

REPORT TO: Climate Change and Environment Committee

DATE OF MEETING: June 20, 2024

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WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 3

DATE OF REPORT: June 5, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-268

SUBJECT: Hidden Valley Land Use Implementation Project – Natural Heritage System

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Climate Change and Environment Committee support an updated natural heritage system shown as Natural Heritage Conservation on Hidden Valley Land Use Option 2 (subject to further refinement) appended as Attachment A to DSD-2024-268.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Technical information has recently been compiled that supports an updated natural heritage system.
- The outcomes of the Hidden Valley Land Use Master Plan will guide future development applications within Hidden Valley, and will address important environmental, social, health, transportation, infrastructure, and cultural heritage impacts.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2019, City Council approved the Hidden Valley Land Use Master Plan to update the Hidden Valley planning framework in response to emerging issues and opportunities.

The Master Plan proposed a variety of land use typologies and set out a series of implementation recommendations for further study and policy changes. Key directions outlined in the Land Use Master Plan to guide the next steps for 'Natural Environment' noted:

- 1) Ensure that the form and function of the significant environmental features is conserved (protected and enhanced). Update the land use designations and zoning accordingly.
- 2) Undertake a formal Environmental Impact Study (EIS) of the land use plan. Utilize water management background work and modelling as an input to that assessment.

- a. Determine appropriate development limits, setbacks (i.e., buffers), zoning and assess potential trail network/crossing implications.
- 3) Any future development should prepare an Environmental Impact Report.

REPORT:

An Environmental Impact Study (EIS) is one of the technical studies prepared to inform the proposed policies and land uses, specifically Natural Heritage Conservation for the Hidden Valley Land Use Master Plan.

Natural Heritage System

Kitchener's Natural Heritage System is comprised of natural heritage features that maintain local and regional biological, hydrological, ecological, and geological diversity and functions, support viable populations of indigenous species, and sustain local ecosystems. These resources provide a wide range of public health, recreational, environmental, and economic benefits to the city and its citizens.

Natural Heritage System, Policies

Using the policies outlined in the Region of Waterloo Official Plan (Greenlands Network) and Kitchener Official Plan (Natural Heritage System) a natural heritage system was updated in Hidden Valley.

The Natural Heritage System Policies (Kitchener Official Plan, Section 7.C.2 Natural Heritage System) aim to strike a balance between protection of the Natural Heritage System while providing for growth and development in accordance with the policies of this Plan. Each feature in the System contains policies that provide appropriate protection based on the feature's significance and sensitivity.

Features categorized as Core Natural Heritage Features are afforded the greatest level of protection and are designated Natural Heritage Conservation, which generally prohibits development.

The features identified as Significant Wildlife Habitat, Significant Landforms and Ecological Restoration Areas also place limitations on development; requiring further studies to determine whether development within the feature is appropriate and how it should occur.

Accordingly, the features identified as Significant Wildlife Habitat, Significant Landforms and Ecological Restoration Areas will be treated as an overlay to land use designations.

Features identified as Supporting Natural Heritage Features, such as Natural Linkages and Corridors, help contribute to the overall ecological integrity and connectivity of the Natural Heritage System. It is intended that these features and their functions will be conserved and enhanced.

Natural Heritage System, Identification

The mapping and criteria for identifying individual natural heritage features that comprise the natural heritage system are included in the Kitchener Natural Heritage System Technical Background Report.

Option 2 – Updated 2024 Land Use Concept, reflects an updated Natural Heritage Conservation designation based on recently compiled technical information.

The boundary of the System is approximate, and the exact delineation will be determined more precisely through the development review process and, in consultation with the appropriate public agencies. Owners/applicants may be required to undertake the necessary studies to facilitate this process.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- DSD-19-133 – Neighbourhood Planning Review: Hidden Valley Land Use Master Plan
- DSD-2022-258 – Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for Upper Hidden Valley Pumping Station and Forcemain
- DSD-2024-119 – Hidden Valley Flood Risk Reduction Environmental Assessment
- DSD-2024-215 – Hidden Valley Land Use Implementation Project – Technical Studies (Climate Change and Environment Committee)

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Hidden Valley Land Use Option 2 - Updated 2024 Land Use Concept