt Areas
3. Gormley Employment Expansion Area Concept Plan – Proposed South Expansion

## **8. Related Reports:**

Report #5: Coordinated Review of Provincial Land Use Plans (D24), May 19, 2015

DS-006-19: Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017 (L11), February 19, 2019

DS-033-19: Official Plan Review – Introductory Report (D08), June 18, 2019

**Authors:**     Randall Roth, Senior Policy Planner  
                     Meaghan Craven, Manager Policy Planning

**For further information on this report, please contact the Department Head:** Haiqing Xu, Director of Development Services at 905-640-1910 or 1-855-642-8697 ext. 2431 or via email at [haiqing.xu@townofws.ca](mailto:haiqing.xu@townofws.ca)



East Gwillimbury

Newmarket

Davis Drive  
Employment Area

Davis Drive

Vivian Road

St. John's Sideroad

McCowan Road

Aurora

Aurora Road

Vandorf Preston Lake  
Employment Area

Kennedy Road

Whitchurch-Stouffville

Bloomington Road

Woodbine Avenue

Warden Avenue

Bethesda Sideroad

Richmond Hill

Gormley GO  
Station

Gormley Industrial  
Employment Area

Stouffville Road

Highway 404

19th Avenue

Markham

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus  
DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

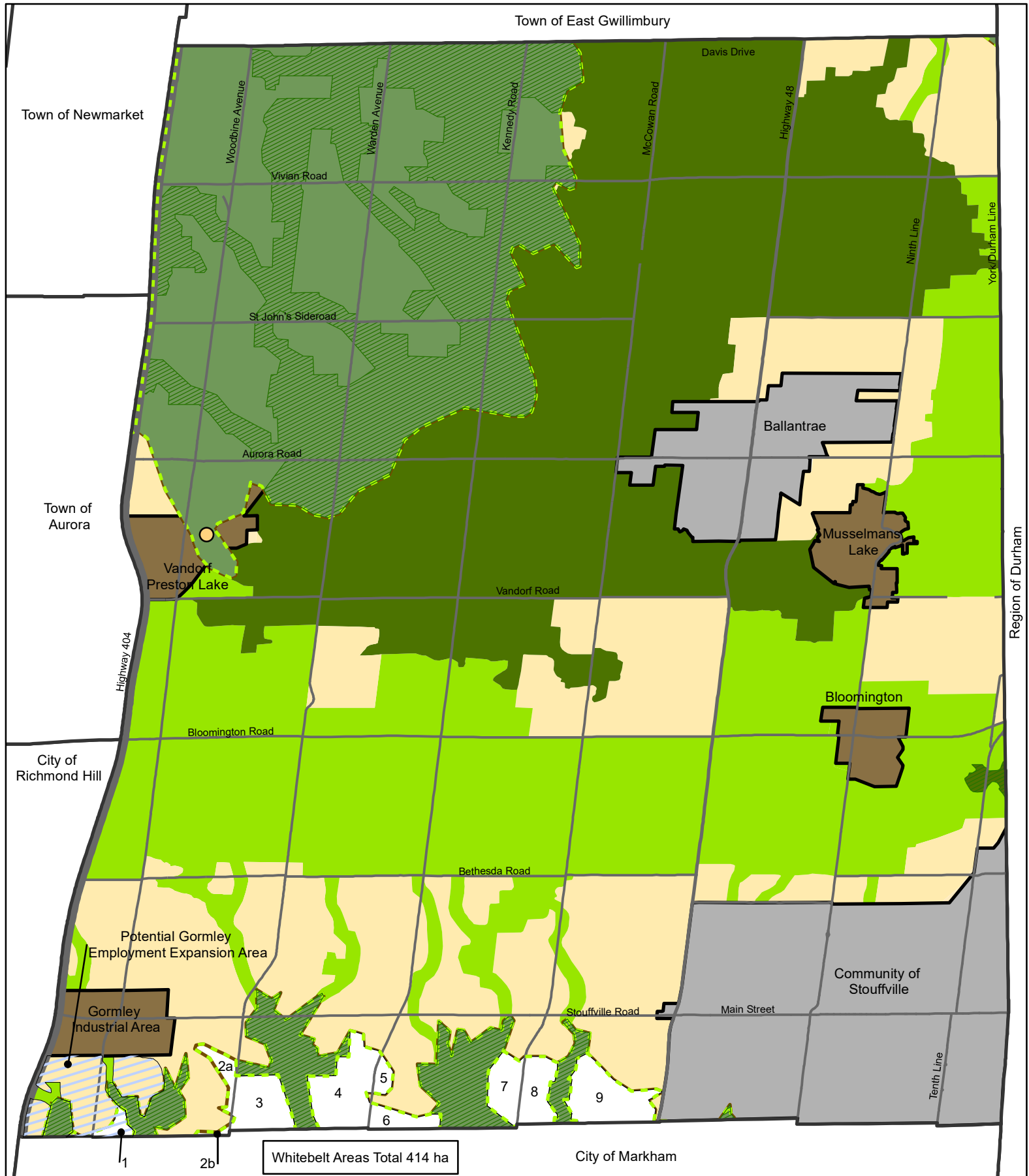
Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zone  
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

