

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	January 9, 2025
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-03-25
Title:	Merit Report on Thornbury Acres County Official Plan Amendment # 25
Prepared by:	Scott Taylor
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Town of The Blue Mountains

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-03-25 regarding an overview of County Official Plan Amendment application 42-42-000-OPA-25 ('Thornbury Acres') on lands legally described as Part of Lot 27, Concession 8, in the geographic Township of Collingwood, now in the Town of The Blue Mountains, be received for information.

Executive Summary

The County has received an official plan amendment application (referred to as OPA 25) to add an exception to the Special Agricultural designation, to permit agricultural uses in concert with a residential farm co-operative (RFC) proposed on the abutting Rural lands. This amendment is proposed as part of the Thornbury Acres development, which includes the proposed RFC consisting of 37 residential units, agricultural uses, and recreational uses. Other applications submitted as part of the Thornbury Acres development are currently under appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal. The subject lands are approximately 61 hectares in size, of which the OPA only applies to the lands designated 'Special Agricultural' that are approximately 9.8 hectares in size.

Following the public and agency review process, a thorough analysis and staff recommendation will be provided. Staff are recommending that this report be received for information purposes at this time.

Background and Discussion

Grey County has received the OPA 25 application which seeks to amend the County Official Plan to apply a site-specific exception to the Special Agricultural designation. The requested exception would allow for the lands designated Special Agricultural to be used in concert with a proposed RFC on the abutting lands designated as 'Rural'. This exception would permit such lands to be used for agricultural uses as part of the RFC, but would not allow residential unit

creation on the Special Agricultural lands (i.e., the residential components would be limited to the abutting Rural lands).

This proposed development known as the Thornbury Acres development encompasses lands designated as Rural, Special Agricultural, and Hazard Lands. However, OPA 25 would only apply to the lands designated as Special Agricultural. Portions of the subject lands also contain pockets of Intake Protection Zone and Significant Woodlands, as mapped on Appendices A and B to the County Plan respectively.

Thornbury Acres has also previously applied for a plan of condominium, Town official plan amendment, and zoning by-law amendment to permit a RFC on the subject lands. These three planning applications have been appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). The RFC would consist of 37 residential units, agricultural uses, condominium roads, and recreational uses. This development is proposed to be serviced via individual wells and septic systems and gain access off internal private condominium roads, connecting to Grey Road 2 and Grey Road 40.

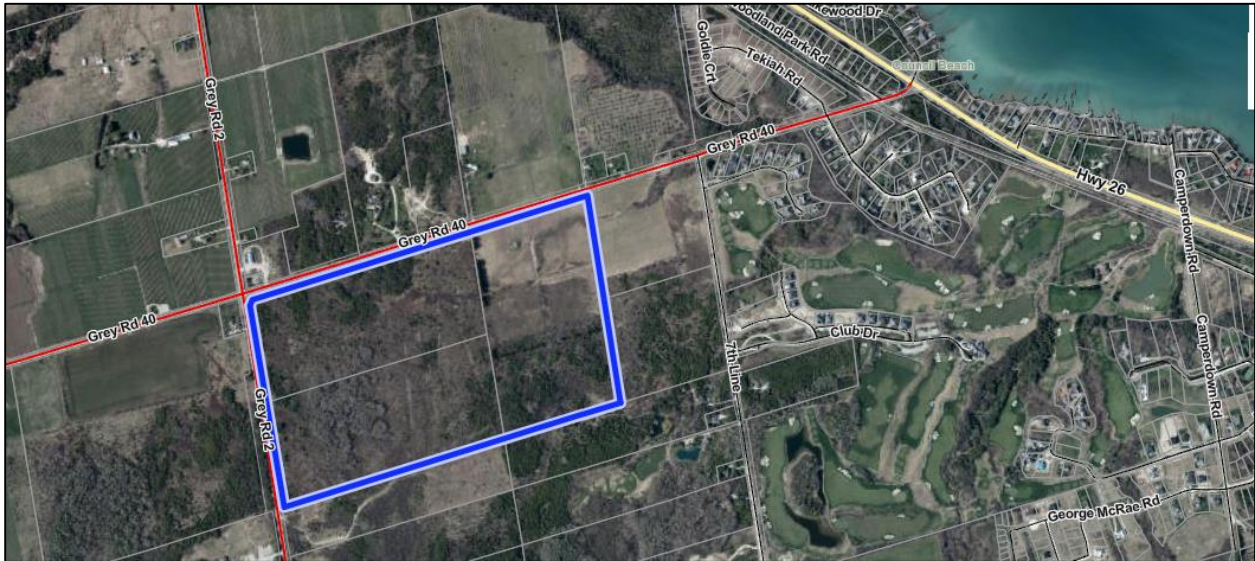
The subject lands are approximately 61 hectares in size, of which the Special Agricultural Lands are approximately 9.8 hectares in size. This site is located south of Thornbury, at the southeast corner of the intersection of Grey Road 2 and Grey Road 4. The lands are legally described as Part of Lot 27, Concession 8, in the geographic Township of Collingwood, now in the Town of The Blue Mountains.

