Agricultural Land Uses and Environmental Protection

Planning and Development Committee
June 24, 2019

www.clarington.net/ZoneClarington
Why now?

- Provincial land use regulations and plans provide direction province-wide and for specific geographic areas (e.g. Greenbelt).
- Official Plan policies must align with Provincial policy direction.
- Zoning By-laws put the Official Plan into effect and provide for its day-to-day administration.
- In 2017, Clarington completed a comprehensive review of the Official Plan. As required by the Planning Act, we have three years to complete a comprehensive review of our Zoning By-laws.
What is zoning?

• Zoning is a set of rules everyone has to follow. It protects residents from conflicting land uses and our agricultural and environmental lands from development.

• A Zoning By-law contains specific requirements that are legally enforceable.

• It regulates the use, size, type and location for development.

• Zoning regulations must align with municipal Official Plans and Provincial policies.
Provincial Direction for Zoning
Where does authority to zone come from?

Municipalities are given authority to zone lands by the “Planning Act”, which is Provincial legislation that tells local governments how they can operate in regards to land use.

The “Planning Act” sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario. It describes how land uses may be controlled and who may control them.
The Planning Act

The “Planning Act” requires Council and the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (LPAT) to carry out their responsibilities as they apply to the protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features and functions, and the protection of the agricultural resources, among other matters of Provincial interest.

The “Planning Act” requires Municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to be aligned with the Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial plans. That means decision-makers must ensure that Provincial policy is applied as part of the land use planning decision-making process.
Provincial Policy Statement

The “Provincial Policy Statement” (PPS) applies province-wide and contains overall policy directions on matters of Provincial interest related to land use planning and development.

The PPS includes strong policy direction to protect the province’s environmental features and agricultural resources, and to direct development away from natural hazards.

PPS Policy 2.1.1: Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long-term.

PPS Policy 2.3.1: Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.
Definition: “Environmental Features”

For the purposes of this presentation, “Environmental Features” include:

- Wetlands
- Fish habitat
- Valleylands
- Significant woodlands
- Areas of natural and scientific interest
- Beach bluffs
- Floodplains
Provincial Policy Statement

The PPS does not permit development within environmental features. For development to occur adjacent to an environmental feature, it must be demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on that feature.

The PPS directs development away from areas of natural or human-made hazards (e.g. floodplains, contaminated sites) where there is an unacceptable risk to public health, safety, or property damage.

The PPS recognizes that taking action to conserve land and resources avoids the need for costly remedial measures to correct problems.
Greenbelt Plan & Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The policies of the PPS are reinforced through Provincial plans. Provincial plans that are applied to Clarington’s rural areas are the “Greenbelt Plan” and “Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan”.

The “Greenbelt Plan” took effect in December 2004 and the “Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan” took affect in November 2001. Both plans were updated in May 2017. Together these plans identify where development should not occur in order to protect agricultural and environmental lands.

The Greenbelt, which includes the Oak Ridges Moraine, was established to protect green space, farmland, communities, forests, wetlands, and watersheds in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe.
Greenbelt Plan & Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The “Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan” was created to protect the concentration of environmental, geological and hydrological features that make this landform vital to south-central Ontario, including:

- Clean and abundant water resources;
- Healthy and diverse plant and animal habitat;
- An attractive and distinct landscape;
- Prime agricultural areas; and
- Sand and gravel resources close to market.
Greenbelt Plan & Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

These plans do not permit development within environmental features or within 30-metres of an environmental feature.

Development within 120-metres of an environmental feature requires an environmental review to demonstrate no negative impacts on the environmental features. This requirement does not apply to buildings for agriculture, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses.
Greenbelt Plan & Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

Both plans permit existing uses and buildings to continue within an environmental feature.

If you had a lot with permission to build a house in, or within 30-metres of an environmental feature, prior to these plans coming into effect, that permission remains. An environmental review would be required to demonstrate no adverse impacts on environmental features due to the construction of the house.
The “Clarington Official Plan” was updated in 2017. This included an update to the natural heritage system comprised of environmental features to be consistent with the PPS, the “Greenbelt Plan”, the “Region of Durham Official Plan” policies and the work of the Conservation Authorities.

A previous update in 2005 implemented the policies of the “Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan”, which were carried forward to the 2017 update.
Environmental Features and Protection
How have environmental features been identified?

