



September 30, 2024

Rebecca Belanger, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Planning
County of Essex

Dear Ms. Belanger –

RE: Draft County Official Plan, Comments and Responses to Comments Arising from Public Meeting

As you are aware, NPG Planning Solutions Inc. are the consultants to the County of Essex for the Review and Preparation of the County's New Official Plan. Our team has worked closely with the County staff and Larry Silani of Miller Silani (project consultant to the County) on this New Official Plan.

We thank all who have provided comments and feedback to the Official Plan Team. This document provides the feedback/comments received together with the response. Where revisions are identified, these have been made in the final version of the Official Plan for presentation to County Council for adoption.

One of the most important issues that arose at the Public Meeting of September 5, 2024 was related to the Natural Heritage System mapping and policies. Updates to both have been provided and can be found in this document.

For the ease of use for those reading this document, we have included an Executive Summary of the feedback and response as well as the more detailed feedback and response. A Table of Contents is also provided which hyperlinks to the specific section.

We look forward to the October meeting of County Council to support finalizing the New Official Plan.

Yours truly,

Mary Lou Tanner, FCIP, RPP
President

**County of Essex New Official Plan
Comments and Responses Received on Draft Official Plan – Public Meeting and Post-Public Meeting**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents all feedback received on the County of Essex Draft Official Plan received at the public meeting of September 5th as well as written submissions received after the public meeting. As the document is lengthy, this Executive Summary is provided to assist readers. For specific responses to each item of feedback, please refer to the submission and response table.

Landowners and Members of the Public – Natural Heritage

Members of the public spoke at the public meeting regarding increasing the natural heritage coverage in the County. Additional letters following the public meeting were also received on this topic. In response to this, the following updates have been made:

1. All natural heritage mapping (Designations and Overlays) are now on one Schedule – Schedule B.
2. Updates to natural heritage policies have been made to:
 - a. Include a requirement of “no net loss” in natural heritage planning implementation;
 - b. Include Wildlife and Habitat Corridors as part of the Natural Heritage System on Schedule B;
 - c. Addition of new policies to support the protection and enhancement of the Wildlife and Habitat Corridors;
 - d. Identify that the natural heritage system is 20% of the County’s land base including restoration areas;
 - e. Set a target of 15% natural heritage system coverage after restoration is completed – this recognizes a goal but also acknowledges that restoration requires working with landowners and funding from the County and the municipalities;
 - f. Commit the County to updating the Essex Region Natural Heritage System within the next five years;
 - g. Commit the County to funding Clean Water – Green Spaces to implement the restoration areas identified on the revised Schedule B;
 - h. Commit to managing the urban forest in existing and expanding communities;
 - i. Expand the requirements for compensation for the natural heritage system;
 - j. Identify that a future study to address the connectivity between Ojibway National Urban Park and Lake Erie in partnership with the municipalities, landowners, agencies, and potential funding partners;
 - k. Require protection of the natural heritage system as infrastructure is implemented; and,
 - l. Reinforce that local municipalities can go beyond the County natural heritage system based on their local studies and updates.

Landowners and Members of the Public – Specific Issues

1. Judy Wellwood-Robson – Revisions have been made to the Official Plan based on these submissions including providing clarity on how Oldcastle is referenced – primary settlement area. Additional wording updates were made to implement the feedback in the presentation.
2. William Pol – one submission was received requesting changes to the Settlement Area in Lakeshore. The request is not supported as there is no need for additional community-based land (residential) in Lakeshore. The lands are not included in the Town's water/wastewater servicing area.
3. Municipality of Lakeshore – one submission in response to William Pol's request for a settlement area boundary change. The request is not supported by municipal planning staff; this information has been conveyed accordingly.
4. Matt McIntosh – one submission was received regarding policies to regulate greenhouse development. The draft Official Plan contains policies regarding the completion of a Greenhouse Study by the County in order to address the location needs, infrastructure needs, water quality impacts, road impacts and more related to the greenhouse use and the greenhouse economy.
5. Nettie Ridley and Mike Piche – Comments were received regarding the Town of Essex new Official Plan. The Town's new Official Plan is in preparation and the County will work with the Town on the draft and final versions.

Landowners and Members of the Public – Consultation

Members of the public spoke at the public meeting regarding the lack of consultation and awareness of the Official Plan Review process. Additional letters following the public meeting were also received on this topic.

Various consultation activities were undertaken throughout the course of the project, demonstrating staff's commitment to receiving public feedback and incorporating the vision of County residents and stakeholders in the draft County Official Plan.

A summary of the engagement is as follows:

1. Workshops with County Council on the Official Plan.
2. Youth Engagement Workshops.
3. Community Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings.
4. Public meetings with County Council to solicit feedback on the Official Plan and updates.
5. Four in-person and online workshops, one stakeholder workshop, over fifteen meetings with partner municipalities, an Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting were held to solicit input on the vision of the draft Official Plan and on draft Official Plan policies.
6. Agency meetings with Essex Region Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

7. Multiple meetings with Caldwell First Nation staff.
8. Meetings with community organizations such as the Federation of Agriculture and the Windsor Essex County Association of Realtors.
9. Key changes to the draft Official Plan policies were outlined in the Open House meeting in an accessible and user-friendly manner. For those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information was made available to the public on the County's Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.
10. Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages.
11. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage.
12. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public.
13. Notice has been provided in accordance with the *Planning Act*.
14. For the notice and circulation related to the release of all documents and inviting feedback:
 - Notice sent to 44 agencies;
 - Notice sent to 192 individuals on the County's mailing list.

Landowners and Members of the Public: Specific Issues

Pol Associates Inc.

