



DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL SERVICES

May 16, 2008

Ms. Anne Kaplan
Mr. Edward Smith
614 Northside Drive
Wilmington, DE 19809

**Re: 614 Northside Drive
Questions and Concerns**

Dear Ms. Kaplan and Mr. Smith:

This letter serves as a response to your letters dated March 10, 2008 and March 29, 2008 and as a follow up to our meeting at your home on March 14, 2008. As you know, the work that New Castle County has undertaken in the vicinity of your North Hills home is related to a portion of the existing Shellpot Sanitary Sewer Interceptor System between I-95 and Washington Street Extension that runs through the Bringhurst Woods. This portion consists of parallel 21" and 24" lines that carry nearly all of the sanitary sewage generated in Brandywine Hundred north of I-95 and between Concord Pike and Silverside and Marsh Roads. These sewers service approximately 40,000 people and carry in excess of three (3) million gallons of sewage per day. Under the Brandywine Hundred Sewer Rehabilitation Program, these lines were investigated and have been determined to have failed to the point that action is necessary for the protection of public health, safety, and property. Rather than replace the lines in this environmentally sensitive area, we are building new sewers in Washington Street Extension and Carr Road, thus preserving the woods and protecting the stream. However, your North Hills community is directly connected to the existing interceptors, and some accommodation for this must be found to ensure reliable sanitary sewer service.

We have evaluated alternatives to achieve this goal, all of which necessitate some impact on the North Hills community. Additionally, the sewers within North Hills are failing and need to be rehabilitated or replaced.

Understandably, you have expressed a number of questions and concerns in your letters and during our meeting regarding our evaluations and plans. Please allow me to try to address these issues:

Questions:

1. *When is the planned construction start date and how long would that take?*
2. *What are the project stages and details of implementation?*

We are currently in the midst of a very large sewer rehabilitation program for the entire Brandywine Hundred. Within that program, there are three projects planned in and around the vicinity of North Hills.

The first project is the replacement of the interceptor known as the Bringham Interceptor Project. Phase I is currently under construction on the Washington Street Extension and should be completed by mid-summer. Phase II is slated for construction in the second half of 2009 on Carr Road from Marsh Road down to Washington Street Extension.

The second project is to reconnect North Hills to the new sewer system once the Old Bringham Interceptor is abandoned. The feasibility evaluation of alternatives for this identified the construction of a North Hills pump station in the lot behind your street as the most cost effective, least intrusive, most environmentally favorable, and most constructible option. Slip lining of the existing interceptor was considered but was ruled out due to environmental constraints, the physical condition of the host pipe and constructability. Design of this project is slated to begin in the fall of 2008 with construction beginning in the summer of 2010. Construction is expected to last six months.

The third project is rehabilitating the existing North Hills sanitary sewers, which were constructed and easements established around 1952. The rehabilitation work will be mostly comprised of trenchless rehabilitation with some excavation required to replace broken sections of sewer pipe, install lateral cleanouts, and replace failing manhole components. Design of this rehabilitation effort is slated for 2010 with construction occurring in a variety of contracts between 2012 and 2014.

3. Where will digging occur on our property for pipe replacement?

A firm answer to this question is not yet possible, as plans for work are still rather preliminary (hence our recent efforts to survey property lines, determine wetland locations, CCTV of existing sewers and establish property ownership). During the construction of the North Hills pump station, work on the two sewer lines currently in New Castle County easements on your property may be necessary, but this can not be determined until the design has commenced. During rehabilitation of the existing sanitary sewers on your property, excavation will probably not be required, but construction access to the pipe on and behind your property will be necessary.

4. Where would the proposed site of the pumping station specifically be in the quarry?

The final location has not been determined, but a preliminary location of the pump station places it in the Bringham Woods property close to the existing sanitary sewer line. Please see the enclosed figure for the preliminary location.

5. What are the implications of constructing the station in a FEMA designated flood zone?

There are a number of pump stations in New Castle County that are currently in FEMA flood zones. New Castle County has strict requirements for its pump stations. These stations are designed to have all necessary equipment and backup systems for use within all types of environmental conditions, including flood zones.

6. *How would the station be accessed?*

An access road is tentatively planned from Washington Street Extension either through the Bringhurst Woods property or through the quarry to the proposed pump station. There will not be any need to utilize private property to access the pump station.

7. *Will any additional easements be requested for our property?*

It is likely that the existing sanitary sewer easements on your property are sufficient. There is a possibility that additional space will be required during construction. If additional space is necessary, we will negotiate a temporary easement on your property that will only be in effect during construction.

