

Technical Memorandum

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To: Jon Whyte, Phelps Homes Ltd.
From: Anne McDonald
Date: January 24, 2025
Re: Woodland Assessment
132 College Street, Smithville
West Lincoln, Ontario
Project No.: 2500107

GEI Consultants Canada was retained by Phelps Homes Ltd. to review the conditions of an area that has been mapped as Other Woodland by the Region of Niagara, within a remnant naturalized area that occurs along the eastern part of the property located at 132 College Street in the Township of West Lincoln (herein referred to as the Subject Lands).

The Subject Lands are located within the Smithville urban area boundary and are the former location of College Street Public School. The Subject Lands have been identified as a key site for redevelopment within the Township of West Lincoln with the passing of OPA 54 in 2020, which re-designated the lands from institutional to high density residential. The site-specific provisions require a minimum density of 40 units per hectare.

This Technical Memorandum will provide an assessment of the area mapped as Other Woodland, to determine whether it meets Regional Official Plan criteria.

Existing Conditions

A small remnant natural area at the rear of the lot is located behind the former College Street School yard and is delineated by a chain link fence. The natural area extends onto the adjacent municipally maintained cemetery and abuts a new residential development to the east.

The Region of Niagara Natural Environment System (NES) mapping has identified the area as 'Other Woodland', defined in Schedule L of the Regional Official Plan (ROP 2022) as "*all terrestrial treed vegetation communities where the percent tree cover is >25 per cent*". Other woodlands do not include woodlands that meet the criteria as Significant Woodlands.

In addition to having a minimum 25 percent tree cover, Other Woodlands must be a minimum 0.3ha in size, or be any size abutting a Significant Woodland, wetland, or permanent stream. The current mapped extent of the woodland is 0.301 hectares according to the Regional NES online mapping.

In accordance with ROP (2022) Sections 3.1.9.5 and 3.1.9.7, development within or adjacent to Other Woodlands must demonstrate no negative impact to the feature or its functions through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS). Section 3.1.9.9 of the ROP (2022) mandates ecologically

appropriate buffers from natural heritage features and areas, the width of which is to be determined through an EIS.

On December 12, 2024, GEI staff visited the site to review existing conditions and confirm the accuracy of the Regional NES feature mapping. Vegetation clearing has previously occurred in the north portion of the Regionally mapped extent of the woodland, reducing the overall size of the feature below 0.3ha. Additionally, the woodland shows heavy impacts by Emerald Ash Borer which has caused significant dieback and loss of canopy tree cover within the Subject Lands. Abundant deadfall visible within the aerial imagery of the site was confirmed on the ground. The few remaining mature trees are primarily located at the southern limit of the property and border the adjacent cemetery site. The approximate location of the woodland dripline based on canopy extent is shown in the attached **Figure 1**.

Woodland Assessment

Within the Subject Lands, the canopy of the remnant woodland feature does not meet the 25 percent tree cover threshold to meet designation as an Other Woodland. A small cluster of trees located immediately south/east of the Subject Lands have retained canopy cover > 25%. **Table 1** assesses this feature based on the criteria for both Significant Woodlands and Other Woodlands as they are defined in Schedule L of the ROP (2022).

Table 1. Assessment of Feature Significance

Feature Function	Criteria	Criteria Satisfied?
Canopy Cover	>60 percent	No
	>25 percent	Yes
Size	2 hectares	No
	1 hectare	No
	0.5 hectares	No
	0.3 hectares	No
	<0.3 hectares	Yes (<0.1ha)
Adjacent Features	Significant Wetland	No
	Permanent Watercourse	No
	Significant Woodland	No

The woodland as it was mapped within the Regional Official Plan is 0.301 ha, which is the minimum size criteria for a treed vegetation community to be designated as an Other Woodland feature. Given the extent of decline within this feature, it would be best described as a Cultural Woodland Community. Based on the current limits of live tree canopy exceeding 25% canopy cover, the woodland is now less than 0.1 ha in size. As such, the feature is no longer comprised of a vegetation community that could be considered a significant woodland, and is below the size threshold to be identified as an Other Woodland based on size alone.

A woodland of any size may be considered Other Woodland if it abuts other important features such as a wetland, permanent watercourse, or Significant Woodland. The remnant woodlot associated with the Subject Lands is an isolated treed community, surrounded by residential development and there are no

other natural features present. Accordingly, the remnant woodland does not satisfy Other Woodland criteria, and the policies of Section 3.1.9.5 and 3.1.9.7 of the ROP (2022) will not apply to the feature.

Conclusion

Based on GEI's assessment of the remnant woodland located at 132 College Street in Smithville, the feature will not be subject to the natural heritage policies of the 2022 ROP and does not represent a constraint to development.

It is anticipated that a Tree Preservation Plan will be required as a condition of future development approvals that would provide any required protection measures or compensation requirements for remnant trees.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the undersigned.

Yours truly,
GEI Consultants



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Attachment: Figure 1



- Subject Lands
- Road
- Assessment Parcels (Niagara Region)
- Wooded Area (LIO)
- Other Woodlands (Niagara OP Draft)
- Approximate Woodland Boundary (identified in field by GEI)

Reference(s):

1. Coordinate System: NAD 1983 CSRS UTM Zone 17N.
2. Base features produced under license with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry © King's Printer for Ontario, 2025, © Niagara Region, 2025.
3. Orthoimagery © First Base Solutions, 2025. Imagery taken in 2023.

Figure 1
Other Woodland Mapping

Project Name:
N/A (For Client Review)

Client Name:
Phelps Homes Ltd.
Smithville, Ontario

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