

Sunningdale West Residents Association

Est. 2012

March 28, 2013

The City of London
P.O. Box 5035
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, ON N6A 4L9

Attention: Councillor Bud Polhill, Chair, Planning and Environment Committee and Members of the Planning Committee

Re: Medway Valley Trail System

Dear Sir/Madam:

We wish to express several concerns with regard to the Medway Valley North Trail matter that is before you. To provide context, the Sunningdale West Residents Association was formed on November 10, 2012 in direct response to this matter. After attending three consultation sessions held by city staff, several local residents expressed that while they appreciated the opportunity to provide an opinion, their singular voices were being lost in the process. In response, the residents association was formed to ensure our collective voices were heard and that local ratepayers had an opportunity to shape decisions in our area.

Our association developed a position statement on this matter and sought the feedback from our neighbours. The effort was well received and 207 signatures were collected in a petition in support of our preferred option #4A – a continuous 3 metre multi-use asphalt pathway through the valley with one new bridge crossing. A copy of this petition is enclosed for your information.

In discussions with our neighbours, we heard that many residents made purchasing decisions to locate to this beautiful area based on the expectation that a 3.5 to 4.0 metre continuous multi-use asphalt pathway would be built in the valley in the near future. Our residents had every reason to believe this was the case as that was what the city had identified in the 2005 Medway Valley Master Plan.

What made this pathway desirable to many was that it would provide a safe and enjoyable place for families and residents to exercise and enjoy the valley while providing access to the City's trail network and community connections. We also heard loud and clear that access to the valley for recreation was a high priority as our neighbourhood is bordered by Wonderland Road and Sunningdale Road and recreation options along both of those roadways poses safety risks - there are no sidewalks or lighting on Sunningdale Road and although there is a brand new sidewalk on

Wonderland Road in some places the sidewalk is dangerously close to the fast moving traffic in the area.

Summary of Key Concerns:

1. Unfulfilled Commitments

Many residents in the area made decisions to purchase or build in the Sunningdale Developments based on various decisions, reports and planning documents:

- 2005 Medway Valley Master Plan identified a 3.5 to 4.0 continuous multi-use asphalt pathway
- August 13, 2007 – “Medway Trunk Sanitary Sewer Phase II – Stage I” staff report to Board of Control recommended that such access routes be developed and constructed in conjunction with the master multi-use path system proposed for the Medway Valley”
- November 18, 2009 – “Contract Award – Tender 09-96, Medway Trunk Sanitary Sewer Phase II – Stage II” staff report to Board of Control recommended that access routes be developed and constructed with the master multi-use path system proposed for the Medway Valley North of Fanshawe Park Road”
- November 29, 2009 – Council resolution that a “moratorium on any new paved pathways in ESA’s by the Planning Committee until such time as the Civic Administration has had an opportunity to review this matter further”
- December 13, 2010 – “Trails and Environmentally Significant Areas” staff report, Built and Natural Environment Committee – Appendix A – Trails in Natural Areas (B. Bergsma, Oct. 2010) stated “planning for the north portion of this pathway, in conjunction with Phase 2 of the sewer EA construction process went through an “ESA type process” in 2004 to select the preferred alternative. The preferred sewer installation alternative changed due to several factors. As a result, even though the EA required the pathway and bridges to be built, there was to be no provision in this phase for constructing this recreational pathway. Completing the planned pathway as part of the project was deferred due to the moratorium on asphalt.”

It is easy to appreciate the frustration that local residents have with the change in direction and the fact that the city completed the north portion of the sewer trunk line and did not install the recreational pathway as planned in the 2005 Medway Valley Master Plan and identified in the November 18, 2009 Contract Award report.

2. Accessibility

The Sunningdale West Residents Association has advocated for a pathway system that will service families with strollers, elderly, and community members with physical challenges. There are several residents with mobility issues who are dependant on wheelchairs for mobility and residents of Amica at London Retirement Home on Fanshawe Park Road who are often seen accessing the southern portion of the pathway (previously completed). Unfortunately, we have faced continued opposition to completing a pathway that will meet our community’s accessibility needs.

Dirt hiking trails and existing granular surfaces/access roads will not provide the access that the majority of users desire because they will be uneven, unstable, often muddy, "natural" (ie. potentially overgrown) and they will not be accessible to the many families with strollers, the elderly, and community members with physical challenges.

Our association pushed to ensure this matter was brought to the attention of the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Their feedback was:

- To implement the option that provided the greatest amount of accessibility
- There are very limited options to provide fully accessible trails in London and/or ESA's and if this area presents that opportunity why wouldn't we pursue it?

3. Local vs. Provincial Restrictions

The asphalt moratorium was an initiative put in place by the previous council. It is not binding and it is not required or mandated by any other level of government. In this case, we argue that the moratorium should not apply to the Medway Valley ESA as the master plan and contract award were issued and approved before the asphalt moratorium. Further, city staff have stated that the "asphalt moratorium had nothing to do with the Medway Valley and that it can't be applied 100% in this case... as it was intended for undisturbed parcels of land."

4. Common Sense Solution

While recognizing that this proposed pathway system is located in an environmentally significant area, it is important to not lose sight of the fact that in 2011 the city installed a sewer trunk extension in the valley to support the rapidly growing urban development the city has planned. We believe installing a continuous multi-use recreational pathway provides a unique opportunity to provide access and enjoyment of this natural area for generations to come, while balancing the social benefits and environmental impacts.

5. Present Usage and Future Growth

The location of this ESA with adjacent communities on all sides will produce a large number of users. This is evident by usage studies conducted by the city which identified that 2900 people crossed the existing pathway bridge in November of 2012 - imagine what the numbers are like in the summer months and imagine the volume of users in 3-5 years as the area north of Sunningdale and east of the valley is developed! We believe that providing a pathway system as described in option 4A (continuous asphalt link) is the only practical way to move users through the area in a way which protects the environment.

6. Public Education

Our association has advocated strongly for increased public education for/about ESA's through enhanced signage and displays in the area. We believe that the high volume of users anticipated in this area provides a unique opportunity to build environmental stewardship in our city. Locking the doors, or restricting access, in this ESA would be a missed opportunity as we believe strongly that users will access the area regardless. Providing a well delineated walking surface will encourage users to stay on the pathway, minimizing the environmental impacts.

In summary, our residents and our association has been true to the public participation process. We have openly engaged, demonstrated a willingness to compromise, and attempted to build consensus. It is most unfortunate that staff could not bring forward a matter that could be supported by all stakeholders.

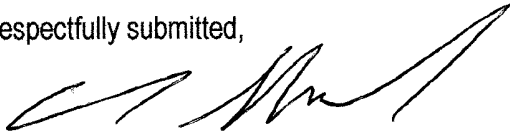
We recognize the tough decision you are burdened with and we implore you to consider our arguments about unfulfilled commitments, accessibility, local vs. provincial restrictions, common sense solution, present usage/future planned growth, and public education and our desire for a multi-use continuous recreational pathway as you deliberate.

Many of our neighbours also wanted an opportunity to formally express their opinions. As such, attached please find individual letters we are submitting at their request.

Should you have any questions please contact the undersigned at your earliest convenience.

Please include this letter within the Planning and Environment Meeting Agenda package.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Sheculski', written in a cursive style.

Chris Sheculski
Vice-President, Sunningdale West Residents Association
c/o 2025 Wallingford Avenue
London, ON
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