

6. Supporting the Countryside

Waterloo Region's countryside contains a diversity of landscapes that both surround and sustain the region's urban areas. The countryside is made up of many unique natural and cultural heritage features as well as valuable natural resources, including agricultural lands, *woodlands*, mineral aggregate deposits and groundwater recharge areas. These assets form part of the region's rich natural capital and contribute to the community's quality of life. The policies in this Plan seek to protect the countryside from urbanization and inappropriate rural activities, while sustainably managing its natural resources for the needs of current and future generations.

Agriculture forms an important part of the region's economy and provides many positive benefits. Each job in the primary agriculture sector has been shown to support an additional four jobs in the wider regional economy. As providers of fresh, locally grown food, area farmers play an important role in the health of the community. Local agriculture also promotes *sustainability* by reducing reliance on longer distance food imports.

Although the region has some of the best farmland in Ontario, this Plan recognizes that simply protecting farmland will not guarantee that it will be actively and viably farmed. Farm businesses today face many economic challenges in a globally competitive environment. To help keep farmers on the land, this Plan contains policies that support on-farm diversification strategies as a means of supplementing farm income.

The surrounding countryside is also home to a large community of Mennonites whose ancestors were among the first pioneers to the region. The culture and farming practices of the Mennonites contribute to the strength of the region's agricultural sector. This Plan seeks to preserve and support the social, economic and cultural needs of this distinct segment of the region's rural population that, in many cases, still relies on horse-drawn vehicles for their primary means of transportation.

The region's countryside includes a series of smaller Rural Settlement Areas and Rural Employment Areas that provide opportunities for living and working in a rural setting. Most of these areas are serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems and have limited potential for growth. In the future, these areas will primarily grow through infill development that is consistent with their rural character and limited *infrastructure* capacities.

This Plan identifies a broad band of permanently protected *environmental features* and agricultural lands known as the Protected Countryside. This designation contains a unique concentration of farmlands, *woodlands*, watercourses, river valleys and *wetlands*. It also includes several significant Regional Recharge Areas, which sustain some of the richest sources of groundwater in the Grand River watershed and account for a significant share of the region's water supply. The Protected Countryside will

permanently protect these critical areas from urban development to ensure the region's continued environmental and economic health.

Overall Goal – Protect the rural character of the countryside while supporting the development of strong and prosperous rural communities.

Objectives:

- 6.1 Permanently protect the ecological and groundwater recharge functions of the Protected Countryside.
- 6.2 Support agriculture as the predominant land use within the countryside and help strengthen the viability of the farm sector.
- 6.3 Conserve renewable and non-renewable resources, while providing for their *sustainable* use by current and future generations.
- 6.4 Protect and enhance the countryside's open space character, topography, natural *linkages* and rural landscapes.

6.A Countryside

- 6.A.1 The Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas are designated as shown on Map 7.
- 6.A.2 The Prime Agricultural Area designation identifies an area where *prime agricultural lands* predominate. This designation includes areas of *prime agricultural lands* and associated areas of Canada Land Inventory Class 4 to 7 soils, and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms that exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture.
- 6.A.3 The Rural Areas designation identifies areas where Canada Land Inventory Class 4 to 7 soils predominate and which are typically characterized by one or more of steep slopes, *environmental features* and/or existing *non-farm lots*.
- 6.A.4 The primary land uses permitted in the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations will include *agricultural uses*, *agriculture-related uses* and *secondary uses* as set out in the policies in this Chapter.
- 6.A.5 Within the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations, all types, sizes and intensities of *agricultural uses* and *normal farm practices* will be promoted and protected in accordance with *Provincial* standards.
- 6.A.6 *On-farm alternative and/or renewable energy systems* will be permitted in the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations in accordance with the policies in this Plan.

- 6.A.7 *Mineral aggregate operations* may be permitted as an interim use in the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations in accordance with the policies in Chapter 9.
- 6.A.8 *Recreational and tourism uses, rural institutional uses* and limited infill residential uses may be permitted in Rural Areas in accordance with the policies in this Chapter.
- 6.A.9 Within the Environmentally Sensitive Landscape designation as shown on Map 4, Policies 7.B.6 to 7.B.19 supersede the policies in this Chapter to the extent of any conflict.
- 6.A.10 The Region will identify *specialty crop areas* in accordance with the evaluation procedures established by the *Province*. These *specialty crop areas* will be designated on Map 7 through a future amendment to this Plan.