• All environmental features, combined, make up the natural heritage system in the Official Plan. Creating the natural heritage system involved working with local Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to identify the following environmental features as part of the natural heritage system:
  – Wetlands
  – Fish habitat
  – Valleylands
  – Significant woodlands
  – Areas of natural and scientific interest
  – Beach bluffs
  – Floodplains

• Following policy direction of the PPS, the “Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan” and “Greenbelt Plan”, the Official Plan designates all environmental features as an Environmental Protection Area and includes a 30-metre wide vegetation protection zone. An environmental review is required for any proposed development within 120-metre of an environmental feature.
How have environmental features been mapped?

• Base data created by expert staff in fields of Engineering, Biology and Ecology was collected from the Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Data was also used from local watershed studies and individual environmental reviews.

• The methodology to create the natural heritage system was outlined in a “Natural Heritage Discussion Paper” as part of the Official Plan review work. The methodology was applied to all parts of Clarington, including the Urban Areas.
Why must we protect environmental features?

Key objectives of the Official Plan relating to environmental features are:

• To protect environmental features from incompatible development; and
• To protect residents from natural and man-made hazards such as poor drainage, organic soils (e.g. peat), flood susceptibility, erosion, steep slopes, and contaminated sites.

Environmental features combined make up the Natural Heritage System. It is important to protect the whole system in order to:

• Allow for wildlife and plant movement to help maintain biodiversity.
• Protect residents from hazards such as erosion and flooding.
• Protect streams, animal and plant species.
How have we been protecting environmental features?

• Policies to protect environmental features have been in place in our Official Plan since 1996. Those policies have been implemented through planning applications. If you have made application for a Site Plan for a commercial development, or created a lot through land division near an environmental feature, you may have already been required to prepare an environmental review.

• Policies relating to the “Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan” have been implemented since 2005 through an Official Plan amendment and creation of the “Oak Ridges Moraine Zoning By-law 2005-109.” Currently in the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan area, development in or within 120-metres of an environmental feature is required to have Site Plan approval that includes an environmental review.
How have we been protecting environmental features?

• The “Conservation Authorities Act” was created in 1946 in response to erosion and drought concerns, recognizing that these threats are best managed on a watershed basis.

• In 1956, additional regulations were added in response to Hurricane Hazel to prohibit filling in floodplains and areas where the control of flooding or conservation of lands would be affected.

• The “Conservation Authorities Act” requires Conservation Authorities to regulate development and activities in or adjacent to river or stream valleys, lakes, shorelines, watercourses, hazardous lands and wetlands.
How have we been protecting environmental features?

• Conservation Authorities also regulate the straightening, changing, diverting or interfering in any way with a river, creek, stream or wetland. This work is to ensure that development taking place on these lands is protected from flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches and pollution.

• If you plan to build or modify land or water in a Conservation Authority’s regulated area you already require approvals from the Conservation Authority.
How have we been protecting environmental features?

• The Region of Durham manages the cutting of trees through the “Regional Tree By-law 31-2012”. It was originally passed by Durham Regional Council in 2008 and was amended in 2012. It is currently under review.

• The Regional Tree By-law reflects Local and Regional commitment to protect forested areas. Woodlands contribute to ecosystem health, human health, and our overall quality of life.

• The Regional Tree By-law applies to woodlands within the Region that are one hectare (2.5 acres) in size and greater. Clarington has a By-law (97-35) that manages woodlands greater than 0.2 hectare (0.5 acres) and less than one hectare (2.5 acres).
How have we been protecting environmental features?

• "Woodlands" do not include orchards, tree nurseries, Christmas tree plantations, fence rows, or land previously cleared for agricultural purposes that has become overgrown with scrub and/or small trees, and is intended to be used for farming. A woodland can extend across property boundaries.

• If you are planning to cut down or remove trees within a woodland area, you may need a permit from the Region of Durham or the Municipality of Clarington.
How have we been protecting environmental features?

• The By-law specifies that the removal of trees as part of normal farm practices are exempt. Normal Farm Practice includes the removal of trees for personal use, as well as the removal of trees for farm-related uses (such as fence posts and rails). Normal farm practices do not include clear cutting of any kind.

