

The sections that follow provide an overview of the five technical studies.

Environmental Impact Study

The Environmental Impact Study (EIS) is intended to provide a review of the applicable environmental policy context, a characterization and evaluation of existing conditions including biophysical resources, hydrogeology, hydrology, geomorphology and natural heritage.

The EIS will identify constraints and opportunities for development and propose the limits of a natural heritage system. The EIS will also assess potential impacts of development and mitigation techniques, as well as outline a monitoring program.

Two drafts of the EIS have been reviewed to date and comments provided by staff, the peer reviewer and agency staff indicate there are still matters outstanding. These matters generally include the adequacy of some buffers to protect features or species; a more detailed screening for restoration and enhancement opportunities; incomplete characterization of the water balance in terms of groundwater and surface water interactions; and an incomplete characterization of stream components and resulting stream dynamics.

However, for purposes of developing the draft preferred plan and assigning land uses founded on the limits of a natural heritage system through the Merton Lands, sufficient threshold information has been provided in the EIS.

Prior to any development on the Merton lands, the draft policy framework in the OPA provides for completing the EIS through the development process in accordance with the study Terms of Reference and to the satisfaction of the town and its agency partners.

Area Servicing Plan and Functional Servicing Study

The Area Servicing Plan (ASP) and Functional Servicing Study (FSS) address the provision of municipal services and the timing of installations of these services. Municipal services include water, wastewater and stormwater management. Each of these aspects is intended to be studied in terms of existing systems and conditions as well as any system proposed to future development.

To date, the landowner group has submitted two drafts of the ASP/FSS. Comments provided by staff, the peer reviewer and agency staff indicate there are still matters outstanding. These matters include inconsistent use of background and baseline data, incomplete characterization of components of the study areas and the water balance, partial application of appropriate methods of calculation, only basic mitigation approaches proposed that are possibly inadequate and generally an unfinished discussion and justification for the strategies proposed.

For purposes of assigning land use in the draft preferred plan, enough information has been provided. Essentially the lands can be serviced, however the manner in which this is done and when has yet to be demonstrated in this technical study.

Revised ASP and FSS reports addressing the comments and providing appropriate levels of detail will be required as part of the development process.

Transportation Study

The Transportation Study, also known as a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) is intended to provide an understanding of the transportation issues associated with the development of the Merton lands. This includes adjacent and nearby transportation system improvements that may be required to maintain a satisfactory, level of service, acceptable safety levels and appropriate access provisions.

To date, two drafts of the TIS have been received that studied the original draft options. Comments provided by staff, the peer reviewer and agency staff indicate there are still matters outstanding. A revised TIS is required that addresses the outstanding comments and that evaluates the current draft preferred plan.

The draft preferred plan represents a reduced level of development compared to the initial draft options and should not generate the same level of impact outlined in the draft TIS.

Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment

The objective of the Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment is to determine whether any part of the Merton Lands has the potential for archeological resources. That determination forms the basis for recommendations around which parts of the Study area, if any, will require a Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment as part of the development process.

This study was submitted for the first time in December 2013 and was peer reviewed by AMEC. Overall, the report was found to be adequately prepared and in compliance with the Province's standard for this type of work. There was one revision requested by the peer reviewer.

The study concluded that all lands within the Merton Planning Study would be subjected to a Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment prior to any development. The exception to this would be any lands that had already been subjected to a Stage 2.

Noise and Odour Studies

These studies are intended to provide an understanding of the impacts of noise and odour from the surroundings on the proposed development area, and the impacts of noise and odour from new proposed uses within the study area.

Two drafts of these studies have been submitted and reviewed. Comments provided by staff, the peer reviewer and agency staff indicate there are still matters outstanding.

These matters relate to incomplete characterization of noise and odour sources in terms of impact modeling and facility classification. As well, some mitigation methods as presented are pretty basic and may not be acceptable from an implementation perspective.

As with other outstanding matters, revised noise and odour studies addressing all comments will be required as part of the development process.