

Roads no longer lead to places; they are places.

J.B. Jackson, A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time

November 2, 2021

Dear Members of the Ipswich Planning Board, Staff, and Administrators,

As the Planning Board continues their site plan review and consideration of the application for a special permit for Ora, Inc. to use and develop 55 Waldingfield Road (“Waldingfield”) for commercial office use under Ipswich’s Great Estate Protection Bylaw, we respectfully ask the Planning Board members to give considerable weight to the history and rural character of the 55 Waldingfield Estate and Waldingfield Road itself.

Waldingfield Road is synonymous with the longstanding Appleton family who emigrated from Little Waldingfield in Suffolk England to Ipswich in 1635 or 1636 (both dates being on historical record). Samuel Appleton, born in 1586, was granted a land parcel in Ipswich in 1638 containing 460 acres. Here, he built the original homestead and founded Appleton’s farm on the Ipswich River which included all the land on the north side of Waldingfield. “.....more or less meadow and upland as it lyeth bounded by the River commonly called the Mile brook on the Northeast and by the great River on the Northwest to the West.” (*Historic Ipswich*) As we all know; Appleton Farms today, is comprised of approximately 1000 acres of rolling grasslands and is one of the oldest continuous working farms in the United States. Thanks to many generations of the Appleton family and ultimately to the late Colonel Francis R. Appleton and his wife Joan Appleton’s foresight in gifting the land to the Trustees of Reservations in 1974, all of the farm’s land is protected for generations to come.

Samuel Appleton’s namesake son is depicted in a painting at both the Ipswich post office and the Ipswich Riverwalk Mural for his role in the early rebellion of the Crown’s tax tactics as early as 1682 and advocated for no taxation without representation in 1687. He was placed in jail and stayed longer than colleagues for refusing to give the bond for release. These were significant events leading to the eventual Revolutionary War. Appleton’s stature and actions are clearly worth noting and there is an opportunity for the Town of Ipswich to further embrace its role as a premier settling spot for the Massachusetts Bay Colony members, its important place in history in the fight for independence from England, and by

memorializing Samuel Appleton's original land grant before the United States was created! Throughout Ipswich, period houses and road names define the town, exalting notable settlers and prominent town names such as Winthrop, Haskell, Lord, Whipple, Goodhue, Warner, Hall, Jeffery, Proctor and Appleton to name a few.

Waldingfield Road, created by the Appleton family, not the town of Ipswich, was once at the very center of the Appleton's farm and lands. Today, it runs the length of the Farm's northern boundary from County Road (Rte. 1A) to Goodhue Street. The 55 Waldingfield Rd. property was not only once a part of the Appleton family property and home to the original homestead, but it remained in the Appleton family and was occupied by an Appleton until the death of Julia Appleton Bird, granddaughter of Daniel Appleton, in 1982. Julia Appleton Bird, as we know, continued the family's legacy of land conservation in 1972 with the creation of the Julia Appleton Bird Reservation, a ~60-acre publicly accessible conservation area bordered to the north by the Ipswich River and to the south by Waldingfield Road. She also protected an additional 8.5 acres of River frontage with a conservation restriction below the Mansion.

The character and history of the Waldingfield estate and Waldingfield Road are worth preserving and protecting from growth and development. Both the road and estate are special. They define Ipswich's roots. They are beautiful. They are unique. They should be available in their totality as Daniel Appleton worked tirelessly to accomplish (the farm had been broken up in the early 1800's and he diligently sought to restore the original family land grant) for future generations and not just a few leftover "token" buildings as are seen at New England Biolabs which inhabit the Proctor Estate off of state Route 1A in Ipswich. We believe the Planning Board has not only an opportunity but the responsibility to protect and preserve the integrity and historical significance of not just the buildings, and portions of the property, but the property as a whole.

Waldingfield Road is all but unchanged and still maintains its authentic and original rural character and the town should work to protect it. The 20' wide and only one-mile-long road with tree-lined allees on the Appleton Farm side as well as on the 55 Waldingfield Property, gentle slopes and curves and classic old stone walls, paddocks and pastures inherently establishes it as a beautiful and yet threatened country road that needs to be protected. (There is a good reason that Winthrop Street and part of Cutler Rd in Hamilton are not paved.) "The differences in character between a twenty-foot-wide, two-lane country road

without shoulders or clear zone, and a forty-eight-foot wide, four lane engineered parkway tells much about the intended and past uses of a road.” (Massachusetts dcr document, “Terra Firma- Identifying and Protecting Historic Roads”)

As it stands, the road cannot handle the current traffic burden of town residents, employee and delivery traffic to and from the expanding New England Biolabs, and the Pingree School. To add more vehicular pressure from a commercial office use will undoubtedly and eventually necessitate the need for widening, walkways and lines and potentially traffic lights. At that point...yet another beautiful small country road will be sacrificed for short term gains found in land development and use. When does it stop?

We are asking the Planning Board to put the history, Rural Residential zoning and country road character of the Waldingfield Road neighborhood first and at the top of their criteria as they consider the special permit application. The current proposal before the Board, with its proposed new buildings and potential for even more development in the future has no place in a residential neighborhood, period. It is fitting that New England Biolabs is currently expanding their development footprint so that we as a community can actively see the town’s Great Estate Bylaw in action there. We argue that it worked for about 20 years but now that the company is growing and expanding (as companies do), the original intent has been diluted. The original three main buildings along with a couple of outbuildings still exist butthe original integrity and beauty of the Proctor Estate is gone. There is no going back once the door is open to such an incongruous use as a commercial office would be on Waldingfield Road. Is that what we want to have happen on the solely residential country road of Waldingfield that is framed by the endangered Ipswich River on the north and by Appleton Farms to the south? Our answer is a resounding and unambiguous no, and it is a strong possibility that Daniel Appleton would agree:

Daniel Fuller Appleton- 1826-1904 -Upon his death, Milo Gates (of the Church of the Intercession) writes: “I have often wondered since Mr. Appleton’s death what Ipswich would have become if he had not lived there and taken an interest in the preservation of the fine old things intellectual as well as material of that place..... I can see now several New England towns similar to Ipswich, but as unlike as possible because these towns have had no Mr. Appleton quietly in their background to inspire and to assist efforts like those which at Ipswich have revered and preserved the good of the past and thus made Ipswich to respect itself and to be respected and so became a place of pilgrimages.”

The Appleton family has a rich history and significant legacy in Ipswich. Their contributions and conservation efforts have protected immensely important open space and historic properties that will be enjoyed and part of the Ipswich landscape for generations to come. They are a part of our living history. It is incumbent upon the Planning Board and the Town of Ipswich to do their part in honoring their contributions as original founders and continuing this legacy by rejecting the special permit application and working with the Open Space Committee, and others to protect 55 Waldingfield Road and Waldingfield Road itself from becoming just another piece of the past. A neighborhood and piece of history we could have saved but chose not to.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sources where not noted above:

<https://historicipswich.org/55-waldingfield-rd/>

<https://thetrustees.org/place/appleton-farms/>

<https://ecga.org/Property/Julia-Bird-Reservation>

<https://essexheritage.org/attractions/julia-bird-reservation>

<https://littlewaldingfieldhistorysociety.wordpress.com>

<http://ipswich.files.wordpress.com>