• The By-law does not apply to the removal of trees to accommodate a building or structure where a building permit has been issued, or for the removal of dead and/or hazardous trees.
Agriculture and Environmental Protection
Zoning for Environmental Protection

In rural areas outside of hamlets and subdivisions:

• Environmental Protection (EP) Zone = Environmental Protection Area designation in the Official Plan

• Minor adjustments were made to the zoning to reflect existing conditions and provide connectivity to environmental features

• Consistent approach with the Oak Ridges Moraine Zoning By-law 2005-109

• The Environmental Protection Zone in Zoning By-law 84-63 was mapped 35 years ago and only included floodplains. Updating is necessary to reflect modern mapping capabilities and other important environmental features.
Zoning for Environmental Protection

The EP Zone includes a 30-metre Minimum Vegetation Protection Zone (MVPZ) overlay in the Rural Areas. It acts to buffer environmental features from surrounding uses.

In the Draft Zoning By-law, the area where an environmental review may be required is shown as an Environmental Review Area (ERA) overlay. The ERA extends 90-metre from the MVPZ overlay.
Draft Zoning By-law Example

- Environmental Protection (EP)
- Minimum Vegetation Protection Zone Overlay
- Environmental Review Area Overlay
- Agricultural (A)
- Rural Residential (RR)

From years of experience applying the Oak Ridges Moraine Zoning By-law, staff have identified ways to be flexible with the proposed Zoning By-law. The vegetation protection zone and environmental review area overlays have been trimmed where a road separates them from the environmental features. We have also adjusted mapping where we know that development has occurred in woodlands.
Agriculture & Environmental Protection

Draft Zoning By-law

The following uses are permitted in the Environmental Protection Zone & Minimum Vegetation Protection Zone:

• Existing farm uses, but no new buildings and structures
• New houses on “existing vacant lots of record” (i.e. lots with previous zoning approval)
• Additions to houses on “existing lots of record” (i.e. lots with previous zoning approval)
• All other legally existing uses *

* Planning approvals (e.g. minor variance or site plan control) may apply for expansions.

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Environmental review may be required for...

- Expansion to an existing agricultural use (i.e. farm buildings) in this area.
- Residential uses (existing and new) (i.e. new garage, addition to a house) in this area.

Environmental review not required for...

- Agricultural, agricultural related and secondary on-farm uses in this area.
Addressing Public Concerns About the First Draft Zoning By-law
What we have heard:
The Municipality used Google Maps to draw the zone boundary lines without science and back-up data.

What we did:
We used data created by qualified professionals at the Conservation Authorities and Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to identify environmental features.

Base data created by expert staff in the fields of Engineering, Biology and Ecology was provided by the Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Data was also used from local watershed studies and individual Environmental Impact Studies. Planning Services has copies of all of the data sources.

The base data layers, combined, make up the Environmental Protection Zone. Refinements have been made to trim the MVPZ and ERA overlays where a road separates it from the environmental feature. We also removed areas where we know that development has occurred within woodlands.

Updated data sets will be incorporated into the draft Zoning By-law, as available.
What we have heard:
60,000 acres of land was added to the EP Zone

Clarification:
As proposed, approximately 29,500 acres of land is proposed to be added to the EP Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Area</th>
<th>Land Area (acres)</th>
<th>% of Total Rural Land Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Rural Area</td>
<td>133,259</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP Zone (Rural Area): Current Zoning</td>
<td>35,344</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP Zone (Rural Area): First Draft Zoning By-law</td>
<td>64,868</td>
<td>49%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 45% of Clarington’s entire land area.
What we have heard:
You can only continue to “cash crop” EP zoned land.

Clarification:
All existing farm uses are permitted in the EP Zone and MVPZ, except the construction of new buildings and structures.

To expand an existing farm structure or building within the EP Zone, a planning application and environmental review may be needed.

Agricultural, agricultural-related and secondary on-farm uses that are proposed to be outside of the EP Zone do not require a planning application or environmental review.
What we have heard:
Landowners will need to complete an Environmental Assessment if they want to develop on their land.

Clarification:
An Environmental Assessment (EA) is not required. An EA is a specific process prescribed by the Environmental Assessment Act and administered by the province.

An environmental review may be needed for development under certain circumstances to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects on the feature.

Agricultural, agricultural-related and secondary on-farm uses that are proposed to be outside of the Environmental Protection Zone do not require this review.
What we have heard:
Secondary apartments are not permitted for existing houses that are now within the EP Zone.

What we did:
As proposed, an existing house is permitted to have a secondary apartment, except in natural hazard areas.

Currently, secondary apartments are not allowed in Clarington’s rural area and require a Zoning By-law Amendment to permit them. Proposed changes allow secondary apartments within the Rural Residential and Agricultural Zones and within existing dwellings in the EP Zone.

