Introduction

What is an Official Plan?

An official plan is a municipal policy document which sets out the community’s vision and strategies for land use planning and development. It guides local decisions on matters such as: managing growth, providing housing and schools, coordinating infrastructure, supporting employment areas and economic development, optimizing transportation systems, the design of public spaces, protecting natural areas and heritage, and supporting agricultural and rural areas.

Official Plan Review

The Township of Adjala-Tosorontio is currently reviewing its official plan. This is an exciting opportunity to consider future directions for land use, development, and resource conservation over the next 20 years.

The township’s most recent official plan was adopted in 2008. Since the Planning Act requires municipalities to review their official plans at least every five years, it is now timely review the official plan to ensure it conforms with provincial and county plans. The evolving provincial policy context has resulted in significant changes and new requirements which must be incorporated into the updated official plan.

We want to hear from you! Tell us what you think about the proposed policy directions for the township official plan. You may reach the Township Office at:

7855 Sideroad 30,
Alliston, ON L9R 1V1
705-434-5055
comments@adjtosopreview.org
adjtosopreview.org

Provincial Planning Framework

In Ontario, there is a hierarchical, top-down, policy-led framework to shape land use planning. The planning framework is generally administered at three levels: 1) provincial, 2) upper-tier municipality, and 3) lower-tier municipality.

Provincial

At the provincial level, land use planning is guided through the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and four provincial land use plans— including 1) Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, 2) Greenbelt Plan, 3) Niagara Escarpment Plan, and 4) Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The province is currently undertaking a Coordinated Land Use Planning Review to recommend changes to the four land use plans. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs is responsible for land use planning in Ontario.

Pohtions of Adjala-Tosorontio are subject to the policies of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and all of Adjala-Tosorontio is subject to the policies of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. New provincial legislation and plans, such as Bill 73 (Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, 2015), also apply in Adjala-Tosorontio.

Upper-tier Municipal

At the upper-tier municipal level, counties or regional municipalities have official plans which conform with provincial legislation and plans, and address regional matters. The county official plan sets out a broad land use structure and growth management approach which local municipalities will build on and conform with in more detailed lower-tier official plans. The County of Simcoe is responsible for planning at the upper-tier level. The new County of Simcoe Official Plan was recently approved in December 2016.

Lower-tier Municipal

At the lower-tier municipal level, cities or townships have official plans which conform with provincial and upper-tier legislation and plans, and address local matters in more detail than upper-tier plans. The most recent Adjala-Tosorontio official plan was adopted in 2008, so it must be updated to reflect changes in provincial and upper-tier policies.

Policy Discussion Paper Format

As part of the Official Plan Review process, 20 Policy Discussion Papers have been prepared which comprehensively consider a full range of municipal policy themes. The objective for these Policy Discussion Papers is to outline the provincial and upper-tier policy requirements which must be addressed, as well as optional policy directions and
Proposed policies for the draft township official plan are provided in each Policy Discussion Paper, followed by background information on provincial, county, and existing local policies and requirements.

Provincial policies examined as a part of this official plan review primarily focused on the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Other provincial policies and plans were reviewed, including: Planning Act, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Ontario Heritage Act, Aggregate Resources Act, and the Ontario Climate Change Strategy.

County policies and strategies were assessed, including the County of Simcoe Official Plan, County Transportation Master Plan, and County 10-year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Policies in the Adjala-Tosorontio official plan have been comprehensively reviewed to determine consistency and conformity with upper-tier plans. Some township policies will require substantial updates, while others may remain exactly the same. Proposed policies are provided to generate community discussion and provide a basis for development of the draft Adjala-Tosorontio official plan.
Natural Heritage

The Township of Adjala-Tosorontio is comprised of many significant environmental features, including forests, streams, woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Residents and visitors value the natural environment and its contribution to the character of the community and ecological and human health objectives. Natural heritage planning involves a system-based approach to the identification, protection, and wise use of resources. Natural heritage systems planning establishes an interconnected web of core natural areas, buffers, and corridors which support vital ecosystem services, such as flooding and erosion control, wildlife habitat, and improved air quality. The establishment of an urban open space system within built-up areas – which includes parks, common courtyards, rooftop gardens, and green infrastructure – can contribute to a connected natural heritage system.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) requires that natural features and areas must be conserved for the long term. It also provides that “the diversity and connectivity of natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems, should be maintained, restored or, where possible, improved, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features” (PPS, 2014 2.1.2).

