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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hespeler River Activation project was initiated in Summer 2002 as part of efforts to substantially improve the core area of Hespeler Village and its relationship with the river. A considerable amount of research and work has set the foundation for this particular project, including identification of an initial vision and a set of priorities by various community stakeholders/ members. Since the inception of this project, consultation with key stakeholders and the community has remained an essential process component of developing this Master Plan.

The Phase One Report, *Community Activation: Establish the Vision* precedes the Phase Two Report, *Towards A Master Plan: Development of Strategic Alternatives*.

The Phase Two report contains information regarding the continued process of work, including: a brief summary of Phase One; the Purpose of Phase Two; the Consultation Process; the Design Process; Architect Impressions; Environmental Impacts; and the Draft Master Plan. As well, the report includes a draft Implementation Strategy, which importantly outlines the phasing procedure.

The Phase Two Report also delivers a description of next steps, and provides a glimpse of the goals and work entailed in Phase Three.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Speed River and Mill Pond are not only historically the lifeblood of Hespeler Village and its identity, but also the focus and geographic centre upon which the community has been established. The potential for reactivating the pond into a more meaningful focal point is very much one of the priorities for the community and this Master Plan.

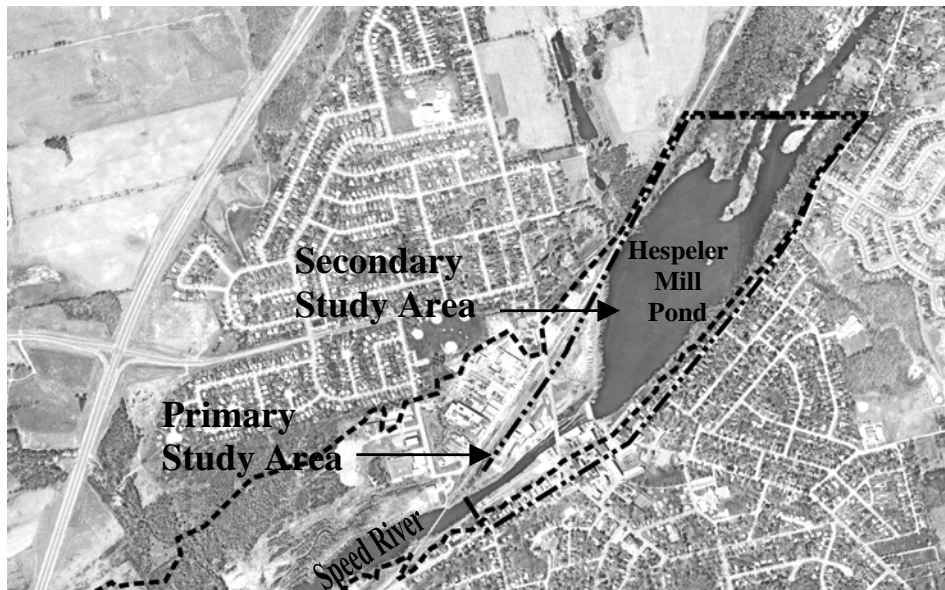
The purpose of the project is to establish a Hespeler Village River Activation Master Plan for the City of Cambridge, which strategically uses the Speed River in the interest of fostering and improving social, environmental, and economic well-being.

As established in Phase One, the revitalization of the core area is also this study’s primary focus due to the need for an enhanced community centre. The Hespeler Village Core Area, primarily defined as Queen Street, has existing attributes that may be enhanced and protected, while at the same time introducing elements that will be economically and aesthetically viable.

The main goal of Phase Two are to develop strategic alternatives, which would be developed following consultation sessions with stakeholders and the community in Phase One, and to be further refined through the continued consultation process.

1.1 The Master Plan Study Area

The primary study area includes the core area, part of the Speed River, the Mill Pond and adjacent residential and industrial lands east and west of the pond. The secondary study area includes the flood plain that extends just beyond the primary area (see aerial photo below). The physical outline of the designated study area takes into account the built environment, natural environment and economic revitalization.



2.0 SUMMARY OF PHASE ONE

Phase One included tasks which were vital in shaping the Strategic Alternatives of Phase Two. The initiation of the project included a definition of issues, review of background data, and planning analysis. Consultation with stakeholders and the public have been an integral, and very necessary component formulating the Master Plan. Opportunities, such as the Walking Tour, Public Charette Workshop and continued Visioning meetings, have resulted in the development of an informed, dynamic vision. The Phase One Questionnaire, Newsletter, and other opportunities for communication have also been helpful in providing insight to move forward.

The Community Workshop (Public Meeting #1) was designed as a strategic planning activity to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to express concerns and identify challenges, articulating their visions for the future. Ideas, questions and concerns, which arose out of this session, were at the forefront of thought during Master Plan development. Suggestions presented, such as the option of full removal of the dam, resulted in the Consultants researching the feasibility and consequences of such action; meetings with the Grand River Conservation Authority allowed the Consultants to explore this option in greater detail (See Section 4.3.2).

Following these meetings, the Consultants worked with the findings of Phase One's meetings/ workshops to synthesize an appropriate range of design options/ alternatives for review and evaluation by the Steering Committee. As these design plans continued to refine, a Public Open House also provided a valuable opportunity for the community to interact with and contribute to the project.

3.0 PURPOSE OF PHASE TWO

At the completion of Phase 1, the initial vision was endorsed by the Steering Committee, identifying both strengths and opportunities, which the Consultants have graphically visualized in two design options. The options and alternatives have been carefully evaluated against a variety of river activation initiatives as identified in the Terms of Reference.

Towards a Master Plan focuses primarily at the arrival of design alternatives, by explaining the methodology of the public consultation process and the public participation process, and a descriptive account of input to the project based on a series of meetings with the Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and Stakeholders. Another important component of Phase Two is the Public Open House, and continued correspondence with the community, including the distribution of the second Hespeler River Activation Newsletter.

The key deliverables for Phase Two include preliminary planning and design guidelines, evaluation criteria, a summary of workshop findings (as follows), strategic design alternatives, project communications, including a Phase Two Newsletter, a summary of

the second round of consultation, additional engineering and environmental investigation as required, and this current final Phase Two Report.