Regulations for secondary apartments are put in place to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area and that they are in fact secondary to the main house.
What we have heard:
Uses have been taken away from commercially zoned land on Highway 115/35.

What we did:
Commercial zoning is being kept for 91% of the properties currently zoned commercial on Highway 115/35. The remaining properties are within an environmental feature and are either vacant or used for residential.

The commercial zone category is proposed to be called “Rural Commercial Zone” and consists of the following zones:

- (RC1) Hamlet Commercial
- (RC2) Highway Commercial
- (RC3) Service Station Commercial
- (RC4) Hamlet Service Station

Each one of these zones permits a variety of uses which can be found in Section 10 of the Draft Zoning By-law. Some site specific exceptions zones were applied and can be found in Section 10.4.
What we have heard:
I no longer can create lots on my land.

What we did:
Lot creation in rural areas is only permitted in Hamlets and Clusters or for a dwelling surplus to a farm operation.

For rural lands outside of hamlets, the Region of Durham Official Plan dating back to 1976 only permitted lot creation for:
• A retirement lot for a farmer;
• A lot for a member of a farm family employed on the farm;
• A house that was surplus to a farm.

These policies were amended over the years based on updates to Provincial policy to eliminate farm retirement lots and farm family lots. Lot creation in rural areas can affect a farmer’s ability to expand barns housing livestock if minimum distance separation cannot be met due to the proximity of a house on an adjacent lot.

One additional house is permitted for people working on the farm on lots with at least 20 hectares (49 acres). On the Oak Ridges Moraine, the building must be mobile and temporary in nature. The proposed Zoning By-law is consistent with this approach.
What we have heard: Conservation Authorities will take authority over my land.

Clarification: Enforcement of the Zoning By-law is the responsibility of the Municipality.

- Conservation Authorities provide data and technical support to municipalities throughout the development and updating of Official Plans and Zoning By-laws.
- They review development applications and provide environmental and natural hazard protection advice to municipalities through the land use planning process.
- Their authority is separate from municipal zoning authority and is already in place as set out in the Conservation Authorities Act.
What we have heard:
The assessed value of my property will change and the decrease in tax revenue will have to be absorbed by residential property taxpayers.

What we did:
We consulted with the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) assesses properties for what they are being used for as compared to similar properties. In the case of farm properties their comparison is based on farmer to farmer sales and the productivity of the land. Section 19(5) of the Assessment Act clearly sets out how farm properties are valued.

Bona fide farms are taxed at 20% of the residential rate in Clarington and Durham, unlike most municipalities which use 25%. When Council determines the budget the Treasurer provides the revenue sources, one of which is the taxes gained from the different classes of property (residential, industrial and commercial). The taxes derived from bona fide farms in Clarington is 3.7% of Clarington’s portion of the tax bill.
What we have heard:
The real estate value (fair market value) of my property will decrease.

What we did:
We consulted with two independent property appraisers, as this is outside of Planning Services area of expertise. The appraisers have considerable experience in the Clarington area and agricultural properties. Here is some of what they said…

- “Beginning with the property history of the site, the appraiser collects all relevant overlying land use control documents. A variety of factors are considered including but not limited to site size, arable acreages, type of soil, location, timing to development (if possible), servicing, land use controls…and Highest and Best Use of the site.”

- “The value of agricultural property is based upon the use of the property at the time of the valuation. The zoning does have a factor as it determines use. In most cases the properties use is dictated by the land quality (low, wet floodplains or high usable lands).”

- “Market value is based upon what buyers would pay for that property. That basis for decision is dependant on the wants and needs for the buyer in relation to the location and amenities of the property. Every property is unique in appeal to a potential buyer.”
What we have heard:
The real estate value (fair market value) of my property will decrease.

What we did:
We searched for academic papers on the effect of environmental protection and agricultural zoning on property values. Here is some of what we found…


The authors conclude that there are negative effects on property value only for properties under immediate development pressure.

Since rural agricultural properties in Clarington are already subject to numerous Provincial agricultural and natural heritage policies that limit development potential, additional EP zoning should not result in any further impacts to property value.
What we have heard:
East Gwillimbury has refused to implement Provincial policy in its Zoning By-law and Clarington Council should do the same.