0 1 2 4 Kilometers

Legend

Provincially Significant Employment Zone Vandorf Preston Lake Secondary Plan Area Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area



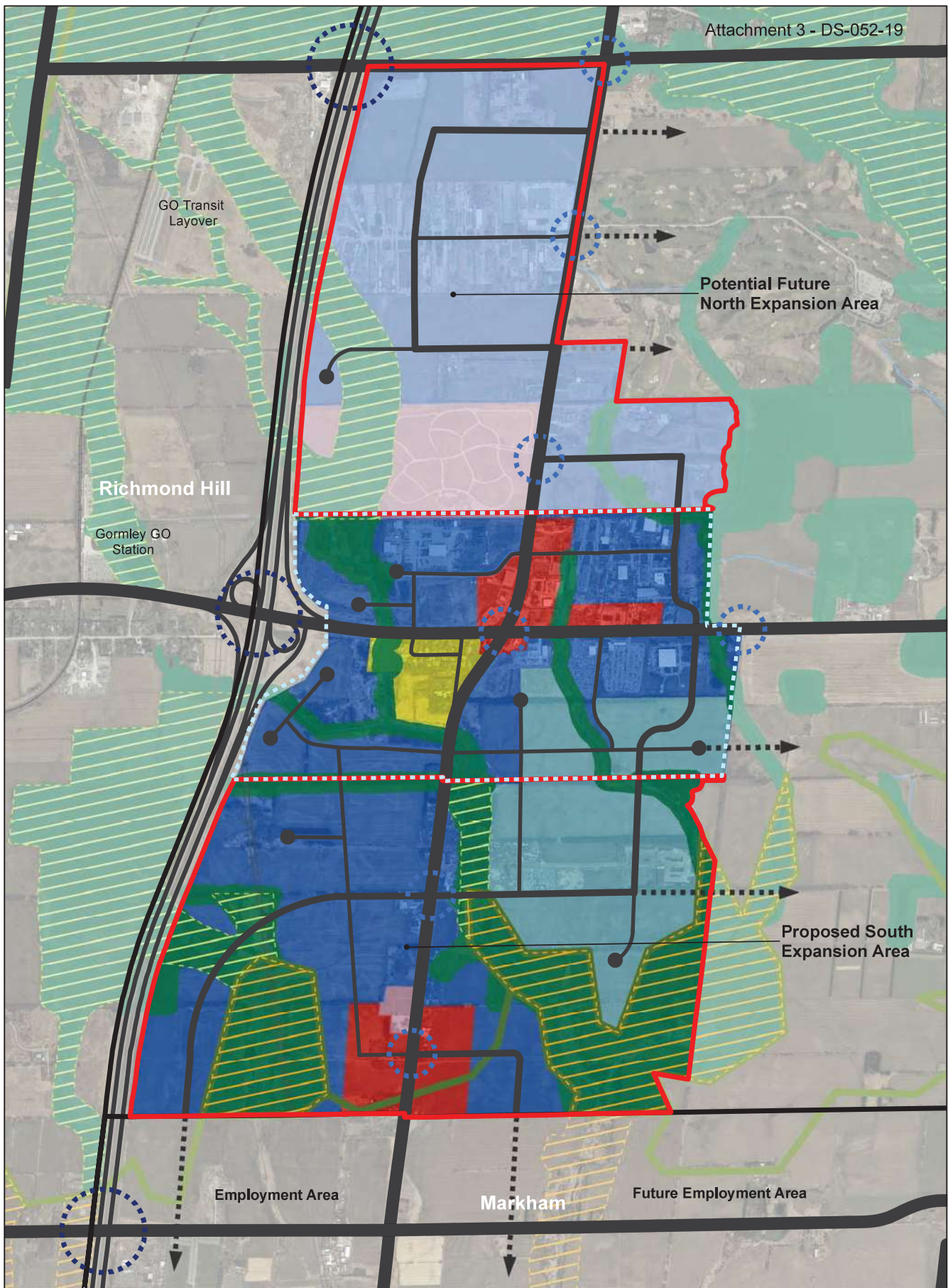


## Provincial Plan Designations and Whitebelt Areas

### Legend

- ORM Plan Boundary
- ORM Natural Linkage Area
- Greenbelt Boundary
- Greenbelt Hamlet
- ORM Countryside Area
- Settlement Area
- Greenbelt Protected Countryside
- Whitebelt Areas
- ORM Natural Core Area
- Rural Settlement
- Natural Heritage System

0 0.75 1.5 3 Kilometers



# Gormley Employment Expansion Area Concept Plan - Proposed South Expansion Area

## Legend

- Gormley Employment Expansion Area
- Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area
- Collector Road
- Local Road
- Greenbelt Area
- Greenlands System
- Greenbelt NHS
- Greenbelt NHS
- Oak Ridges Moraine
- Institutional

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Kilometers