6.B Protected Countryside

- 6.B.1 The Protected Countryside is designated as shown on Map 7. This designation identifies a continuous band of *environmental features* and agricultural lands surrounding the north, west and south sides of the Urban Area designation that is to be permanently protected. Lands within the Protected Countryside contain a large concentration of *prime agricultural lands, woodlands, watercourses*, portions of the Grand River valley, *wetlands*, Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes, Regional Recharge Areas, and portions of the Waterloo and Paris-Galt Moraines and *mineral aggregate resources*. The Protected Countryside is intended to permanently protect these valuable areas from urban development, while providing for the continued use of the lands for agriculture, environmental and other appropriate rural uses including appropriate access to natural resources including *mineral aggregate resources* in conformity with the policies in this Plan.

Within the Southwest Kitchener Policy Area designated on Maps 7 and 7a the final extent of the Protected Countryside has yet to be determined. The final extent of the Protected Countryside as it applies to the lands within the Southwest Kitchener Policy Area will be coincident with the final boundary of the Regional Recharge Area and will be determined through the next *municipal comprehensive review* process to be undertaken not later than 2019. The final location of the Protected Countryside as it applies to the Southwest Kitchener Policy Area will be implemented by a future amendment to this Plan. The current Protected Countryside designation adjacent to the Southwest Kitchener Policy Area as shown on Map 7a will be considered as the minimum extent of the designation for the purposes of this future review process and there will be no reconsideration of the extent of the Protected Countryside designation on lands to which it applies outside of the Southwest Kitchener Policy Area.

- 6.B.2 Land uses within the Protected Countryside will be regulated in accordance with the underlying policies of the Prime Agricultural Area, Rural Areas or Landscape Level Systems designations as shown in this Plan.
- 6.B.3 Expansions of the Urban Area, Township Urban Areas, Highway 401/Regional Road 97 Employment Area, Rural Settlement Areas or Rural Employment Areas will not be permitted into the Protected Countryside, except as provided for in Policy 6.B.4.
- 6.B.4 Minor expansions of Rural Settlement Areas located within the Protected Countryside designation may be permitted to facilitate the enlargement of an *existing* employment, recreational or institutional use subject to the provisions of Policy 6.G.8 and, where applicable, Policy 7.B.25. Such expansions will not be permitted where the lands subject to the expansion proposal are also designated as Environmentally Sensitive Landscape.
- 6.B.5 The designation of lands as Protected Countryside will not affect *agricultural uses* and associated *normal farm practices* as defined in applicable Provincial legislation and regulations in conformity with approved Area Municipal official plans and zoning by-laws, and statutes, policies and regulations of other government agencies, including agricultural drainage through municipal or agreement drains.
- 6.B.6 Nothing in this Plan shall prevent the owner of a legal lot of record located within the Protected Countryside designation from obtaining a building permit to construct or enlarge a house, accessory building or farm structure, provided it is in conformity with all other Regional, Area Municipal and Grand River Conservation Authority policies and regulations.

6.C General Policies

The policies in Section 6.C apply to the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations.

- 6.C.1 New land uses, including the creation of separate lots, expansions of existing lots and the development of new or expanding livestock facilities, will comply with the *minimum distance separation formulae*.
- 6.C.2 The placing of fill, removal of topsoil or extraction of peat will generally be discouraged within the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations. Area Municipalities are encouraged to regulate such activities through site alteration by-laws, passed under the provisions of the Municipal Act or Topsoil Preservation Act, and to require the rehabilitation of lands from which peat or topsoil has been removed.

