

Sunningdale West Residents Association

Est. 2012

April 13, 2013

Delivered by Email: To be included in April 16, 2013 Council agenda package regarding the North Medway Valley Trail

Re: Item 15, 8th Report of Planning and Environment Committee

Dear Members of City Council:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Sunningdale West Residents Association, a community which borders the North West regions of the Medway Valley ESA area and will be directly impacted by the decision London City Council makes on this issue. For this reason, I hope that you will factor our input into your decision making process.

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.

We have been anxiously awaiting the completion of the Medway Valley Trail. We are aware that many options have been evaluated and discussed and that the City has sought public feedback along the way. Our position has not changed; we would like to see a pathway that provides a well delineated, safe and stable surface that can be accessed year round by all our residents – whether they are young children, seniors, or those with mobility issues.

The Sunningdale West Residents Association is satisfied with the outcome of the April 9, 2013 meeting of The Planning and Environmental Committee. The committee reached a consensus to recommend Trail option 5B –“Enhanced Accessible Modified”. This solution provides a continuous link asphalt pathway with 2m wide boardwalks and wood chip paths in the environmentally sensitive areas around the bend in the creek. This compromise from the original 2005 master plan balances providing a practical approach to protecting the ESA, meeting promises made to the community, and accessibility for all.

Our residents and our association have 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. The items below highlight the position of the Sunningdale West Residents Association with regards to the trail system in the Medway Valley.

1. A Practical Solution

We recognizing that the proposed pathway system is located in an ESA, many of our residents are strong proponents of environmental protection. The fact is the city has installed a sewer trunk extension in the valley to support the rapidly growing urban development. People are in the valley now; usage studies conducted by The City of London showed 16,000 people crossed the existing pathway bridge in past 6 months (during winter). Providing a well delineated walking surface will encourage users to stay on the pathway, minimizing the environmental impacts. Many studies have shown that a properly developed pathway keeps users moving through the area and out of sensitive area. Also import to note is that the current granular path has a higher negative environmental impact than asphalt, see Staff report page 16.

2. Unfulfilled Commitments

The 2005 Medway Valley Master Plan identified a 3.5 to 4.0 continuous multi-use asphalt pathway be installed. This pathway was linked to the approval of the installation of the sewer trunk line as a means to offset the negative impacts of its installation. Many residents in the area made decisions to purchase or build in the Sunningdale Developments based on this plan. Since this time we have seen numerous delays to this project while various consultants, committees, and other parties delayed the project completion. The residents of the community have worked tirelessly to see this project through to completion, including public participation meetings, comment forms, petitions, committee meetings, letters to councillors, ...

3. Accessibility

This area is full of families with strollers, elderly, and community members with physical challenges. There are several residents with mobility issues who are dependent on wheelchairs for mobility and residents of Amica of London Retirement Residence on Fanshawe Park Rd. The existing paved pathway in the valley creates a unique opportunity to provide access to a group of users. 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, and often muddy. See Accessibility Advisory Committee recommendations

- 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?

Again, in closing we support the recommendation of the Planning & Environment Committee's from their 8th report, item 15: that Option 5B "Enhanced Accessibility Modified" including its subsections be approved and urge Council to support the same recommendation.

We recognize the tough decision that councillors are burdened with and we implore you to consider our arguments about developing practical solution, unfulfilled commitments, and accessibility and our desire for a multi-use continuous recreational pathway as you deliberate.

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

Respectfully submitted,

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