

Protecting the Moraine:

Working to ensure responsible development for Clair-Maltby

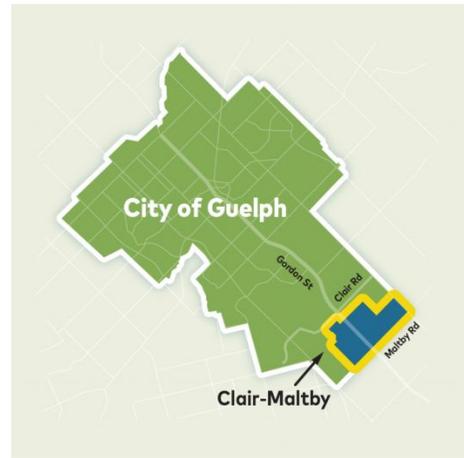
The City of Guelph is in the midst of developing the Clair-Maltby Secondary Plan (CMSP), a study to help Guelph plan development of the last greenfield area remaining within the City, by establishing an appropriate range and mix of land use designations to support future urban growth.

The study area (initially 520 ha, but now 415 ha after the removal of the Rolling Hills neighbourhood from the plan) is located in the south end of Guelph and is bounded by Clair Road to the north, Victoria Road to the east, Maltby Road to the south and the eastern limits of the Southgate Business Park to the west.

The CMSP area contains an extensive wetland network, the Hall's Pond wetland complex, which has several provincially designated significant wetlands, as well as significant woodlands, wildlife corridors, and important groundwater recharge areas for the Paris-Galt moraine where part of Guelph and surrounding areas' drinking water comes from. It is also home to several provincially designated cultural heritage areas, including the remarkable Marcolongo farm which contains numerous wetlands, ancient trees, heritage buildings, and species at risk.

In early April 2018 the City fast-tracked its plans to review design alternatives and gather public input on initial development plans for the CMSP study area. City staff presented three varying land use alternatives to the public, ranging from a low density 'Featuring the Green' alternative (supporting approximately 10,000 new residents) to a high density 'Connected and Urban' alternative (supporting approximately 21,000 new residents). The public's input was received through several hours of design charrettes the first week of April. But by April 9, City staff had finalized the recommended land use plan to present to Council for approval with the highest-intensity alternative, ignoring the green priorities that were preferred and promoted by Nature Guelph in our comment letter.

Community members were shocked by the sudden push to shorten the timelines for the CMSP process from 4 years to 3 years, and many residents in the affected area were given only a few days notice that this plan was being presented to Council for approval. Concerned citizens filled the gallery for the mid-April Council meeting and several delegates spoke to concerns about the process, the timelines, the inclusion of the



Rolling Hills neighbourhood, and most importantly to nature lovers, a road that was proposed to cut right through the protected buffer area of a provincially significant wetland, and the cultural heritage landscape of the Marcolongo farm (see Figure 2).

