



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: January 17, 2011

SUBJECT: INFORMATION REPORT:
Application for Official Plan and Secondary Plan Amendment
Buttonville Airport Redevelopment Proposal
2833 16th Avenue, Markham
CON 3 PT LOTS 13-15
OP 11 115381

PREPARED BY: Anna Henriques, Senior Planner, extension 7922
REVIEWED BY: Ron Blake, Development Manager, West District

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report dated January 17, 2012, entitled, "Information Report: Application for Official Plan and Secondary Plan Amendment, Buttonville Airport Redevelopment, 2833 16th Avenue, CON 3 PT LOTS 13-15 (OP 11 115381)", be received.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of the Buttonville Airport redevelopment proposal, outline the general review process to be undertaken and identify preliminary issues and staff's preliminary feedback relative to the redevelopment proposal.

BACKGROUND:

Subject property & area context

Buttonville Airport (the "subject property") is generally bounded by 16th Avenue to the north, Highway 404 to the west, the Rouge Valley and Renfrew Drive to the east and Valleywood Drive to the south. The approximately 70 hectare (170 acre) property is relatively flat and contains very little vegetation. The Rouge River and the Beaver Creek run in close proximity to the northeast and southwest corners of the property.

The site is currently used as an airport which is surrounded by low density employment uses to the south, valleylands, employment and residential uses to the east, valleylands and employment/commercial uses to the north and Highway 404 to the west. Employment uses are located immediately west of Highway 404 in the neighbouring municipality of Richmond Hill.

Proposal

The proposed redevelopment of Buttonville Airport contemplates a high density mixed use commercial, employment, entertainment and residential district. The applicant's ultimate vision is to create a district that is pedestrian and transit oriented and offers a wide range of uses and amenities.

Application Deemed Complete

The subject Official Plan and Secondary Plan amendment applications were submitted to the Town on October 17, 2011 and deemed complete on November 1, 2011. The applications were deemed complete for the purpose of initiating the review process. It is recognized by Town staff and the applicant that a number of studies remain outstanding and are required to enable a comprehensive review process. It is anticipated that these studies will be submitted to the Town as the application review process progresses.

Official Plan and Zoning

The subject property is designated "INDUSTRIAL – Business Park Area" in the Markham Official Plan and is zoned "Transportation Zone" in By-law 304-87, as amended and "MC" (Industrial with Limited Commercial) in By-law 165-80, as amended.

Town of Markham Official Plan policies contemplate future redevelopment of the Buttonville Airport lands for industrial-commercial uses. Specifically, the Official Plan anticipates redevelopment of the Airport lands for "uses consistent with the Business Park Area category and that the uses on the lands will reflect an extension of the existing pattern of land use in the Browns Corners Planning District to the south."

The Region of York Official Plan policies contemplate redevelopment of the Buttonville Airport lands where "the significant majority of the subject lands shall be retained for business park use and the balance for a mix of urban uses." Furthermore, Region of York policies intend that re-use of the Airport site will generate a range of quality employment opportunities and expand upon the number of jobs planned for the site. This policy also states that specific details regarding the future use of these lands is to be determined through an implementing secondary plan process with the Town of Markham, in consultation with the Region of York.

The applicant is proposing to re-designate the property from "Industrial – Business Park" to "Commercial – Community Amenity Area" in the draft Official Plan amendment and Secondary Plan submitted with the application, to facilitate the proposed redevelopment plan. Both the proposed Official Plan amendment and proposed Secondary Plan amendment will require Region of York approval.

The Master Plan for the site is focused around a mixed use core, located in the centre of the development, and a large water feature, located along the western edge of the property and adjacent to Highway 404 (see Figure 1). The Master Plan provides for approximately 7.2 to 9.3 million square feet in gross floor area, potentially generating approximately 15,000-24,000 jobs and 6,000-7,200 residents. This represents a ratio of approximately 3 jobs per resident and a density of approximately 300-400 people and jobs per hectare (based on gross area). Residential unit numbers have not been provided thus far, however, approximately 600,000 – 750,000ft² (56,000 – 70,000m²) of residential area is proposed as part of Phase 1 with the majority of the balance of the residential area [approximately 2,600,000ft² – 2,850,000ft² (241,548m² – 264,774m²)] proposed for Phase 2. A total of 4 phases are proposed with Phase 3 and Phase 4 providing for the majority of office employment uses. The following table further outlines the development program for the entire Master Plan:

ENTIRE MASTER PLAN		PHASE 1
USE	RANGE (floor area)	RANGE (floor area)
Retail, Service Commercial, Restaurant & Entertainment	900,000 - 1,200,000 ft ² (83,613 – 111,484m ²)	400,000 – 500,000ft ² (37,000 – 7,000m ²)
Office, Major Institutional	2,600,000 – 4,400,000ft ² (241,548 – 408,773m ²)	450,000 – 850, 000ft ² (42,000 – 79, 000m ²)
Residential	3,200,000 – 3,600,000ft ² (297,290 – 334,451m ²)	600,000 – 750, 000ft ² (56,000 – 70,000m ²)
Hotel	450,000 – 600,000 ft ² (41,806 – 55,742m ²)	130,000 – 160,000ft ² (12,000 – 15,000m ²)
Convention	100,000ft ² (9,290m ²)	N/A
Total	7,200,000 – 9,900,000ft ² (674,000 – 920,000m ²)	1,600,000 – 2,300,000ft ² (147,000 – 210,000m ²)

The applicant anticipates that the development contemplated by the Master Plan will be built out by 2030. This would represent significantly more development on the subject lands than currently contemplated by the Regional and local municipal growth management strategies.

The concept was recently presented, by the applicant, to the Development Services Committee on November 22, 2011 and was generally well received by Committee members, subject to significant interest in the matter of transportation capacity. Following the presentation, DSC referred the matter back to staff, requesting a report on issues relating to transportation improvements and options, potential impacts of the closure of Buttonville Airport, and possible advancement of the Pickering Airport. This information will be provided to DSC as the application review process continues and once the information becomes available.

DISCUSSION

Comprehensive Town staff and agency review of Master Plan and draft Official Plan Amendment will be required

The applicant has indicated that they are targeting approval of the Official Plan and Secondary Plan amendments for April 2012. However, given the significance of the land use change and the complexity of technical issues involved (discussed further in this report), staff anticipate that a fulsome and comprehensive review process is warranted and that an April 2012 approval date is unrealistic.

Town staff and the applicant are in the process of finalizing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that the applicant has agreed to execute. The MOA sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Town and the applicant as well as the key steps in the proposed review process. Briefly, these include:

- Agreement to undertake a collaborative working arrangement between Town, agencies and applicant;

- Establishment of a working group, consisting of representatives from Town staff, agencies and the applicant's consulting team, to meet monthly to discuss and review the application and technical studies;
- Agreement by the applicant to fund a Town staff project manager, on an annual basis, renewable on the consent of both parties;
- Agreement by the applicant to fund peer review of technical studies; and,
- Agreement by applicant to assist in researching similar developments in other jurisdictions.

In addition, the MOA identifies key technical studies that will be required during the course of the review of the application, including:

- A Planning Justification Report that considers the following:
 - i. An analysis of the congruence of the proposed development with the Provincial Growth Plan, Provincial Policy Statement & Regional Official Plan regarding anticipated number of jobs by major employment type and how the anticipated profile will contribute to the Town's established employment forecasts; and,
 - ii. Proposed land use mix and how it relates to provincial, municipal, and regional policies and objectives;
 - iii. An analysis of how the Master Plan will impact the Town's recommended intensification strategy including key intensification areas such as Langstaff Gateway and Markham Centre;
- An environmental analysis study identifying opportunities, constraints and strategies for delivering stormwater, sanitary and water infrastructure, in addition to an analysis of current environmental conditions that warrant protection, as well as an analysis of the feasibility of the proposed water feature on the west side of the development;
- Community amenity infrastructure analysis;
- Market analysis demonstrating the need for proposed residential, employment and retail floor areas, including an analysis of how the proposed development will impact existing and future markets in the Town;
- An analysis of the economic implications to the Town with the closing of Buttonville Airport and redevelopment of the site;
- A comprehensive development phasing strategy addressing the impact on the provision and phasing of area community services such as schools, public & private recreation facilities, cultural facilities, etc., based on an assessment of future needs; and,
- A detailed and comprehensive Transportation Impact Study that considers:
 - i. regional transportation impacts from anticipated intensification (on the subject property and off, as a result of

potential additional development from the release of airport height restrictions);

- ii. opportunities to enhance accessibility and linkages to existing and future transit infrastructure;
- iii. road pattern that is transit supportive and designed for integration with surrounding road patterns; and,
- iv. Traffic Demand Management (TDM) strategies

In addition to the above, the Region of York has indicated to Town staff that the following additional information is required, consistent with Region of York Official Plan policies:

1. A Regional impact analysis (required for new retail facilities in excess of 30,000 gross leasable square metres) addressing the following:
 - a. transportation requirements;
 - b. the impact on existing and approved future retail facilities;
 - c. pedestrian, cycling and transit access to the facilities; and,
 - d. the manner in which the proposal is supportive of the centres and corridors policies of the Region of York Official Plan.
2. An economic/fiscal impact analysis, to be coordinated between the Region and local municipalities, boards and agencies and shall include but not be limited to:
 - a. an assessment of Regional service costs including transportation; water, wastewater, police, community and health services;
 - b. the impact on operating capital budget and the financing implications related to the impact on tax levy, user rates and development charges; and,
 - c. the ability to financially and technically provide for the required servicing infrastructure in order to allow the development to proceed on a timely basis.