The County of Simcoe has identified and mapped
key features and functions of the natural heritage system, which are designated and mapped as Greenlands in the County’s Official Plan. The Greenlands designation also includes linkage areas that the County “has identified as an area in which it would be desirable to restore lost or severed natural corridors through natural succession and/or supplementary planting” (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.16). The County requires that local municipalities must include policies in their Official Plans for linkage areas.

Through the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review, the Province is considering a number of changes to natural heritage systems planning policies in the Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including the identification of a provincial natural heritage system. New policies in the Proposed Growth Plan will require the Township to implement the Province's natural heritage system and apply appropriate designations to maintain, restore, or improve the diversity and connectivity of the system and the long-term ecological or hydrologic functions of the features and areas. A major change to the Growth Plan also includes the identification and protection of key hydrologic features and key hydrologic areas, in addition to key natural heritage features.

**Proposed Objectives**

The following objectives are those which are being considered for the new Township of Adjala-Tosorontio Official Plan. They have been developed through an examination of existing Official Plan objectives and principles, review of the Adjala-Tosorontio Community-Based Strategic Plan, and input received from council, the public, agencies, and Township staff.

- To protect natural heritage features and their ecological functions for the long term
- To maintain, restore, or where possible, improve the diversity and connectivity of natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features

**Proposed Policies**

The following policies are those which are being considered for the new Township of Adjala-Tosorontio Official Plan. They have been developed through:

- Reviewing existing Official Plan policies and updating them to comply with new provincial and county policy requirements
- Input received from council, the public, agencies, and municipal staff

Policies that are strictly mandated by the province or county appear in **bold** whereas those that have been municipally derived appear in plain text.

**Greenlands**

**Location**

1. The Greenlands designation, which identifies the natural heritage system for the County of Simcoe and is mapped in Schedule X of this Plan, primarily includes the following natural heritage features and areas, wherever they occur: (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.8.10)

    a. Habitat of endangered species and threatened species;
b. Significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, other coastal wetlands, and all wetlands 2.0 ha or larger in area which have been determined to be locally significant, including but not limited to evaluated wetlands;

c. Significant woodlands;

d. Significant valleylands;

e. Significant wildlife habitat;

f. Significant Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs);

g. Regional Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs);

h. Fish Habitat;

i. Linkage areas; and,

j. Public lands as defined in the Public Lands Act. (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.8.10)

2. The mapping of the Greenlands designation on Schedules X to X is approximate, and does not reflect specific features such as habitat of endangered species and threatened species, or new or more accurate information identifying natural heritage features and areas. Any minor adjustment to the Greenlands designation as determined through more detailed mapping, field surveys, the results of an EIS, or information received from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry or conservation authorities will not require an amendment to this Plan. (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.8.11)

Principles

3. Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term (PPS 2014 2.2.1)

4. Natural features and areas, and hydrologic features and areas, will be protected by the Greenlands designation of this Plan (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.8.9 & 3.8.10)

5. The diversity and connectivity of natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems, should be maintained, restored or, where possible, improved, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features. (PPS 2014 2.1.2)

6. The Township is encouraged to identify natural heritage features and areas that complement, link, or enhance natural systems. (Growth Plan 2006 4.2.1.3)

7. The Township, with Conservation Authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties, will work to develop a system of publicly accessible parkland, open space and trails that:

   a. Clearly demarcates where public access is and is not permitted

   b. Is based on a co-ordinated approach to trail planning and development

   c. Is based on good land stewardship practices for public and private lands. (Growth Plan 2006 4.2.1.4)
d. The Township will similarly work toward establishment of an urban open space system within built-up areas, which may include rooftop gardens, communal courtyards, and public parks. (Growth Plan 2006 4.2.1.5)

Permitted Uses

8. Natural heritage conservation and forestry uses are permitted in all designations of this Plan, subject to Section X and Township bylaws. (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.18)

9. Low-intensity recreational uses

10. Existing and new agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, and on-farm diversified uses, subject to the policies of this Plan (Proposed Growth Plan 2016 4.2.2.4)

