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**PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION REPORT FOR A PUBLIC MEETING ON A REQUEST
TO AMEND THE YORK REGION OFFICIAL PLAN
BY GREEN LANE LESLIE HOLDINGS INC.
TOWN OF EAST GWILLIMBURY**

Pursuant to Section 17(15) of the Planning Act, as amended, the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee held a Public Meeting to inform the Public and receive comments in regard to a request to amend the York Region Official Plan by Green Lane Leslie Holdings Inc., in the Town of East Gwillimbury.

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

1. The presentation by James Stiver, Senior Planner, be received;
2. The following deputations be received;
 - a) Peter Van Loan, Fraser Milner Casgrain, on behalf of Robert G. Faissal, Green Lane Leslie Holdings Inc.;
 - b) Stew Beatty, Metrus Development Inc., on behalf of Fetlar Holdings and Ladyfield Construction; and
 - c) Michael Larkin, Larkin & Associates, on behalf of Dalton Faris, Landowner, Town of East Gwillimbury.
3. The following communications be received and referred to staff:
 - a) R.D. White, Resident, Sharon, January 13, 2004;
 - b) Margaret and Gary Sedore, Residents, Willow Beach, January 22, 2004;
 - c) A.Ruth Coursey, Director of Planning, Town of East Gwillimbury, January 21, 2004;
 - d) Richard Nethery, Director of Planning, Town of Newmarket, January 26, 2004;
 - e) M. Domovitch, Resident, Toronto, January 28, 2004; and
 - f) Michael T. Larkin, Larkin & Associates, February 3, 2004, on behalf of Dalton Faris, Landowner, Town of East Gwillimbury.

4. The recommendations contained in the following report, January 20, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This information report on the request by Green Lane Leslie Holdings Inc. to amend the Regional Official Plan be received for information purposes.
2. Staff receive and review comments from the public meeting and responses to the circulation regarding the proposed amendment and prepare a further report with recommendations for consideration at a future Planning Committee meeting once the Minister of Municipal Affairs Zoning Order has been lifted and once the Town of East Gwillimbury's Growth Management Strategy has been completed.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide details of the application made by Green Lane Leslie Holdings Inc. to amend the Regional Official Plan.
- Identify Regional interests associated with the proposal.
- Provide background information for the required public meeting to be held in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Description of Application

The proponent has applied to the Region to redesignate the subject lands from "Agricultural Policy Area" to "Towns and Villages" in the Regional Official Plan (ROP) so that they can be developed for urban uses. No details of the type or form of development have been offered by the applicant.

3.2 Location

The lands subject to the application (the Green Lane Leslie lands) comprise 63 ha (156 ac). The lands are located northwest of Leslie Street and Green Lane East in the Town of East Gwillimbury (*Attachment 1*).

3.3 Site Description

The undeveloped agricultural lands are generally flat with the southerly portion sloping steeply down to Green Lane. The lands are bounded on the east by Leslie Street, on the south by Green Lane East, on the west by undeveloped agricultural lands and a water course and on the north by undeveloped agricultural lands.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Minister's Zoning Order and Bill 27 - The Greenbelt Protection Act

On December 16, 2003, the Minister of Municipal Affairs issued a Zoning Order by means of Ontario Regulation 432/03. The Order prohibits development on any lands in areas outside of "Urban Settlement Areas" as they existed on December 16, 2003. An Urban Settlement Area is defined as: "*lands designated in an official plan as at the date of [the] Order as an urban area, urban policy area, town, village, hamlet, rural cluster, rural settlement area, urban or rural system, rural service centre or future urban use area.*" The Order was issued to permit the Ministry of Municipal Affairs time to undertake a study to determine the appropriate boundaries of a "Greenbelt" area around the urban areas of the Greater Toronto Area.

The designated study area, as defined by the Order, encompasses all of the lands outside of Urban Settlement Areas in the Greater Toronto Area, including all of York Region. Given that the Green Lane Leslie lands are outside lands designated for urban development in the Regional and local Official Plans, the proponent's application for redesignation to permit development cannot be finalized until such time as the Minister's Zoning Order has been lifted. Notwithstanding the Order, the applicant has requested that a public meeting be held in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act.

4.2 Regional Official Plan

Subsections 5.2.1, 5.2.3, 5.6.4 and 5.7.2 of the ROP establish the growth management principle to direct new growth to urban areas, towns, and villages to maintain the character of the Region's agricultural and rural areas. Directing new growth to approved urban centres implements the centres and corridors structure of the ROP as depicted on Map 5 – Regional Structure and as set out in detail in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of the ROP.

4.2.1 Expansion to the "Towns and Villages" Designation

The proponent's ROPA application is not considered an expansion to an existing designated "Towns and Villages" area for the following reasons:

- The lands are not designated "Towns and Villages" on Map 5 of the ROP.
- The lands are not adjacent to a designated "Towns and Villages" in the ROP. There are intervening lands between the Green Lane Leslie lands and the area designated "Towns and Villages" to the north (the community of Sharon).
- Uses such as residential or commercial, as may be proposed, are considered urban uses and should be within an urban designation.

4.2.2 Proposed Expansion to the "Urban Areas" Designation

The Community Building policies of Section 5.2 of the ROP establish that it is Regional Council's policy that the majority of growth will be directed to designated urban areas. The Green Lane Leslie lands are not designated as urban area. Any proposed expansion to urban areas shall be consistent with regional population forecasts and demonstrate the need for expansion relative to other lands available for development in the area municipality.