Delegation at Public Meeting, September 5, 2024 and Letter of September 23, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Schedules	Lakeshore Settlement Area Boundary Change Request	<p>Requested exchange:</p> <p>Remove Rochester/ Deerbrook Secondary Settlement Area – County Road 2/ Railway/ Ruscom River from Secondary Settlement Area and designate it as Agricultural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class 1 lands • Suitable for speciality crop • Sandy loam • Significant environmental constraints – prone to flooding • No sanitary servicing • Part of legacy designation/less desirable for the site to be developed <p>Add Belle River Primary Settlement Area 483 Renaud Line Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve County's housing policies – affordability and more intense forms of housing • More opportunities for quicker and efficient development to achieve County's plan <p>Agree with the policies in the draft OP – this is an opportunity to achieve planning for growth and fiscal responsibility as soon as possible. This would contribute</p>	<p>Please see the response letter prepared by the Municipality of Lakeshore, dated September 5th, 2024, in response to your request. As noted in the letter, this request would be considered a Municipal Comprehensive Review under the policies of the County and Lakeshore Official Plans. Municipal staff have concluded that this request is out of scope of the County's Official Plan process and considered to be premature, with additional consultation required with the County and municipality in order for municipal planning staff to provide detailed analysis and recommendations. It is recommended that the proponent consult with the Municipality of Lakeshore to discuss settlement boundary alterations.</p>

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		to achieving the growth numbers in Lakeshore for the 2051 planning horizon.	

Municipality of Lakeshore

Tammie Ryall, Corporate Leader – Growth and Sustainability

Response Letter for Public Meeting, September 5, 2024

Response to Request for Settlement Area Boundary Change

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Schedules	Lakeshore Settlement Area Boundary Change Request	<p>This letter serves as the Municipality of Lakeshore’s response to the requested settlement area changes proposed by Pol Associates Inc. on behalf of James Sylvestre Developments Ltd., that will be presented at the public meeting for the new County of Essex Official Plan. We understand that the privately initiated request is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To remove the lands bounded by County Road 2, the Railway and the Ruscom River in Rochester Place/Deerbrook from the “Secondary Settlement Area” Land Use Designation and replace it with the “Agricultural Land Use Designation”; and 2. To remove the lands at 483 Renaud Line Road from the “Agricultural” Land Use Designation and change it to the “Primary Settlement Area” Land Use Designation. <p>This switch of land use designations is considered to be a Municipal Comprehensive Review under the policies of</p>	Noted. This will be conveyed in response to the delegate’s request.

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		<p>the County and Lakeshore Official Plans. Administration has reviewed the 3-page memo and maps that were submitted by Pol Associates Inc., which outlines the reasons for the request. Based on the review, Administration has concluded that the request is premature, and that a more thorough evaluation is required to come to a clear decision as to whether the proposal could be supported.</p> <p>It is noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No pre-consultation request or meeting on the proposal has occurred with Lakeshore or County of Essex Administration. - There appears to be no authorization from some of the impacted landowners in the Rochester Place/Deerbrook area. - There has been no direction from Lakeshore Council regarding altering urban settlement boundaries. - Lakeshore is preparing a Water and Wastewater Master Plan (WWMP) which will be presented to Lakeshore Council in October 2024. The Plan will set out recommendations for servicing related projects in Lakeshore. Servicing of the lands at 483 Renaud Line Road has not been considered in the WWMP process, as the lands are outside of the Urban Settlement boundary and therefore currently there is no capacity available (water and sanitary) to service these lands. Further to not being considered in this update, it will be identified 	

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		<p>in the WWMP as a level 3 priority (which falls beyond the planning horizon of 20 years). Based on the existing constraints identified through the WWMP Update, it would be incautious to extend the servicing boundary when legal commitments and secondary plans within the boundary are unable to be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Related to the point above, there are several undeveloped parcels of land within the Urban Settlement Boundary waiting to proceed. Some have been identified as “Urban Reserve” which need to be considered in the context of any Municipal Comprehensive Review. <p>It is also noted that a more detailed analysis of the proposal would need to be prepared to address crucial information before Administration can make a recommendation that is in the best interest of Lakeshore’s current and future residents.</p> <p>For instance, there is no information on how the lands at 483 Renaud Line Road are to be serviced. Given the current sanitary capacity constraints that exist in the Municipality, further information would be needed to address the financial impacts of extending the services to this location, or how their proposal fits within the future framework of the Municipality’s Water and Wastewater Master Plan.</p> <p>An Agricultural Impact Assessment would be required to confirm if lands can be removed from the prime</p>	

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		<p>agricultural land base. An Archaeological Assessment is also necessary. There may also be species at risk or other environmental constraints that need to be considered. Further, external agencies such as ERCA, VIA Rail, CP Rail and the School Boards need to be consulted.</p> <p>There is also the question as to what extent of lands are affected by the proposal as the mapping provided by the proponent is not consistent with the existing lot fabric in both areas. In addition, it is unclear if there has been sufficient consultation or notice provided to those who would be affected by the proposal.</p> <p>In my opinion, it is outside of the scope of the County Official Plan process to entertain a Municipal Comprehensive Review - i.e. a proponent's request to change land use settlement boundaries through the County Official Plan review process. The County Draft Official Plan identifies the amount of land needed for growth in the local municipalities, but does not assign where settlement boundary changes should occur.</p> <p>Given the timely release of the new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, which as of October 20, 2024, will allow private land owners to make requests for settlement boundary alterations at any time, it is recommended that the proponent consult with the Municipality of Lakeshore on this proposal.</p>	

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
		I respectfully request that this letter be submitted as written comments at the County of Essex Official Plan public meeting. Please feel free to contact me at any time to request any additional information, and/or to discuss the requested settlement area boundary changes.	

Judy Wellwood-Robson

Delegation at Public Meeting, September 5, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
4.C.3	Wording of Oldcastle Policies	<p>Objecting to page 55 of the draft County OP - directs Old Castle from establishing a complete community of people to establishing an employment only settlement region.</p> <p>It is evident that Oldcastle has already contributed more than its fair share of land to employment use.</p> <p>4.C.3 distorts, misleads, and creates a one-sided vision of Oldcastle – the sentence is misleading instead of stating what it really is, a primary settlement area. A more appropriate statement would be Oldcastle is a primary settlement and a significant employment center for the Town of Tecumseh.</p> <p>The second statement regarding Oldcastle being the historical focus of manufacturing is a deceptive and false fact. It had agricultural beginnings and history; a more appropriate description would be Oldcastle is historically a significantly important agricultural hub that evolved into</p>	Revisions have been made to the Official Plan based on these submissions including providing clarity on how Oldcastle is referenced as a primary settlement area.