Development Policies

11. Within the Greenlands designation, a proposal for development or site alteration will demonstrate that:

   a. There will be no negative impacts on key hydrologic features or key natural heritage features and their functions;

   b. Connectivity for the movement of plants and animals along the natural heritage system, and between key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features located within 240 metres of each other will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced;

   c. The removal of other natural features not identified as key natural heritage features should be avoided, and the features should be incorporated into the planning and design of proposed uses where possible;

   d. The disturbed area of the site, including buildings and structures, will not exceed 25 per cent (40 per cent for golf courses) of the total developable area;

   e. The impervious surface will not exceed 10 per cent of the total developable area;

   f. Uses will be planned to optimize the compatibility of the project with the natural surroundings; and

   g. At least 30 per cent of the total developable area of the site will remain or be returned to natural self-sustaining vegetation, except where specified in accordance with the policies in subsection 4.2.8; (Proposed Growth Plan 2016 4.2.2.4.b)

12. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant wetlands (PPS 2014 2.1.4.a & b & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.i)

13. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in the following areas, unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions:

   a. Significant woodlands (PPS 2014 2.1.5.b & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.ii);
b. Significant valleylands (PPS 2014 2.1.5.c & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.ii);

c. Significant wildlife habitat (PPS 2014 2.1.5.d & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.ii); and

d. Significant areas of natural and scientific interest; (PPS 2014 2.1.5.e & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.ii)

14. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in fish habitat except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements. (PPS 2014 2.1.6 & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.iv)

15. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in habitat of endangered species and threatened species, except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements. (PPS 2014 2.1.7 & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.v)

16. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted on adjacent lands to the natural heritage features and areas unless the ecological function of the adjacent lands has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or on their ecological functions. (PPS 2014 2.1.8) Adjacent lands shall generally be considered to be:

a. Within 120 metres of habitat of endangered species and threatened species,

b. Significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, wetlands 2.0 hectares or larger

c. Determined to be locally significant by an approved EIS, significant woodlands,

d. Significant wildlife habitat, significant areas of natural and scientific interest –

e. Life science, significant valleylands, and fish habitat (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.vi.a);

f. Within 50 metres of significant areas of natural and scientific interest – earth

17. Science (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.vi.b);

a. A reduced adjacent lands from the above may be considered based on the nature of intervening land uses. The extent of the reduced area will be determined by the approval authority in consultation with the applicant prior to the submission of a development application, and supported by an EIS, demonstrating there will be no negative impacts beyond the proposed reduced adjacent lands area. (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.vi.c).

b. The Township may, based on an environmental impact study, establish alternative standards for development within the natural heritage system outside of the key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features and associated vegetation protection zones, provided that any alternative standards will maintain, restore or enhance the diversity and connectivity of the system and the long-term ecological or hydrologic functions of the features. (Proposed Growth Plan 2016 4.2.2.4.d)

Existing and New Agricultural Use Policies (Proposed Growth Plan 2016)

18. Nothing in the above policies is intended to limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue. (PPS 2014 2.1.9 & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15)

19. New buildings or structures for agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses are permitted in Greenlands but shall comply with the following requirements:
Key Hydrogeologic Features, Key Hydrologic Areas, and Key Natural Heritage Features

20. Development or site alteration is not permitted in key hydrologic features or key natural heritage features, with the exception that expansions to existing buildings and structures for agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and residential dwellings may be considered within key hydrologic features or key natural heritage features and their associated vegetation protection zones if it is demonstrated that there is no alternative, and the expansion in the feature is minimized and mitigated and, in the vegetation protection zone, is directed away from the feature to the maximum extent possible.

Lands Adjacent to Key Hydrogeologic Features and Key Natural Heritage Features

21. A proposal for development or site alteration within 120 metres of a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature will require a natural heritage evaluation or hydrologic evaluation that identifies a vegetation protection zone. The vegetation protection zone for key hydrologic features, fish habitat, and significant woodlands will be no less than 30 metres wide. The vegetation protection zone will be established to achieve and be maintained as natural, self-sustaining vegetation.

22. Such evaluations will identify any additional restrictions to be applied before, during and after development to protect the hydrologic functions and ecological functions of the feature.

23. No development will be permitted in the vegetation protection zone with the exception that expansions to existing buildings and structures for agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and residential dwellings may be considered if it is demonstrated that there is no alternative, and the expansion in the feature is minimized and mitigated and, in the vegetation protection zone, is directed away from the feature to the maximum extent possible.