8. *Another neighbor suggested that as the solution would be for this neighborhood, let it serve the neighborhood. We have all donated (e.g., power lines on our properties). Might the compromise be, if the pump station is a necessity, to put the pump station far away from our properties in the woods?*

Once a project like this is preliminarily designed, a public meeting is held with the impacted neighborhoods. This has been on the County's schedule prior to initiating the detailed design phase. Every effort will be made to keep the pump station as far from private properties as possible while also balancing cost, environmental impacts, and constructability.

Concerns:

1. *The structure would be a neighborhood eyesore.*
2. *One of the most important aspects of our home when we purchased it was the beauty of the land. We currently treasure the views we have out the back of our house toward the woods and this proposed structure would ruin that.*
3. *We are committed to preserving open space and especially land around our home. We purchased a home nearly 70 years old and have put a lot of work into taking care of it in a way that preserves its original beauty and places great value on the gardens, natural landscape, and general aesthetic value.*

Your concerns are understandable. Fitting into the existing landscape is an important consideration when the County designs new structures. We are committed to minimizing the effects caused by the construction of the pump station and ensuring the resulting work is aesthetically pleasing. To this end, it is in our interest also to preserve as much open space and trees as possible. This was one of the main reasons why the new replacement interceptor was moved away from the Bringhurst Woods to the existing road ways. Although some trees will need to be removed, clearing will be much less than if we were to replace the sewer lines in the woods.

As you can tell from the pictures provided at our meeting, pump stations can be designed to closely match or complement the facades of the existing North Hills buildings. New Castle County appreciates the beauty of Bringhurst Woods and wants to preserve it as much as possible while continuing to provide reliable sanitary sewer service to the North Hills neighborhood.

4. We are worried about leaks and, despite assurances, accidents and incidents happen.

One of the main drivers for this project is being proactive in assessing the condition of its sanitary sewers in the Brandywine Hundred area to prevent incidents and accidents. New Castle County has chosen this proactive approach rather than having to react to failures that would have much greater consequences. The current and future projects in and around North Hills are being done to prevent the much more invasive emergency repairs that would be necessary if the existing sewers were to fail. New Castle County plans to continue being as proactive as possible with its entire infrastructure.

All that being said, yes, accidents and incidents do occur. While a fail proof system is never guaranteed, New Castle County takes a number of steps to prevent as many of these unnecessary accidents and incidents. Pump stations are equipped with backup equipment and remotely monitored by our operations center.

5. This unwanted sewer pumping station would significantly decrease our property value and rights, as well as give North Hills a bad name.

The entire sanitary sewer in New Castle County is serviced by at least one of our 170 pump stations, including neighborhoods located in Greenville, Montchanin and other affluent areas.

6. We are concerned about safety, particularly as we have young children.

Safety is a very valid concern. During construction activities, the limits of construction are marked out and New Castle County will have a full-time representative on-site to ensure that site safety procedures are adequate and being followed. However, given the steep slopes and the wooded and rocky nature of the terrain in Bringham Woods, New Castle County highly recommends that young children remain under close parental supervision during any construction and sewer maintenance activities.

The proposed pump station will be entirely self-contained and locked at all times. The pump station may have a fence placed around it for additional security and safety reasons, but the final decision of a fence will not be made until the detailed design phase. The installation of a fence must also be balanced with the concerns for maintaining the aesthetics of the area.

7. We do not wish for the added noise (residents near other sewer pumping stations have told us they can be noisy.)

Because all components of the pump station are housed within a specially designed building, noise will be minimal outside the building. There are a number of additional design considerations that can be used to further reduce noise, including landscaping and sound-attenuated electrical components, which are standard in all New Castle County pump stations. Given the proximity of this proposed pump station to the homes in North Hills, noise reduction will be considered during design.

8. *We do not want the lingering potential for aggravation due to county workers being on our property. We have already experienced frustrations as county workers have shown up unannounced (despite requests to be notified and assurances they would), trampled our plantings, and broke a portion of our vegetable garden fixed bed (which they said they would get back to us on and fix and never have). They had come to survey the sewer lines and then to clean them out. At the time, we were unaware of this Interceptor Rehabilitation project and thought they were done with what they needed to do at that point). We really do not wish to have an open invitation to more hassle, destruction, discarded cigarette butts, and dropped tools / construction pieces for our young children to discover.*

As I mentioned, there are a number of projects that are planned over the next five years to restore the integrity of the sanitary sewers in your neighborhood. The planned location and access ways for the new infrastructure will minimize the need to access your property.

