

From: Gordon Wood
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2013 10:29 PM
To: Lysynski, Heather
Cc: Brown, Matt
Subject: Medway Valley Trail Planning

Dear Ms. Lysynski:

Please include these comments and the attachments in the agenda package:

I recently reviewed the “Draft North Medway Valley Heritage Forest Environmentally Significant Area Trail Master Planning Study – January 2013”. Having walked much of this trail, I wanted to express my concerns about how the trail over the existing sewer system is developed going forward.

I understand that consideration is being given to possibly create 4m wide asphalt paths from the fenced area (where the paved path from the south currently comes to an end) north to Sunningdale. While asphalt provides the easiest surface to walk on or push a stroller over, it would encourage traffic and therefore increased tendency for people to wander off-trail.

As you know, much of the surroundings are considered ESA. In order for those areas to remain that way in perpetuity, I believe we need to trade off some of the social benefits of a convenient trail in favour of environmental concerns. The sewer development, while necessary, has had significant deleterious effects on the valley already. There are better alternatives to asphalt, such as turfstone, or keeping the existing gravel cover in place (although erosion concerns have been noted), and either can serve as service access and public access options. While turfstone may be expensive to place initially, it encourages re-growth while providing an erosion-resistant base.

I would also prefer to see a boardwalk, as opposed to two bridges, going around the bend in the Medway (see attached map). One of the suggestions in the draft document was to include a lookout feature, which I think would be an excellent adjunct to the boardwalk. While it could be argued that a boardwalk over steep terrain would not allow wheelchair access, I would note that on the current asphalt path, there are portions that are too inclined (example: where the bridges meet the path) to encourage wheelchair traffic. The bend in the Medway is zoned ESA, so perhaps such a lookout feature could also have educational signage highlighting the aspects that make it significant.

On the subject of signage, I believe that money saved by not building bridges at the bend could be put into signs placed frequently along the trail. I've attached an example of a sign placed in Gainsborough Meadows Park where trees were planted many years ago. This sort of sign gives a positive message that respecting the trails will give the lands disturbed by sewer placement a chance to regenerate.

This natural area will be around longer than any of us, if we let it. Short term concerns about social benefits should take a back seat in this and other similar scenarios. I hope you will take these suggestions into consideration when the outcome of this trail system is decided.

Respectfully,

Gordon Wood

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