3.1 Work Program

The major tasks for Phases One, Two, and Three are outlined in a work program chart. See Work Program Insert.

4.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

4.1 Community Consultation

4.1.1 Public Meeting, January 9, 2003

On January 9th, 2003, a second public consultation meeting was held at the Beehive Community Centre, with more than forty residents participating. After brief introductions, Joe Farwell, Manager of Engineering and Conservation Services at the Grand River Conservation Authority, provided background information on dams and explained how the Speed River and Mill Pond function. Patrick Li of *EDA Collaborative Inc.* followed with a presentation of two design concepts (Concept A and Concept B). These design concepts were prepared in consultation with the Hespeler Village River Activation Steering Committee, incorporating suggestions received from the public as a result of the initial public meeting of September 18, 2002.

Following an introduction of the members of the consultant team, the main goals of the meeting were established as an opportunity to present two master plan concepts, and break into smaller groups in order to provide comments on the concepts, priorities for action, and any new ideas. Each group would also present the results from their discussions in a plenary session.

Participants were encouraged to respond to Concept A and Concept B in terms of the major issues, strengths, and weaknesses. Participants were also encouraged to discuss and contribute their perspectives, in terms of solutions to any weaknesses identified, and their design vision. A list of the major elements from each of the plans that were desirable to the group was assembled in the form of a condensed list of five items for each of the two concepts. With the facilitation of a consultant, participants were able to diagram and visually show the design implications of their ideas.

4.1.2 Group Session Workshop and Questionnaire Summary

Summary of Group Session Workshop

The public meeting participants were asked to divide into small groups of 8-10 people to discuss Concept A and Concept B in further detail. This process allowed all meeting attendees to voice their opinions about the master plan concepts. The main points expressed during this session are as follows:

Strengths and/ or likes of Concept A:

- Quantity of parkland, for passive recreation
- Opening views to Mill Pond and Speed River
- Water cleanup efforts
- Upgrade of existing trails and pathways that move from natural to urban space
- Attraction of more business on Queen Street
- The boardwalks on Concept A seem to be less intrusive than in Concept B
- Increased parking at Ellacott Landing and north trail head
- Historic tours

Concerns and/ or dislikes of Concept A:

- Cost of expropriation
- Too much marsh land
- Reconstruction of dam may mean that it will fill with silt over time
- Would rather spend money on downtown core
- Boardwalk in Mill Pond, where trails may be better along shoreline as a looped trail
- Focus on heritage
- Concern about soil contamination and pedestrian crossing at railways

Strengths and/ or likes of Concept B:

- Boardwalk crossing is a good way for people to enjoy the waters edge, independent of land owners
- Looping trail links two communities
- Water cleanup efforts
- Converting industrial buildings for new uses
- The variety of development (active, passive, urban, natural)
- Visionary plan
- Opportunity for new urban growth; new shops, stores, and restaurants to attract tourists
- New bridge crossing at dam and pedestrian crossing at railroad
- Increase of marshland
- Creation of islands using the silt from dredging

Concerns and/ or dislikes of Concept B:

- More parking is required in BIA
- Boardwalk trails by landowners backyards
- Cost of new events and infrastructure
- Focus on the heritage
- Themed garden in Riverside Park, which takes away from existing children's playground

Summary of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire was distributed to all participants of the January 9, 2003 meeting at the Beehive Community Centre, to provide an alternative means of providing response and input to the concepts presented; the questionnaire provided the opportunity for the public

and/or local residents to more privately voice their personal opinions with regards to the presented master plans. The questionnaire prompted respondents to think about their likes and dislikes regarding Concept A and Concept B. They were also asked to rank these items based on a level of importance (1= most important, 10= least important), and the specific design ideas they wished to see implemented, in ranked priority.

Seven questionnaire responses were received. The comments are summarized as follows:

Strengths and/ or likes in Concept A:

- Opening views and providing more access to Speed River / Mill Pond, and providing more access via a looping trail system and connecting boardwalks
- Selective dredging for boat activities
- Expansion of park land – greening of the flood plain land
- Clean up of industrial area
- Concept of Gateway
- Visual and economic revitalization of core
- Themed lighting on bridge
- Installation of murals
- Improved parking
- Renovation of older buildings
- Enhancement of wetland

Concerns and/or dislikes in Concept A:

- Boat launches
- Any disturbances to wetland (including wetland enhancement)
- Proposed paths
- Gateway
- Want to see more active recreation (volleyball, skateboarding)
- Themed garden could be in a better place, such as Jacob’s Landing, where it will be more visible, and will not take away from an existing children’s play area

Strengths and/or likes in Concept B:

- Selective dredging for boating activities
- Boardwalk and looping trail system which improves access to Pond
- Interpretive signage
- Enhancement of wetlands
- Gateway
- Incorporation of the downtown core in design; visual and economic revitalization of downtown core
- New bridge over dam
- Pedestrian bridge by the railway tracks
- Queen Street bridge enhancements
- Themed gardens
- More parking
- Renovation of older buildings

Concerns and/ or dislikes in Concept B:

- Any interruption to wetland (including wetland enhancement or boat launches)
- Proposed paths and boardwalks, which may disturb wildlife and habitat, or interrupt people's property (south side)
- Lack of access to Mill Pond at Ellicott Lookout

General Comments

Comments regarding both Concept A and B showed positive response to the opportunity for enhancement and revitalization occurring in Hespeler Village. Access and amenities related to Mill Pond are appreciated, including installation of the boardwalks and trail systems; however, respondents are also concerned about any environmental and ecological damage. Respondents stressed that development would have to be a balance of change and sensitivity to habitat, wildlife, and history.

More information was also requested, specifically regarding the dam and how it can specifically influence the Mill Pond and the concentration of sediment, as well as the effects of dredging on habitat and wildlife. As well, information regarding the costs of each element was requested, in order that the public is able to make a more informed decision regarding priorities of action.

New suggestions were put forward, including an extension of the sidewalk along Queen Street from downtown to Town Line Road, placing an observation deck at Ellacott Lookout and/ or at Blackbridge Road Bridge overlooking the Speed River. Facilities suggested include canoe rental facility at Jacob's Landing, and an indoor/outdoor soccer field. Respondents also felt that there was a need to focus more on youth. One suggestion was for education material about the wildlife found in Hespeler Village to be distributed to schools and libraries.

