

To: Chair and Members Planning and Environment Committee

From: George and Sydney Sinker, Owners of 1597 Gloucester Road, London

Subject: Medway Valley Heritage Forest Environmentally Significant Conservation Master Plan (CMP) (South) Phase II Public Participation Meeting

Date: July 26th2021

Background:

We have had the privilege of living adjacent to the Medway Valley for 36 years. Degradation of the valley started with installation of trunk sewers in the 1980's and the creation of the utility corridor. The affected areas have never fully recovered despite tree planting and other attempted remedial measures. Hopefully time and good management will allow the forest to recover. The Provincial Policy Statement 2020, as it relates to Natural Heritage Areas (Section 2.1) requires that Natural Heritage Areas be protected for the long term and that they should be "maintained, restored or where possible, improved". These policies are included in the London Plan and Council is required to make decisions consistent with these policies. Accordingly, when there is a conflict, Natural Heritage Protection trumps Access. It is with this backdrop that we suggest certain amendments to the draft CMP.

Connectivity

The July 26th 2021 Planning Report refers to the April 24th 2018 Resolution of Council and the manner in which Planning Staff have dealt with the directions of Council set out therein. However, we note that the Planning Report does not deal with that portion of the Resolution which states "hardscaped surfaces on the level 2 trails be limited to the greatest extent possible". Does Planning Staff intend to comply with this direction particularly with respect to the Gloucester Road access point? There are currently 9 access points on the southeast side of Medway Valley, being Ambleside Park, Grangeover Court, Marcus Court, Glenridge Crescent, Ambleside Drive on the north end near Toohey/Glenridge intersection, Fanshawe Park Road, Gloucester Road, Elsie Perrin Williams Estate and the west end of Windermere Road. It would appear that there are more than sufficient access points at the present time. Furthermore, having regard to Planning Staff's emphasis on the need for connectivity, we query whether it is the ultimate intention of Council to extend the trail system and create a paved or other "hardened" surface connected path for bikes and pedestrians through the Medway Valley similar to the trails created along the Thames River heading east (almost to Clarke Road) and south and west to Springbank Park. If the intent is to connect these trails to the Thames Valley Parkway, which is a multiuse recreational trail, not an ESA, that would be entirely inappropriate and would place the Medway Valley ESA in severe jeopardy. We would ask that clear and unequivocal answers to the above questions be provided prior to any adoption of the CMP.

Green Acres Drive Access

Public use of the Green Acres Drive access point is problematic. A brick wall, pool house and two driveways are located on the access lane and have been for approximately 50 years without complaint from the City. We suggest that it would be inequitable at this point in time to open the access point. Due to the advent of Title Insurance in Ontario, the owners of the two properties affected by the draft CMP may have understood that they were the owners of the subject lands. We suggest that this access be deleted from the CMP and that the adjoining owners enter into Encroachment Agreements with the City.

Gloucester Road Access

Should Council agree that the Green Acres Access not be opened, connectivity will not be an issue. Therefore the proposed change to the Gloucester Road Access from Level 1 to Level 2 would be unnecessary. The current trail is a looped trail, in essence a trail to nowhere. In addition, the access to the Valley floor is steep. In our conversations with our professional advisors and representatives of UTRCA we were advised that if the trail were to be improved with gravel or wood chips it would simply wash away due to the steepness of the slope. We have also been advised by an architect that if wooden switchbacks were constructed, based on AODA requirements, the minimum length of ramp would be approximately 770 feet at 10% slope and possibly longer depending on the slope. The ramp would also require hand and guard rails on both sides, Should you build the slope to 20% (20 feet of horizontal length, for every one foot of vertical) railings would not be required but the total length of the ramps would increase to approximately 1300 feet. Construction on either a 10% Or 20% level would not only be costly, it would likely damage the ESA. We realize that decisions on this access have been deferred, however we feel it is important to point these issues out.

Equitable Access at Elsie Perrin Williams Estate (EPW)

We believe that the most suitable area for the City to expand and improve access to the Valley is at EPW. Our ad hoc committee walked this trail with councillors Morgan, Squire and Lehman, in particular, the meadow area where the EPW 9 hole golf course used to be located. I believe it was agreed that without a large expenditure of capital, this access could be improved to fully accommodate able and other abled people. In addition, at the top of the bank, there is a beautiful lookout down the Valley which could be improved with benches. There is also plenty of parking available.

Technical Corrections To Draft CMP

1. S 3.4 We believe the Gloucester access should read A11 rather than A12.
2. Implementation section We believe this should read either 10 years from the adoption of the plan or 2021-2031 rather than 2018 to 2028 as it now reads.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft CMP. We believe that early and continuous public participation is essential to make a good plan better for the benefit of the citizens of London.

George and Sydney Sinker