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VIA EMAIL: ethanp@ipswichma.gov

Ipswich Planning Board
Town Hall
25 Green Street
Ipswich MA 01938

Re: 55 Waldingfield Road, Ipswich MA 01938

To the Planning Board of the Town of Ipswich,

I am writing to the Board once again as an immediate abutter, across the river at 44 Mill Road, to 55 Waldingfield Road. My apologies for commenting in writing on the day of the meeting, but I do not expect to be able to connect on Zoom tonight and want to comment on Mr. Nylen's recent letter (February 8) and the revised Open Space Plan (February 9).

It is truly unfortunate that, once again, we are presented at the last minute and in generalities with what appear to be significant proposed adjustments to the contemplated project. This is totally counterproductive. It completely undercuts the possible impact of the adjustments and runs the risk that we will once again have an inconclusive discussion of dueling assertions and counter assertions. Assuming that the applicant is serious about pursuing this project, which I certainly believe they are, I would strongly urge that they step back and prepare an updated presentation of the entire project in its complete and final form in all

of its detail and then give the Board and the community enough time to evaluate this as a proposal. This is a complex project and piecemeal reviews and presentations are just not productive.

Returning to Mr. Nysten's letter and the plan, he appears to be making some concessions, but it is impossible to be sure.

More than sixty percent open space? I realize that this is, in the aggregate, much better than where we started. And it appears, finally, to have finessed the 8.8 acre discussion which has wasted so much Board time and attention. But it still leaves the bulk of the highly sensitive east paddock available for some hypothetical future use. Exactly what would this be? To my mind, both paddocks should be permanently protected or the project should not proceed. This is a tiny site and it does not make sense unless the ORA development is principally limited to the least intrusive areas. We are talking about the heart of the landscape viewed from Waldingfield Road.

What is the maximum permitted buildout of the site? Open spaces percentages only go so far – by definition what is not “open space” is available for future use. Is the applicant limiting development to the Phase 1, 2 and 3 that they have shown us or are we still at risk for additional development, either by ORA or by some unknown future owner? The applicant states that they will offer a right of first refusal “provided that the use is not more intensive.” What does this mean? Whose use? What is more intensive? Having a future right of first refusal may be nice, but in fact it just kicks the ball further down the road and makes it someone else's problem.

They also offer an amendment to the Special Permit in the case of a “different or more intensive use.” Can we finally, after all these months, cut to the chase? This is a tiny and sensitive site. The Board should be approving the square footage and the intensity of use it has before it, and it should be clear that none

of this will change in the future. Better to reject the application than run the risk of further or more intensive use of the property in the future.

They've also offered a reduction in parking spaces. Good. In terms of both parking and traffic control, the small size of the site and its sensitive location certainly call for the strictest practical limitations – the minimum that the applicant truly needs – assuming that we can all be comfortable with that really is. But if all of the measures proposed by the applicant and mandated by the Board are carried out, and if all other issues are resolved, I am not convinced that traffic concerns alone should stop the project.

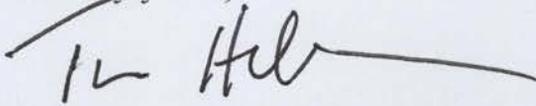
Apologies to all my good neighbors – I know what a hot button this is. All of our roads are already too busy and getting worse all of the time. At the same time, I would not reject this specific project just because it adds traffic. I know that it may be heresy to speak in favor of change, but the whole idea of the Great Estates By-law is to allow for controlled change and practical reuse. Whatever happens, things will be different in the future. If the ORA proposal is rejected, the Friends have offered to purchase the property. If as proposed by the Friends the site is acquired by a nonprofit, great, but then what will they want to do with the site? Almost any use of the site other than as a park with no buildings will require expenditures and involve at least some additional traffic. The main house alone will require extensive and expensive repairs and modifications unless it remains as is as a single family dwelling. Demolition alone of all of the structures would take money – and of course we have historic preservation questions. Quite possibly all this can come about in a completely nonintrusive and low impact way, but it remains to be seen.

And then we have the risk that the Friends fail in their bid to buy the property – what then? Maybe Waldingfield is somehow bought by the reclusive individual buyer who has so far failed to appear, but that would only delay the day of reckoning for the site and we will return to the same battle years or decades later.

For the moment, I prefer to look at the proposal actually on the table before the Board – sensitive adaptive reuse in a creative way positive to the town's tax base. Absolutely no question, this is not a perfect solution, but I prefer the imperfect proposal on the table – assuming it can be clarified and maybe be improved a little more – to the complete uncertainty of the future.

Again, thank you all for your hard work and long nights on this complicated transaction.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Hilton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Timothy T. Hilton