As pleased as residents were that money and energy was being placed towards improving the quality of life for Hespeler Village residents, they also hoped there would be sufficient funds dedicated to *continuing* and *maintaining* the project, and any new implementations. Participants also communicated that they need more time to review concept drawings to provide further comments.

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rank concept items, in order of preference, as follows:

Concept A:

1. Open views to Speed River and Mill Pond
2. Aesthetic improvements to Queen Street
3. Strengthen trail connections throughout study area
4. Increase public open space
5. Enhance and create wildlife habitat
6. Create a scenic drive
7. Provide public outdoor recreation facility
8. Enhance wetlands / marshes

9. Create an indoor recreation facility / skateboard park
10. Install a boat launch

Concept B:

1. Build a pedestrian bridge across the Mill Pond dam
2. Create an interpretive trail and boardwalk
3. Thematic treatment of Guelph Ave Bridge
4. Utilize historic buildings for tourism opportunity
5. Build a multi- purpose canopy
6. Outdoor recreational facilities for family outings
7. Designated urban square and themed gardens
8. Retain and enhance existing employment opportunities
9. Enhance wetlands boat launches / canoe channel
10. Create an amphitheatre

Summary of Discussion

Strengths of Concept A include improved access to the Mill Pond and the expansion of parkland areas to include both active and passive recreation. Although the boardwalk and improved views of the Pond were viewed as strengths for the purposes of recreation and identity, there were concerns that the existing wetlands and wildlife habitats would be disturbed. Any paths that are constructed would need to be carefully located and developed to address ecological protection as well as human safety.

With Concept B, participants appreciated attempts to address the visual and economic revitalization of the downtown core. There was strong support for residential and commercial re-development, improving the appearance of the Guelph Avenue Bridge, maintenance and/or renovations of historical buildings, and other beautification initiatives such as interpretive signage and improved lighting. Residents also expressed an interest in public/pedestrian access to the Mill Pond.

While participants want to create facilities that people can enjoy, being sensitive to the ecological conditions of the site is clearly a priority. Many people noted that funding, maintenance, and continued consultation with community members are important to the success of the master plan.

4.1.3 Public Open House, April 3, 2003

The public had an opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft master plan concept at the Public Open House. This was held on Thursday, April 3, 2003 at the Hespeler Memorial Arena, 640 Ellis Road West, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This was the public's opportunity to help "activate" the Speed River for the benefit of the Hespeler Village Core Area. Over thirty attendees attended the Open House.

This was an opportunity for the public to receive clarification on the process to date, feedback generated from previous meetings, the concepts as they have developed into the draft master plan concept, phasing plans, as well as architectural impressions of the

design. For the Consultants and the Steering Committee, this was another valuable chance to seek further feedback from community, and set the stage to develop specific master plan guidelines.

Upon arrival, participants signed-in, and were able to review approximately half a dozen large format panels. The panels both summarized questionnaire/ communication comments received on Concept A and Concept B, and outlined a list of priorities for design action. Three other panels provided a visual plan of the latest Concept, the Phasing strategy, and architectural impressions of future development. These illustrations were quite helpful for discussion purposes, as Consultants and project committee members circulated throughout the room, answering questions that people might have.

Comments received from the public open house were very positive. The majority of respondents communicated that the whole concept looks good, and some even commented that the Final Concept was an extremely well thought out plan. Several residents said the islands, created as a result of dredging, are a good idea, as well as the concept of the boardwalks. In response to previous comments, a new comment said "...wildlife will be disturbed, not destroyed", indicating that the boardwalks could still be a very viable, environmentally sensitive option. Still, the environment and sustainability issues are important to people, as one person provided the comment "If islands are to be made from the dredging, I would like to see them left alone for trees and nature, without paths...perhaps pedestrians can use other trails/ footbridge/ Queen Street instead."

In regards to recreational facilities, respondents said that they would be of great benefit for everyone in the community. One person communicated that they would like to see the land on the north side of the river west of Guelph Avenue developed for a park area, together with necessary parking facilities.

Many participants of the open house communicated that they were pleased that there were proposed developments for Hespeler, and appreciated "anything involving enhancement of the area" as a good indication of positive change. Residents also expressed an eagerness to begin the development process as soon as possible.

New suggestions were communicated, either in conversation with the Consultants and project committee members, or via a comment sheet that was completed and submitted at the open house.

Several people expressed concern over dredging of the Mill Pond. Some people were still relatively adamant that there be total dredging vs. selective dredging. As well, residents hoped for dredging to occur 'sooner than later', preferably initiated in Phase 1. Residents adjacent to the Mill Pond also identified mosquitoes as an issue with the Mill Pond, which dredging may help alleviate.

With respect to design details, washrooms, floodlighting and children's facilities that extend right onto the island formations were expressed as elements, which would help attract families to the boardwalks.

One respondent suggested that Phase 3 is a higher priority than Phase 2, and that Phase 2 should be in the following order: 2C, 2A, 2B.

Several teenagers commented that they would really like to see a (indoor) skateboard park as one of the facilities of the plan, while a parent said that she would like to see a place for children to learn about being a peaceful community, e.g. a pavilion with themes such as “Peace for the Planet”.

Parking was commented on several times, usually in conjunction with traffic congestion and/or a recreational facility. An example of this is a resident who would like to see a boat launch off Chapel Street with parking made available, including proper lighting.

In general, comments received during the open house did thematically mirror many of the comments received to date, but as a whole, people appreciated the plans, which resulted out of public feedback.

4.1.4 Continued Consultation

Consultation and communication with the public and residents of Hespeler Village will continue throughout the Master Plan process. Further, the public had a variety of means for providing input into the master plan proposal, including inclusion in a mailing list for project updates, and opportunities to respond directly to Consultants and the Steering Committee.

4.2 Stakeholder Consultation

4.2.1 Meeting with Queen St. Residents Group, March 18, 2003

A group of residents who live along Queen St. had some personal concerns with some of the design intentions behind the master plan design concepts presented. The Consultants had brought forward the idea of having a proposed trail on the south side of the Hespeler Mill Pond, along the waters edge. The residents were concerned that the trail crossed through private property/ backyards and thought a public trail would increase the noise level, create unwanted garbage and pose safety concerns for the trail users and the residents.

