

APPENDIX C

A GUIDELINE FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT REPORTS

AUGUST 2007

Introduction

This guideline is written for landowners and developers to assist in the review and approval of development applications and/or site alterations that may affect the Natural System shown or described in the County of Middlesex Official Plan.

A Provincial Policy Statement was issued by the Province of Ontario in March 2005 that provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development including the Natural Environment. The Planning Act requires that municipal decisions affecting planning matters “*shall be consistent with*” policy statements issued under the Act. As a result, the County of Middlesex Official Plan sets out a policy framework that encourages the protection of the County’s Natural System which comprises the following elements:

- Natural Hazards
 - steep slope hazards
 - unstable soils
 - fill regulated areas
- Natural Environment Areas
 - floodplains
 - flood regulated watercourses
 - wetlands
- Natural Heritage Features
 - significant woodlands
 - wildlife habitat
 - habitat of endangered and threatened species
 - aquatic ecosystems including fish habitat
 - river, stream, ravine and upland corridors
 - significant valley lands
 - aggregate Resource Areas
 - petroleum Resource Pool Areas
 - areas of natural & scientific interest (ANSI's)
- Groundwater Features
 - groundwater recharge areas
 - groundwater discharge and headwater areas
 - well head protection areas

Development shall not be permitted on lands designated as ‘Natural Environment Areas’ on Schedule “A” of the County Official Plan which are:

- Wetlands
- Flood regulated water courses and associated flood plains
- Thedford Marsh Floodplain
- Significant portions of the habitat of threatened and endangered species

The habitat of endangered and threatened species is not shown on the Official Plan maps due to the sensitivity of publishing such information. This information is available from the Ministry of Natural Resources, at the request of the landowner.

Development Assessment Reports

Before starting a Development Assessment Report, a work plan will be prepared to the satisfaction of the County, in consultation with the relevant agencies. Depending on the extent of the proposed development and the potential for impact on natural features, the County may approve a work plan for a Development Assessment Report that is reduced in scope and content; referred to as a 'scoped' Development Assessment Report.

A Development Assessment Report shall be required to show that development will have no negative impact on the natural features or on their ecological functions. The public, particularly adjacent property owners, may be notified of the preparation of a Development Assessment Report and given the opportunity to comment.

A Development Assessment Report is required for development applications adjacent to lands designated as 'Natural Environment Areas' on Schedule 'A' of the County Official Plan

A Development Assessment Report may be required for development on or adjacent to lands delineated as 'Natural Heritage Features' on Schedule 'C' of the County Official Plan

A Development Assessment Report may be required for development applications on or adjacent to Natural Heritage Features which are described but not mapped in the County Official Plan. These features may include significant woodlands; groundwater recharge areas; river, stream ravine and upland corridors, significant valley lands and the habitat of endangered and threatened species

If a local municipality requires a Development Assessment Report or equivalent impact assessment document, as part of their approval process, the County will waive its requirement for a Development Assessment Report, provided the local impact assessment meets the requirements of this Guideline. It is also noted that additional Natural Heritage Features may be shown in local municipal official plans.

The following table summarizes the distances from a Natural System Element where a Development Assessment Report is required.

Natural System Element	Development adjacent to Natural System Element	Development within Natural System Element
Wetlands and adjacent lands. Adjacent lands are those within 120 metres of an individual wetland area or land connecting individual wetlands within a wetland complex	DAR required within 120 m	Not Permitted
Significant habitat of endangered or threatened species	DAR required within 100 m	Not Permitted
Floodplains and flood prone areas mapped and/or regulated by a Conservation Authority	DAR required within 50 m	Permitted in Some Circumstances
Significant Woodlands and ANSI's as identified on Schedule 'C'	DAR required within 50 m	DAR Required
Significant Wildlife Habitat	DAR required within 50 m	DAR Required
Significant Valley Lands	DAR required within 50 m	DAR Required
Fish Habitat	DAR required within 30 m	Not Permitted

The County may require the proponent to consider features beyond the distances outlined in the above table to ensure the relevant context for the assessment of potential impacts.

