

**Bolton Planning Commission's Written Report
Regarding the Proposed 2017 Bolton Town Plan
Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4384(c)**

Approved by the Planning Commission: January 9, 2017
*Amended following the Planning Commission Public Hearing:
Submitted to the Selectboard:*

Section 4302 Consistency Statement

This plan is fully consistent with the goals established in 24 VSA §4302, as detailed in the section labeled "24 VSA § 4302 Required Goals" below.

Altered Designation of Land Use

1. The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use.

The 2017 Bolton Town Plan proposes amending land use in the town in four ways, all of which can be seen on Map 12 (Proposed Land Use):

- i. A 30-acre lot at the intersection of Honey Hollow and Duxbury Road has been reclassified from the Conservation District to the Residential 1 District. The lot was previously owned by the State of Vermont, but has since been purchased by a private owner. Except for a small building envelope, the lot has a conservation easement that restricts all development besides forest management. The reclassification allows for the easier development of accessory structures in the building envelope, but does not create any additional potential for new primary structures or allow any development on the rest of the lot.
- ii. Several lots without any road frontage or existing access, which were previously part of the Rural I or Rural II District, are being examined for reclassification as part of the Forest District. No changes have been made to such lots that are already part of the Forest District or the Conservation District. Given their current lack of access, development potential on these lots was extremely limited and therefore this reclassification will likely have no impact on the surrounding area.
- iii. Several lots previously located in the Rural I District adjoining the Village District have been reclassified as part of the Village District. These lots have existing dimensions and development that corresponds better with the Village District than the Rural I District. This reclassification of lots is intended to lessen the number of preexisting nonconformities near the Village District. While this change may result in some additional development, it will be relatively minor and therefore no impact is anticipated on the surrounding area.
- iv. 350 acres located around the intersection of Stage Road and Notch Road, currently located in the Rural I area, are recommended for the creation of a new Hamlet District. Exact dimensional standards for this District have not been defined in the Town Plan and will be decided through a public participation process, and ultimately adopted in the

Bolton Land Use and Development Regulations. The Town Plan contemplates that the minimum lot sizes may be in the range of ¼ to 1 acre. This will result in dimensional standards and density levels that match the existing development pattern in part of this area; and increases the development potential for the vacant portion of the area. In the latter area, there is likely to be some impact from this change on the surrounding area – likely in the form of a compact development area, possibly including, housing and small scale businesses with associated traffic.

2. The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on:

- i. This reclassification of this parcel is intended to allow a greater ease of development of accessory structures for a preexisting home, and does not allow a greater level of development. Therefore, this reclassification likely will not affect the town’s tax base or need for public facilities.
- ii. This possible reclassification of lots is intended to ensure that lots without road frontage are included in the Forest District. Given their current lack of access, development potential on these lots was extremely limited and this reclassification likely will not affect the town’s tax base or need for public facilities.
- iii. This reclassification of lots is intended to lessen the number of preexisting nonconformities near the Village District, and does not allow a greater level of development. Therefore, this reclassification likely will not affect the town’s tax base or need for public facilities.
- iv. The creation of a Hamlet District is intended to increase Bolton’s development potential and to increase the tax base by allowing for additional development. Given the town’s policy of not taking over private roads, there will be no new municipal roads created by this change. Additionally, given the small size of the area, it is unlikely that the area would create an additional need for other public facilities.

3. The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation; and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose.

- i. Because the reclassification of this parcel does not allow for increased development, this question is not applicable.
- ii. Because the possible reclassification of parcels to the Forest District does not allow for increased development, this question is not applicable.
- iii. All parcels being reclassified as part of the Village District have existing development. While this change may result in some additional development, it will be relatively minor and therefore no impact is anticipated on the surrounding area. This question is not applicable.
- iv. No land in Bolton is currently subject to the proposed Hamlet District designation, as this is a new district. However, land available for development in Bolton is very limited. 77% of Bolton’s land is conserved. Furthermore, in areas outside the Conservation District and Forest District, only 640 acres, or 2.4% of the town’s total area, are potentially viable for development (defined as land that is not already developed and is not characterized by floodplains, wetlands, river corridors, slopes of 15% or more or poor septic soils). Creating a denser district in the form of the proposed Hamlet District provides a much-needed opportunity for compact development in Bolton.