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		<p>an important employment center due to its strategic location.</p> <p>The beginning of the third statement regarding how Oldcastle shall be primarily developed for employment uses - prioritizing employment lands before residential land is not in line with 2024 PPS to achieve complete communities. A more appropriate statement would be Oldcastle shall be primarily developed with a mix of land-uses which will accommodate the building of a complete community.</p> <p>Settlement areas are the largest and traditional centers of commerce in the County. Primary settlement of Oldcastle is the only settlement in the County OP that steers its growth in a singular direction that directs growth for employment. Obvious that creation of regional settlement areas in the County are the general policies of the 2024 PPS for complete communities.</p>	

Matt McIntosh

Email of September 6, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	Greenhouse Development	Please consider the following with regards to the County of Essex Official Plan review, and specifically greenhouse development. It's a subject I've covered extensively in my journalistic capacity, and have direct experience with as a farmer in the area.	Thank you for your comment. A policy has been included in the Draft Official Plan that requires the County to undertake an implementation study of greenhouses in Essex County. This study will address the location needs, infrastructure needs, water quality impacts, road impacts and more

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		<p>The size and speed of development of the greenhouse sector in this area must be seriously reconsidered, due to a variety of serious and potentially serious environmental problems - environmental problems which will incur significant costs for the region, and hardship for everyone living here.</p> <p>Two of note are 1) waterway nutrient pollution coming from, among other things, bad actors and totally inadequate site designs in the greenhouse sector. And 2) the demand for water from ever-expanding greenhouse operations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The nutrient pollution in greenhouse heavy waterways cannot be understated. It is several orders of magnitude higher than what the provincial environment ministry considers eutrophic. The industry is not willing to take any responsibility for this whatsoever, and actively deflects and misdirects. Thus, the issue will not go away, and will only make what the MOE has long considered "the most polluted water courses" in Ontario with regards to nutrient loading, worse. This is a travesty for our area, socially, economically, and environmentally. 2) The demand for water is also an enormous problem. Not having enough from the Municipality of Leamington, for example, it has come to my attention that new builds have been drilling wells. What impact will this have on our county water table? Perhaps I'm wrong, but I do not believe any 	<p>related to the greenhouse use and the greenhouse economy.</p>

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		<p>impact assessment has been done to project the impact of several hundred more acres of greenhouse production, and the associated water use requirements, when pulling the required water from the water table. This is particularly concerning as many such builds are being constructed on important groundwater recharge areas. The implications of this could be serious in the extreme.</p> <p>Overall, the regulations and allowances for greenhouse development were constructed at a time when greenhouses were not as they are now. Any efforts to update and reign in what has been a wild-west level of development must be pursued.</p> <p>There are several other related issues to which I would like to provide comment. However, in an effort not to write an essay of considerable length, I'll call it here. Please do get in touch if anyone would like to discuss these (and other) issues further.</p>	

Nettie Ridley

Email of September 20, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	Natural Heritage	<p>Natural Heritage Protection is critical.</p> <p>Our wetlands have diminished to zip; our woodlots the same. Our insects are in serious decline, yet we</p>	<p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary.</p>

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		<p>continue on our way without making the changes necessary to ensure we have a planet tomorrow, let alone a healthy one.</p> <p>Grass and concrete do NOT mitigate flooding nor add oxygen to the environment. Trees do that; native plantings do that. Why are we not paying heed?</p>	
	Climate Change	Climate Change/Emergency is critical.	Please refer to the Executive Summary re natural heritage. Please see the Chapters on Climate Change in the Official Plan as well as Natural Hazard Protection.
	Town of Essex Official Plan / Colchester	<p>We and other settlement areas are NOT considered primary, yet are being treated thusly in the T of E OP. This must be a consideration when review of the T of E plan is made.</p> <p>Although moving Essex County towards a major tourist destination is desired (on the part of the town), Colchester is just not large enough to be turned into a Grand Bend as their OP currently suggests. We are being exploited due to our beach. Has anyone who plans this actually looked at the size of our beach? Added to this is the question of how much green space do we lose to changes in order to attract more tourists?</p> <p>Higher density residential and intensification is mandated by our province, yet again, we must do it wisely which the T of E is not. We are being overrun by developers purchasing land with plans to more than double our population when our infrastructure will not permit.</p>	The Town of Essex is currently preparing its new Official Plan. The County will be reviewing that draft and providing feedback to the Town. We encourage sharing your feedback with the Town.

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		<p>If no other consideration is made, we MUST look at our carbon footprint with vehicles traveling in and out of Colchester.</p> <p>We MUST look at new housing being adjacent to beach areas which are actually on the maps as flood prone as unconscionable.</p>	

Mike Piche

Email of September 23, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	Town of Essex Official Plan / Colchester	<p>If I understand the proposed Official Plan from the County as proposed, it will negatively affect the residents of the Secondary Settlement area of Colchester. I have read this document in detail and note that in a number of areas the plan appears to describe how the County is deeply concerned about numerous issues but then little is documented that suggest enough viable approaches to dealing with these concerns or ensuring that the written guidelines are actually followed by the Towns, in particular, the Town of Essex.</p> <p>For example, The Town of Essex would appear to be ignoring any level of consideration for section 8.A.1.2 etc. of the County Plan for developments within a flood area. If the Town of Essex is even entertaining the thought about these projects then, they feel that the County Plan has no influence or control whatsoever. It appears that the Town of Essex has taken the position that they do</p>	The Town of Essex is currently preparing its new Official Plan. The County will be reviewing that draft and providing feedback to the Town. We encourage sharing your feedback with the Town.

