

Dear Mayor, Members of City Council, and Chair and Members of the Planning and Environment Committee of City Council,

**Re: MEDWAY VALLEY HERITAGE FOREST ENVIRONMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT AREA**

I have lived in London Ontario for all but 4 years since 1969, starting as a student at Western. I have been one of those people that London claims it wants here – someone who comes from out of town, gets an education, and then returns to live here, buy a home, and raise a family. I care about this city and about trying to preserve what is good about it. Sadly, rather than seeing our city build on its strengths, it seems I have more regularly witnessed erosion through neglect and poor policy. A current example is the proposal to further develop the Medway Valley Heritage Forest area – an Environmentally Significant Area – by building intrusive bridges that harm nature. This follows decades of protecting this area and will encourage much more traffic, threatening a natural habitat and turning neighbourhoods into thoroughfares.

After seeing the city fail to protect old London, we reluctantly moved from the core to Sherwood Forest in 1990, drawn by a sense of community with proximity to a green space protected as an Environmentally Significant area. Like generations of parents before us, we raised our children to enjoy and respect nature through their exposure to Medway Creek and the surrounding woods. And now it seems that this gem is under threat. Why? What is the higher purpose served by proposing to build bridges, covering over natural pathways and damaging the habitat of endangered species, and flowers, trees, brush, birds and animals that thrive here? Where is the appreciation for the value of neighbourhood pride and protection of enclaves of greenspace, cared for by locals who are committed to seeing nature thrive?

London does not lack parkland. London does not lack pavement. London does lack a commitment to preserving neighbourhoods, to preserving natural habitats, and to respecting the value of community spirit that comes from knowing

and caring about ones' neighbours and surroundings. As an avid cyclist, I have no problem finding paved surfaces for cycling. I do have a problem finding efficient commuting routes that follow major arteries in the city. As an avid walker, I have a problem finding peaceful places to walk where I do not have to be concerned about competing with those on various forms of transport who share paved surfaces with walkers. As a nature lover, I have a problem finding natural habitats in the city that haven't been encroached upon by buildings or turned into urban parks. As a Londoner, I care deeply about protecting the bit of natural habitat we have left and setting an example of environmental responsibility.

I urge City Council to turn down this proposal. Invest instead in other projects that will make London a better place to live – an inviting downtown core with lively neighbourhoods, useful commuter lanes for cyclists, by-laws that protect neighbourhoods from out-of-town investors and absentee landlords who do not care about London's welfare, and green spaces that respect the value of co-existing with nature and other living things.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Connidis