What we did:
We have researched the situation in East Gwillimbury and have determined:

- Council for East Gwillimbury passed a Zoning By-law with a reduced EP area;
- Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority appealed the decision to LPAT;
- The Conservation Authority alleges that the Zoning By-law does not conform to numerous land use planning instruments;
- If the allegation is proven, the Zoning By-law will be contrary to law and Provincial policy;
- The appeal is ongoing and the parties are currently participating in mediation.
What we have heard:
   Zoning has been changed.

Clarification:
   Zoning has not changed. Zoning By-law 84-63 and Zoning By-law 2005-109 remain in effect.

A Draft Zoning By-law was released Nov. 2018 for public review and comment.

This is the first of three planned drafts to be released before requesting a decision of Council.
Zoning By-law Review Process
What is ZONE Clarington?

Guiding Principles:

• Implement the Official Plan, helping Clarington to develop and thrive.

• Modernize and improve usability of the Zoning By-law.

• Respect our unique mix of urban and rural communities.
General Work Program

Project Initiation
- Create work plan
- Communications and engagement strategy
- Official Plan/Planning Act conformity analysis
- Key issues survey
- Review of layout and format

Rural Area Zoning
- Zoning issues and analysis
- Research
- Minor variance review
- Special exceptions analysis
- Information sheets created
- Update mapping
- First Draft Zoning By-law regulation
- Public open houses

Urban Area Zoning
- Zoning issues and analysis
- Research
- Minor variance review
- Special exceptions analysis
- Information sheets created
- Update mapping
- Second Draft Zoning By-law regulation
- Public open houses

Zoning By-law
- Third Draft Zoning By-law regulation
- Statutory public meeting
- Recommendation to council
- Implementation

Monitoring & Maintenance
- Continued monitoring and maintenance of the Zoning By-law

January 2016 to June 2020
First Draft Zoning By-law

- First Draft Zoning By-law released November 2018
- Two parts:
  - draft regulations
  - maps (schedules) that illustrate the zoning proposed for individual properties (rural area only)
- 4 public open houses, plus meetings with organizations and stakeholder groups

Interactive mapping tool is available to help quickly compare current zoning with proposed zoning.
Notice

Official Plan Amendment 107

• Clarington invested significantly in undertaking a comprehensive review of the Official Plan. The review included:
  – 20 Council reports;
  – 9 discussion papers;
  – Numerous workshops, public engagement sessions, and meetings with individuals, interest groups and Committees of Council;
  – Website, social media, newspaper and newsletter advertising and information sharing;
  – Notification to all Clarington property owners via the property tax bill.

Property tax bill notice, May 2015
Notice

Comprehensive Zoning-By Law Review

Statutory Requirements

• Prior to passing of a new Clarington Zoning By-law, the Planning Act requires the Municipality to hold one information session and one statutory public meeting where interested parties have a chance to speak on the proposed changes.

• Notice of the statutory public meeting must be given through local newspapers or by mail and posted on the website.

Zone Clarington is in the early stages of consultation. The official Zoning By-law amendment process and associated statutory consultation has not yet been initiated.
Notice

ZONE Clarington

• To date, notification of the Zoning By-law review project included:
  – Newspaper, social media, and newsletter advertising;
  – Letters to key stakeholder organizations (e.g. Durham Federation of Agriculture);
  – Direct notice to subscribed interested parties.

• Prior to the statutory public meeting prescribed by the Planning Act, two Draft Zoning By-laws and two rounds of public open house sessions will be held to solicit public input.
Next Steps

• Review of comments on first draft Zoning By-law.
• Analysis of Environmental Protection / Agricultural zoning concerns with Conservation Authorities, other technical experts and Provincial Ministries.
• Continue to meet with interest groups.
• Review of communication plan and notification methods.
• Urban Area Phase research and analysis.
• Preparation of a second draft Zoning By-law for public comment (Target: spring/summer 2020).

Planning Services will continue to accept comments on the First Draft Zoning By-law
Stay Informed – Get Involved!
Stay Informed!

Visit www.clarington.net/ZONEClarington

• You will find:
  – Background information and work plan
  – Information sheets on key zoning topics
  – First draft Zoning By-law regulations and mapping (schedules)
  – Interactive eMap
  – Reports to Council
  – Subscriber request form
  – Comments and questions form
Subscribe:

Subscribe to receive notifications on upcoming open houses, public meetings, or other events, and be added to the ZONE Clarington interested parties list.

To Subscribe:

- Submit the online form (www.Clarington.net/zoneclarington)
- Email zoneclarington@Clarington.net
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