

GDA comments on Northeast Pickering Secondary Plan

Submitted to: City of Pickering c/o clerks@pickering.ca; pwirch@pickering.ca; zkhan@pickering.ca

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Submitted by: Green Durham Association
c/o David Morley, 2675 Concession 9, Pickering ON, L1Y 1A2
info@greendurham.ca; davidmorley55@gmail.com

GDA has for many years strongly opposed development in Northeast Pickering. Quite apart from the need to protect prime food land and natural areas in Northeast Pickering, we also believed and continue to believe that the planned growth during the planning period 2021-2051 could **all** be accommodated within the existing Seaton and South Pickering Urban Areas. Our opposition was clearly stated in our extensive 2023 submission to Envision Durham.

However, before commenting on urban development **within** Northeast Pickering, we have the following questions we believe the City of Pickering needs to answer regarding urban development within Seaton and the South Pickering urban area. We believe these issues significantly impact the phasing of development within Northeast Pickering, the land needed to accommodate growth until 2051 (the end of the prescribed planning period), and the land available to support growth beyond 2051.

1 Population/jobs estimates within Seaton and South Pickering Urban Areas

(a) Seaton Buildout: The plan for Seaton was roughly 7000 acres in size and called for creating a compact community accommodating 70,000 residents and 35,000 jobs, while saving more than half that acreage as greenspace. GDA was highly involved with the creation of the Seaton plan.

We understand it is being assumed that Seaton will not be fully built out even by 2051. However, if instead Seaton **was** fully built out by 2051, by how much would that reduce residential and job requirements for Northeast Pickering before 2051? And if Seaton is not planned to be fully built out by 2051, Pickering needs to explain why it makes more sense for Pickering's planners and their taxpaying citizens to support more buildout in Northeast Pickering **before** 2051 than would be required if Seaton were fully built out by 2051.

(b) Virtually all planners believe that it is essential to provide cheaper housing in the GTA, and in also in stating that the best way to do this is to promote densification within the existing urban area close to jobs and amenities and **within** single family residential areas. Pickering's current forecast for Northeastern Pickering is premised on **no additional densification taking place** within the south Pickering urban areas **over the entire next 25 years to 2051**, than was contemplated in the Envision

Durham exercise 2 years ago. **Is this a reasonable assumption for Pickering its plan for Northeast Pickering to make?**

(c) Making the phasing and size of the urban area expansion in Northeast Pickering even more in need of review, two years ago, after the Envision Durham public exercise was completed, Durham Region, after considering a proposal put forward by the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), approved an urban area expansion in Northeast Pickering to meet community land needs of 2500 hectares or 6177 acres. This proposal had **not** been one of the proposals presented to the public as part of the Envision Durham planning exercise and was **very much higher** than the community land need the Planning Commissioner recommended. Therefore, the size of the Northeast Pickering Urban Area approved by the Province assumed a housing and population density that was very much lower than the Region’s planning commissioner had recommended and lower than was contemplated in Envision Durham.

However, after approval, the Northeast Pickering Plan **now** indicates that it has considered a number of land use concepts and states “The land use concepts considered the full build-out of Northeastern Pickering with a range of densities consistent with those used in Seaton, which contemplated a higher population than was contemplated in Envision Durham. The consulting team was directed to use the higher population estimate as the basis for planning Northeast Pickering, This population “**would likely be achieved post 2051**” (our highlighting).

Therefore, although the size of the area approved for urban expansion was based on a lower population density than contemplated by Envision Durham, given Northeast Pickering is **now** planning to pursue much higher densities inevitably creates a situation where **far more land** has been set aside for urban development in Northeast Pickering than will be needed by 2051. It would be interesting to know whether the Northeast Pickering Plan now requires higher densities than are presently required in many areas of South Pickering. We noted in our 2023 submission that if the density requirement in the pre-2020 Provincial Growth Plan had still been in place in 2023, no expansion of the urban area into Northeast Pickering would have been allowed. Envision Durham was only able to recommend **any** urban area expansion in 2023 because the pre-2020 Growth Plan standards had been very significantly reduced.

Furthermore, we feel that that growth in Northeast Pickering, far from sewer and supporting services will in all likelihood incur more expense on Pickering taxpayers. **If** Seaton were completely built out by 2051 if not well before, and **if** more intensification in South Pickering was also assumed, beginning well before 2051 and accommodating considerably more housing and population than what was assumed by Envision Durham in 2023, we assume this should also be considered in phasing development in the Northeast Pickering Secondary Plan.