Some residents also voiced their opinion about a proposed pedestrian boardwalk system which is shown running through the centre of the Mill Pond on the draft master plan concept. Residents along the Mill Pond considered the boardwalk to be a visual barrier that would pose serious environmental concerns to the wildlife environment within and around the Mill Pond. The residents were assured that any boardwalk implementation strategy would have to be thoroughly reviewed by the necessary environmental committees, including the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Canadian Coast Guard (Navigable Waters Protection Act) and Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and receive their approval.

The group of Queen Street residents who provided comments on the Hespeler River Activation Plan are:

Paul Langan, 107 Queen Street, E
Brad & Pam Norman, 103 Queen Street, E
France Wilson, 111 Queen Street, E
Ron & Monica MacPherson, 185 Queen Street. E
Linda and Franck Foldy, 164 Queen Street East
Sylvia Groh, Steve McFatrige, 193 Queen Street E
Roger Vokey, 147 Queen Street E
Peter Kevan, 352 River Rd.

The following is excerpted from comments collectively submitted from this group.

Protecting the Environment

Introduction

The need for the City of Cambridge to focus their energy and some resource on improving the quality of life for residents in Hespeler is a positive step. The community of Hespeler is doubling population in ten years. The pressures on the community by uncontrolled growth and urban sprawl are significant.

Funding for making improvements to the Hespeler core area including the Mill Pond area are a result of studies suggesting that the river can play a bigger part in our community.

The residents of Queen Street East, who have put together this document, are deeply concerned that asking Consultants and residents that do not even live in homes backing onto the Mill Pond do not have the knowledge base to make assessments and recommendations about the of the Mill Pond Area.

The residents, given the short time frame, have had a meeting and put together this document in response to the Consultants Concepts A & B.

One reoccurring concept that came up at the residents meeting was, "If nothing is broken, don't fix it." Residents who have lived next to the Mill Pond for over three generations have provided valuable comments included in this report. One noteworthy comment was, "There is more wildlife in the pond now than there has been in the last sixty years"

Study Methodology

The City has hired a Toronto area-consulting firm to come up with some concepts for revitalizing the Mill Pond/Guelph Avenue Industrial Area. These ideas were presented to the public at a workshop on January 9.

Methodology Fault # 1 – Using “forced choice” in their consultation process. The public had to choose between Concept A and Concept B. There was no ability to combine suggestions from the two concepts and where, how or even if new suggestions would be categorized or used.

Methodology Fault #2 – The Consultants had over six months to develop the two concepts yet the taxpayers of Cambridge are given only seven days to comment on them.

Our Methodology

We met as a group and went through the concepts and: decided what ideas were beneficial, what ideas would cause problems, and suggested new ideas. Our comments were based on the following themes:

- 1. Protection of the existing environment*
- 2. Educating the Public on the Wildlife and Plants in the Mill Pond*
- 3. Promoting Activities for the Youth*
- 4. Protection of Built Heritage*

Environmental Damage to Ecosystem from Installation of Boardwalk/Trails in an around Mill Pond

The concept of a boardwalk being installed through the middle of the most sensitive area of the Mill Pond will cause habitat destruction, destroy breeding sites, reduce the variety and number of birds who live there.

The concept of surrounding the pond with a boardwalk/trail would have the same devastating consequences, as shoreline birds like the Blue Heron, would become extinct in the pond area.

Comments from the Consultants comparing the boardwalk at Wye Marsh Conservation area to Mill Pond are ridiculous. As the Mill Pond is surrounded by subdivisions with potential easy access to over 8000 people. Wye Marsh has no subdivisions near it. The negative impacts on the environment by a boardwalk in/around the Mill Pond due to human activity would be significant.

Habitant Destruction of Forbes Creek Wetland

The suggestion of trails going through the Forbes Creek Provincial Wetland is also a bad idea. This wetland area is a known deer trail area. Trails for humans will wipe out the deer from this area. No trails shall be allowed in this area.

Security

There are also is a very real existing problem, relating to extensive late night parties, along the north trail of the Mill Pond and the boardwalk would certainly attract more of the same. It is a problem that has existed for years. An extensive trail system would make this problem worse. Recently an attempted rape of a young women occurred on the new Melran subdivision trail. Residents on Queenston Rd. in Cambridge where a trail has been put in have experience several housebreak- ins after the trail was put in.

Selective Dredging

Although selective dredging was suggested in the Mill Pond area, there was absolutely no information presented as to what the environmental impacts would be to the existing plant and wildlife species. There is over 99 species of birds known in this area.

There was no information presented as to the condition of the existing Mill Pond dam. Is it operable and could it play a role in present/future sediment reduction? There were no assurances given that if selective dredging was done that the sediment would not just build up again and the dredging would have no real long term positive impact. The end result of the dredging would be the wasting of significant amounts of taxpayer's money. The dredging concept should not move forward without a critical assessment of the existing situation.

Riverview Enhancement Area

The destruction of plant material along the North Side of Queen Street East and River Road will cause of loss of habitat for small birds that use shrubbery as protection in the winter. Removing plant species along the north side of the road will cause an increase in human activity into sensitive areas of the Mill Pond and destroy breeding areas for several bird species. The plant material also provides a windbreak for the marsh area of the Mill Pond. No destruction of vegetation should occur along the north side of Queen St. E. and River Road.

Theme Park in Riverside Park Destroys Children's Play Area

The implementation of a theme garden in Riverside Park may be a good idea for people to get their wedding pictures taken, but it denies the children of Queen Street East their play area. Currently in the winter, this park is used extensively as a toboggan hill, in the summer the flat part is used for playing soccer, volleyball and kite flying among other things. Since crossing Queen Street to go to Forbes Park is too dangerous due to speeding and heavy traffic, the elimination of the Riverside Park as a play area for children would seriously limit options for our children to play outside in a larger area.

Solutions

The main theme is to allow better access to the Mill Pond for the Public. The following suggestions would accomplish this task without destroying the environment.

