

Monday, February 12, 2018

Chair and Members

Planning and Environment Committee

Regarding: Conservation MasterPlan Phase II, Medway Valley South ESA

No Footbridge across the Medway.

“Preserving the ecological integrity and ecosystem health of these features is the first priority.” This is what this City of London Council has said to Londoners.

I have read through the Conservation MasterPlan Phase II, Medway Valley South ESA document, studied the maps and plans, and over a period of 31 years, walked through most of the Medway Creek trails from Snake Creek through to the Thames River Trail system.

I believe, there is no place for a bridge across the Medway Creek. The construction with its connecting trails, including hardened trails, cannot be installed without irreparably damaging the delicate topography, flood plains, and flora, and negatively impacting wildlife along this corridor. Your policies in your Guidelines say in every case, that nature comes first.

I am accountable to my grandchildren and future generations. They deserve what we have and we must not spoil it. This is not a park.

The topography is varied with steep cliffs, wetlands and a creek that can range from a small stream to a raging fast moving river that overflows its banks.

In this southern section of the Medway ESA, I have sighted herons flying low along the creek, or standing silently and still in the creek at various locations. The kingfishers also are active along the creek and bordering trees, as they fish and nest. Snapping turtles have come out to lay eggs in the sandy spots in the field, baby turtles have walked back to the creek after hatching. Muskrats and beavers have been seen too during quiet walks.

All this and more, is unsustainable if there is a significant increase of traffic. This proposal would increase human activity and thus jeopardize the ecological integrity of the Medway ESA. My naturalist readings link loss and degradation of habitat to loss of species, and the increased usage and trails through sensitive areas will most certainly degrade the ESA.

There is a reference in the Consultants Report, to paths being wet at the creek edge, and suggesting that people do indeed try to cross the Medway. This “evidence” does not justify the need to cross the creek. These muddy spots have been created by loose dogs bounding through to the creeks edge to cool off in summer, and they are even encouraged to go in when their owners throw objects into the creek for their dog to fetch. I have seen many more off leash dogs than humans churning up the banks.

The Guide also states “trail planning and design should address ecological sustainability to avoid impacts to ecological features and functions”.

I am extremely concerned about any construction in this southern Medway ESA. An example of past construction is when trails were “improved” at the entrance from Longbow Road westwards towards

the creek; the original 10,000 year old geological bench features, evidence of repeated glaciation retreats, were destroyed by this construction, and as well, in the first heavy rainfall the new trails washed out spreading sand and grit off trail.

Quotes from Masterplan used as references for my letter.

“Preserving the ecological integrity and ecosystem health of these features is the first priority. “

40 hectares is 0.4 km square, ie 400metres by 400metres.

Objectives

“The objectives for this CMP are summarized below:

(b) Naturalization: Prepare a strategy and priorities for implementing naturalization projects within or adjacent to the ESA to protect ecological integrity.

Wildlife Habitat: Identify a sustainable monitoring and adaptive management program for the benefit of key wildlife habitat areas within the ESA, including Species at Risk habitat.

While ESAs are protected by their inclusion in the Green Space Place Type under the London Plan, additional measures to provide for their protection, management and utilization are considered necessary.”

The Guiding Principles themselves preclude a bridge!

“Natural features and ecological functions for which the ESA has been identified shall be protected.

-

The ecological integrity and ecosystem health of the ESA shall have priority in any use or design-related decision.

-

A properly designed and implemented trail system appropriate to specific management zones and reflecting sensitivity of the natural features will be implemented to achieve the primary objective of protection and the secondary objective of providing suitable recreational and educational opportunities.”

London’s Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy provides direction for wildlife and identifies that:

“The City is committed to upholding high standards of animal welfare, including the humane treatment of wildlife. The City will strive to not interfere with wildlife and their natural processes where possible; and will strive to implement proactive and preventative measures in order to promote coexistence, and to prevent potential conflicts where possible.”

“As identified in the Guidelines, trail planning and design should address:

Ecological sustainability to avoid impacts to ecological features and functions.

Physical sustainability of the trails and/or structures so they retain their form and function over time and can withstand the natural forces acting on them.

Stewardship of the greater community to foster a sense of individual and collective responsibility for the protection of the ESA”

With respect to a bridge crossing to access one side of the Medway Creek to the other, this statement is not true.

“All options were confirmed to be in compliance with the Guidelines.”

Judith Nesbitt