

February 14, 2021
City of London

Attention: Mayor Ed Holder

Re: Balcarres/ Imperial Proposed Street Changes (see attached)

Dear Mayor Holder,

I am writing about this proposal as it affects Imperial Road. I do not live on it but my daughter and family do and I am close enough to walk to their house so am very familiar with the street scape. I am writing to add my voice to others in protesting the proposal.

It is difficult to understand the basis for the changes other than the fact that there probably is a city by-law or regulation which says "all streets shall have sidewalks on at least one side". But one size does not fit all and certainly is not appropriate for Imperial Road. It is a short street, probably about 100 metres in length, which goes "no where", meaning there is absolutely no through traffic - almost without exception the vehicular and pedestrian traffic is related to the residents of the street. Let me give you reasons why the changes should not be made, using my daughter's house (2 Imperial) as a reference.

- a. Street parking. The current setback of houses allows considerable driveway parking. My daughter can park four cars in their driveway. If the changes go through there will be room for only two. It is very seldom that one sees parking on the street; addition of a sidewalk and grass boulevard would force parking which is now on driveways on to the street. Why, why would you want to do that? On street parking complicates garbage pickup and certainly is a severe negative for snow clearance.
- b. Safety. I suppose there could be a concern about the liability pedestrian/vehicle accidents where there is no sidewalk, but I think that would be over stated. There are both few walkers and few vehicles, with, as noted earlier, most of those vehicles belonging to the residents. I think too that planners often overlook the fact that sidewalks themselves create safety problems for walkers. In the winter there is often left a coating of snow which becomes slippery whereas streets with black asphalt and salting are generally more secure for pedestrians. There also is an additional year round problem with sidewalks; you do not have to do much walking before you encounter cracked sidewalks and ones where a portion has heaved due to frost or tree roots, creating a cause for seniors to stumble and fall. (Yes, over time these get ground down but not until they have existed for a period of years and this not only leaves unsightly scarring, but is not a permanent fix.) Separately but also a safety matter is the fact that the street lights are on the other side of the street, not where the sidewalk will be.
- c. Environment: It is estimated there are 15 mature trees which would have to be removed. About three years ago my daughter sought permission to cut down a single tree in her backyard and permission was not granted. Now the city is about to embark on a project which would remove 15 trees from landowners' property without any consultation. In the lifetime of the current residents these trees will never be replaced, depriving the homeowners of the beauty and shade of mature trees. This also would be contrary to the image the city tries to maintain, namely a "treed" city. Visitors entering London on some roads are greeted by a sign saying "London The Forest City". Also the city logo proudly displays a Tree.
- d. Cost. Two aspects of cost. The first is the cost of the project. Imperial Road needs a new surface however I would guess that the cost of creating the sidewalk plus all the ancillary touchups would be at least 2Xs the cost of the simple resurfacing. The second is the reduced property value of each affected property. The much shorter set back of the house and the elimination of those beautiful mature trees cannot be ignored, it does affect value - and from a city viewpoint, a lower property value also means a lower tax revenue.
- e. Annoyance. Sidewalks bring snow plows and these plows invariably scoop up residents lawns. This generally happens with the first snowfall in December so the homeowner is left with an unsightly mess until spring. Then at his expense

and effort the lawn must be repaired. Not a critical matter but one which needs to be recognized. The city does not need to do unnecessary things to further antagonize homeowners.

So, in closing I will repeat an old phrase "*if it ain't broken, don't fix it*" and in terms of Imperial Road, it certainly isn't broken. Since this is a project which in my opinion is unnecessary and uses taxpayers money which could be better spent elsewhere, I am sending a copy of this letter along to the London Free Press.

Sincerely,

William J Roberts

620 Thistlewood Drive,
London, ON N5X 0A9

cc Councillor Maureen Cassidy
hlysynsk@london.ca (Trees and Forests)
Gregg Barrett (Director Planning)
Kyle Fairhurst (project mgr.)
Deris Dow (city mgr.)
London Free press