

Report to Planning and Environment Committee

To: Chair and Members
Planning and Environment Committee

From: Scott Mathers, MPA, P.Eng.
Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic Development

Subject: The Corporation of the City of London
Byron Gravel Pits Secondary Plan - Update

Date: August 22, 2022

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Planning and Development the following report **BE RECIEVED** for information.

Executive Summary

Staff are in the process of undertaking the Byron Gravel Pits Secondary Plan study, to develop a Secondary Plan for the lands near the Byron Gravel Pits in west London.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

This application supports the Building a Sustainable City area of focus in the Corporate *Strategic Plan* by ensuring that the City of London's growth and development are well planned and sustainable over the long term.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Study Area

The study area is located on the east side of Colonel Talbot Road, south of Baseline Road and Commissioners Road West. The site lies within the Westmount Neighbourhood, immediately adjacent to the Byron Neighbourhood, and is approximately 76 hectares in size. The site contains an unusually deep glacial deposit which has been used to produce sand and gravel products to supply the London construction market and surrounding region for over 75 years. The study area is comprised of 14 separate parcels, with some of the properties under similar ownership. There is one parcel, located in the northwest corner of the Study Area, that is owned by the City of London. The rest of the lands within the Secondary Plan area are privately owned. A map detailing the study area can be found in Figure 1 below.

The majority of the study area has been licensed under the Aggregate Resources Act for sand and gravel extraction. The aggregate licenses are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and the Ministry oversees compliance with operating conditions and rehabilitation of the site. It is noted that the pit extraction activities have been completed for the site and pit rehabilitation activities are underway.



Figure 1 - Map of Study Area

1.2 Purpose of the Byron Gravel Pits Secondary Plan

The London Plan identifies the lands as being located within the Future Community Growth Place Type. This place type establishes Municipal Council's intent for future urban development on the lands, and ensures that development does not occur until a secondary plan is prepared to determine the appropriate place type(s) to be applied to the lands, and to guide the long-term management and approval of growth for the area. The Future Community Growth Place Type also creates an expectation that non-industrial Place Types will be applied through the secondary planning process. The lands are also identified as a Specific Policy Area on Map 7 of The London Plan. The policy provides further direction for the land and indicates that the long-term use of this area will be a mix of mid-rise housing types and recreational uses, and rehabilitation of this area will be based on a comprehensive rehabilitation and development plan. To avoid premature development, zoning has been applied to the lands to limit the range of permitted uses, severances, and other forms of development that is allowed to occur.

The Byron Gravel Pits is a unique area within the city of London. Characterized by dramatic topography with a central pond, the area has been shaped by years of aggregate extraction. As the aggregate activities have been completed within the Byron Gravel Pits, and the rehabilitation activities are underway, there is a need to plan for the after use of the gravel pit lands. The secondary planning process will undertake a comprehensive review of the lands and establish a vision for this unique area that focuses on both open space and recreational opportunities that the site provides, and also for the integration of urban development that could occur along the perimeter of the former gravel pit operations.

The development of the Secondary Plan includes the following elements:

- Review of the current Area Study and approved land use plan to determine if this still meets the needs of the landowners, City and the community.
- Ensure land owners, licensed aggregate operators, agencies and the community are consulted and involved in the preparation of the Secondary Plan.
- Define a vision for the open space/park lands that will form the majority of the site.
- Apply appropriate place types, consistent with the recommended land use plan, delineate possible road alignments, identify, and protect natural heritage features and open space lands and delineate a trail/pathway network through the site.
- Co-ordinate with the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment during the Secondary Plan process to finalize the alignment of Commissioners Road.
- Provide urban design concepts and vision for the developable portion of the study area. These design concepts will be developed into design guidelines that will constitute park of the Secondary Plan.

1.3 Overview of the Study Process

At its meeting of October 26, 2016, Municipal Council approved the Terms of Reference for the Byron Gravel Pits Secondary Plan, thereby directing Staff to undertake the development of a secondary plan to guide future development in the study area. Following Municipal Council's adoption of the Terms of Reference, Staff began the work to develop the Byron Gravel Pits Secondary Plan.

The following section provides a summary of the process that was undertaken to develop the Secondary Plan:

- The Secondary Plan process started with developing an understand the unique physical characteristics of the site, and the surrounding landscape including environmental features and linkages, residential communities and recreational facilities.
- The initial evaluation of recreational and open space options looked at opportunities to compliment other existing and proposed facilities in the area, including the network of parks and open spaces, nearby Boler Mountain, local sports fields and facilities including the existing Byron Optimist Community Centre and the new Southwest Community Centre YMCA and Library.
- Landowner outreach was also carried out in the early stages of the project, to assess the expectations for future development of the lands within the Study Area. This portion of the project also provided a greater understanding of the ongoing gravel pit extraction and rehabilitation activities.
- Communication with staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, who are responsible for overseeing compliance and rehabilitation of the aggregate licenses, has also been an important element of this project.
- The Secondary Plan Study included a number of component reviews, similar to other Secondary Plan studies completed for the City but in less detail. These included a Natural Environment Report, a Transportation Assessment and a Servicing Study. A more detailed analysis of these elements will be undertaken as future development plans are brought forward.