24. A natural heritage evaluation will not be required for a proposal for development or site alteration on a site where the only key natural heritage feature is the habitat of endangered species and threatened species. In such instances the requirements of the Endangered Species Act shall apply.

25. New buildings and structures for agricultural uses will be required to provide a 30 metre vegetation protection zone from a key hydrologic feature or key natural heritage feature, but are exempt from the requirement of establishing a condition of natural self-sustaining vegetation if the land is, and will continue to be, used for agricultural purposes. Despite this exemption, agricultural uses should pursue best management practices to protect or restore key hydrologic features or key natural heritage feature and their functions;

26. A natural heritage evaluation or hydrologic evaluation is not required for new buildings and structures for agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses located within 120 metres of a key hydrologic feature or key natural heritage feature, provided that these features and their functions will be protected from the impacts of the proposal by meeting the following conditions:

   a. A 30 metre vegetation protection zone is maintained and the key hydrologic feature or key natural heritage feature is maintained;

   b. Connectivity between the key hydrologic features and key natural heritage features can be maintained and where feasible, improved;

   c. The new building or structure is located away from the key hydrologic feature or key natural heritage feature to the maximum extent possible, and where possible clustered with existing buildings or structures;
d. Best management practices are pursued to protect or restore key hydrologic features or key natural heritage features and functions;

e. Measures are put in place, especially for stormwater management and erosion control, so that potential impacts of the building or structure on the key hydrologic feature or key natural heritage feature and functions will be mitigated, before, during and after construction; and

f. The Township has considered the following in relation to determining any potential impacts of the proposal:

i. The nature and purpose of the building or structure;

ii. The size and scale of the building or structure, including where appropriate, the cumulative impact of existing development;

iii. The site characteristics such as topography; and

iv. The sensitivity of the adjacent key hydrologic feature or key natural heritage feature.

**Linkages**

27. It is a goal of this Plan to, where possible, restore and maintain the connectivity and linkages between natural heritage features and areas. As such, Greenlands mapping includes potential linkage areas which have been identified as an area in which it would be desirable to restore lost or severed natural corridors through natural succession and/or supplementary planting.

28. Development affecting linkage areas, as identified in an environmental impact study, shall ensure that linkage functions are maintained through consideration of the following:

a. The nature and type of natural features which could serve a linkage function;

b. Whether it is feasible to maintain, restore or where possible improve ecological linkages which connect natural heritage features and areas given the function of the linkage and the nature of adjoining lands;

c. The ecological function of the linkage and the types of flora and fauna that may use the linkage;

d. The size and extent of linkage necessary to achieve the function; and

e. The ability to realize the necessary size along the extent of the linkage.

29. Refinement of the limits of the linkage areas may be achieved through approved planning applications supported by appropriate technical studies as required by the Township and other approval authorities. Such studies may include an EIS, master environmental servicing studies or subwatershed studies.

30. If the technical study concludes to the satisfaction of the Township, and other approval authorities, that the linkage, or lands adjacent to the linkage does not serve an ecological function or will be maintained, restored or where possible improved, then development within or adjacent to the linkage may proceed without an Amendment to this Plan. The land use designation abutting the linkage area shall apply unless otherwise determined through the planning application process. (County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.16)
Environmental Impact Statement

31. Generally, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) shall include the following:

   a. Description of the study area and the natural heritage system context;

   b. Description of the development proposal;

   c. Identification of those natural features and ecological functions likely to be affected by the development;

   d. Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on key natural features and ecological functions;

   e. Identification of potential mitigation requirements and monitoring requirements;

   f. Consider opportunities for remediation and enhancement where impairment has occurred; and

   g. Results and recommendations. (Township Official Plan 6.4.11)

32. The issues to be addressed within an EIS shall include, but not be limited to, those listed above in the Greenland policies. Notwithstanding policies regarding the extent of adjacent lands, the functions of the feature shall determine the boundaries of the area considered to be adjacent to the feature and representative of the area of study for the EIS, as well as the range of issues to be addressed within the EIS, as determined by the Township and the Conservation Authority. (Township Official Plan 4.11.5)

Proposed Definitions

Adjacent lands: for the purposes of natural heritage features and areas, means those lands contiguous to a specific natural heritage feature or area where it is likely that development or site alteration would have a negative impact on the feature or area. (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan 3.3.15.vi)

