

Submission Regarding New Sidewalks in Established Neighbourhoods

On behalf of the Sherwood Forest neighbours recently involved in the 2021 sidewalk exemption process, we wished to offer a few thoughts on the tabled Report to CWC (Dated November 23, 2021) regarding new sidewalks in established neighbourhoods and the proposed NSCP concept.

First, we wished to sincerely thank the City for the excellent job done on Friar's Way, Doncaster Place and Abbey Rise. The construction was completed in a way that left curbs intact in front of the mature trees, protecting their roots, and keeping tree loss to a minimum. These streets were resurfaced within the existing footprint, and continue to serve us all as highly walkable, inclusive, multi-use paths. We cannot overstate how much we appreciated the City's decision, and the careful manner in which the reconstruction occurred. We walk, ride, drive, use walkers, play hockey, and transit with every form of mobility device on these safe and brilliantly resurfaced roads daily. The Engineering Dept deserves high praise for preserving the mature greenscape during reconstruction.

Second, we hope that future exemptions under Policy 349 will not be vilified as "to be avoided". Such exemptions are an appropriate balance, and that is why they exist in the London Plan and should continue to be relevant. City Policies supporting the protection of London's mature green spaces, various climate control measures, and the City's overall environmental targets with respect to the "Forest City", while not considered in the Report, offer some competing context in the evaluation of sidewalk exemptions for those established streets that are presently safely walkable, accommodating, and suitable as is.

Third, we sincerely hope, and trust, that any NSCP would not replace the owners right to approach CWC, and Council in turn, with future exemption requests. I assume the process is not intended to prejudice the homeowners who wish to raise future exemption requests for it would be naive to suggest these NSCPs will not be stocked with paid advocates and committees who take the position that sidewalks should apply as a blanket rule. We worry an NSCP could mount a campaign (with participants who don't even live on the impacted streets) which would not reflect the position of a particular street. We trust that such a process would not be used to bully individual homeowners and neighbourhood street delegations into an outcome based upon an NSCP that has participants well beyond those living in the impacted area.

I offer my own street as an example. We are on Doncaster Avenue. It flanks the Medway Valley natural heritage ESA. Doncaster Avenue was granted an exemption under the 2021 Council decision (regarding the connecting streets Friars Way and Doncaster Place which were exempted). It has no connecting sidewalks and is a very steep street, given that it follows the contours of the Valley ESA. A pathway currently runs behind the backyards on Doncaster Avenue, and the City has done an excellent job with upkeep and even upgraded the boardwalk this year. The neighbourhood was part of a heartfelt campaign for the sidewalk exemptions - literally a thousand kids petitioned, and many delegations submitted personal use testimony as to the existing "walkability" of the street for users of every sort. For many reasons, Doncaster Avenue qualified for exemption.

My point is, that the construction has not occurred on Doncaster Avenue yet (and we are in no rush as the street is in reasonable condition) but we assume that any NSCP involving the broader community, including an area that might reach well beyond the Valley borders, should not act as a reversal of Council's intent and those owners should not have to re-litigate the exemption process.

Thank you for your consideration. It's been a tough stretch for everyone over the pandemic and we appreciate your service. We all cherish our London neighbourhoods. For the Sherwood Forest residents, we particularly love our quiet, tree-lined, walkable, wheelable, inclusive, streets abutting the ESA. We write in the hopes that all the heartfelt effort the neighbours made in previously appealing to Council is not to be overridden by a stacked NSCP that extends to participants who do not have to face the destruction of their boulevards.

Thank you to the City and all involved in the recent road work in Sherwood Forest for a reconstruction well done. We are so grateful daily for the exemption decision. I would just end by stressing that speaking from personal experience, for the people who live in these houses (all of whom bought them on the basis that the area was designed not to require sidewalks) it remains a massive worry that our streetscapes could be destroyed against our wishes. Please do not underestimate the impact on the residents who live in these homes and who bought their homes in good faith, never imagining the boulevards and trees they have maintained over the years could be torn away in the name of unnecessary new concrete.

We can only hope the process being discussed is not intended to prejudice their opportunity to appeal to CWC and/or Council, or to reverse decisions previously granted.

Sincerely, the Sherwood Forest delegation 2021