- 6.C.3 Additional permanent or temporary *farm-related residential units* may be permitted on a farm without severance to accommodate full-time farm employees, including members of the farm household directly involved in the farm operation, provided that:
- (a) the size, nature and productive capability of the farm operation warrant additional farm employment for extended periods of time such that additional on-site accommodation is considered necessary;
 - (b) any new permanent dwellings will be limited to bunkhouses or the conversion and/or expansion of *existing farm-related residential units*;
 - (c) any new temporary dwellings will be located near existing farm buildings and will be removed if they are no longer required to accommodate farm employees; and
 - (d) the site can be appropriately serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems.
- 6.C.4 To preserve and support the historic, social and cultural needs of a unique segment of the region's existing rural community which relies on horse-drawn vehicles as their primary means of transportation, Area Municipalities may, by amendment to their zoning by-law, permit the establishment of small-scale schools, places of worship and associated cemeteries. In prime agricultural areas, an alternative locational analysis needs to be completed and the policies of Section 6.D.1 (b) to (d) inclusive, apply.
- 6.C.5 Minor intensification of *existing* industrial, commercial, recreational and/or institutional uses, including minor changes to the uses thereof, may be permitted within the limits of the existing property.
- 6.C.6 The Region will endeavour to support environmentally *sustainable* agriculture by assisting farmers in the development of individual Environmental Farm Plans to minimize soil degradation, protect the quality and quantity of water resources, improve the management of potential on-site pollution sources and to maintain, enhance or, where feasible, restore the *ecological functions* of elements of the Greenlands Network.

Agriculture-Related Uses

- 6.C.7 Area Municipalities will establish policies in their official plans to permit *agriculture-related uses* within the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations, subject to the following:
- (a) the use minimizes the amount of land removed from agricultural production and is suitable for the site in comparison to other reasonable
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alternatives available in the Area Municipality, including sites with poorer agricultural soils or where fragmented or smaller lots and/or a mix of *non-farm lots* may already exist;

- (b) the use mitigates any potential land use conflicts with adjacent farms and other land uses;
- (c) the use can be appropriately serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems; and
- (d) the severance of a lot for an *agriculture-related use* created in accordance with this policy may be permitted only in accordance with Policy 6.E.7.

Secondary Uses

6.C.8 Area Municipalities will establish policies in their official plans to permit *secondary uses* within the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations, subject to the following:

- (a) the *secondary use* will be clearly accessory to the principal use of the property;
- (b) the *secondary use* will be small in scale and compatible with surrounding agricultural operations;
- (c) for *secondary uses* located on a farm, any buildings, structures or facilities associated with the *secondary use*, except roadside produce stands, will be integrated with the main farm buildings and be constructed in a manner that will allow for ease of conversion to an *agricultural use* should the *secondary use* cease to exist. Minor retailing of products will be permitted directly from the farm provided that sales are limited to those goods produced or manufactured primarily on the farm; and
- (d) the severance of a lot for a *secondary use* created in accordance with this policy will not be permitted.

6.C.9 Area Municipalities will establish regulations for *secondary uses* in their zoning by-laws.

Expansion/Intensification of Existing Employment Uses within the Countryside Line

6.C.10 Lands located between the Urban Area/Township Urban Areas designations and the Countryside Line shown on Map 7 will continue to be subject to the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas policies in this Plan, except where a development application is submitted to expand or intensify an existing

employment use. In such situations, an Area Municipality may consider approving the development application without an amendment to this Plan only where:

- (a) there is a demonstrated need to expand or intensify the use;
- (b) the uses minimizes the amount of land removed from agricultural production;
- (c) the land use mitigates any potential land use conflicts with adjacent farms and other land uses;
- (d) the proposed land use will not compromise comprehensive planning for the future development of a *complete community* on the lands located within the Countryside Line; and
- (e) the use is in conformity with all other applicable policies of this Plan.

6.D Rural Areas Special Policies

Recreational and Tourism Uses

6.D.1 Area Municipalities may permit the establishment or expansion of a *recreational and tourism use* within the Rural Areas designation by amendment to their official plan, provided that:

- (a) any buildings or structures associated with the use are small-in-scale and do not include overnight guest accommodation, with the exception of campgrounds;
- (b) the use is compatible with surrounding agricultural operations;
- (c) the use minimizes the amount of land removed from agricultural production;
- (d) the use complies with other policies in this Plan regarding mineral aggregate extraction, source water protection, the natural environment and water and wastewater servicing; and
- (e) for proposed golf courses, the proponent submits a Best Management Practices report to the satisfaction of the Area Municipality that outlines measures to minimize irrigation, fertilizer and pesticide use requirements through use of Integrated Pest Management, promotes native and naturalized vegetation and minimizes active use areas.