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		<p>NOT have to adhere to the County of Essex Plan. Why are these developments even allowed to be considered much less become a fait accompli? How much pain and cost do the residents in these areas have to absorb after every flood? I can't imagine that flood insurance will be available to the new homeowners in these lakeside areas, will we tell them this fact in advance?</p> <p>Furthermore, the County has developed strict guidelines for developments within Secondary Development areas, yet more homes are being considered for the Colchester area than the Towns of Essex and Harrow COMBINED. What has become of the goal of focussing development upon Primary Development areas and with small developments and infill being left for Secondary. Is Essex immune to the requirements of the County Plan?</p> <p>The whole Section 10 plan for Environmentally Sustainable Communities is weak and somewhat pointless given the focus of Towns like Essex indicating that they'll develop communities as physically far from the jobs and higher education sources as possible. In the Town of Essex for example, the 2 Primary areas are physically closer by many kilometers to most jobs and the University and College in Windsor yet where is most of the development being planned....in Colchester! This is a location many more kilometers away, requiring longer trips, using much more fuel and the production of much more greenhouse gas. The developers don't care, should the Town, should the County?</p>	

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		<p>Agritourism and Tourism in general are again being focused upon despite the fact that the wineries, motel, Glamping facility and restaurants are indicating that their businesses are doing well. Do we really need to keep adding to the crowded beaches, the parking problems and the full restaurants despite the evidence to the contrary? The addition of more tourists also increases traffic as well as pollution. There are numerous towns and locations who are regretting the fact that they now have a tourism overload and have regrets about pushing so hard to expand their attraction. Which clauses in the County Plan detail how serious consideration is being given to the needs of existing residents?</p>	

Landowners and Members of the Public: Natural Heritage and Consultation

John DeMarco

Delegation at Public Meeting, September 5, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	<p>The good news is that the County Official Plan is taking steps toward appropriate intensification and affordability.</p> <p>Focus on building within major settlements (and not on rural lands) is also welcome and maybe needs further strengthening.</p> <p>Not so good – there is insufficient information and consultation. The OP review is still almost completely under the radar for most county residents.</p> <p>It is almost impossible to figure out what has changed. There should be a public summary document highlighting the differences.</p> <p>There should be at least one open house in each member municipality.</p> <p>Nothing is proposed to improve environmental protection, restoration, and reconciliation.</p> <p>The natural heritage system is standing still or falling back, based mainly on work done in the 1990's. We don't even know how effective current conservation</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultation activities have been conducted to solicit input on the vision and draft Official Plan policies, including but not limited to four in-person and online workshops, a stakeholder workshop, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting. Recognizing the length and complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes to the draft Official Plan policies in a manner that is accessible and user-friendly for the public – for those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information is available to the public on the County's Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are</p>

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		<p>measures are (but we know for sure some are effective!). The creation of Ojibway National Urban Park should be a wake-up call that we need a new vision of how to restore the landscape, in dialogue and partnership with First Nations.</p> <p>Are we satisfied with the Natural Environment Designation as our highest level of protection? The OP is the best opportunity to articulate a new vision for the landscape. Toronto has more intense development pressures but they have the Oak Ridges Moraine, Greenbelt, Rouge National Urban Park, and Niagara Escarpment. Can we imagine Ojibway to Lake Erie? How about Ojibway to Point Pelee?</p> <p>Suggested way forward:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upgrade the plan with stronger, interim measures for environmental protection – e.g put an immediate ‘hold’ on all development within the 3 existing environmental layers until a new plan is agreed. 2. Start a new consultation process with First Nations and all stakeholders for a new environmental vision that will reconnect Ojibway and Point Pelee National Parks with the rest of other landscape through effective restoration. 	<p>posted in a timely manner and are available on the County’s webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p> <p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary.</p>

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Official Plan	Natural Heritage	<p>The good news is that the County Official Plan is taking steps toward appropriate intensification and affordability.</p> <p>Focus on building within major settlements (and not on rural lands) is also welcome and maybe needs further strengthening.</p> <p>Not so good – there is insufficient information and consultation. The OP review is still almost completely under the radar for most county residents.</p> <p>It is almost impossible to figure out what has changed. There should be a public summary document highlighting the differences.</p> <p>There should be at least one open house in each member municipality.</p> <p>Nothing is proposed to improve environmental protection, restoration, and reconciliation.</p> <p>The natural heritage system is standing still or falling back, based mainly on work done in the 1990's. We don't even know how effective current conservation measures are (but we know for sure some are effective!). The creation of Ojibway National Urban Park should be a wake-up call that we need a new vision of how to restore the landscape, in dialogue and partnership with First Nations.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultation activities have been conducted to solicit input on the vision and draft Official Plan policies, including but not limited to four in-person and online workshops, a stakeholder workshop, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting. Recognizing the length and complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes to the draft Official Plan policies in a manner that is accessible and user-friendly for the public – for those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information is available to the public on the County's Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p> <p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p>

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		<p>Are we satisfied with the Natural Environment Designation as our highest level of protection? The OP is the best opportunity to articulate a new vision for the landscape. Toronto has more intense development pressures but they have the Oak Ridges Moraine, Greenbelt, Rouge National Urban Park, and Niagara Escarpment. Can we imagine Ojibway to Lake Erie? How about Ojibway to Point Pelee?</p> <p>Suggested way forward:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Upgrade the plan with stronger, interim measures for environmental protection – e.g put an immediate ‘hold’ on all development within the 3 existing environmental layers until a new plan is agreed. 4. Start a new consultation process with First Nations and all stakeholders for a new environmental vision that will reconnect Ojibway and Point Pelee National Parks with the rest of other landscape through effective restoration. 	Please refer to the Executive Summary.