There are intervening lands between the Green Lane Leslie lands and the lands designated “Urban Area” to the south, across Green Lane, in the Town of Newmarket. Therefore, the proponent’s Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) application does not represent an expansion to an existing designated urban area.

4.2.3 Principles of Urban Expansion

Despite the proposed redesignation not being an urban area expansion, the principles of urban expansion can be used as a guide to evaluate the merits of the application. The policies considered when reviewing proposed expansions to urban areas are outlined in Subsection 5.2.3 of the ROP. ROPAs are to be consistent with the following:

- a) Regional population and employment forecasts.
- b) The need for expansion relative to other lands available for development in the area municipality.
- c) The role of new development lands identified in the area municipal growth management strategies.
- d) The capability of the area municipality to provide growth within the urban area.
- e) An analysis of options for growth direction and sequencing with respect to environment, agriculture, and the implications on the availability of servicing including water, sewer, road and transit networks and human services.
- f) The protection of and integration with the Regional Greenlands System.
- g) The amendment is large enough (i.e. a concession block) with clear and identifiable boundaries, such as concession roads, major natural features, rail or major utility corridors, to assess the creation of new communities at the regional level.
- h) The other policies of the Regional Plan.

The proponent does not indicate how these tests have or can be met. At present, adequate lands for urban uses are designated to meet the Town of East Gwillimbury’s needs over a 20-year time horizon. The Town is presently undertaking a Growth Management Strategy and the proponent’s ROPA is premature until the Strategy has been completed and criteria a), b), c) and d) above can be adequately addressed.

4.2.4 Applications are to be of a Sufficient Size to Permit Comprehensive Planning

According to Subsection 5.2.3g) of the ROP, applications for urban area expansions must be of sufficient size to allow for comprehensive planning by way of a secondary plan that considers transportation, servicing, environmental and land use planning matters. Interconnection of roads with adjacent lands, mid-block collector roads, walkways, pedestrian access and location of transit stops are some of the Regional issues considered during the review of secondary plans. The proposed ROPA does not meet the criteria of the ROP as it is a site-specific application that does not take into account comprehensive planning on a broad (concession-wide) basis.

Based on the above, the proponent has not demonstrated that the Community Building Policies of the ROP have or can be met.

4.2.5 Development in the Agricultural Policy Area

The lands are also designated “Agricultural Policy Area” by the ROP. The agricultural policy area designation permits farm and accessory uses only. If the tests for considering expansions to urban areas as outlined in Subsection 5.2.3 have been met, consideration shall be given to the agricultural criteria outlined in Subsection 5.6.7 of the ROP. Subsection 5.6.7 specifies that development proposals in the agricultural policy area shall be evaluated in accordance with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food’s Foodland Guidelines to determine:

- a) whether the proposal will reduce or impede surrounding farm operations
- b) the necessity of the proposed land use
- c) the suitability of the site chosen, the reasons for its choice, and the amount of land needed
- d) whether suitable alternative locations on lower-capability agricultural land in hamlets, towns, villages or urban areas have been considered.

The proponent did not submit an analysis demonstrating how these agricultural criteria have or can be met.

4.3 East Gwillimbury’s Growth Management Strategy

The Town of East Gwillimbury is currently undertaking a Growth Management Strategy (GMS) that will take into account updated region-wide population and employment forecasts. The results of the GMS will assist the Town in planning for future growth by examining if there is a need to expand existing urban boundaries or designate new lands for development by evaluating various growth options. The Strategy is expected to be completed in 2004.

The development of the Green Lane Leslie lands, as defined by this application, would not be based on sound planning principles and would not represent good planning. As proposed, the ROPA to permit the development of the subject lands represents a site-specific development proposal that would result in a pocket of urban development isolated from other lands designated for development in the Town. The application is premature until such time as the Town’s GMS has been completed and it can be considered in the context of the greater study.

4.4 East Gwillimbury’s Official Plan

The proponent has also submitted an application to amend the local Official Plan to redesignate the subject lands from “Urban Buffer Area” to “Community Plan Area”. The current designation limits the permitted uses of the property to low-intensity agricultural, passive recreation, conservation or golf course uses. In September 2003, East Gwillimbury’s Council deferred consideration of the application until such time as the completion of the Town’s Growth Management Strategy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPACT

Comprehensive growth management strategies allow municipalities to ensure that growth occurs in a logical and orderly manner together with the facilities and services required to support growth. An expansion to an urban area typically involves comprehensive study to adequately consider the fiscal impact of the proposed development with a view to ensuring that growth pays for growth. A financial impact of the proposed ROPA cannot be undertaken until the results of the Town's GMS are known.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The proposed ROPA application should be considered in the context of the greater GMS strategy review. That will provide the context for a comprehensive planning exercise on a wider basis and the proper review of the merits of an urban boundary expansion.

7. CONCLUSION

This report is intended to provide information on the proposed ROPA for the public meeting being held in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act. This report has summarized Provincial, Regional and local interests associated with the proposal and the applicable tests set out in the Regional Official Plan that are required to be met prior to permit the development of the Green Lane Leslie lands.

Based on the information received to date, staff are not supportive of the proposed application. It is recommended that any comments from the public meeting and circulation of the proposed ROPA be received and that staff be directed to prepare a further planning report on the application with recommendations for presentation at a future Planning Committee meeting once: 1) the Town of East Gwillimbury's Growth Management Strategy has been completed; 2) the Minister's Zoning Order has been lifted; and, 3) any legislation pertaining to the enactment of the protection of a Greenbelt around the Greater Toronto Area has received Royal Assent.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing report is attached to this report and is also on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)