Rural Institutional Uses

6.D.2 Area Municipalities may permit the establishment or expansion of a *rural institutional use* by amendment to their official plan and/or zoning by-law, provided that the proposed use:

- (a) has a demonstrated need to locate within the Rural Areas designation; and
- (b) will be in conformity with Policy 6.D.1 (a) to (d).

6.E Lot Creation and Lot Adjustment Policies

6.E.1 *Development applications* to create a new residential lot within the Prime Agricultural Area or Rural Areas designations, or which would otherwise result in the creation of a new residential lot, will not be permitted except in the following circumstances:

- (a) to create a lot for a second residence designated under the Heritage Act that would become surplus to the farm operation as a result of a proposed consolidation of the farm, subject to Policy 6.E.8; and
- (b) within the Rural Areas designation, to create new infill lots for residential purposes within an existing grouping of rural residential lots that has not been designated in an Area Municipal official plan as a Rural Settlement Area, subject to Policy 6.E.10.

6.E.2 *Development applications* to create new non-residential lots within the Prime Agricultural Area or Rural Areas designations may be permitted only in the following circumstances:

- (a) within both the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations, to create new farm parcels, or reconfigure existing farm parcels where lands are severed from one farm parcel and conveyed as a lot addition to an adjoining farm and held in one ownership in accordance with Policy 6.E.3;
- (b) within both the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations, to sever lands for *agriculture-related uses* in accordance with Policies 6.E.4 and 6.E.7;
- (c) within both the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designation, to facilitate conveyances to public bodies or non-profit entities for the conservation of *environmental features* or elements of the Greenlands Network, in accordance with Policy 6.E.9; and

- (d) within the Rural Areas designation, to create lots for *recreational and tourism uses* and *rural institutional uses*, in accordance with Policies 6.E.4, 6.E.11 and 6.E.13.

Farm Lot Severances

6.E.3 *Development applications* to create a new farm parcel, or reconfigure existing farm parcels where lands are severed from one farm parcel and conveyed as a lot addition to an adjoining farm and held in one ownership, will comply with the following:

- (a) the minimum lot area for both the newly created and retained farm parcels will be 40 hectares each; or
- (b) where the newly created or retained farm parcels would have lot areas less than 40 hectares, the owner/applicant will be required to provide information satisfactory to the Region, which demonstrates that the resulting farm parcels will:
 - i) be of a size appropriate for the type of *agricultural uses* common in the area; and
 - ii) be sufficiently large enough to sustain an economically viable farm operation and to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations.

6.E.4 *Development applications* to sever lands from an existing farm parcel for an *agriculture-related use, recreational and tourism use, rural institutional use*, or for the purposes of conserving *environmental features* or elements of the Greenlands Network as provided for in this Plan, will be in conformity with all applicable policies in this Plan and the following:

- (a) the minimum lot area for the retained farm parcel will be 40 hectares; or
- (b) where the retained farm parcel would have a lot area less than 40 hectares, the owner/applicant will be required to provide information satisfactory to the Region, which demonstrates that the resulting farm parcel will:
 - i) be of a size appropriate for the type of *agricultural uses* common in the area; and
 - ii) be sufficiently large enough to sustain an economically viable farm operation, and to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations.

- 6.E.5 The Region may consult with the *Province*, or other professionals knowledgeable in farm economics and management, at the owner's/applicant's expense, to evaluate the farm severance for conformity with the provisions of Policies 6.E.3 and 6.E.4.
- 6.E.6 This Plan recognizes that there are many existing farm parcels within the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Areas designations that are less than 40 hectares in area. These undersized parcels are considered as *agricultural uses* except where otherwise provided for in this Plan.

Severance of Agriculture-Related Uses

- 6.E.7 *Development applications* to sever lands for *agriculture-related uses* may be permitted, provided that:
- (a) the severed lands will be limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use of private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems;
 - (b) the severance will not result in an undersized farm that may not be economically viable, as determined in accordance with Policy 6.E.4; and
 - (c) the consent to sever will not receive final approval until the buildings or structures associated with the use have been constructed or substantially completed.

Severances for Surplus Dwellings Designated Under the Heritage Act

- 6.E.8 Where two or more farm parcels are to be merged in title into one ownership, with each lot having one dwelling, a new lot may be created for the dwelling surplus to the needs of the merged farm provided that:
- (a) the surplus dwelling is designated by the Area Municipality as a heritage property under the Heritage Act; and
 - (b) the new lot has a maximum area of one hectare, except where natural features or existing lot patterns justify the inclusion of additional lands.