- The engagement and consultation process included the general public, community leaders, local sports and recreation groups, as well as the landowners and pit operators within the study area. A focus group participated in a visioning session, to look specifically at the range of recreational ideas for the site.
- Using the input from the landowners, commenting partners, land owners and the visioning group, three concept plans were prepared and introduced at a community open house in December 2018. The concepts focused on ideas for the green space component of the Secondary Plan Area. Feedback from the open house together with potential residential development around the site was reflected in the Land Use Concept Plan that was shared with the community in April 2019.
- There has been a high level of community interest in this project, particularly in the recreational opportunities on the gravel pit lands. While there are different perspectives on what this area might look like in the future, there is positive support to see a former industrial area transformed into a new community.

A graphic highlighting the steps to develop the Secondary Plan can be found as Figure 2 below.

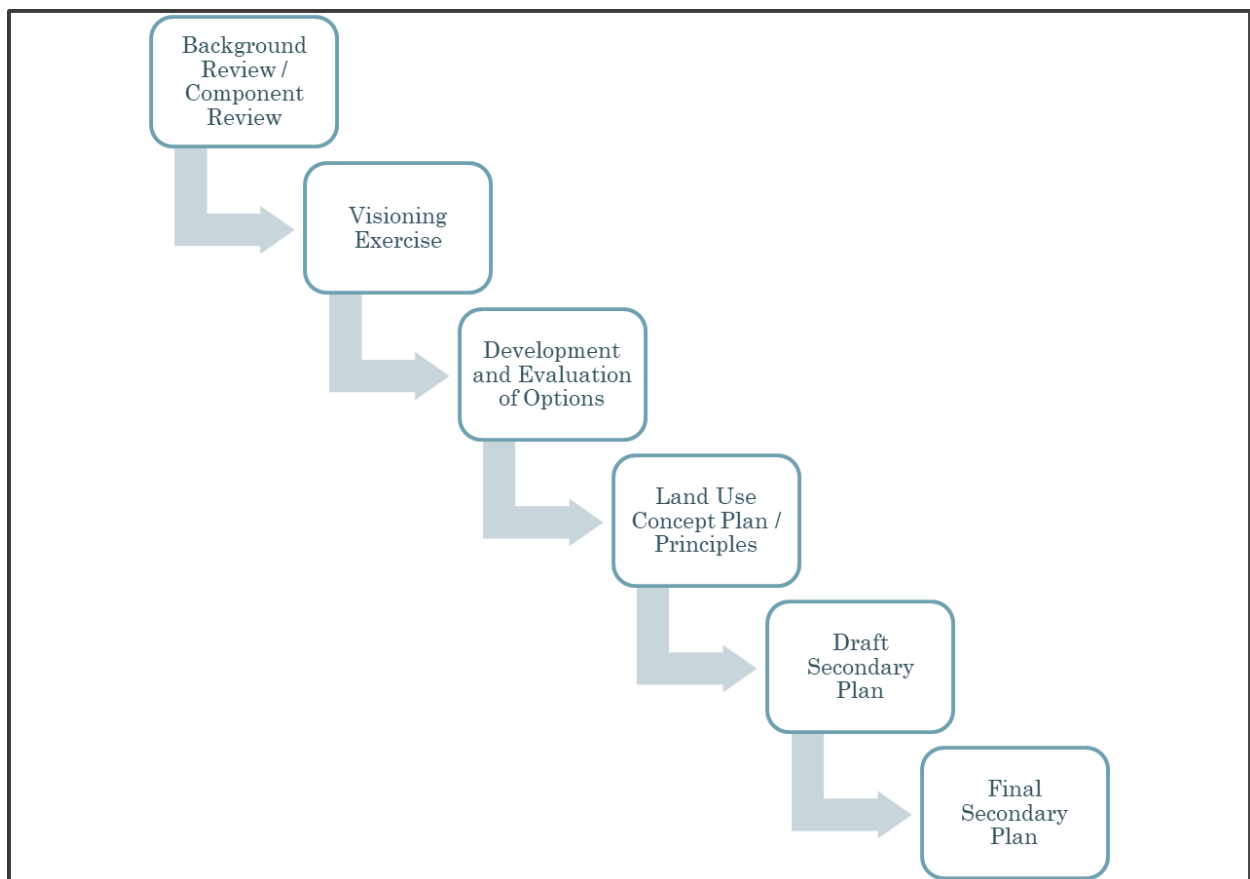


Figure 2 – Secondary Plan Process Map

1.4 Commissioners Road Municipal Class Environmental Assessment

During the secondary plan review process, the City of London undertook the Commissioners Road Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) to determine the ultimate road alignment of Commissioners Road between Byron Baseline Road and Cranbrook Road. The Class EA included two public information meetings in 2017 and consultations with property owners, agencies, and the public. In 2018 Municipal Council approved the recommendations of the Class EA which re-aligned the road allowance through the Byron Gravel pit. During the appeal period of the Class EA, one of the landowners submitted a request to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for a more detailed level of study (Part II Order request). In 2019, the

Ministry issued a decision on the request for a Part II order and upheld the findings of the Council recommended Environment Assessment.

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Draft Land Use Concept Plans

Based on input from the above process, (3) three draft land use concept plans with different themes were prepared and shared at a community open house in December 2018. As indicated above, a community meeting was held prior to the pandemic where a preferred concept was presented to the public and landowners. It is noted that the Draft Land Use Concept Plans overemphasised the size of elements within recreation area and were not intended to be represent a realistic scale.

The following Draft Land Use Concept Plans are shared for consideration by Council:

1. Concept One provides Opportunities for Passive Recreation and Nature Appreciation



2. Concept Two provides Opportunities for Active Recreation.



3. Concept Three provides Opportunities for the site to be used as an event venue.



2.2 Draft Principles

The Draft Principles were developed in consultation with the landowners and the community 2019. The principles will form the basis for the policies that are to be developed for the Secondary Plan.

The following Draft Principles are shared for consideration by Council:

1. Promote Unique Opportunities for Recreation

- This is an area unlike any other in the City of London, shaped by years of aggregate extraction and characterized by dramatic side slopes, and a central pond.
- Active and Passive recreation uses could include public and/or private facilities, or a combination of both.