Destruction of private property features, even within the limits of our easement, are not authorized without prior notification of the property owner. Littering or leaving unsafe conditions is also prohibited in our policy of maintaining a safe working environment for our workers and our customers. While notice to enter an established sanitary sewer easement is not required, the New Castle County policy for work related to the Brandywine Hundred Sewer Rehabilitation project is to provide the property owner written notice (via door hanger or flier) as a courtesy outlining the scope of work and the need to enter the easement area. New Castle County also tries to limit this work to normal business hours. During this very important project our goal is to disrupt the home owner as little as possible.

While inconvenient, all infrastructure (whether it be a house or a sewer pipe buried underground) requires regular inspection, maintenance and occasional repair. Without regular attention, sewer overflows and basement backups will occur. The intent is to rehabilitate the sewers so they require as little maintenance as possible over the next 50 years.

9. *We are concerned about potential graffiti and/or vandalism (we already have problems with Mt. Pleasant High School kids using this area of our property to access the Bringhurst county woods).*

Graffiti and vandalism has not been a major concern with pump stations, due to the regular maintenance and monitoring. If a problem occurs, the issue is handled as quickly as possible. The building will be as inconspicuous and secure as possible, and should not result in any increase in potential graffiti and/or vandalism. The entrance to the access road on Washington Street Extension will also be gated.

10. *Ultimately, we'd hope that an information meeting be held specifically with the North Hills Civic Association, and that all its members be invited to attend and ask questions. Stan Bell had also suggested that elected members of New Castle County Council should be invited to attend and state their position on this proposal.*

Dozens of public meetings have been held on the Brandywine Hundred Rehabilitation Program, as civic meetings are standard with all of our projects. The approximate time for a

North Hills civic association meeting will be in late August or September 2008. As with all of our public meetings, the New Castle County Council Representative for this district will be invited to attend. The meeting will most likely take place at Rockwood Park. We will contact the North Hills Civic Association President (Mary Anne Korant) to schedule the meeting.

Follow up items: (from March 29, 2008 letter)

1. *Dennis asked about the idea of using an undersized liner and gravity.*

As discussed at the meeting, this option was explored early on and ruled out because of environmental constraints, the physical condition of the host pipe and constructability. At the request of Dennis Litwin, we have reevaluated slip lining and have determined it is not feasible. We will discuss this in detail when we hold the civic association meeting in the fall.

2. *You described the existing lines behind our house and the new plan to connect them. I noted from the map you showed us that point 289 goes to 288 and that the plan was to connect 295 to 298, then 298 would go to 290 (pump station placement). The manhole cover on our property was labeled "300". This would involve digging on the properties of Stan and ourselves. You offered to send the maps/plans to us which show the existing lines and proposed plan in red.*

The final location of the pump station and how the existing gravity lines will be reconfigured has not been determined, but a preliminary spotting of the pump station places it in the Bringhurst Woods property close to the existing sanitary sewer line. Please see the enclosed figure for the preliminary location.

3. *You will send an approximate date for the civic association meeting for later this year.*

The approximate time for the civic association meeting will be in late August or September 2008. As with all of our civic association meetings, the New Castle County Council Representative for this district will be invited to attend. The meeting will most likely take place at Rockwood Park. We will contact the North Hills Civic Association President (Mary Anne Korant) to schedule the meeting.

4. *You will send the date of the next scheduled sewer line cleaning for our area.*

The approximate date of the next scheduled sewer cleaning is April 21, 2010. Please keep in mind that the schedule may change based on weather, manpower and equipment availability. I will be happy to provide an updated schedule for the Preventive Maintenance upon request.

5. *You described you worked with the civic association head of Tarleton (Jon Borsos) and would provide the contact information for him as a reference.*

Mr. John Borsos, TCA President (302.354.5869) has been our main contact during all of the Sewer Rehabilitation work for Tarleton. Mr. Borsos would be happy to speak with you concerning his experiences with New Castle County and Malcolm Pirnie during the Sewer

Rehabilitation design/construction work in his area. Please note that Mr. Borsos is on vacation and unavailable until Wednesday, May 29, 2008.

6. *Regarding noise associated with work near/on our property, please let us know the expected/permmissible hours of operation for the contractors/sub-contractors.*

Typically normal working hours available to the contractor during construction are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

I hope this letter has adequately addressed your concerns. Please let me know if you need any additional information. You can reach me at any time via phone at (302) 395-5868.

Very truly yours,

Robert Roff
Operations Services Manager

Enclosure

c: Jon Husband, New Castle County
Jason Zern, New Castle County
Dave Hofer, New Castle County
Jim Shelton, Malcolm Pirnie