Severances for Woodlands/Conservation Lands

- 6.E.9 Conveyance of lands specifically for the purpose of conserving *environmental features* or elements of the Greenlands Network may be permitted only where such lands are both designated and zoned in the Area Municipal official plan and zoning by-law to prohibit any use not related to conservation, and are covered by a conservation easement granted in favour of the Region, Area Municipality or other conservation organizations acceptable to the Region. The

creation of such lots will not be permitted where the configuration of the remnant parcels will create the potential for new *non-farm lots*.

Severances for Residential Infilling – Rural Areas Only

- 6.E.10 Within the Rural Areas designation, Area Municipalities may permit the creation of new lots for residential infill purposes within an existing grouping of rural residential lots that has not been designated as a Rural Settlement Area within the Area Municipal official plan, provided that:
- (a) the existing grouping of lots accommodating the proposed infilling lot(s) presently consists of a grouping of four or more *non-farm lots*, with each such unit or lot separated from each other by no more than 100 metres on the same side of an open public road;
 - (b) the measurement of the 100 metre separation distance is determined in accordance with the *rural residential infilling formulae*;
 - (c) the new lot has a maximum area of one hectare, except where natural features or existing lot patterns justify inclusion of additional lands;
 - (d) the new lot is not located within a Source Water Protection Area where individual wastewater treatment systems are identified as a prohibited use in accordance with the policies in Chapter 8; and
 - (e) the new lot can be appropriately serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems.

Severances for Recreational and Tourism Uses – Rural Areas Only

- 6.E.11 Within the Rural Areas designation, *development applications* to sever new lots for *recreational and tourism uses* established in accordance with Policy 6.D.1 may be permitted, provided that:
- (a) the new lot will be limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use;
 - (b) the severance will not result in an undersized farm that may not be commercially viable, as determined in accordance with Policy 6.E.4;
 - (c) the lands to be severed have been designated and zoned in the Area Municipal official plan and zoning by-law to permit only the proposed use; and
 - (d) the new lot can be appropriately serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems.
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- 6.E.12 Within the Rural Areas designation, *development applications* to expand the lot areas of *existing recreational and tourism uses* may be permitted, provided that:
- (a) the *existing use* is not a legal non-conforming use;
 - (b) there is a demonstrated need for the additional land area;
 - (c) the use minimizes the amount of land that is removed from agricultural production;
 - (d) the expansion does not adversely affect the ability of surrounding agricultural operations to carry out *normal farm practices*; and
 - (e) the severance will not result in an undersized farm that may not be commercially viable, as determined in accordance with Policy 6.E.4.

Severances for Rural Institutional Uses

- 6.E.13 Within the Rural Areas designation, *development applications* to sever new lots for *rural institutional uses* established in accordance with Policy 6.D.2 may be permitted, provided that:
- (a) the new lot will be limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use;
 - (b) the severance will not result in an undersized farm that may not be commercially viable, as determined in accordance with Policy 6.E.4;
 - (c) the severed lands have been designated and zoned in the Area Municipal official plan and zoning by-law to permit only the proposed use; and
 - (d) the new lot can be appropriately serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems.
- 6.E.14 Within the Prime Agricultural Area or Rural Areas designations, *development applications* to expand the lot areas of *existing rural institutional uses* may be permitted, provided that:
- (a) the *existing use* is not a legal non-conforming use;
 - (b) there is a demonstrated need for the additional land area;
 - (c) the use minimizes the amount of land removed from agricultural production;

- (d) the expansion does not adversely affect the ability of surrounding agricultural operations to carry out *normal farm practices*; and
- (e) the severance will not result in an undersized farm that may not be commercially viable, as determined in accordance with Policy 6.E.4.

Severances for Rural Residential Lots - Beverly Area (Township of North Dumfries)

6.E.15 Where a consent application has been submitted for a new rural residential lot within the Beverly Northern and Southern Areas of the Township of North Dumfries (designated as shown on Map 6 of the Regional Official Policies Plan, 1995) prior to the date of approval of this Plan by the *Province*, such application, together with any associated existing or future zone change applications required to permit consideration of the new rural residential lot, will be continued and/or processed, and finally disposed of in accordance with all applicable policies of the Regional Official Policies Plan as it read on the day before the approval of this Plan.

