

January 1, 2024

Dear Planning Board:

The Carlisle Trails Committee has reviewed the application for a Conservation Cluster at 75 West Street, specifically with regard to the proposed trail. The trail would provide access from West Street along the southern border to the eastern edge of the property through the Open Space parcel. The eastern edge of the Open Space parcel abuts a landlocked parcel of conservation land owned by the Carlisle Conservation Foundation known as the Ryan Land (see attached map). Currently there are no trails on the Ryan Land because the parcel is almost all wetlands. There is some dry land on the northeastern edge of the Ryan Land that can be accessed by a trail easement from Westford Street through the Sorli conservation restriction land. However we don't see a practical way to connect to the proposed Conservation Cluster trail from east to west through the wet Ryan Land. It is possible in the future that we might be able to make this connection through other parcels, although nothing is in the works today. In our opinion the value of the proposed trail easement is for future rather than current use. While we have the opportunity, we would like to keep open the possibility of a future trail connection.

If the proposed dead-end trail is constructed today we expect it to have limited public benefit other than to residents of the Cluster. We haven't seen any natural features that would make it a destination for others. Little-used trails are often more difficult to maintain because of encroaching vegetation. They require volunteer effort to keep open that might be better spent on trails serving more users. At this time, we consider the easement to be more valuable than an actual trail. Keeping the proposed trail parking area would also be valuable from a future trail perspective.

On the October 21 site walk we looked at the idea of adding a trail along the northern boundary of the property to make a loop trail. The topography along the northern boundary is generally suitable but wetlands would need to be crossed to get back to West Street and then users would have a walk along West Street to complete the loop. Also, a trail would be close to houses on both sides of the northern boundary. This is uncomfortable for both trail users and homeowners and we prefer to avoid it when possible. We do not recommend extending the trail along the northern boundary.

Please let me know if you have questions.

Best regards,

Alan Ankers  
Chair, Carlisle Trails Committee