2 Links to the North, west and south of the Northeast Pickering Plan Area that would influence development within the Northeast Pickering Plan area itself

(a) Establish Nature and Trail corridor Links between the Uxbridge Provincial Urban Park and the Northeast Pickering Urban Area. TRCA owned land which we expect will become part of the Provincial Park extends south into Pickering within a mile and a half north of Concession 8, the northern

boundary of the Northeastern Pickering Development area. In addition, a largely unopened Pickering road allowance, Sideline 8 of Pickering, extends south from the Town line on the west side of the TRCA land referenced and further south to Concession 8 of Pickering, creating an ideal potential connection between the Provincial Park and the Northeast Pickering Development area, a connection which we believe would substantially benefit the Northeast Pickering Development Area as well as other areas of Pickering.

(b) Establish Nature and Trail Corridor links west from Claremont Conservation Area and the northwest portion of the North Pickering Urban Area to the Federally owned former Airport lands which we anticipate will largely and or completely soon be transferred to Parks Canada or to the Rouge National Urban Park itself. Concession 8 of Pickering to the west of Sideline 16 of Pickering is unopened as it crosses Mitchell Creek and links to the Federal lands which extend well east of the Brock Road on the south side of Concession 8. Creating a robust nature/trail corridor west from the Claremont Conservation Area and the Northeast Pickering Urban Area to the Federal Lands and the Mitchell creek corridor which surround Claremont to the south and west would significantly benefit the Northeastern Pickering Urban Area as well as other communities in Pickering such as Claremont.

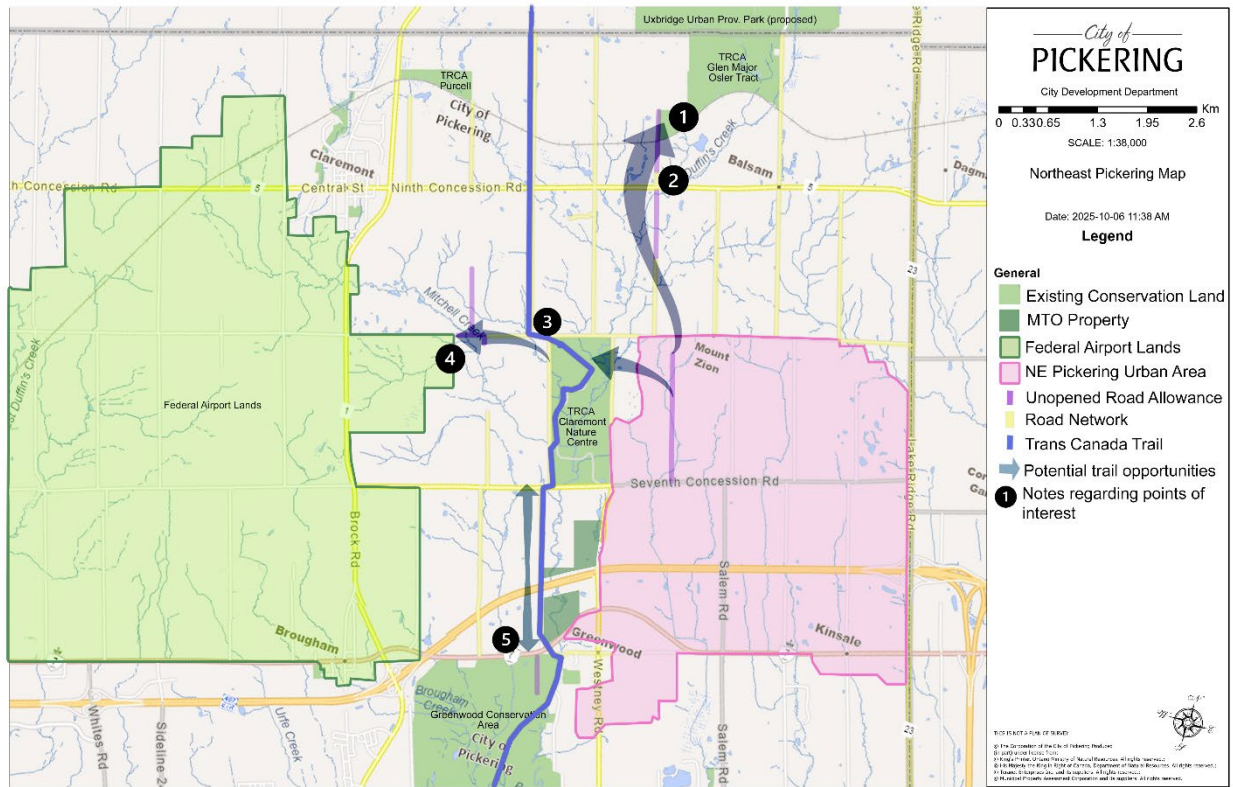
(c) Create and strengthen trail links west from the Northeast Pickering Urban Area to the Claremont Conservation Area, and south along the Paddock Road underpass of the 407 to the hamlet of Greenwood and the Greenwood Conservation Area.