- Enhance and compliment other recreational opportunities in the vicinity and in the broader region.
- Design parks and recreational facilities to promote a strong sense of identity and place and to serve as a meeting place with appropriate infrastructure to attract and support neighbourhood residents of all ages and demographics

2. Create a Green and Attractive Environment

- Integrate the natural and built setting to distinguish the Byron Gravel Pits Area as a high quality, master planned and protected environment.
- Achieve ecological sustainability in new development, with built forms having a minimal impact on the features and systems of the natural environment.

3. Provide a Range of Housing Choices

- Ensure that a range and mix of housing types is provided within developments to achieve a balanced and inclusive residential community.
- Ensure that the community caters to the needs of all ages, stages of life and income groups.
- Provide affordable housing opportunities.

4. Create a Diverse and Connected Community

- Connect the community to surrounding neighbourhoods through parks and natural areas, multi-use trails, pedestrian connections and street network.
- Enhance the public realm, including streetscapes, public spaces and infrastructure.
- Create and enhance views and vistas through building placement, street pattern, and location of trails

2.3 Next Steps

Over the next few months Staff will work in collaboration with our internal partners and engage with landowners within the study to develop a Draft Secondary Plan. As part of the project the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry will be consulted during the secondary planning process. Staff will also be refining the preferred concept and principles described above based on the policies of The London Plan to ensure that the Byron Gravel Pits Secondary Plan provides the direction for the future development of this unique area within the context of The London Plan. The following section provides an overview of the key milestones that will be undertaken to complete the project:

- Refine Draft Land Use Concepts, Draft Principles, reconfirm findings from Component Studies, and identify any additional information that is required to develop Secondary Plan
- Prepare Draft Secondary – including but not limited to formulation of a Preferred Land Use Plan and accompanying policies
- Hold a Community Meeting for public consultation and review
- Refine Draft Secondary Plan
- Hold a Public Meeting for public consultation and review
- Finalize Secondary Plan
- Council Approval in Q1 2023

Conclusion

Staff will work with internal partners, landowners within the study area, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and engage the public to complete project milestones identified above. The feedback that has been received to date has helped to inform the Land Use Concept Plan and principles and will also help to inform the development of the Secondary Plan.

The Draft Secondary Plan will be brought forward to a Public Participation Meeting in front of Planning and Environment Committee in Q1 2023. City Staff will continue public consultation throughout the Secondary Plan study process to gather public feedback. The Final Secondary Plan is targeted to be brought back to Council later in Q1 2023.

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Recommended by: **Gregg Barrett, AICP**
Director, Planning and Development

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Note: The opinions contained herein are offered by a person or persons qualified to provide expert opinion. Further detail with respect to qualifications can be obtained from Development Services.

August 15, 2022
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