- 4. The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated.**
- i. Because the reclassification of this parcel does not allow for increased development, this question is not applicable.
 - ii. Because the possible reclassification of parcels to the Forest District does not allow for increased development, this question is not applicable.
 - iii. All parcels being reclassified as part of the Village District have existing development. While this change may result in some additional development, it will be relatively minor and therefore no impact is anticipated on the surrounding area. This question is not applicable.
 - iv. The area of the proposed Hamlet District designation is the most appropriate area in Bolton for increased development. As discussed above, development opportunities in Bolton are extremely limited. The area of the proposed Hamlet District has the greatest concentration of land with development potential (as defined above). There are no alternative locations in the town for additional growth. Additionally, given existing development patterns in the area and the development potential of the land, development will likely continue in the area regardless of the zoning change. A zoning district with greater density will allow for denser development on smaller lots as opposed to scattered houses on 2-acre lots, as currently allowed.
- 5. The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability and existing development in the area.**
- i. Because the reclassification of this parcel does not allow for increased development, this question is not applicable.
 - ii. Because the possible reclassification of parcels to the Forest District does not allow for increased development, this question is not applicable.
 - iii. All parcels being reclassified as part of the Village District have existing development. While this change may result in some additional development, it will be relatively minor and therefore no impact is anticipated on the surrounding area. This question is not applicable.
 - iv. The area proposed for the Hamlet District is 350 acres, or 1.3% of the town's total area. Of these 350 acres, 165 acres have good development potential (as defined above). This is a much higher proportion of development potential than any other district in Bolton. The boundaries of the district lie within approximately ½ mile of the intersection of Stage Road and Notch Road. Given the existing development in the area, this small radius will allow for future development to occur at a walkable scale.

24 VSA § 4302 Required Goals

(a) General purposes . . .

(b) It is also the intent of the legislature that municipalities, regional planning commissions and state agencies shall engage in a continuing planning process that will further the following goals:

- (1) To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies.**
- (2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.**
- (3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state, as well as the community in which it takes place.**
- (4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.**

The Bolton Town Plan is consistent with the general goals outlined here.

(c) In addition, this chapter shall be used to further the following specific goals:

Goal 1:

To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

- (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.**
- (B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas, or employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.**
- (C) Public investments, including construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area.**

<p>Consistent</p> <p>Pages: Land Use chapter</p>

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal?: The Land Use section identifies the future land use in Bolton, with development concentrated around the Route 2 village area, Bolton Valley Resort and the proposed West Bolton Hamlet. Bolton’s severe development constraints and large lot sizes elsewhere in the town will maintain this historic settlement pattern. The plan identifies that the town’s largest infrastructure investments during the life of this plan will be on road maintenance and upgrades required by the Municipal Roads General Permit.

Goal 2:

To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

Consistent
Pages:
Economy section

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Economy section discusses Bolton’s limited economic base currently, and identifies strategies for increased economic growth in the town, particularly around Bolton Valley Resort.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why: The plan discusses economic development for the town as a whole, not based on areas of high unemployment or low per capita incomes, as these data are only available at the town level.

Goal 3:

To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

Consistent
Pages: Education section

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The People chapter identifies educational opportunities that are available for Bolton residents of various ages and includes an action of increasing funding available for scholarships that are awarded annually to Bolton college students.

Goal 4:

To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

Consistent
Pages:
Transportation section

(A) Highways, air, rail and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Bolton’s road network and bridges, culverts and other infrastructure are discussed in the Transportation section of the plan. Residential transportation use, including public transit use, is discussed in that section as well. Resilience of these features and the impact of the new Municipal Roads General Permit is discussed in the Resilience section. The town’s network of hiking trails and on-road bicycle and pedestrian routes are discussed in the Recreation section.