Working with Pickering, the TRCA should create a new Management Plan for the Claremont Conservation Area given the new reality that the airport has been cancelled; Federal Park lands will be much closer to its western boundary; and the newly created Northeast Pickering Urban Area will now abut parts of its eastern boundary.

More than 20 years ago the GDA's sister organization Durham Conservation Association and now merged with the GDA, worked closely with Uxbridge Township, the TRCA and others in the creation of an almost completely off-road corridor for the Trans Canada Trail south through Uxbridge. Durham Conservation Association subsequently received a Trillium grant to recommend a TCT route further south through Pickering. In consultation with Pickering the route chosen was south along Sideline 12 of Pickering; east on Concession 8 to Sideline 12 and the Claremont Conservation Area; and south along Paddock Road to Greenwood and the Greenwood Conservation Area.

Other properties we explored at this time have since been acquired by Ministry of Transportation. We believe that a trail link which heads north from Greenwood, under Highway 407, accessing the western edge of this MTO property as it would directly link to the Northeast Pickering Urban Area should be carefully investigated. And since the Greenwood Conservation Area abuts the Seaton lands and other conservation lands to the west, creating and improving the east-west connections between these areas would greatly benefit Pickering. We note that traffic lights would be needed at the intersection of busy Highway 7.

Possible Greenspace and Trail Connections NE Pickering



- 1 TRCA-owned Osler Tract is connected to the new Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park. Unopened portions of Sideline 8 could connect the emerging urban area in NEP to UUPP. Pickering would need to formally request that Osler Tract be transferred to UUPP.
- 2 Unopened road allowance continues south of Concession 9 directly into the proposed urban area.
- 3 The TransCanada Trail travels from the UUPP (and beyond) through TRCA-owned Claremont Conservation Area and south. CCA currently managed in partnership with Durham District School Board as an outdoor centre. A new management plan could provide additional public trail opportunities.
- 4 The 8th Concession ends at Mitchell Creek and could provide a connection to the Federal lands (Rouge National Urban Park)
- 5 Paddock Road runs south from Concession 7 close to Claremont Conservation Area. It ends at the 407 but a trail under the highway connects it to Paddock Road on the south side of Highway 407.

*Note that the proposed plan as presented in the Statutory Meeting materials does not meet the minimum parkland target as recommended by City of Pickering for new developments.

3 Comments on lands within the Northeast Pickering Plan area

(a) With respect to the connections mentioned above to the north, west and south: It would be important within the Plan Area to create a nature trail corridor south from Sideline 8 and Concession 8. As this corridor heads south between Concessions 7 and 8, it will be important also to create at least one and possibly 2 attractive connections west to Claremont Conservation Area and not just a walking/biking lane right beside a road. The Northeast Pickering Plan mentions the shortfall of parkland and we support the need to address this shortfall. Perhaps some of that parkland could be created along the trail/nature corridors mentioned.

(b) Within the development area it is particularly important to understand how the development will be phased. The Northeast Pickering Development Plan breaks the area into 8 planning areas (22-39), with 22 and 23 containing virtually all the lands between Concessions 7 and 8.

We feel it is essential to develop the southernmost planning areas as fully as possible first. For example, if as we believe it will become clear in the next 10-15 years that the population and job estimates for 2051 can be easily accommodated in areas south of Concession 7, we hope the Plan would envisage leaving the area north of Concession 7, of very scenic prime farmland at the northern end of the Carruthers and Lynde Creek watersheds almost completely untouched. And if not why not? And now that various development interests own land in different places that have now been designated as an urban area, how limited is Pickering in being able to delay or even prohibit development on some of these lands?

The Plan also references a new proposed arterial road running from Lakeridge Road to Westney Road midway between Concessions 7 and 8, which connects to two north-south arterial roads between Concessions 7 and 8. Are we right to assume these will only be built after sufficient development has occurred in Northeast Pickering to justify building them?

We assume that unfortunately, regardless of how much additional development occurs in Seaton and the southern urban areas and of how much land is left in Northeast Pickering after all growth to 2051 has been accommodated, there is now no practical way of reducing the size of the Northeast Pickering Urban Area. Therefore, phasing development and ensuring communities are largely if not completely built out before extending development into other communities becomes a critical priority. We need to much better understand the approach being taken in Northeast Pickering. We look forward to seeing these questions addressed in the Recommendation Report to the Planning & Development Committee regarding this application.