Parking Lot & Dock West of Riverside Park – Canoe Launch

There exists a parking lot and old dock. If the City paved the parking lot fixed the dock, then people would have easy access to launch their canoes from and to fish from. There would have to be security lighting installed. This dock would allow for easy access for emergency crews so other “emergency boat launches” would not be needed. If this parking lot is not owned by the City, it could be purchased. Security lighting would be needed.

Ellacott Lookout Observation Deck

To enjoy the wildlife and plant species without impacting the ecosystem of the Mill Pond, an observation deck can be built that extends up to 4m off the Ellacott Lookout to observe the wildlife. Descriptive displays can educate the public on the 99 species of birds found there. Security lighting would be needed.

Trail along Queen Street Sidewalks - Extension

Extend the sidewalks on the north side of Queen Street East through River Road, up the west side of Townline Rd. and over to Blackbridge Road. The Blackbridge Road bridge area is beautiful.

Blackbridge Road Bridge Observation Deck

An observation deck can be built that extend up to 3m next to the bridge to allow people to observe the plant and wildlife. Descriptive displays will be located here also. Security lighting would be needed.

Jacobs Landing – Canoe Rental Area

Allow for the building of a small canoe rental facility (or use an existing nearby building) to facilitate canoeing on the Pond. Security lighting would be needed.

Support for the Young

In the areas where active recreation are defined, the need for an indoor/outdoor soccer field for Hespeler is well established. The development of an amphitheatre and indoor skateboarding/multi use facility would be beneficial.

Built Heritage Protection

The protection and enhancement of Hespeler's built heritage is important. Protection of buildings such as the Hespeler Furniture Factory, Hespeler Railway Station and the buildings in the Hespeler downtown core should be considered a vital part of the plan.

New Bridge For Teens to Cross from Sheffield to Queen St.W.

There exists a very real hazard as teens use the Canadian National Railway Bridge as a crossing. A pedestrian crossing is needed.

Education Software Development on Mill Pond Area

To educate children and adults about the 99 species of birds in the Mill Pond area, a CD can be developed with pictures, sounds and descriptions of all the birds found there. It can be used as an educational tool in our schools and libraries.

In conclusion, we feel that these suggestions will benefit the citizens of our community, the local ecosystem and that it will be a wise way to spend our taxpayer's dollars.

4.2.2 Hespeler Healthy Community Coalition Review & Response

Ed Gazendam (Hespeler Village River Activation Steering Committee Member) on behalf of the Hespeler Healthy Community Coalition submitted the following letter addressing their praise and concerns throughout the consultation process:

RE: Hespeler Village River Activation Master plan

On behalf of Hespeler Healthy Community Coalition, we would like to thank you and the Hespeler River Activation Steering Committee for addressing our concerns throughout the process. Although we are quite pleased and excited by much of the Hespeler River Activation Final Concept, members of our group are very concerned about two issues in the plan. We ask that they be addressed.

Firstly, we feel the residents of Hespeler have said clearly and eloquently that any real and meaningful rejuvenation of our core is implicitly dependant on the work directly related to the “Mill Pond”. As a result, it is disappointing to us that the boardwalk has been taken away from the south shore of the Mill Pond (especially since the GRCA has just drafted their new policy, stating that they will actively discourage the creation of recreational facilities on or adjacent to wetlands). It is obvious to all concerned that the south shore is really the only part of the pond that a boardwalk will have a minimal environmental effect.

As a community minded group dedicated to improving the quality of life in Cambridge north, we feel that the proposed boardwalk is critical to the success of the project. We acknowledge that the concept with a boardwalk constructed through the middle of the wetlands (pond) will probably not receive GRCA approval, however, as long as it is possible to find a way to complete the loop around the Mill Pond we think the goal of increasing the recreational potential of the Mill Pond will be accomplished.

The plan to take the path up the sidewalk at Riverside Park, and then use the sidewalk along Queen Street all the way to Ellacott Lookout, has a serious flaw, as that it will do little to entice recreational use.

It concerns us that the original boardwalk design was seemingly altered to appease a small but vocal special interest group whose requests certainly do not represent the interests of the community as a whole, and may not even represent the majority of homeowners backing onto the river.

Reinstituting the boardwalk concept behind the houses on Queen Street in the Master Plan has two benefits. It will have minimal environmental impact, and it will be safer. By their own admission, those same residents of Queen Street have expressed serious concerns about the speed and volume of traffic on this part Queen Street and that the sidewalk is not safe (especially in the winter).

In summarizing Issue #1, we do acknowledge that the possibility of having a boardwalk along the south shore will be very small, primarily due the private landowner issues and the potential for a political time bomb. However, we do not want to point out that the boardwalk was something that Hespeler village residents desired and that only a few, not necessarily those living adjacent, vocally opposed.

Our second concern focuses on the timeframe guidelines suggested for the Mill Pond improvements and enhancements. We understand that the master plan has identified 3 phases in the implementation process. These phases do not necessarily run in series (that is with the completion of the first phase, the second phase may begin, etc), but are rather run concurrently. This would allow portions of 2 or 3 to be implemented or initiated as opportunities arise or funding becomes available. However, our concern is that by slotting them into Phase 3, the perception would exist that the Phase 3 components are not as important or necessary. In addition, while the concept of “phasing”, as we understand it now, exists strongly in all our collective minds, the passage of time accompanied by staff changes and poor memories may result in Phase 3 items becoming just that, the very last phase of a long, drawn out process. As a result, we are afraid that the City may not even start the EISs and other required testing for at least 5 years.

In concluding Issue #2, we are requesting that the River Activation Steering Committee step up the priority of the Mill Pond components. We would appreciate some written assurances that preliminary work regarding the Mill Pond, including necessary consultation with GRCA, and any appropriate Regional, Provincial, or Federal involvement, and any other necessary studies, begin as part of phase 1. This will ensure that the monies become available to fund this project (and we anticipate this being the costliest part of the river activation), this most important part of the project can proceed with a real view to having it completed within a ten-year timeframe currently proposed.

Thank you for your consideration. We are actually aware that there is very little time left in the planning stage, and we feel that on behalf of our Community there needs to be a record of our concerns.

