



Letter from Friends of Meadowlily Woods Regarding the Medway Master Trail Planning Study

9 April 2013, Planning and Environment Committee Public Meeting

Committee Chairperson and Members of the Planning & Environment Committee,

First of all I'd like to let you know why a community association from another part of the city is choosing to give feedback about a document regarding a master trail plan for another environmentally significant area in another part of our city. The Meadowlily Woods Conservation Master Plan has recently commenced after years of delay and we are delighted to see it. The Life Sciences Inventory is already underway. The last comprehensive study was actually about twenty-five years ago in 1988! Thanks for getting back to our natural area with a more recent study. We are concerned that decisions reached tonight at this meeting could end up being applied to other environmentally significant areas without consideration of some key points about all environmentally significant areas:

1. That the primary purpose of environmentally significant areas is **not** the same as a recreational park. This is demonstrated very well in the Meadowlily area by the distinction of the environmentally significant area and the recreational park known as City-Wide Sports Park on Commissioners Road East. It is just that the primary purpose of environmentally significant areas is to preserve and protect the ecological integrity of a natural area. It is not dedicated to recreational use. There are good examples in Meadowlily Woods where the Upper Thames Conservation Authority, which manages the ESAs for London, has restricted access to certain parts of the environmentally significant area of Meadowlily Woods to protect rare and endangered species that are at risk of being exposed to too much activity. We the members of Friends of Meadowlily Woods applaud the efforts of the UTRCA in this matter and have even asked for this protection in cases. The primary purpose of environmentally significant areas is to protect ecological features.

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2. We are concerned that in matters and decisions affecting environmentally significant areas that this **ecological protection** be the **main priority** for master plans related to these natural treasures of our urban landscape. The recreational access to the natural trail in our environmentally significant area is **secondary** to protecting and preserving the natural features of ecologically sensitive areas.

3. In terms of the issue of full accessibility, we have attended meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council that brought to our attention where members of the committee informed us that full accessibility in environmentally significant areas is not an expectation on their part. The policies of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act states that there are specific exemptions regarding accessibility in ecologically designated areas.

4. We the Friends of Meadowlily Woods were part of a larger cooperation between neighbourhood and community associations in opposing paved paths inside of environmentally significant areas. There are many other options for surfaces like boardwalks and hard-packed granular surfaces for making trails more accessible.

5. Given that there is some consideration being given to expand the amount of paved paths in the Medway Environmentally Significant Area, we felt that it was key to remind this committee of the opposition that was expressed about this previously. Environmentally significant areas are not recreational parks, but are purposed to protect and preserve ecological features with as little human disturbance as possible.

6. That the expansion of bike paths across the city is wise and advisable, but not in environmentally significant areas. If you look at the entry signs to the environmentally significant areas you will see a no biking symbol at the entrance to these natural areas. Bikes in environmentally significant areas have increased erosion and disturbance of sensitive areas to the extent that it is easy to see that this activity is damaging the area's ecological features.

7. While we encourage that all natural trails be accessible as possible, we would ask this committee to uphold and maintain the original purpose of environmentally significant areas as being that of protecting and preserving ecological features of these natural treasures. Ecological protection and preservation is the primary purpose of environmentally significant areas.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Smith  
President, Friends of Meadowlily Woods Community Association