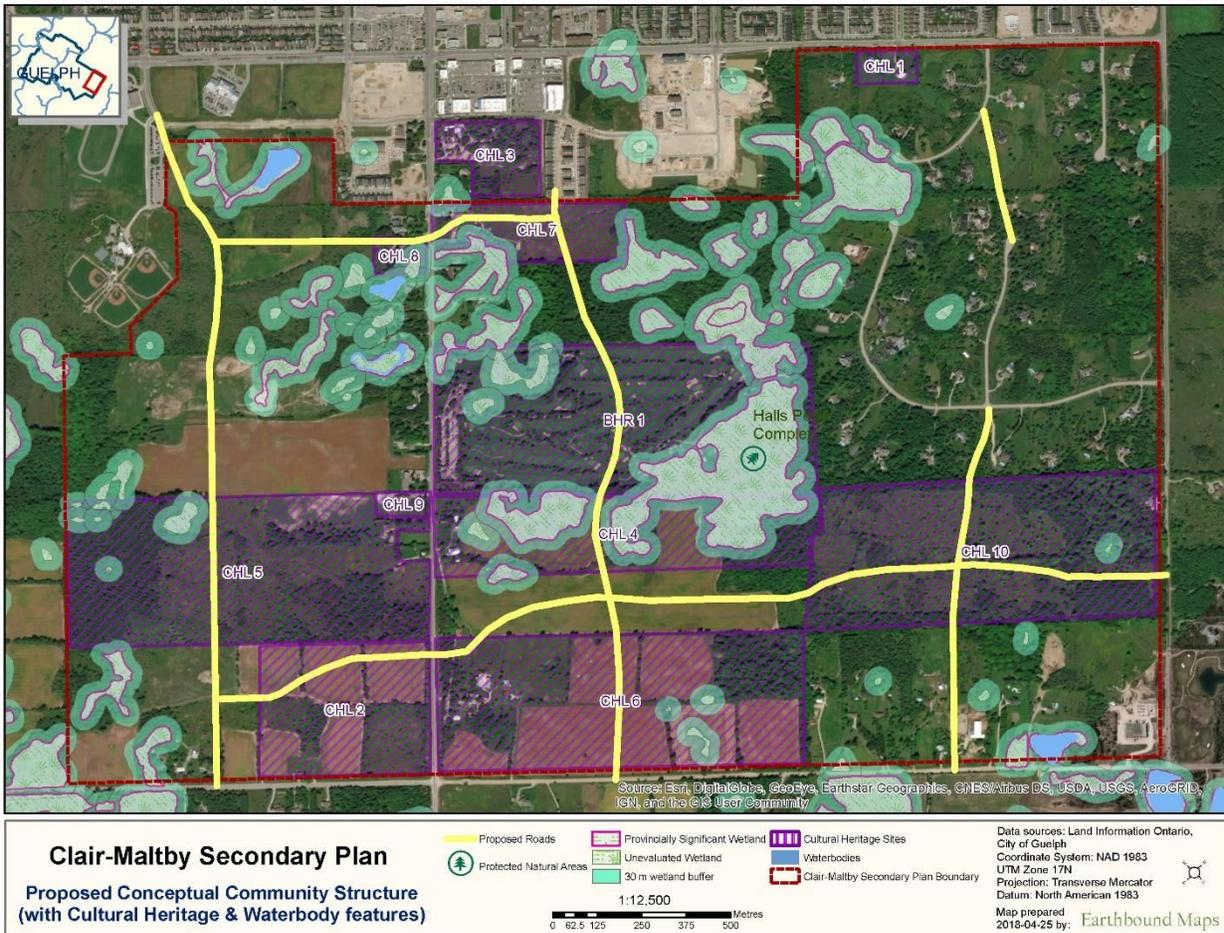


Figure 2. Proposed road locations with wetlands and cultural heritage properties (Conceptual Community Structure April 9, 2018)

Protect Our Moraine Coalition Formed

Council heard the community's concerns and directed staff to make revisions to the conceptual structure. A revised plan was released to the public May 31, with the offending road and the Rolling Hills neighbourhood removed from the plan. The revised plan was set to be presented to Council for approval in June, but many still had significant concerns.

Key environmental studies looking at the natural heritage significance and sensitivity, wildlife corridors, and analysis of surface and ground water were not yet complete, nor had they been reviewed by the City's Environmental Advisory Committee before this

plan was being presented for approval. This proposed land use plan, once implemented, had the potential for very significant impact to the integrity of the wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitat and groundwater recharge areas. There was also grave concern that the public was being asked to weigh in on the design alternatives without actually having any understanding of the design limitations presented by the Natural Heritage System features in the area.

Throughout April a small working group from *Nature Guelph* was active in writing letters and making delegations to Council, and it was clear there were many other citizens and organizations that were equally concerned about how this study was evolving. By late April the **Protect Our Moraine** (POM) coalition was born. The group is steered by representatives of *Nature Guelph*, Wellington Water Watchers, the Marcolongo family, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Guelph Urban Forest Friends, and Families for Rolling Hills, as well as a handful of other concerned citizens. Each group has their own particular interests, and all are united in concern over development impacts on the Paris-Galt moraine and our drinking water.

Addressing City Council

In June *Nature Guelph*, POM and other concerned citizens made delegations to Guelph City Council at two different meetings speaking to concerns about

- the rushing of the process
- important decisions being made on the plan without all the key environmental science being reviewed
- the plan not meeting minimum City standards for parkland
- community and First Nations consultation being lacking
- and an appeal to Council to provide more governance leadership on the plan

On June 25th City Council voted to approve the Clair-Maltby Secondary Plan Preferred Community Structure as the basis for detailed technical analysis, modeling and the development of draft policies and land use plans in Phase 3 of the project. Though *Nature Guelph* was disappointed that they City voted to move forward without all the key environmental studies being released for review, we were encouraged that Council did include a number of measures to address some of our concerns.

The decision included provisions that the master servicing plans of Phase 3 would not proceed until all characterization reports were complete and reviewed by key stakeholders (GRCA, POM, *Nature Guelph*, etc.), and the public was engaged via focus groups. The motion also included a provision to formally seat a member of POM to the Clair-Maltby Secondary Plan Technical Advisory Group. Val Wyatt from *Nature Guelph* has been designated as POM's representative, so we are confident we have a sharp

eye at the table to ensure that protection of the natural heritage features of the area is given top priority.

Next Steps

As the City moves into Phase 3 of the plan, POM and Nature Guelph continue to be actively involved to make sure that planning proceeds in a way that follows the City’s “Environment First” motto, and we don’t end up with a “condo canyon” as the south entrance way to the city. The coalition has been active through the summer to refine our position and develop a campaign for the upcoming municipal election this fall.

Key concerns that we want to make sure candidates and voters understand include:

- population density for the development must be <12,000 residents to avoid permanent impacts on the natural heritage system
- current proposed parkland for the area is woefully inadequate
- the City’s Official Plans dictates that Greenfield Areas be “planned and designed to promote the development of identifiable, pedestrian oriented neighbourhood scale ‘urban villages’ “

For more information on the campaign or to join us, visit our website:

<https://www.protectourmoraine.ca/>

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