Respectfully,

Ed Gazendam

(Hespeler Village River Activation Steering Committee Member- on behalf of the Hespeler Healthy Community Coalition)

4.3 Committee Meetings

4.3.1 Steering Committee Meeting, February 17, 2003

The purpose of this meeting was to update the Steering Committee with regards to the public input/ feedback received from the previous public meeting and for the consultant to present to the committee a draft preferred master plan concept for their review and comments. Along with the draft master plan, a more detailed design concept was presented for the proposed parkland area. David Wood, of Salter Farrow Pilon Architects, presented the architectural components of the master plan concept emphasizing the potential future reuse of existing industrial buildings. The following comments were then provided by the Steering Committee following the presentation:

- Any work proposed for the Mill Pond will require a comprehensive environmental assessment process and several approvals before proceeding.
- There is the opportunity for potential partnerships with other city departments in order to implement specific design ideas. (E.g. undertake aesthetic improvements to the Guelph Avenue Bridge when it is refurbished by the Transportation and Public Works Department; work with Community Services to determine if recreational proposals fit into existing capital spending plans).
- Any phasing or implementation strategy must be specific for the first five years of the plan. The consultant noted that the first three to five items must be reasonable, doable and successful.
- Any new facilities will require strong programming to ensure maximum use for all user groups in the future.
- Design related comments: An urban square should be addressed and incorporated into the plan, proposed pathways should be suitable for athletic/ recreational uses (standard pre-measured distances that are signed-off), improved access to the water at Ellacott lookout.

The Steering Committee identified their suggested list of priorities as follows:

- Guelph Avenue bridge aesthetic improvements
- An urban square
- Detailed 'core' area of the plan (projects on either side of the bridge including the park)
- Aesthetic/ visual improvements (banners, ground planters)
- Enhancement of Ellacott lookout through selective clearing of vegetation to improve views.

4.3.2 Technical Advisory Meeting, March 20, 2003

Members of the Technical Advisory Committee brought to the Consultants' attention that *no new residential development is allowed within the floodplain*. Restrictions on development in the flood encroachment zone due to safety and environmental concerns required the consultant to modify the area labelled 'new urban identity' to comply with the updated flood line. The Technical Advisory Committee raised the idea of removing the Mill Pond dam as a possible solution to help improve water quality and increase flow rates. This procedure has become common when dealing with other waterways. However, an extensive environmental assessment process is needed before action is taken. The following list shows the positive and negative effects of removing the dam:

Dam removal (+):

- Water flow rates and velocity rates would increase and improve
- Sediment, which has settled, will be flushed out of the water system

Dam removal (-):

- The pond would dry up and eventually disappear over time
- The current wetland ecosystem would be disturbed
- Extensive flooding would occur down stream
- Recreational uses would decrease

It was determined early in the master planning process that the Mill pond dam would remain in the design concept because the dam itself is in good condition. There is no need for structural improvements. Removing the dam would result in the loss of the Mill Pond. The visual aesthetic and appeal of the downtown core would be significantly altered and the core area's identity would be affected in the process.

4.3.3 Steering Committee Meeting, March 20, 2003

An updated draft Master Plan concept was presented to the Steering Committee addressing the comments received from the previous meeting. Aside from graphic alterations to the presentation boards, discussion arose regarding the feasibility of the proposed boardwalk in the Mill Pond. Any alterations, disturbances or additions to the Mill Pond, including the boardwalk, would be dependent on intense environmental assessment and study. The consultant made it clear that in their previous project experience, similar concepts facing similar challenges have proven successful.

4.3.4 Meeting with Grand River Conservation Authority Staff, March 31, 2003

Discussion was primarily focused around environmental issues concerning the Mill Pond. The GRCA had clearly communicated at an earlier date, that any work or disruption in the pond would require an extensive environmental assessment study. Patrick Li of EDA Collaborative made a brief presentation of the draft Master Plan and phasing/implementation diagram. Both sides agreed that future considerations for the Mill Pond and environs would need to be looked at in a watershed context. Other groups, such as water managers and fisheries management groups, have an interest in water quality

upstream and downstream of this site. The GRCA acknowledged and support the following goals for this project:

- Improvement of water quality in the Mill Pond
- Enhancement of the associated wetlands
- Improvement of public access
- Improvement of public knowledge of natural values to be found within the area

As stated earlier, any decisions regarding design details to achieve the above mentioned goals would be dependent on information to be generated by an Environmental Assessment process (or similar processes; as well as other legislative requirements). This process would need to include detailed inventories and technical analysis for the approval of any work within the Mill Pond.

5.0 DESIGN PROCESS: STRATEGIC OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

As a result of research, analysis, consultation and visioning from Phase One, the Consultant developed two alternatives, presented in visual, large-format images, for the purpose of receiving feedback from committee members, stakeholders, and the public.

The two concepts were presented to generate feedback, which led to the preparation of a final, preferred concept. This concept was subject to a process of review and approval from the Steering Committee, stakeholders, and the public via a series of presentations and public consultation.

5.1 Concept A

The overall theme of Concept A is the enhancement of the natural environment. Selective dredging of the Mill Pond, and creating marsh wetlands that would form islands for wildlife would be a means to accomplish this. The goals of this concept include improving the quality of the pond, strengthening green corridors and open spaces, improving views of the river, and improving trail connections.

A number of passive recreation elements are proposed. These include a trail system to link existing trails and to create new access points to the river and the pond. Residents could use these pathways for activities such as walking, jogging, and cycling, and cross-country skiing during the winter months. Active recreation elements are also proposed. The areas labelled “active recreation” on the plan would include soccer fields, indoor recreational facilities/skateboard park, and kayak and canoe launches.

Residents would be able to explore the extensive natural area using a pedestrian boardwalk system that includes a loop around the Hespeler Mill Pond. A trail bridge crossing at the northern end of the channel would create an additional pedestrian linkage across the pond.

Proposed cultural facilities include event tents for large gatherings at social events and annual holidays such as Canada Day.

5.2 Concept B

Concept B combines economic development with environmental enhancement. This concept promotes the re-use and conversion of existing industrial buildings. This concept includes a long-range plan for converting older buildings from industrial land use to commercial and residential uses. This would help maintain an employment base and attract visitors to the Hespeler Village core area.