Refinements to the boundaries of the Natural System Elements must be submitted to the County of Middlesex in digital form and must be approved by the appropriate agency or authority.

Content of Development Assessment Report

The County requires the Development Assessment Report to be completed to a professional standard, in consultation with the relevant public agencies. The detailed content required for Development Assessment Reports is outlined below.

(i) Description of the Development

A Development Assessment Report shall include a concise summary of the nature and extent of the proposed development, including:

- a detailed location map to scale showing proposed lot lines, building envelopes(s), laneways, servicing and the extent of any proposed vegetation removal

- a description of the surrounding land uses and the natural features located on adjacent properties
- the extent of the overall development of the site i.e., other phases
- a list of any relevant reports that have been completed for the site
- any changes to grade
- a description of the alternative plans that could reduce or eliminate impacts

(ii) Description of Natural Features

A Development Assessment Report shall include a description of the existing natural environment that will be affected including:

- a description of how the natural system elements relate to the broader natural heritage landscape as identified in the 'Middlesex Natural Heritage Study'
- a three season inventory to determine the location and distribution of any significant or rare plant or animal species (a scoped Development Assessment Report may not require this)
- a characterisation of the hydrology and hydrogeology of the site
- the boundaries of existing natural system elements
- description and identification of topography and soils of the area required for the determination of appropriate site service, including water table depth, soil percolation rate and soil structure
- a description of the impact of the development on any Natural System Element beyond the property boundary

(iii) Identification of Potential Impacts

The Development Assessment Report shall include the potential environmental effects that may occur as a result of the following:

- removal of vegetation and the effects this could have on all native species with particular emphasis on significant plant and animal species
- the proposed destruction or alteration of significant wildlife habitats
- the effect of altered hydrology and hydrogeology resulting from grading, installation of services, and increased imperviousness, on the natural element including implications for erosion and sedimentation
- encroachment as a result of development including landscaping, invasive garden plants, domestic animals, etc

(iv) **Identification and Recommendation of Mitigation Measures**

The Development Assessment Report shall describe alternative methods and measures to avoid and mitigate negative environmental impacts on the Natural System Element and its ecological functions as follows:

- identify and recommend measures necessary to protect and maintain the identified ecological functions of the natural system
- identify and recommend measures for the preservation of significant vegetation communities, special habitats and specimen trees on the site
- identify and recommend erosion and sedimentation control measures
- recommendations for replanting vegetation so that there is a minimal loss of vegetation cover
- recommendations for improving the diversity of natural system elements in the area and the natural connections between them
- recommend options for ongoing rehabilitation, protection, management and enhancement of the Natural System Element

(v) **Demonstration of Consistency**

The author of the Development Assessment Report shall provide an opinion as to the development's consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement.

More Information is available from:

The County of Middlesex (519) 434-7321
Planning & Economic Development
399 Ridout Street North
London, ON N6A 2P1

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (519) 451-2800
Hydrology and Regulatory Services Coordinator
1424 Clarke Road
London, ON N5V 5B9

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (519) 235-2610
Supervisor of Water and Planning
RR 3; 711108 Morrison Line
Exeter, ON N0M 1S5

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (519) 245-3710
Director of Planning
205 Mill Pond Crescent
Strathroy, ON N7G 3P9

Kettle Creek Conservation Authority (519) 631-1270
Manager
RR 8
St. Thomas, ON N5P 1Y6

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (519) 354-7310
Resource Technician
100 Thames Street
Chatham, ON N7M 2Y8

The Ministry of Natural Resources (519) 773-4750
District Planner
Aylmer District Office
353 Talbot Street West
Aylmer, ON N5H 2S8

NOTE : Additional contact information is available from the
County's web site at www.county.middlesex.on.ca