

March 25, 2008

The Honourable Jim Watson
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Honourable John Gerretsen
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Honourable Leona Dombrowsky
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Dear Ministers:

An application has been submitted under the Ministry of Natural Resources; Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) for a **Banner Road Pit** Category 1 “Class A” Pit Below Water on property located at Part of Lot 20, Concession 1, Township of Zorra in the County of Oxford. Further, the applicant is requesting an Official Plan Amendment and zone change. Approximately half of this property is currently designated/zoned; Future Development for the Village of Thamesford. The application fails to address the secondary planning end use of the property after rehabilitation.

This proposal is for a 36.9 hectare site of which 31.9 hectares are proposed to be extracted. The rehabilitation plans currently laid out in the application suggest that once extraction is complete, the 31.9 hectares will be a small lake with approximately 100 foot set back from the boundaries. This would be located west of the Banner Road, an ongoing new residential development (Thames Springs subdivision) is directly east (across the Banner Road) of this proposed pit application. Further, the summary statement makes no mention of a Separate Elementary School (St. Joseph’s) less than 400 metres from proposed pit where prevailing winds would blow from the south-west direction. **This highlights health and safety concerns - noise and dust - for families, especially children and seniors, in the area.**

Oxford County Official Plan was developed over time by provincial, county, township and most importantly public input. The logical development as noted in Schedule “Z-2” Land Use Plan of the Village of Thamesford is to the west of Banner Road. Further, rural municipalities rely on residential development for their economic growth, attracting doctors, businesses and retaining existing businesses, as well keeping taxes down for the remaining property owners in the Township. If the application goes forward as proposed **it will all but destroy growth potential for the Village of Thamesford for at least 10 years (the suggested minimum time frame in the pit application).**

The Summary Report makes small mention of the municipal water supplies being 1300 metres and 2300 metres respectfully states “**As a result, operation of the proposed gravel pit is not anticipated to impact the existing groundwater supply for the community of Thamesford.**” This is not good enough – Thamesford residents want 100% assurance that groundwater supplies will not be affected either in the short or longer term. Further, this application requests a below water table extraction. This **should not** be considered under any circumstance.

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There are already an uncommonly high number of existing pits surrounding the Village of Thamesford. A comprehensive **cumulative impact study** must be undertaken before considering this or any future pit applications in close proximity to the Village of Thamesford.

I strongly object to this application on the following points:

Firstly, this application should be DENIED as it does not support the intent for Growth for the Village of Thamesford under the County of Oxford Official Plan and Building Strong Community under the Provincial Policy Statement. Details on secondary end use are completely lacking in this application. The final intent after rehabilitation is absent from this application and, therefore, an Official Plan Amendment should not be permitted.

Secondly, the Ministry of Natural Resources needs to investigate the effectiveness of current licensing procedures and mandatory studies required as part of the application process for aggregate extraction. Further, that the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) be opened and amended to include a mandatory component for “cumulative” environmental and social impact studies for all applications where multiple pits are operating in close proximity to a serviced village.

Thirdly, Section 66 (1) of the ARA prohibits the use of municipal by-law to regulate subject matter covered by the Act, the regulations or the provisions of a license or site plan. There is health evidence that the parameters on noise and dust set in the ARA are not sufficient for children, seniors and those with respiratory health issues. I would strongly urge the Ministries of Natural Resources and Ministry of the Environment to reassess these parameters.

I thank you for your prompt attention for this time sensitive matter.

Respectfully submitted,

cc. Ernie Hardeman MPP Oxford
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cc. Paul Holbrough Warden Oxford
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cc. Margaret Lupton Mayor Township of Zorra
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cc. Jeff Brown Councillor Village of Thamesford
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