Minor Lot Boundary Adjustments

- 6.E.16 Notwithstanding the provisions of Policies 6.E.1 and 6.E.2, a new farm or new lot will not be deemed to have been created where consent to sever is given for the following purposes:
- (a) minor adjustments to lots so as to permit conformity with existing patterns of exclusive use and occupancy, or to rectify problems created by the encroachment of buildings, structures, private wells or individual wastewater treatment systems on abutting lots, provided that such adjustments do not result in the creation of any additional lot held, or capable of being held, in distinct and separate ownership pursuant to the Planning Act;
 - (b) minor adjustments to the boundaries of two adjoining *non-farm lots* recognized by the Area Municipal zoning by-law, provided that such adjustments do not result in the creation of any additional lot held, or capable of being held, in distinct and separate ownership pursuant to the Planning Act;
 - (c) minor adjustment to the boundaries between an adjoining farm and a *non-farm lot* that does not decrease the size of the farming operation;
 - (d) acquisitions of land for *infrastructure*, where the need for the project has been demonstrated through an *Environmental Assessment* or other appropriate study and the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements or rights-of-way;
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- (e) addressing legal or technical matters such as easements, rights-of-way, corrections of deeds, and quit claims that do not result in the creation of a separate lot, except where such easements or rights-of-way are intended to facilitate the construction of new buildings or structures on a vacant lot of record otherwise undevelopable due to a lack of frontage onto a public road. Consents for such easements will be considered an application to create a new lot and will be subject to the provisions set out in Policies 6.E.1 or 6.E.2 as applicable; or
- (f) severing from each other two or more rural lots that have unintentionally merged in title, provided the severances reflect the original lot lines.

6.F Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Clusters

- 6.F.1 In order to preserve and support the historic social, economic and cultural needs of a unique segment of the region's existing rural community, which relies on horse-drawn vehicles as their primary means of transportation, the Township of Wellesley may designate a limited number of sites in its official plan to permit the development of Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Clusters. Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Clusters consist of lots on which a combination of compatible residential, industrial/commercial and limited, non-commercial farming uses are permitted. In addition, Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Clusters may also contain lots for small-scale schools, places of worship and associated cemeteries, as required to support this segment of the rural community.
 - 6.F.2 Any Area Municipal official plan amendment to designate a Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Cluster will:
 - (a) not be adopted until the Area Municipality has completed a planning justification report addressing the need for this type of development;
 - (b) assess the suitability of the site proposed in comparison to reasonable alternatives available in the Area Municipality, including consideration of minimizing impacts on agricultural areas and operations by locating on lands of poorer soil capability, or where fragmented or smaller lots and/or a mix of *non-farm lots* uses may already exist;
 - (c) establish a minimum and maximum number of lots to be permitted in each Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Cluster, based on Policy 6.F.2 (d) to (i), and the size and configuration of the selected site;
 - (d) permit additional lots within the Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Cluster for small-scale schools, places of worship and associated cemeteries as required to support the segment of the rural community which relies on horse-drawn vehicles as their primary means of transportation;
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- (e) propose lot sizes of approximately two hectares, except where studies submitted in accordance with Policy 6.F.2 (f) ii) have indicated additional lands are required to provide for wastewater and manure disposal in accordance with the requirements of the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, where appropriate, but lots will generally not be permitted to exceed four hectares in size;
- (f) be accompanied by detailed servicing studies to determine:
 - i) the suitability of the lots for servicing by private wells; and
 - ii) the suitability of the lots for servicing by individual wastewater treatment systems, and for disposal of manure in accordance with the requirements of the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, where appropriate that could reasonably be anticipated to be generated by the limited, non-commercial farming uses;
- (g) be accompanied by studies as required to address the impact of the establishment of the Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Cluster on the Greenlands Network in accordance with the policies in Chapter 7;
- (h) propose appropriate separation of new Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Clusters from each other and from Rural Settlement Areas and Rural Employment Areas, and from Township Urban Areas as required to minimize conflicts; and
- (i) be in conformity with the *minimum distance separation formulae* between Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Clusters and adjacent *agricultural uses*.

