

April 19, 2018

London City Council Members  
City Clerk Cathy Saunders

London City Hall  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, Ontario  
N6B 1Z2

**RE: Conservation Master Plan (CMP) – Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA (South)**

VIA EMAIL

Dear Council Members:

My wife Susan and I own a home at 42 Green Acres Drive, where we have lived with our family for more than 15 years.

Ourselves along with many of our neighbours attended the Planning and Environment Committee meeting Monday evening April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018. For those of you Council members not in attendance, it was abundantly clear that there was an overwhelming resistance to this above noted initiative from a number of well researched points of review. In our opinion, City administration has not been transparent in this process and has undermined the implied taxpayer/property owner/citizen - city fiduciary relationship.

As identified in an earlier email correspondence to city employee, Linda McDougall, we became aware of this proposal only 4 weeks ago, on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 when a neighbor discovered this process was underway. We were surprised to understand that this MVHF ESA south CMP proposal process has been in development for 5 years, that various meetings have allegedly been held with interested and some of the affected parties, and that a "Local Advisory Committee" had been struck, for which no one from our neighborhood bordering the eastern side of the Medway south ESA had been invited to participate. As a community, upon learning that this initiative appears to be steamrolling ahead by city hall and specific city council proponents, we have had to quickly pull together and mount a call to action to examine the proposed plan, protect our interests, and have a rightful voice in a decision process for which we have been denied to date.

While some of our neighbours have voiced and submitted similar concerns, the core points we would like to emphasize as were also collectively raised at the public April 16<sup>th</sup> PEC meeting earlier this week are as follows:

1. Lack of Support – the Planning Committee meeting held on Monday evening revealed that the public as represented by those in attendance, overwhelmingly was not in favour of the MVHF ESA south CMP. The Medway Heights neighbourhood, on very short notice has a signed petition

with 98% (58 of 59 homeowners signatures) voting against the interventions proposed to the south portion of the Medway Valley.

2. ESA Protection – several individuals with a deep understanding of the inherent issues associated with environmentally sensitive areas pointed out that an ESA requires protection. This area is not a recreational park for people to exercise and explore – we have many parks, accessible pathways and sidewalks across the city that people utilize for recreational purposes. An ESA represents nascent wilderness that requires sensitive management and modest intervention if any for human use.
3. Failure to provide adequate transparency, notice and consultation of the proposed plan – the city staff indicated that this plan was communicated on the city website and the Londoner, neither of which my family would review unless specifically identified. There was no local representation on the Advisory Committee from our neighbourhood which directly borders the ESA, causing us to question the process used to select this Advisory Committee. In addition, the Master Plan for this ESA indicates that this land has a long history with our first nations indigenous peoples – where was their input on this proposed CMP?
4. Due Diligence – based on my understanding from the meeting on Monday evening, there are specific studies and consultations which have not been completed, which I would argue would be asking council to approve the CMP with incomplete information and thereby insufficient feasibility, functional planning and budget analysis.
5. There are two bridges in addition to new and upgraded paths proposed in the current plan – this is a fundamental component of the proposed plan and represents significant expenditures for both construction and long term maintenance. The uncertainty of placement, environmental impact and sensitivities, structural design and sizing in an area prone to extensive flooding will be disruptive, extensive and most definitely not complimentary to the inherent beauty of the ESA. Access to the valley itself will be very disruptive to the natural habitat given the steep and fragile ground. Any level 1 paths could potentially be washed away during flood seasons as we have recently experienced, which will therefore require extensive paving and maintenance – why do we want to do this?
6. Access points 11 and 12 – The CMP has recently identified two new access points, one on Green Acres Drive and another on Gloucester Road, which will divert foot traffic from the path into the neighbourhood. There is already adequate and well lit access at the Elsie Perrin Williams Estate with paved parking, and no need to create these access points within a neighbourhood that has been established for more than 50 years. There was no advocating that these access points be created and no need to add more.
7. ESA protection – Intensification of this unique and treasured area will no doubt result in loss. The number of new and intensified paths, as well as the fact that human nature will no doubt prevail with people and their dogs making informal additional paths to circumvent and ‘shortcut’ through any well planned, preservation rationale, will, especially with increased use, lead to further degradation of the area. As stated by many and validated in the definition of an

ESA and the city's endorsed guidelines, 'an ESA is not a park', and intensification is not a necessity for paths already in existence to meet accessibility standards.

8. Increased criminal activity and personal risk – one of the speakers on Monday is a criminology professor, whose concerns were supported by academic reference studies that indicated that there are direct correlations of increased crime as relates to increased access/escape routes to a neighbourhood. Our home backs onto an existing path through the ESA and we experience periodic property theft by individuals accessing our property from the rear and stealing outdoor furniture and other fixtures which is an extremely frustrating violation. Increasing access and throughput of walkers will only increase the awareness, opportunity and likelihood by those so inclined. In case of emergency, the ESA is a difficult to access location, with at times fast flowing water, ample opportunities for personal injury as well as for individuals to hide. This increased danger is worth exploring and needs to be incorporated in the city's safety plan and review as well as training for emergency response teams before an investment is made as prescribed in the CMP.

As a community and a family, we have a familiarity with the ESA and feel strongly that the proposed CMP will have an irreversible negative environmental impact at significant expense. There appears to be a desire to overstep the stated guidelines to create a recreationally oriented path at the expense of protecting a rare and unique ESA. In conclusion, for the reasons outlined in this letter, we adamantly oppose the approval of the CMP and respectfully hope that you will come to the same conclusion and vote accordingly.

Sincerely,



Michael and Susan Crowley

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