Giovanni Abati

Delegation at Public Meeting, September 5, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	Greatly concerned with the process – as a past watershed planner working for a conservation authority, they used to have meetings in all the municipalities when proposing changes to the regulations. Don’t think	Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultation activities have been conducted to solicit input on the vision and draft Official Plan policies, including but

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		<p>that there is a lack of concern but a lack of promoting – people don't know what's going on. The County needs to do more – doesn't seem very democratic.</p> <p>Provincial changes are destroying environmental regulation – we need to stand up against that, need to protect natural spaces, enhance areas with tree plantings and linkages, keep waterways cool.</p> <p>Concern with mapping – for the non-agricultural use map, why are recharge areas, environmental areas, significant woodlands and woodlands not part of the non-agricultural area? Shouldn't they be protected by more than that?</p> <p>Work on the natural heritage link throughout the County all the way to the Ojibway National Urban Park, just like the Greenbelt in Toronto.</p>	<p>not limited to four in-person and online workshops, a stakeholder workshop, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting. Recognizing the length and complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes to the draft Official Plan policies in a manner that is accessible and user-friendly for the public – for those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information is available to the public on the County's Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p> <p>Please see Schedule A1 for mapping of the natural environment County wide including non-agricultural areas. Please see Schedule C6 for recharge areas.</p> <p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p>

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
			Please refer to the Executive Summary.

Giovanni Abati, Watershed Watchers

Email of September 23, 2024


#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Consultation	<p>This is a 30 year Growth Plan for Essex County (you would think that you would want to hear from residents – not just developers that have plenty to gain, at the expense of the County of Essex and its residents.</p> <p>1 Public Meeting in McGregor (60 participants – I was there). I found it very uninformative and designed to get very little feedback. (there should have been a presentation)</p> <p>1 Presentation at County Council (6 delegates – I was a delegate)</p> <p>By your attendance results (approximately 70 people), you would think there isn't any interest. I blame the Process (2 meetings for close to 200,000 people). Not very democratic. Not well advertised.</p> <p>My OP Review Comment Card had 43 participants in 5 hours, this shows there is an interest.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultation activities have been conducted to solicit input on the vision and draft Official Plan policies, including but not limited to four in-</p>

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			<p>person and online workshops, a stakeholder workshop, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting. Recognizing the length and complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes to the draft Official Plan policies in a</p>

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			<p>manner that is accessible and user-friendly for the public – for those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information is available to the public on the County’s Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation .</p>

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			<p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who</p>

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			<p>register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public. Furthermore , notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p>
		<p>I distributed my OP Review Comment Cards at Windsor's Farmers' Market on September 14th. (5 hrs - 43 people filled out the card and submitted their comments to me **see attached document**).</p>	<p>Please see the responses in the Executive Summary regarding</p>

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response																																																					
		<div><div><div><div><div>OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW COMMENT CARD</div><div><div>RESIDENT COMMENT CARD</div></div><div><div>Name: _____</div><div>Address: _____</div><div>Email: _____</div><div>Email to: Rebecca Belanger officialplanreview@countyofessex.ca</div></div><div><div>When did you become aware of the 30 Year Official Plan Review? _____</div><div>Essex County currently has 8.6% Natural Land-use Cover (wetlands, woodlots, etc.). Do you think that is enough? _____</div><div>How much would you like to see? _____ %</div><div>Should we protect our Natural Land-use areas from development? _____</div><div>Why? _____</div><div>Rank the following: 1 Highest Priority to 4 Lowest Priority</div><div>Agriculture _____ Environment _____ Housing _____ Economy _____</div></div><div>APPENDIX I</div></div><div><div>SUMMARY of 49 COMMENT CARDS:</div><div>OP Review Awareness: 90% never heard of the OP Review</div><div>Is 8.6% Natural Land-use cover enough? 100% said NO</div><div>How much would you like to see? 23% Natural cover was Avg</div><div>Should we protect our Natural Land-use areas? 100 % YES</div><div>Why? 35 % mentioned wildlife conservation, 65% ranged from improving our quality of life, human survival, climate action, air & water quality as well as flood prevention</div><div>PRIORITY VOTING (4 People did not prioritize & some people gave equal priority)</div><table><tr><th rowspan="2">PRIORIT Y</th><th colspan="2">Agriculture</th><th colspan="2">Environment</th><th colspan="2">Housing</th><th colspan="2">Economy</th></tr><tr><th>Vote s</th><th>100 %</th><th>Vote s</th><th>100 %</th><th>Vote s</th><th>100 %</th><th>Vote s</th><th>100 %</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>10</td><td>22</td><td>28</td><td>62</td><td>12</td><td>27</td><td>7</td><td>15</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>19</td><td>42</td><td>11</td><td>24</td><td>9</td><td>20</td><td>6</td><td>13</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>6</td><td>13</td><td>6</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>31</td><td>14</td><td>31</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>10</td><td>22</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>10</td><td>22</td><td>18</td><td>40</td></tr></table></div></div></div></div>	PRIORIT Y	Agriculture		Environment		Housing		Economy		Vote s	100 %	Vote s	100 %	Vote s	100 %	Vote s	100 %	1	10	22	28	62	12	27	7	15	2	19	42	11	24	9	20	6	13	3	6	13	6	13	14	31	14	31	4	10	22	0	0	10	22	18	40	consultation and natural heritage.
PRIORIT Y	Agriculture			Environment		Housing		Economy																																																
	Vote s	100 %	Vote s	100 %	Vote s	100 %	Vote s	100 %																																																
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3	6	13	6	13	14	31	14	31																																																
4	10	22	0	0	10	22	18	40																																																
		<div><div><div>RESULTS:</div><div>90% of participants were UNAWARE OP Plan Review.</div><div>100 % of participants believe we need more than the current 6.8% Natural land-use cover, with an average suggested land-use cover being 23 %.</div><div>100% of participants believe we should protect our Natural Areas from development. When asked why 35 % of respondents mentioning wildlife conservation. The remaining 65% of the comments discussed improving our quality of life, human survival, climate action, air & water quality as well as flood prevention.</div><div>The 4 Priority Sectors selected were: Agriculture, Environment, Housing and the Economy Some individuals gave the same Priority value to more than 1 sector (thus not equaling 100%) Highest Priority: Lowest Priority:</div></div></div> <div><div>Please see the response in the Executive Summary regarding Natural Heritage.</div><div>The Agricultural policies are</div></div>																																																						

