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## TOWN OF IPSWICH OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

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### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Carolyn Britt, Chair, Ipswich Planning Board

**FROM:** Open Space Committee

**SUBJECT:** 55 Waldingfield Road Great Estates Preservation Development

**DATE:** November 8, 2021

**CC:** Ipswich Planning Board  
Molly Shea, Open Space Manager  
Beth O'Connor, Open Space Steward  
Ethan Parsons, Director of Planning and Development  
Kristen Grubbs, Town Planner

Please consider this memo a follow-up to the October 20, 2021 recommendation that the Open Space Committee (OSC) provided to the Planning Board. These are the recommendations of the Open Space Committee, at the discretion of the Planning Board, for open space at 55 Waldingfield Rd. associated with the Great Estate Preservation Development (GEPD) proposal by Ora, Inc.

1. Members of the Open Space Committee met with Jim Bone, the Building Commissioner, on November 2, 2021 as recommended by the Planning Board at the October 21, 2021 meeting.

The OSC acknowledges the Building Commissioner's opinion that the existing 8.8 acre Conservation Restriction (CR) area could be eligible to count as open space set aside land if the Planning Board determines it meets the criteria and intent of the GEPD bylaw. Therefore, the Open Space Committee would like to clarify its recommendation to the Planning Board pertaining to the open space areas.

The OSC agrees with the Building Commissioner that the Planning Board has the discretion to allow that qualifying portions of the the 8.8 acre CR area could count towards the open space set aside. However, pursuant to the May 1997 Criteria for Evaluating Open Space, portions of that 8.8-acre area may not count in the applicant's proposal of open space. As the Planning Board considers the applicant's calculations for open space, areas that do not meet the criteria should be excluded from the proposed open space area.

Per the GEPD zoning bylaw, a minimum of 40% of the land owned by the applicant (i.e. a minimum 40% of 39.9 acres) shall be designated open space. We recommend that the Planning Board use their discretion as needed to increase the open space minimum by up to ten percent as outlined in the GEPD bylaw in order to protect the most valuable open space resource areas specified below.

2. As mentioned in the previous Open Space Committee memo (October 20, 2021), the most significant portions of the property that meet the Open Space criteria cited above, and which are integral to the

design and character of the existing estate (primary intent of bylaw), are the front two pastures. These pastures, highly visible from Waldingfield Road, are valuable as scenic vistas and active agricultural areas and should be the priority for open space protection. As such, those two pasture areas, in their entirety, should be permanently protected as open space (*see attached figure OSP-3*).

Based on our evaluation of the onsite features, we deem that the side and front setbacks (i.e. buffers from adjacent properties and the road as required by the GEPD Bylaw Section 5.d.i.), as proposed by the applicant, are not “the best possible use of the open space” and therefore should not be the priority areas set aside for open space protection.

3. The Open Space Committee’s recommendation regarding trails and public access remains the same as outlined in the October 20, 2021 Open Space Committee memo.
4. Regarding a request to provide OSC input on the formal designed landscape portion of the property made during the October 21, 2021 Planning Board meeting, the OSC acknowledges that the formal landscape is important to the character and integrity of this great estate and would be meaningful to retain through conditions by the Planning Board. However, we feel that in regards to designated open space, the pastures are a top priority for protection. Beyond acknowledging that the historic landscape and gardens are important to the character and integrity of the great estate, the Open Space Committee feels that it is outside of their expertise to comment on these areas.

As previously stated, permanent protection of this property’s highest profile open spaces (i.e. the two pastures) is of the utmost importance. Protecting natural features and their aesthetic value for the long term is a foundational purpose of the GEPD bylaw. By not protecting an open space highly valued for its current condition it would leave those areas vulnerable to future development.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide supplemental comments. We recognize the applicant may present modified open space proposals to the Planning Board that may differ from their original application, and we will be available to provide further review and comment as the Planning Board requests.

Sincerely,

Wayne Castonguay and Andy Brengle  
Co-Chairs, Open Space Committee

*Enclosures:*

**OSP-3:** Pasture Areas (November 3, 2021)

Figure OSP-3