This mixed-use concept would also include public open spaces, including passive and active green spaces adjacent to the core and along the water's edge. Outdoor gathering areas for large cultural events and festivals would be created to allow local residents of all ages to socialize and meet one another. Outdoor green spaces for active sporting events, picnic areas and boat launches could be mixed with indoor recreational activities such as an indoor skateboard park. An extensive trail system/boardwalk is proposed. This would link the surrounding residential neighbourhoods to the core area through enhanced green corridors.

5.3 Architectural Impression (existing building renovations/ rehabilitations)

The intent within the Architectural Impressions was to identify existing buildings and spaces, which have potential for re-development, and to inject new uses into existing spaces. Converting existing buildings into mixed-used buildings consisting of retail, work-live spaces and newly created spaces, may create arrival/departure areas before one explores the existing landscape corridor and proposed recreational areas.

American Standard building:

- Remove infill areas of building to reveal main building shapes and create courtyards with intimate spaces for cafes, retail, and lounging areas to enjoy the Mill Pond.
- Extend Chapel Street (currently a dead-end condition) down to the river and connect to proposed pedestrian bridge at dam creating a link to recreational areas
- Extend downtown towards recreational areas along Guelph Avenue
- Open up facade along Speed River and add balconies to create a lively building

Sheffield Street (Currently warehouse and industrial use buildings)

- Look at the intersection of Sheffield Street and Guelph Avenue as hub to the urban fabric
- Architecturally influence existing warehouse buildings on Milling Road, which will help articulate a distinct exterior; renovate the warehouse buildings on Sheffield Street
- Convert existing buildings into mixed use buildings
- Focus on Sheffield Street as being the new edge of the urban fabric

Architectural interventions on both the north and south sides of the landscape corridor may act as gateways to draw people from the urban fabric into the recreational areas and vice versa.

6.0 REVIEW AND EVALUATION PROCESS

The review and evaluation process initially involved presentations and meetings with the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee. Through this process, the Consultants tested and evaluated the design options and alternatives, against factors of technical and financial feasibility, staging, and phasing.

The other stage of review and evaluation is via public consultation, which includes resident meetings, public open house, and continued receipt of feedback/ comments via direct correspondence. Information generated was documented, reviewed, and extensively discussed between consultant and the Steering Committee to ensure design and master plan objectives incorporate and are sensitive to such review.

The consultant will include results of this process in the Final Report.

7.0 DRAFT MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

The draft Master Plan concept was conceived as a result of feedback obtained throughout the design process. Comments and opinions gained from public meetings, public open houses, technical advisors and Steering Committee members helped revise and improve the draft Master Plan. Design elements that were well received from Concept A and Concept B remained in the Master Plan. Combining economic development with environmental enhancement ('new urban identity') was a realistic and do-able design approach. Key elements to the draft master design are as follows:

- Strengthening the downtown core through intensified urban uses
- Providing public open space adjacent to the core including, but not limited to, passive and active recreational uses
- Introducing urban aesthetic landscape improvements such as street/ bridge vegetation, lighting, banners and murals
- Revitalization of existing buildings into mixed-use (commercial/ residential) developments
- Wildlife sanctuary wetland enhancement
- Interpretive boardwalk system linkage

Many of the conceptual design ideas are concentrated in Hespellers downtown core area. The Guelph Avenue Bridge acts as a strong linkage for communities to the north and south of the Hespeler Mill Pond/ Speed River. Bridge enhancements, along with streetscape improvements, would include enhanced light features, planter boxes, banners and murals, to help improve the visual aesthetics of the downtown; this will present a more attractive aesthetic to residents and tourists. An extensive pedestrian trail system

would allow users from outside the core area to access the downtown through new and improved parks, wetlands and green corridors.

Signed trail nodes will make the process of travel safe and easy for user groups to navigate around the community. Tied to this trail system is an extensive boardwalk system which will loop around the Mill Pond, linking neighbourhoods on both sides of the water. Interpretive signage will help educate users about the various environments and ecosystems associated with the pond. (Please note that any integration of a boardwalk system would be subjected to intensive environmental assessment/ study prior to any form of implementation).

Strategically placed lookout areas and boat launches will allow users to safely access the pond for recreational purposes such as fishing, kayaking or canoeing. A proposed public open space/ parkland area on the northern edge of the pond will be the central attraction for the surrounding community. The parkland on the west side of Guelph Avenue between the Speed River and the railway corridor will be used for more active recreational activities and is a much more flexible space for future. Because Victoria Park houses a number of baseball/ softball diamonds and is nearby, two soccer fields will be integrated into the park design (one professional size field and one junior size field). An intensive planting strategy/ concept will help buffer the park space from adjacent uses.

The parkland on the east side of Guelph Avenue between the Mill Pond/ Speed River and the railway corridor will be a multi-functional, multi-programmed space for all user groups. An event structure will allow different festivals and celebrations to be held for the entire community to participate in. This structure will become a visual reference/ symbol for people to identify with. A subtle amphitheatre built into the landscape will hold large outdoor gatherings and provide breathtaking views across the pond. Senior and junior playgrounds, a water-play splash pad and a skateboard/ in-line hockey park will supply recreational activity for all age groups along with themed gardens and naturalized planting which will provide visual interest year round. Surrounding green spaces will be used for passive recreational activities such as picnic areas and pedestrian trails that will link all the parks together.

A gazebo and additional parking lots will provide for users from outside the community and make the entire park accessible. The existing industrial area north of the railway corridor will be converted into an urban mixed-use development consisting of retail, residential and commercial space (see **Section 5.3 Architectural Impression** for additional information). Combining economic development with environmental enhancement will help maintain an employment base and attract visitors to the Hespeler Village core area.

7.1 Open Space/ Habitat Management Strategy

Management Zones:

- **Zone 1 (Protection Zone):** Preservation and enhancement of existing riparian communities and corridor functions (primarily in the northern portions of the study area)
 - Preservation
 - Visitor management: passive recreation, limited nature interpretation
- **Zone 2 (Rehabilitation Zone):** Rehabilitation and landscape development along shoreline segments with deteriorated riparian zones (southern, south-western, south-eastern portions of the study area)
 - Rehabilitation and landscape development: new buffer plantings; naturalization of artificially stabilized shoreline segments; development of new marsh and island habitat; expansion of existing buffer plantings (including private garden properties)
 - Rehabilitation/ enhancement of natural linkages with Forbes Creek corridor.
 - Visitor management: passive and active, nature oriented recreation; nature interpretation
- **Zone 3 (Development Zone):** Landscape development for active and passive uses (downtown core portions of the study area)
 - Development of urban park situations;
 - Provision of open space for active recreation and sport (picnic, soccer, baseball etc);
 - Visitor management: parking; trail heads, picnic shelters, kiosk (information, washrooms).