Adverse effects: as defined in the Environmental Protection Act, means one or more of: a) impairment of the quality of the natural environment for any use that can be made of it; b) injury or damage to property or plant or animal life; (PPS 2014)

Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI): means areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features that have been identified as having life science or earth science values related to protection, scientific study or education. (PPS 2014)

Ecological function: means the natural processes, products or services that living and non-living environments provide or perform within or between species, ecosystems and landscapes. These may include biological, physical and socioeconomic interactions. (PPS 2014)

Endangered species: means a species that is listed or categorized as an “Endangered Species” on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ official Species at Risk list, as updated and amended from time to time. (PPS 2014)

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): means a report or document that identifies and describes natural heritage features and areas and ecological functions and determines and evaluates the implications of proposed development or infrastructure and its interactions with the natural heritage features and areas and ecological functions of an area. An EIS must determine whether the likelihood of negative impacts
occurring on the natural heritage features and areas and ecological functions is definite or probable if the
development proceeds under a given proposed design. The EIS will determine the need for modifications
to proposed plans, buffers, and other mitigation strategies to demonstrate that there will be no negative
impacts on natural heritage features and areas and ecological functions of the County or local natural
heritage systems. In the case of infrastructure, the EIS will demonstrate only such negative impacts as are
consistent with Sections 3.8.17 through 3.8.20 of this Plan. (County of Simcoe OP)

**Environmentally Sensitive Areas:** are areas supporting fragile ecosystems susceptible, prone, or
vulnerable to human impact and/or development pressures. (County of Simcoe OP)

**Fish habitat:** means as defined in the Fisheries Act, c. F-14, means spawning grounds and nursery, rearing,
food supply, and migration areas on which fish depend directly or indirectly in order to carry out their life
processes. (County of Simcoe OP)

**Habitat of endangered species and threatened species:** means a) with respect to a species listed on the
Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species for which a regulation made under
clause 55(1)(a) of the Endangered Species Act, 2007 is in force, the area prescribed by that regulation as
the habitat of the species; or b) with respect to any other species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario
List as an endangered or threatened species, an area on which the species depends, directly or indirectly,
to carry on its life processes, including life processes such as reproduction, rearing, hibernation, migration
or feeding, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; and places in the areas described in
clause (a) or (b), whichever is applicable, that are used by members of the species as dens, nests, hibernacula
or other residences. (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

**Hydrologic function:** means the functions of the hydrological cycle that include the occurrence, circulation,
distribution and chemical and physical properties of water on the surface of the land, in the soil and
underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere, and water's interaction with the environment including its relation
to living things (PPS 2014)

**Key Hydrologic Areas:** Significant groundwater recharge areas, highly vulnerable aquifers and significant
surface water contribution areas that are necessary for the ecologic and hydrological integrity of a watershed.
The identification and delineation of key hydrologic areas will be informed by watershed planning, and
other evaluations and assessments. (Proposed Growth Plan, 2016)

**Key Hydrologic Features:** Permanent streams, intermittent streams, inland lakes, seepage area and
springs and wetlands. The identification and delineation of key hydrologic features will be informed by
watershed planning, and other evaluations and assessments. (Proposed Growth Plan, 2016)

**Key Natural Heritage Features:** Habitat of endangered species and threatened species; fish habitat;
wetlands; life science areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs), significant valleylands, significant
woodlands; significant wildlife habitat; sand barrens, savannahs, and tallgrass prairies; and alvars.
(Proposed Growth Plan, 2016)

**Natural heritage features and areas (Natural heritage):** means features and areas, including significant
wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, other coastal wetlands in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E, fish habitat,
significant woodlands and significant valleylands in Ecoregions 6E and 7E (excluding islands in Lake Huron
and the St. Marys River), habitat of endangered species and threatened species, significant wildlife habitat,
and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, which are important for their environmental and
social values as a legacy of the natural landscapes of an area. (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

**Natural heritage system:** means a system made up of natural heritage features and areas, and linkages
intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are
necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous
species, and ecosystems. These systems can include natural heritage features and areas, federal and
provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored
or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue. The Province has a recommended approach for identifying natural heritage systems, but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used. (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

