

Re: Proposed Official Plan Amendment by Shining Hill Collections Inc. at 16250, 16356 and 16450 Yonge Street, Newmarket

It is widely known that there is a global environmental crisis. Addressing this crisis is not the sole responsibility of any one body, be it at the national, provincial, regional, municipal or individual level. At each level, the decision makers have an obligation to do whatever is in their control to ensure the quality and protection of the environment. Changes and events that happen even at a micro-level all contribute to the global crisis.

The possibility that the lands in question can even be considered for re-designation is alarming. People fought to have the Oak Ridges Moraine designated as environmentally protected and for good reason. It was not to have that designation simply overturned when a developer came along with a particularly enticing offer, but to have those lands and the eco-systems upon them protected, for all time. The council of 2003 went one step further and decided this would be a “no-touch” area. A bold move perhaps, but an understanding that the value of a unique and sensitive environmental area outweighed anything that might come from having the land exploited by development.

The developer has, of course, proposed parks, trails, green space and the like in their master plan. This cannot be considered equal, or even a reasonable alternative, to the absolute preservation of the land. Adding park spaces or naturalized areas around storm water ponds after the land has been bulldozed does not replace a natural eco-system. It does not guarantee that species will not be destroyed. It does not protect the quality of waterways.

At a time when there is much discussion about trusting in science and fact-based evidence, it is critical that council also look to science and take the same position as their predecessors. A real stand must be taken toward the environmental crisis that is upon us, at every level. Recycling programs, creation of park spaces, development of mass-transit and cycling opportunities all have their place in an environmentally conscious community but none replace dedication to preservation of natural environments.

Past development and exploitation of land cannot be undone, but with responsible decision-making the last remaining protected area can remain untouched while the needs of the population continue to be met in less environmentally damaging ways.

As an individual, I am not afforded the opportunity to vote directly on this application. I can only express my position, hope that it is not already too late and implore council to preserve the environmental protection designation on these lands. As the decision-makers, you will have saved this fragile and unique part of our town or you will have allowed it to be destroyed, forever.

Sincerely,

Michelle Fallows