Maintenance of status quo is considered unacceptable (and likely impossible) in light of the increasing residential development around Hespeler and the proposed core revitalization. Both will lead to an increased number of people exploring the pond environment. Spontaneous use of the natural environment could result in further deterioration and degradation (disturbance to wildlife, erosion, etc). To prevent such development, a pro-active landscape development strategy is suggested focusing on three key development zones with specific management objectives.

The zone-specific recommendations must be seen as components of an overall strategy. For example, opening parts of the pond environment (e.g. loop trail across Speed River) to passive recreation is compensated by rehabilitation of former riparian and upland habitat and creation of new wetland and marsh habitat in Zone 2.

To be successful, the environmental strategy must be an integral part of the overall strategy for the revitalization of Hespeler Village. Involvement of local and regional governments, and communities is essential. Action plans must have short as well as long-

term components. Above all, monitoring must be applied to provide feedback on the success of remediation measures and to trigger program adjustments if required.

	Zone 1 (Protection)	Zone 2 (Rehabilitation)	Zone 3 (Development)
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve existing vegetation communities • Preserve existing wildlife communities • Preserve ecosystem functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive pond and shore line rehabilitation and improvement; • Provision of nature and water oriented recreation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalization of Hespeler core area through development of attractive open space and recreation opportunities; • Diversify recreation opportunities to protect sensitive areas;
Landscape Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve water quality of Mill Pond (long term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve water quality of Mill Pond (long term) • Develop diverse bathymetry with faster flowing main channel, shallow marsh areas and deep water refuge pools; • Rehabilitate and enhance riparian zone; • Develop island and wetland/marsh habitat (in context of Mill Pond remediation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of diverse range of open spaces for active and passive uses; • System elements to range from near-natural park settings to highly ornamental, manicured parkettes, sport fields and waterfront docking and launching facilities; • Landscape designs to establish and maintain links to pond and surrounding core and residential areas;
Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit accessibility of area to <u>one</u> defined path; • Protect against spontaneous, unorganized trail development (e.g. establish barriers; naturalize or otherwise block developing paths) • Provide for lookout points; • Establish interpretive signage; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop hierarchical trail system with a loop off the main trail; • Provide for lookout points; • Establish interpretive signage; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop hierarchical multi-use trail system with a network of diverse trail types and a series of loop options with pedestrian links to core area and adjacent neighbourhoods; • Include paved trails for roller blading, skate boarding
Specific Visitor Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of comprehensive visitor management system; • Offer attractions away from sensitive areas (Zone 1); • Limit trail accessibility, relatively narrow hiking trail, wood chip or granular surface, no lighting; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors to be directed to designated (loop) trails and viewing platforms; • Trail into Zone 1 to be hiking trail of more rural character (unpaved, wood chip or granular pavement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for parking • Establish easy access to parking, picnic shelters, kiosk etc.; • Provide for lighting;
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures natural character of Mill Pond environment; • Contributes to sustainable development and conservation of natural pond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to rehabilitation of aquatic pond system and environmental health; • Potential to function as “demonstration project on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to sustainable development and conservation of natural pond environment; • Contribution to “re-

	Zone 1 (Protection)	Zone 2 (Rehabilitation)	Zone 3 (Development)
	<p>environment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to “re-vitalization” of the Hespeler core area by provision of tranquillity and a natural environment for relaxation, contemplation and nature interpretation; 	<p>pond rehabilitation”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distracts and diverts majority of visitors from sensitive areas by providing access to diverse new shoreline and wildlife habitat • Enhances active recreation on Mill Pond (e.g. canoeing) • Contributes to “re-vitalization” of the Hespeler core area by provision of local opportunities for active and passive outdoor recreation. 	<p>vitalization” of the Hespeler core area by provision of local “attraction” and “destination” providing opportunities for a range of outdoor, and indoor recreation activities .</p>
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased user levels may cause disturbance of wildlife (e.g. during waterfowl nesting season) and habitat (e.g. trampling and subsequent erosion of shoreline) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Pond rehabilitation is complex and long term task requiring participation of local, regional, provincial, and federal governments; • Realization would compensate for potential disturbance resulting from increased visitation and use levels; • Scheme could set “signal” /”kick-start” the revitalization efforts; • Rehabilitation expensive and to some extent experimental (outcome uncertain); should be used as demonstration project with opportunities for public involvement, learning and research; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractiveness of area requires an on-going high level of maintenance;

8.0 PREVIEW OF PHASE THREE

In Phase Three, the Master Plan Concept will be finalized and presented to the Steering Committee. A realistic Phasing and Implementation Strategy will also be a main component of the Master Plan. Project communications will continue throughout this phase.

1. Preferred Master Plan Alternative
2. Draft Implementation and Phasing Strategy
3. Capital Cost estimates for implementation
4. Review with Steering Committee

5. Public Consultation/ Newsletter
6. Presentation to the Steering Committee and final revisions
7. Presentation to Council

9.0 SUMMARY OF PHASE TWO

The purpose of Phase two was the development of two (2) draft master plan concepts- A and B. The public consultation process, along with input from the Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and the GRCA all contributed to forming the draft Master Plan concept. Listening to public opinion, ideas and concerns related to the plan shows the community's passion towards improving the Hespeler Village Core Area for future generations. This Master Plan will become the blueprint for creating and managing change in the future. By developing a usable Master Plan concept, the process will now lead into a Phase Three Report focusing on project phasing and an implementation strategy for the future.

Appendix:

- a) Work Plan Chart
- b) Map 16 & 17- Concept A and B
- c) Map 19- Architectural Impression Panel
- d) Map 18- Draft Master Plan Concept

WORK PROGRAM

Hespeler River Activation - Master Plan

