



TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH
ENGINEERING AND PLANNING SERVICES

REPORT: E94-2011

MEETING DATE: December 13/11

TITLE: Peer Review of Visual Impact Assessment:
Proposed Jigs Hollow Gravel Pit

MEETING TIME: 6:00 p.m.

FILE ID:

LOCATION: Council Chambers
24 Church Street West, Elmira

PREPARED BY: Dan Kennaley

REVIEWED BY: SMT

DATE REVIEWED BY MANAGEMENT TEAM: December 7, 2011

C.A.O.: _____ (signature not required if reviewed by SMT)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive Report E94-2011 for information and direct Township Staff to request that the applicant for the proposed Jigs Hollow Gravel Pit address the visual impact issues identified in the peer review dated November 2011 completed by Walker, Nott, Dragicevic Associates Limited.

BACKGROUND

On November 23, 2010 Council approved in principle a zone change application for the proposed Jigs Hollow gravel pit subject to nine conditions, including conditions requiring a maximum 15 year period of operation and that the maximum depth of extraction be identified in the zoning by-law. The nine conditions needed to be satisfied before Council would be prepared to pass a zoning by-law amendment for the proposed gravel pit.

On April 19, 2011 Council heard delegations from several members of the public expressing concerns with visual impact from the proposed Jigs Hollow gravel pit. As a result of these delegations, Council directed staff to obtain a peer review of the visual impact assessment that had been undertaken by the applicant's consultants.

On May 24, 2011, Council was provided with a memorandum from Township Staff which noted that Staff had concluded, in recommending the proposed pit for approval in principle, that no unacceptable visual impacts would result from the proposed pit. The memo advised that:

“staff did not rely solely on the visual impact information provided by the applicant, but went on to check that information with Staff's own assessment of visual impact that included site visits and photographs of the views to the proposed pit”.

Notwithstanding the memorandum from Township Staff, Council did not alter their direction to staff to obtain a peer review.

On July 27, 2011, the applicant appealed the gravel pit application to the Ontario Municipal Board. An OMB pre-hearing conference is scheduled for February 16, 2012, and a tentative hearing has been scheduled for May 14-25, 2012.

COMMENTS

Township Staff have obtained a peer review dated November 2011 from Walker, Nott, Dragicevic Associates Limited which is attached as Appendix "A". The peer review evaluated both the initial visual impact assessment as well as the supplementary information submitted by the applicant's consultants. The supplementary information was submitted to address initial questions and concerns raised by Township Staff's review of the initial visual impact assessment.

In summary, the November 2011 peer review report identifies a number of information gaps and other issues concerning the visual impact of the proposed gravel pit. The peer review report says:

"The area of consideration under Section 10 "Visual Impacts" has been limited to views from residences near the Subject Property, in particular on Peel Street, and from the Grand River.

As part of our review of the IBI analysis we have identified a viewshed area that includes other potentially surrounding and nearby sensitive receptors such as residential dwellings found to the southwest, nor, east and south of the Subject Property; adjacent roads such as Peel Street and Jigs Hollow Road; and significant natural and cultural features related to the overall character of the area such as The Grand Valley Trail, the Region of Waterloo Historic Driving Tour Route and the Winterbourne Bridge".

More specifically, the peer review report indicates:

- 1) the three additional areas of the Grand Valley Trail, the Historic Driving Tour Route and the Winterbourne Bridge should be assessed;
- 2) the height and elevation of stockpiles of all extraction and recyclable materials and associated equipment should be incorporated into the analysis of significant views;
- 3) analysis should be provided for the initial excavation which will occur at an approximate elevation of between 320 and 322 metres;
- 4) the IBI Group's analysis did not provide an assessment of views from 1127 Jigs Hollow Road and these views should be assessed to determine if additional mitigative measures are required;
- 5) additional assessment of the views from 1129 Jigs Hollow Road is required including a section drawing;
- 6) the long views from residences on Sunset Drive have not been assessed by the applicant and the potential visual impacts of the extraction area on these residences should also be addressed;

- 7) there was no assessment of the visual impacts on surrounding properties related to the location of the weigh scale and fuel storage facilities now located at the entrance to the property on Jigs Hollow Road and this further assessment is required;
- 8) further information should be provided regarding the nature of the vegetation providing visual screening in front of the berm proposed on Peel Street and how this vegetation will be maintained for the duration of the pit operation;
- 9) no information was provided to the risk associated with mitigation. Additional consideration must be incorporated in this area; and
- 10) visual impact associated with truck traffic on the haul route needs to be addressed.

With regard to views from the Winterbourne Bridge, (also known as the Peel Street Bridge) and the long views from the residences on Sunset Drive, these are both matters where Township Staff undertook our own investigations in coming to the conclusion that there would be no unacceptable visual impacts. On the other hand, Township Staff were not aware of the location of the Historic Driving Tour when Staff recommended the Jigs Hollow gravel pit in principle. Accordingly, Township Staff does endorse, in particular, the need for visual impacts on the Historic Driving Tour Route to be assessed. Similarly, since the relocation of the internal haul road and the weigh scale and fuel storage facilities occurred during the processing of the gravel pit application, these facilities were not assessed by the applicant's consultants for visual impact. Accordingly, Township Staff also endorses the need for the visual impact of the haul road, weigh scale and fuel storage facilities

CONCLUSION

In light of the information gaps and other issues raised by the visual impact peer review report, it is recommended that the applicant be given an opportunity to address these information gaps and issues prior to Council taking a final position in the context of the up-coming OMB proceedings.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

OTHER DEPARTMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Appendix "A" – Walker, Nott, Dragicevic Associates Limited, Peer Review of Visual Impact Assessment, 125 Peel Street – Jigs Hollow Pit, November 2011.