6.G Countryside Settlements

- 6.G.1 Rural Settlement Areas refer to existing smaller settlements, such as villages and hamlets, that generally comprise a limited mix of residential, commercial and institutional uses primarily serving the local community. These rural communities provide opportunities for living and working in the countryside, and also play a key role in the economic health and vitality of the townships. Rural Settlement Areas are not identified within this Plan, but will be designated and zoned in Area Municipal official plans and zoning by-laws.
- 6.G.2 Rural Employment Areas refer to existing clusters of small-scale, industrial and associated commercial and ancillary uses. The primary function of Rural Employment Areas is to provide rural employment opportunities compatible with the surrounding countryside. Residential development will not be permitted within these areas. Rural Employment Areas are not identified in this Plan, but

will be designated and zoned in Area Municipal official plans and zoning by-laws.

- 6.G.3 Where lands located within a Rural Employment Area are currently designated and zoned to permit commercial uses within an Area Municipal official plan and zoning by-law, as of the date of the adoption of this Plan by Regional Council, *development* in conformity with such designations and zoning will continue to be permitted.
- 6.G.4 Where an existing lot is partly within a Rural Settlement Area or Rural Employment Area, the part of the lot located outside the Rural Settlement Area or Rural Employment Area will be designated and zoned in the Area Municipal official plan and zoning by-law in accordance with the policies in this Chapter. Consent applications to sever the lot along the boundary of the Rural Settlement Area or Rural Employment Area, so as to create a new *non-farm lot* outside the Rural Settlement Area or Rural Employment Area, will not be permitted.
- 6.G.5 Area Municipal official plans will delineate Rural Settlement Area and Rural Employment Area boundaries in a definitive manner.
- 6.G.6 Within Rural Settlement Areas and Rural Employment Areas, *development applications* may be approved provided that any new lots can be appropriately serviced by private wells and individual wastewater treatment systems.
- 6.G.7 The expansion of existing Rural Settlement Areas or Rural Employment Areas will not be permitted, except as provided for in Policies 6.B.4, 6.G.8 or 7.B.24.
- 6.G.8 Area Municipalities, in collaboration with the Region, may give consideration to permitting a minor expansion to a Rural Settlement Area or Rural Employment Area to accommodate the future employment, recreational or institutional needs of the Township. Any such expansions will require an amendment to the Area Municipal official plan and will only be considered as part of the *municipal comprehensive review* of the Area Municipal official plan where:
- (a) sufficient opportunities to accommodate the proposed employment, recreational or institutional use within existing Township Urban Areas, Rural Settlements or Rural Employment Areas are not available;
 - (b) the site is zoned for the specific use;
 - (c) within the Prime Agricultural Area designation:
 - i) the land does not comprise a *specialty crop area*;
 - ii) there are no reasonable alternatives that avoid the Prime Agricultural
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Area; and

- iii) there are no reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in the Prime Agricultural Area;
 - (d) the potential impacts on any surrounding agricultural operations are mitigated to the extent possible; and
 - (e) the minor expansion complies with all other applicable policies in this Plan.
- 6.G.9 The Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich may rationalize the boundaries of their respective Rural Settlement Areas, including the deletion of areas from one Rural Settlement Area designation and the addition of areas to another Rural Settlement Area designation, provided that the boundary rationalization:
- (a) only occurs at the time the Area Municipal official plan is first brought into conformity with this Plan;
 - (b) takes into consideration existing property configurations, patterns of existing land use, natural and constructed features, and will not extend or promote strip development;
 - (c) does not result in a net increase in developable land area;
 - (d) re-designates the area being deleted from the Rural Settlement Area as Prime Agricultural Area or Rural Areas, as appropriate, in the Area Municipal official plan;
 - (e) does not result in an expansion of a Rural Settlement Area within the Protected Countryside; and
 - (f) is minor and is in conformity with all other applicable policies in this Plan.
- 6.G.10 The designation of new Rural Settlement Areas or Rural Employment Areas will not be permitted.

6.H Municipal Park Use

- 6.H.1 Notwithstanding the Prime Agricultural Area, Regional Recharge Area and Protected Countryside designations and their location outside of the Countryside Line, the lands located at the southwest corner of Fischer-Hallman Road and Huron Roads may be used for the development of a municipal park (active or passive), athletic/community centre and associated facilities. The extent of the municipal park use will be determined through the development of a master plan for the lands by the City of Kitchener.