Working Group Meetings to be scheduled to discuss issues and concerns

A series of regular working group meetings will be scheduled in the coming weeks and months to thoroughly discuss issues and concerns while also collaboratively working on finding solutions and alternatives. The Working Group will consist of Town staff, the Region of York, the applicant and interested public agencies. It is anticipated that the Working Group will review information and studies to identify additional information or analysis required for moving forward with the approval process. Staff anticipate that input from the Working Group and additional information to be provided (studies) will likely necessitate refinements to the Master Plan.

The first Working Group meeting was held on November 22, 2011, to discuss transportation issues and opportunities. It is anticipated that additional Working Group meetings will be required to further discuss transportation and other matters, as outlined above.

Preliminary Issues & Concerns

At the time of application submission, a Master Plan (Vision), Transportation Strategy and Sustainable Servicing Strategy were submitted as supporting documents. A Noise Impact Study was submitted to the Town, to be peer reviewed, shortly after application submission.

It should be noted that the concept was developed without any substantive consultation with staff relative to land use, design concept or the integration of the concept into the urban context of the area. This is not typical for a project of this scale and as a result key strategic community opportunities and impacts may have not have been fully considered or explored. On this basis, staff suggest that the initial Urban Design peer review focus on validating the overall design concept and Master Plan.

Based on an initial review of the application submission, staff have identified some preliminary issues and concerns associated with the proposal. These include:

- Transportation impacts from the proposed development and infrastructure improvements required;
- Noise impacts from Highway 404 and their implications on the proposed Master Plan;
- Feasibility and implications of the proposed water feature;
- Implications of the proposed scale of development and mix of uses on the Town's and the Region's intensification, growth management and development phasing strategies;
- Economic impacts of the proposed development and closure of the Buttonville Airport;
- Impacts on community infrastructure and amenities, including schools, open space and recreation facilities;
- Private amenities, public realm elements and relationship to the adjacent valley systems; and,
- Urban design considerations and how these will affect the proposed Master Plan layout.

As noted above, a number of supporting studies have been requested to further evaluate and address these matters.

These issues, and other issues that may be identified during the review process, will be addressed through the technical studies and the review process outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

The scale of this project results in a very significant investment by a major private sector developer into the community, which is commendable and which has broader implications that must be considered. This investment will be focused on providing land uses, building space and amenities that are essentially private in nature. The project will also require a very significant investment in public infrastructure (roads, open spaces, transit solutions, water/sewer systems, etc.) by both the investor and public agencies (Town, Region & Province). As such, it is imperative to quantify the amount of private and public sector investment that will be required to support this development and to understand how this investment will relate to other projects and

priorities. In addition, Markham Council and the Region of York must validate and be assured that consideration of this proposal will not undermine the development and phasing strategies associated with other growth centres in the Town and Region. Certainly, the project as proposed cannot be accommodated within the existing servicing & transportation limits, and therefore, a key element is to determine to what extent development can be permitted in the area, within the limits of existing and planned infrastructure. It is likely that the approach to phasing will be derivative of available transportation and servicing capacities. It is also critical to ensure that each phase of the project remains focused on the primary intended employment lands function and that the proper linkages and conditions are put in place to regulate permitted land uses.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Redevelopment of Buttonville Airport will be considered within the context of the Town's Strategic Priorities: Growth Management; Transportation/Transit; Environment; Municipal Services; Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library Master Plan and Public Safety; and Diversity.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

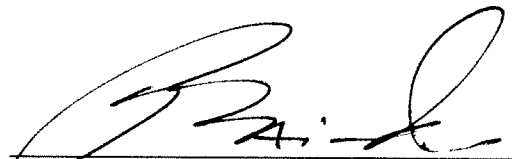
This application has been circulated to all relevant departments and agencies. Comments received will be considered as part of the Secondary Plan review process.

RECOMMENDED

BY:



Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Director, Planning & Urban Design



Jim Baird, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1 – Proposed Buttonville Master Plan