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		<div> 62 % of Respondents chose Environment 27 % of Respondents chose Housing 22 % of Respondents chose Agriculture 15 % of Respondents chose Economy </div> <div> 40 % of Respondents chose Economy 22 % of Respondents chose Agriculture 22 % of Respondents chose Housing 0 % of Respondents chose Environment </div>	<p>a significant update to the current Official Plan.</p> <p>There are new housing policies to address growth and affordability.</p> <p>The Economic policies are new to support job growth in the County.</p>

Bernadette Robertson

Email of September 24, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	With such a limited amount of natural environment left in Essex County, I would like to see what we have preserved and protected. Does the official plan include	Please find the new Schedule B to the County Official Plan attached which shows the County of Essex Natural Heritage System. For a detailed explanation of the components of the Natural

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		restoring natural habitats and making them accessible to the public?	<p>Heritage System, I encourage you to check out Section 7.A Natural Heritage System in the new County of Essex Official Plan on the County webpage www.countyofessex.ca/officialplanreview (it's located at the bottom of the page).</p> <p>To simplify, no development or site alteration is permitted in the Natural Environment designation. No development or site alteration is permitted on lands within the "Natural Environment Overlay" unless it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the appropriate approval authority and/or local municipality that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions. The "Restoration Opportunities Overlay" applies to lands that do not contain existing natural heritage features; however they have been identified as potential areas to enhance the fragmented natural heritage system in the County. The "wildlife corridors" are based on the public Greenway Trails maintained by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. They were designed for recreation for people, however they are invaluable as wildlife corridors given the connectivity they provide between natural heritage features.</p> <p>As part of a development approval process, such as a plan of subdivision, there may be opportunities for the conveyance of lands within the natural heritage system to a public authority, such as the Town or Conservation Authority. Some natural heritage features are made publicly accessible on a case by</p>

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			<p>case basis such as the Conservation Areas in Essex County.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p>

Giovanni Abati (Email)

Email of September 23, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	I am extremely concerned with the State of Essex County's Environment. Essex County only has 8.6% natural land-use cover such as woodlots & wetlands. As a result, Essex County suffers from poor water quality, poor water quantity, heat islands, polluted air, polluted water and a decline of numerous vulnerable, threatened and endangered species.	<p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary. Note that the County has 20% mapped natural heritage including restoration areas. A new goal of 15% has been set for coverage.</p>
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	Essex County needs to FOCUS on LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL concerns, NOT MISGUIDED	<p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p>

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
		PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT plans. Bill 23 and other legislative changes are sacrificing Natural Spaces and Native Species, under the pretense of creating affordable housing. Building around natural spaces won't create affordable housing. These developments will be high-end homes in prime locations. They will create detrimental environmental effects (flooding, erosion, habitat loss, species decline, harm water quality) that tax payers will have to finance to mitigate.	Please refer to the Executive Summary. Revisions have been added to reflect no net loss in natural heritage.
Official Plan	Consultation	<p>You had 1 Public Meeting in McGregor, which I attended. I found it very uninformative and designed to get very little feedback (there should have been a presentation).</p> <p>This is a 30 year plan that will guide growth. (you would think you would want to hear from residents – not just developers that have lots to gain, at the expense of the County and its residents.</p> <p>People are very interested in the Official Plan. They just don't know that there is a review happening. (As an example: My booth at Windsor's Farmer's Market had 43 people submit comments in 5 hrs.).</p>	Please see the Executive Summary regarding engagement and consultation.
A1	Land Use	<p>Schedule A1 (Land-use Map)</p> <p>Highlights the lack of Natural Land-use</p> <p>Shows the threat that settlement areas pose to our natural areas</p>	Please see new Schedule B which now shows all natural heritage.
C1	Flooding / Regulated Areas	<p>Schedule C1 (Susceptible to Flooding) & Schedule C2 (Regulated Areas)</p> <p>Validates the reasons why we need Conservation Authorities and all of their services</p>	Your comment is noted. This plan has been prepared in consultation and engagement with the Conservation Authorities.

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
		They have expertise in identifying key habitats, restoring damaged lands and mitigating potential detrimental effects from human or natural activities	
C3	Source Protection	Schedule C3 (Intake Protection Zones), Schedule C4 (Aquifers) & Schedule C5 (Recharge Areas) These areas should be NON-AGRICULTURAL USE. Don't they provide and store our water resources? Need to protect these areas from pesticides, herbicides, animal waste and nutrient loading? Are there regulations to protect these areas from degradation, contamination or elimination.	This information comes from the Source Protection Plan which addresses all of the items which you have commented on. With regard to the areas on C3, C4 and C5 being non-agricultural uses – this is not recommended. Agriculture is an important priority for the County and Source Protection Planning is to protect municipally provided drinking water. Source Protection Plans do no limit agricultural use.
B3	Restoration Opportunities	Schedule B3 (Restoration Opportunities) Don't limit the amount of restoration areas, if someone wants to do something to benefit our natural world, lets encourage it. These areas need to be linked through protection and restoration efforts.	Schedule B3 is now part of Schedule B. Nothing in the Plan prevents additional restoration areas.
	Official Plan	MY GOALS (1): PROTECT OUR NATURAL AREAS (Currently 8.5% Natural Land-use Cover in Essex County) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need a moratorium on development in woodlots, wetlands, Conservation Areas, Federal, Provincial and Municipal Green Lands - Provide tax breaks, tax incentives for properties with these lands - Buy natural lands from property owners - Need to create links, connect our natural areas. 	Please see the responses regarding natural heritage in the Executive Summary.

