

From: W or D Wake

Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2013 10:03 AM

To: Saunders, Cathy

Subject: City Council - Medway Valley Heritage Forest Environmentally Significant Area

Mayor Fontana and Members of Council,

The Medway Valley Heritage Forest is an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) within the City of London. ESAs are set aside for the **protection of natural features and functions**. Under policies approved by the current Council, introduction of trails within ESAs for the purposes of education and recreation is acceptable, only if protection of natural features can be achieved. Policy specifies that **ecological integrity and ecosystem health of the ESA shall have priority** in decisions regarding trails. ESAs are separate and distinct from other classes of city parks. While most categories of parks have a focus on recreation, ESAs are for the protection of natural features.

At its meeting of April 9, 2012, the Planning and Environment Committee (PEC) adopted a plan which is inappropriate for an ESA. The PEC recommendation places too much emphasis on infrastructure for recreation with limited recognition of ecological values. As residents with a long-term interest in protecting natural areas, we urge Council to **reject** the amended plan put forward by PEC.

A more appropriate plan was put forward in the staff report presented at PEC on April 9. We support the general arrangement of trails outlined in that plan (5B - Enhanced Accessibility) with the following amendments:

- Route takes advantage of existing asphalt
- Additional asphalt provided at the north end only, to provide access to the proposed lookout and for the east-west community link that will be south of and parallel to Sunningdale Road
- No asphalt added southward from proposed oxbow lookout
- No additional asphalt northward from existing asphalt pathway near Valley Run Blvd
- Baffle gates must be installed at any transition from asphalt pathway to hiking trail to discourage bicycles (bicycles are not permitted in ESAs)
- Trail around "the bend" is a Level 1 hiking trail, 1 metre in width, using natural substrate
- Seeps and small watercourses are crossed by boardwalk

We believe this amended plan will provide a good trail network while protecting the important natural features of the ESA.

Yours truly,

David and Winifred Wake
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