Goal 5:

To identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape including:

- (A) significant natural and fragile areas;**
- (B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands;**
- (C) significant scenic roads, waterways and views;**

Consistent
Pages:
Natural Resources section,
Land Use chapter, People
chapter

(D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Natural Resources section of the plan identifies natural and scenic resources in Bolton and offers strategies for their preservation. In addition, the plan incorporates the 2013 Science to Action report, a detailed inventory of all natural resources in Bolton, by reference. The Land Use chapter also establishes a Conservation district which protects many natural and scenic resources. The People chapter discusses historic features and strategies for their protection.

Goal 6:

To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests and other land resources.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Natural resources are identified in the Natural Resources section of the plan and strategies for their protection and improvement are identified therein.

Consistent

Pages: Natural Resources section

Goal 7:

To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Energy issues are discussed in the Energy section of the plan, including strategies for increased efficiency throughout the town and increased renewable energy generation Energy facilities can be seen on the Energy map. The plan also identifies the possible goal of revising the plan in the future to gain a Determination of Energy Compliance from CCRPC.

Consistent

Pages:
Energy section

Goal 8:

To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

(A) Growth should not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.

(B) Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, should be identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate.

Consistent

Pages: Natural Resources section, Recreation section

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The town plan identifies recreation as the core of Bolton's economy and identifies a goal of increasing the financial stability of Bolton Valley Resort. The plan also discusses the need to ensure that recreational activities in the town do not negatively impact residents. Finally, Bolton's key recreational resources are almost all located on conserved land.

Goal 9:

To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

(A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forestlands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low overall density.

(B) The manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.

(C) The use of locally-grown food products should be encouraged.

(D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be encouraged.

(E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.

Consistent

Pages:

Natural Resources section,
Economy section

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Forest industries are discussed in the Economy section of the town plan. Protections for core forest are discussed in the Natural Resources section, and the Land Use chapter includes discussion of a Forest district which limits most development. The natural resources section also discusses Bolton's limited prime agricultural soils and very few farms, and identifies strategies for their protection.

Goal 10:

To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

Consistent

Pages: Natural Resources
section

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Natural Resources section identifies gravel and sand quarrying as important economic activities in the town and requires the submission of operation, stormwater management and erosion control and site reclamation plans for all operations. Quarrying operations can be seen on the Earth and Water Resources map.

Goal 11:

To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters

(A) Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income.

(B) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers,

Consistent

Pages: Housing section

and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.

(C) Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.

(D) Accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons should be allowed

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Housing needs analysis, discussion of the housing market and strategies for increasing housing affordability can be found in the Housing section of the plan. A variety of housing types is allowed everywhere development is permitted in the town. The town identifies strategies for increasing the safety of housing stock.

Goal 12:

To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

(A) Public facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal.

(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services

Consistent
Pages: Utilities, Facilities and Services section

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Utilities, Facilities and Services section discusses the utilities, facilities and services provided to residents, both those provided by the town and those provided by outside entities through contracts. The town is currently in the process of developing its first Capital Improvement Plan, a major step in ensuring that the town will be able to provide facilities and services to future residents at the town's identified rate of growth (around 11 residents per year).

Goal 13:

To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.

Consistent
Pages: People chapter

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The People chapter identifies childcare available in the town and in neighboring areas, and discusses childcare needs by Bolton residents. The plan ensures that childcare related businesses can be established throughout Bolton, and the town budget helps fund childcare services in nearby towns that are accessible for residents.

Goal 14:

To encourage flood resilient communities.

(A) New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

Consistent

Pages: Resilience section,
Natural Resources section,

(B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.

(C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Resilience section of the plan discusses resilience and emergency planning in Bolton, and incorporates both the Bolton All Hazards Mitigation Plan and the Local Emergency Operations Plan by reference. The Resilience section also identifies the degree to which Bolton is at risk from flooding and fluvial erosion. The Land Use section identifies strategies to ensure that future development in Bolton is not at risk from flood damage or fluvial erosion by identifying development constraints for two Flood Hazard Overlay Districts and in river corridors. The Natural Resources section ensures that uplands forests and wetlands are protected to reduce risk from flooding.