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	Official Plan	<p>MY GOALS (2):</p> <p>SUPPORT THE ESSEX REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (ERCA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What will it cost each Municipality to provide the same services (ERCA) provides? - We need to RESTORE (ERCA)'s Powers to Regulate Development that negatively impacts our environment or our properties. - We need to RESTORE (ERCA)'s Right to appeal damaging developments. - We need to RESTORE (ERCA)'s ability to enter into Agreements with Municipalities to comment on development. (expert staff – local knowledge) - We need to RETAIN (ERCA)'s services (tree planting, education, natural area evaluations). - We need to PROTECT (ERCA)'s Lands (key habitats, flooding & erosion control) - We need to REMOVE (ERCA)'s prohibitions imposed by CA Act 	<p>The policies in the Plan work closely with the work of ERCA. Changing the powers of Conservation Authorities is not possible within an Official Plan or the jurisdiction of the County.</p>

Patricia McGorman

Delegation at Public Meeting, September 5, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	<p>Very concerned about the state of our environment, concerned that we don't have strong policies for development to not intrude on natural environment</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultation activities have been conducted to solicit input on the</p>

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	Consultation	<p>Provincially Significant Wetland is an area that provides a lot of water retention and a lot of biodiversity – very productive timber producing forest – these are not wastelands but are very productive environments.</p> <p>Commenting on the Official Plan, very disappointed in opportunities to make comment in an environment of showing what the plan is and talking to staff members. We attended in McGregor and wasn't a lot of information which seemed very limiting. To have the public meeting right after the long weekend – had to rush to get something in – very important document about how we develop our communities.</p> <p>2024 PPS will come into effect October 20, must be in compliance with it – we can do better than the PPS and we should. Most productive land in the best conditions in the County, there is a lot of opportunity for future employment. However if we don't look at how we're developing land, we can make some huge mistakes.</p> <p>Another disappointment is the environmental overlay, Schedule A1 – highlight this because we have very limited wetlands, prairies, forested land left. What we have left is very important for biodiversity and mature lands. When we have this shown as separate, it's confusing, there are provincially significant woodlands that aren't there, how are we working to protect and creating linkages if we can't see it, we should be able to see all of that.</p>	<p>vision and draft Official Plan policies, including but not limited to four in-person and online workshops, a stakeholder workshop, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting. Recognizing the length and complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes to the draft Official Plan policies in a manner that is accessible and user-friendly for the public – for those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information is available to the public on the County's Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p> <p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary.</p>

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		<p>Regarding intake protection zones – really emphasize these areas and make it clear. What's missing here is highly sensitive aquifers, people still use groundwater, it's a reserve for us.</p> <p>Emphasize that some of our biggest agricultural operations are limited – putting incompatible development will limit their ability to engage in agriculture.</p> <p>We're not going to be here decades from now – our responsibility is to look out for our future generations and we have the opportunity now to do so.</p>	<p>The Official Plan includes the following schedules as well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake Protection Zones are shown on Schedule C3; • Highly Vulnerable Aquifers are shown on Schedule C5; • Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas are also shown on Schedule C6. <p>Regarding agriculture, the Official Plan does require analysis of development in proximity to agriculture using the established provincial requirements (Minimum Distance Separation).</p>

John DeMarco (Letter)

Letter of September 16, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
Official Plan	Consultation	<p>To the Warden and Members of Essex County Council, This letter is a follow-up to my presentation to the Council on September 5 (attached), principally to elaborate on key recommendations.</p> <p><i>Concerning the consultation process</i></p> <p>1. The consultation process has been insufficient, almost invisible, for a document as important as the County Official Plan.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultation activities have been conducted to solicit input on the vision and draft Official Plan policies, including but not limited to four in-person and online workshops, a stakeholder workshop, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open House meeting, and the Public Meeting. Recognizing the length and complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes to the draft Official</p>

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		<p>2. It is suggested that a document or presentation should be produced that highlights any important differences between the old plan and the new draft, along with the reasoning behind the proposed changes.</p> <p>3. It is further suggested that there should be at least one in-person open house in each of the member municipalities. County Council members, as the responsible decision-makers, should be on hand to explain the intent of the new plan, answer questions and receive input from the public.</p>	<p>Plan policies in a manner that is accessible and user-friendly for the public – for those that were unable to attend the Open House, this information is available to the public on the County’s Official Plan Review webpage. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County’s webpage as well as the County’s social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County’s webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County’s webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p> <p>Lastly, the Policy Directions Report prepared as part of Phase 2 of the project is available on the County’s website for the public to review. This important document sets out the broad policy approaches to address requirements in the new Official Plan. The Policy Directions Report describes the new Official Plan major policy areas, recommended policy approaches, and identifies where the existing policies of the current Official Plan will be incorporated. It is a key document that highlights the changes between the current and the new Official</p>

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
			Plan, and the rationale for the proposed policy directions.
Official Plan	Natural Heritage	<p><i>Concerning environmental protection, restoration and reconciliation</i></p> <p>4. It appears that the latest draft OP does not contain any new provisions to improve on historical ecological conservation and restoration efforts, which most people consider to be insufficient.</p> <p>5. It is therefore recommended to start a new co creation process on the future environmental vision for Essex County, involving First Nations and a range of stakeholders in a spirit of reconciliation.</p> <p>6. Since the above-mentioned process will take time, and in order not to delay enacting the positive aspects of the latest draft OP, it is suggested that the Council should adopt strong interim measures based on existing OP map layers, so as to hold the line against present development pressures on the Natural Heritage System. As a reminder, the existing Essex County NHS consists of three layers, with decreasing levels of protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Environment Designation: the highest level of protection, but very limited in extent • Natural Environment Overlay: a weaker level of protection for other existing fragments of native vegetation, which are still being eroded 	<p><u>REVISIONS TO OFFICIAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary for changes to the Official Plan since the public meeting.</p> <p>Regarding the request that Council place a “hold” on all designations, the existing Official Plan is in effect. Council does not have the legislative authority to prevent an application to change the designations or overlays.</p>

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration Opportunities: a great concept (although in need of improvement), which unfortunately has been almost completely ignored in practice <p>The proposal is that the Council should immediately (even before adopting any version of the draft OP) pass an amendment to the existing OP, placing a Hold designation on all of the 2nd and 3rd NHS layers, but prohibit any rezoning or change in land use until such time as a new environmental plan is developed and enacted.</p> <p>7. It is further proposed that Essex County Council should pass a resolution in support of creating effective ecological corridors connecting the future Ojibway National Urban Park with Point Pelee National Park as well as other critical habitat areas in the County. The Council should also formally request a “seat at the table” with Parks Canada, First Nations and other stakeholders to be directly involved in planning for a great National Park that will be an asset to all member communities. With the recently announced federal budget to plan and expand the ONUP, there is also an opportunity for the County to request financial support from Parks Canada to develop the environmental component of the new OP in a way that incorporates a vision of the National Parks within a substantially restored landscape.</p>	