Surrounding land uses include agricultural uses, a cannabis growing facility, residential uses, a golf course, and space extensive commercial/industrial uses.

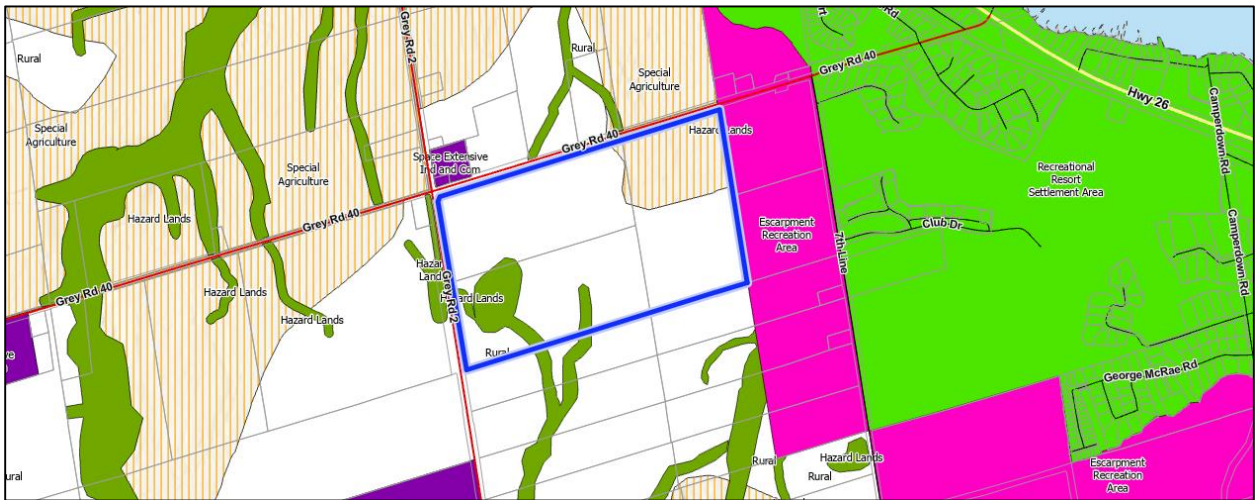
Several studies have been undertaken to support initial applications. With the current OPA 25 application, only a Planning Justification Report was required. Copies of all background reports and plans can be found on the [County of Grey website](#).

Map 1 below shows the Thornbury Acres lands outlined in blue and surrounding area, while map 2 shows the current County Official Plan land use designations for the area.

Map 1: Airphoto of the Thornbury Acres Lands and Surrounding Area



Map 2: County Official Plan Land Use Designations of the Subject Lands and Surrounding Area



Within map 2 above the following land use designations are shown:

- Rural = white,
- Hazard Lands = darker green,
- Special Agricultural = orange and white cross hatching,
- Escarpment Recreation Area = pink,
- Recreational Resort Settlement Area = bright green, and
- Space Extensive Industrial and Commercial = purple.

Analysis of Planning Issues

When rendering a land use planning decision, planning authorities must have regard to matters of provincial interest under the *Planning Act*, be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024 and conform to any provincial plans or County/Municipal Official Plans that govern the subject lands. In this case, the County of Grey Official Plan and the Town of The Blue Mountains Official Plan have jurisdiction over the subject property. There are no provincial plans in effect for this area of the County, but the lands are adjacent to lands in the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

A detailed planning analysis has yet to be undertaken by County staff for the proposed OPA 25. Following the public and agency review process, a thorough analysis and staff recommendation will be provided. Key provincial and County policies have been flagged below for consideration.

Provincial Policy and Legislation

The *Planning Act* speaks to the need to have regard for matters of provincial interest under section 2 of the Act. Some of the areas of provincial interest relevant to this application are as follows:

- the protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features and functions,
- the protection of the agricultural resources of the province,
- the orderly development of safe and healthy communities, and
- the appropriate location of growth and development.

The new 2024 PPS provides a policy regime for similar matters. Section 4.3 of the PPS contains policies on Agriculture, while sections 2.5 and 2.6 have policies on Rural Areas and Rural Lands respectively. Other sections of the PPS provide direction on the protection of significant natural heritage features, the provision of infrastructure, and directing growth to settlement areas.

County of Grey Official Plan

As noted above, the subject lands are designated Rural, Special Agricultural, and Hazard Lands on Schedule A of the County's Official Plan. The proposed OPA 25 would add an exception to section 5.3 of the Plan, which are the Special Agricultural policies. Agricultural uses are currently permitted in this designation, but the requested exception would permit such agricultural uses to be used in concert with a RFC. The Special Agricultural designation does not currently permit a RFC.

Following the public and agency processes, a more thorough analysis of the *Planning Act*, PPS, and County Official Plan will be undertaken along with a staff recommendation.

Legislated Requirements

OPA 25 will be processed in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

Financial and Resource Implications

There are no anticipated financial or resource considerations associated with OPA 25, beyond those normally encountered in processing such applications.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Planning, Transportation Services, Legal Services
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets – to be reviewed at the formal review stage.
- External: External Legal Counsel, Town of The Blue Mountains, the public, and agencies

Appendices and Attachments

None.