**Negative impacts:** means a) in regard to policy 2.2 of the PPS, degradation to the quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their related hydrologic functions, due to single, multiple or successive development or site alteration activities; b) in regard to fish habitat, any permanent alteration to, or destruction of fish habitat, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the Fisheries Act; c) in regard to other natural heritage features and areas, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or ecological functions for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive development or site alteration activities (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

**Sensitive:** in regard to surface water features and ground water features, means areas that are particularly susceptible to impacts from activities or events including, but not limited to, water withdrawals, and additions of pollutants. (County of Simcoe OP)

**Significant:** means a) in regard to wetlands, coastal wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest, an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time; b) in regard to woodlands, an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; (PPS 2014)

**Significant woodlands:** means an area which is:

a. Ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history;

b. Functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or

c. Economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history.

These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Local municipalities may map significant woodlands in local official plans. Significant woodlands can also be determined through an Environmental Impact Statement. Local municipalities shall determine whether a woodlot is a significant woodland within a settlement area based on criteria established within the local official plan. Outside of a settlement area, where a woodlot is determined not to be ecologically or economically important, its potential importance shall be determined by a minimum patch established in the local municipal official plans. In determining the minimum patch size in local municipal official plans, the following size criteria established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry will be used unless appropriate justification is provided to use different criteria:

a. Where woodland cover is less than 5% of the land cover in the local municipality, woodlands 2 ha in size or larger should be considered significant;

b. Where woodland cover is 5 – 15% of the land cover in the local municipality, woodlands 4 ha in size or larger should be considered significant;

c. Where woodland cover is 16 – 30% of the land cover in the local municipality, woodlands 20 ha in
size or larger should be considered significant;

d. Where woodland cover is 31 – 60% of the land cover in the local municipality, woodlands 50 ha in
size or larger should be considered significant.

For the purposes of this definition: A patch is a distinct, separate area of contiguous woodlands. The
edge of a patch is delineated by the outermost dripline. Woodlands remain contiguous even if interrupted
by natural clearings, or clearings for agricultural uses, other rural land uses, or infrastructure, provided
the clearing is not more than 20 metres wide, edge to edge. Patch size is not deemed to terminate if the
woodland crosses municipal, county, or regional boundaries. (County of Simcoe OP)

Surface water feature: means water-related features on the earth’s surface, including headwaters, rivers,
stream channels, inland lakes, seepage areas, recharge/discharge areas, springs, wetlands, and associated
riparian lands that can be defined by their soil moisture, soil type, vegetation or topographic characteristics.
(PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

Vegetation Protection Zone: A vegetated buffer area surrounding a key natural heritage feature or key
hydrologic feature. (Proposed Growth Plan, 2016)

Watershed: An area that is drained by a lake or river, and its tributaries. (Growth Plan 2006)

Watershed Plan: A watershed plan provides a framework for integrated decision-making for the
management of human activities, land, water, aquatic life and aquatic resources within a watershed. It
includes matters such as a water budget and conservation plan; land and water use management strategies;
an environmental monitoring plan; requirements for the use of environmental management practices and
programs; criteria for evaluating the protection of water quality and quantity, and hydrologic features and
functions; and targets for the protection and restoration of riparian areas. (Growth Plan 2006)

Wetlands: means lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands
where the water table is close to or at the surface. In either case the presence of abundant water has
caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic plants or water
tolerant plants. The four major types of wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs and fens. Periodically soaked
or wet lands being used for agricultural purposes which no longer exhibit wetland characteristics are not
considered to be wetlands for the purposes of this definition. (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

Wildlife habitat: means areas where plants, animals and other organisms live, and find adequate amounts
of food, water, shelter and space needed to sustain their populations. Specific wildlife habitats of concern
may include areas where species concentrate at a vulnerable point in their annual or life cycle; and areas
which are important to migratory or non-migratory species. (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)

Woodlands: means treed areas that provide environmental and economic benefits to both the private
landowner and the general public, such as erosion prevention, hydrological and nutrient cycling, provision
of clean air and the long-term storage of carbon, provision of wildlife habitat, outdoor recreational
opportunities, and the sustainable harvest of a wide range of woodland products. Woodlands include
treed areas, woodlots or forested areas and vary in their level of significance at the local, regional and
provincial levels. Woodlands may be delineated according to the Forestry Act definition or the Province’s
Ecological Land Classification system definition for “forest.” (PPS 2014 & County of Simcoe Official Plan)