Cathy Lapain

Email of September 17, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	Natural Heritage	<p>Are you satisfied that we have enough protected natural areas in Essex County? Are you not concerned about your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren's etc. future? Will the new Official Plan do anything to step up the effort to protect and restore habitat in Essex County?</p> <p>Essex County has very little forest coverage, this is unacceptable. In order to provide clean air in our future the forest in our area should be increased to 30% coverage.</p> <p>Your official plan completely misses the opportunity to improve our system of protecting and restoring the environment.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Restoration is included in Schedule B and the policy updates commit to funding restoration work in partnership with landowners.</p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary for updates to the Official Plan since the public meeting.</p>

Rachael Mills

Email of September 18th, 2024

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	Natural Heritage	I am writing to you regarding the recent Statutory Public meeting on the Essex County Official Plan draft, held on	Thank you for your comments. Throughout the Official Plan process, a variety of consultations

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
	and Consultation	<p>September 5th, 2024. I am hopeful that the following will be taken into consideration.</p> <p>The public consultation period for this overarching and comprehensive planning document should be considered inadequate due to the minimal public outreach methods and recurrence utilized along with the provision of only one open house for the entire population of Essex County.</p> <p>I attended the open house in McGregor and was concerned that, while the information was visually well-organized, there was no attempt by the available staff to engage with me, nor was there a summary of the key differences, improvements and changes between the current Official Plan and the draft that is now in review. Both large documents.</p> <p>I was relieved that during the recent County Council meeting there seemed to be an emphasis on the importance of public consultation and on the feedback gathered that will ultimately help guide and evolve the draft plan to a more robust version. I strongly urge that a variety of recurrent attempts and opportunities be made to engage with the public for feedback on this draft plan prior to it being adopted by the County Council. An in-person open house for each of the municipalities would be appropriate.</p> <p>Additionally, I am extremely concerned with the fleeting yet attainable opportunities to be forward-looking</p>	<p>activities have been conducted to solicit input on the vision and draft Official Plan policies, these include but are not limited to four in-person and online workshops, various meetings with partner municipalities, the Open house meeting, and the Public Meeting.</p> <p>Recognizing the complexity of the draft Official Plan, the Open House meeting outlined the key changes being introduced in the Draft Official Plan in an accessible and user-friendly manner. For those unable to attend the Open House, this information is available in the County Website. An online feedback form was also provided through the Open House presentation.</p> <p>Information regarding the Official Plan process is provided on the County's webpage as well as the County's social media pages. Comments are invited from residents throughout the various stages of the project, and timely notifications on the draft Official Plan process are provided through a project email list to those who register, as outlined on the County's webpage. All reports, plans, and schedules are posted in a timely manner and are available on the County's webpage to the public. Furthermore, notice has been provided in accordance with the <i>Planning Act</i>.</p> <p>Please refer to the Executive Summary for updates to the Official Plan since the public meeting.</p>

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		<p>leaders in the protection, restoration and enhancement of our natural environment here in Essex County. I will proceed under the assumption that we can recognize the immense benefits of a healthy, connected natural environment when navigating the challenges of a changing and unpredictable climate crisis. It is our responsibility to mitigate all crises impacting us, housing is not the only one that will affect our future generations.</p> <p>I acknowledge there is some positive language that should provide reassurance that our current Official Plan is “Strong” enough for the environmental aspects. However, it is not sufficiently translated into action in our County and we are continuing to see fragmentation and loss. I urge that the Official Plan draft have a stronger set of policies and a commitment to safeguarding the three levels of protection (<i>Natural Environment Designation</i>, <i>Natural Environment Overlay</i> and the <i>Restoration Opportunities Overlay</i>). This will ensure that our natural environment is not just protected but restored, enhanced and connected in collaboration with First Nations and other relevantly knowledgeable stakeholders, guiding us towards halting and reversing the further fragmentation and degradation of our local environments, biodiversity and water sources. Explore local consultation and studies from a diverse lens of perspectives to ensure a robust plan that takes into account various crises, and how best to move forward. We can find inspiration in other successes like Toronto's Rouge National Urban Park and the Greenbelt. With the Ojibway National Urban Park being welcomed to our</p>	

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
		<p>community, we can seek support and resources for connectivity initiatives to the rest of the County's natural habitats that are at risk and fragmented.</p> <p>As we expand, I am hopeful that through collaboration and the intentional restoration of the ecological integrity, we can honour these areas for their inherent <i>value</i> to us and countless other species who call this place home. With proper planning and visionary development, we can achieve a range of appropriate homes and dwellings in the right locations in our communities, alongside connected and thriving natural corridors. Rather than merely protecting the bare minimum of significant natural areas, we should expand to include areas with the potential to be restored into a thriving environment with a focus on connectivity and essential linkages (<i>Restoration Opportunities Overlay</i>). We should encourage both existing and new developments to incorporate green infrastructure, low- impact and renewable practices, native plant and tree planting and preservation, and a naturalized landscaping design that will aid with flooding, water conservation, reduced chemical use, and will support local biodiversity.</p> <p>I was reassured to see some council members address environmental concerns and acknowledge that there is a need to further strengthen the current policies and guidelines in the Official Plan, which do not appear to have been improved upon in the draft. If we move forward without stronger policies and a clear vision for our natural environment and its connectivity throughout</p>	

#	General Topic Area	Description of Issue Raised	Response
		<p>the county, we risk losing the opportunity to ever do so. These are unprecedented times, and there is an urgent need to change the status quo of not prioritizing the conservation, restoration and connection of our natural landscape. It is essential to incorporate spaces designed for human recreation while allowing other natural areas to be carefully stewarded and thrive. Our community members care deeply about our natural places and extremely unique biodiversity, especially when given this opportunity to believe and see that it can be prioritized in our County's Official Plan and translated into action, not just language on paper.</p>	