



To: Carolyn Britt, Chair Planning Board
From: Nancy Baker, Robert Baker
CC: Ethan Parsons, Director of Planning, Kristen Grubbs, Town Planner, Wayne Castonguay and Andy Brengle, Co-chairs of Open Space Committee
Date: February 10, 2022
Re: Comments on Special Permit Application for 55 Waldingfield Road

As they say, “Hindsight is 20/20.” With additional information continuing to be introduced on the Ora project, it seems more and more likely that the Spring 2021 Town Meeting decision to modify the Great Estate Preservation Development (GEPD) Bylaw would have been different, if this information had been available before that vote was taken.

Even with that favorable vote, Atty. Nysten’s letter (2/8/22) points out that a mere 2 percent¹ of the town voted for the GEPD bylaw changes for the Ora project.

Would Town Meeting have attracted more voters if they understood that the vehicular traffic from the project would have significant impacts on their scenic road that is used recreationally as well as for travel and is valued for its unique and special features that are important to the character of the Town?

Would more of Ipswich citizens have shown up to vote if they understood that the 40 percent open space requirement is 5 percent lower than the current level of open space in Ipswich?²

Would Town Meeting voters be satisfied with property setbacks and existing conservation land being included as new open space for this project, in exchange for a public pathway around the property? Would they think the access to this riverfront site is a benefit if they knew a section of walkway would be in close enough proximity to buildings and that the experience would be comparable to walking near two average size strip retail plazas, averaging 13,218 square feet per strip center³.

Although it is too late for the Town Meeting to reconsider the GEPD bylaw changes for this project site, the experience the planning board has had with this special permit approval process is a cautionary tale of a good idea gone wrong. The Planning Board now has the weighty responsibility to decide on the granting of a Special Permit, but **this is the wrong site for application of the GEPD bylaw for the Ora project proposed.**

The traffic cannot be eliminated. There is no known traffic mitigation that could preserve the characteristics of Waldingfield Road as explained by commenters⁴. The open space that exists will not be conserved by 100-foot and 250-foot setbacks. Reuse of existing open space on the Bird property is a net zero gain of open space for the town, and a pathway around a private business will not be an inviting recreational experience.

One final note: when people cry ‘Nimby,’ keep in mind their warning -- it is a clear indication that the criers have no means to avoid or minimize the damage that would be done by a project, so they resort to attacking those who would be adversely impacted. In this case, it is more than one community that would be harmed.

¹ 309 votes for GEPD bylaw change out of 13,785 residents (2020 census data).

² Biomap 2, Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World, Ipswich, 2012

³ US Shopping Center Classification and Characteristics

⁴ Emails from: J. Whittier/N. Baker, A.&M. Maginn, R. Spurrier/P. Jones, P. Greene, J Eddy, C. Barone, R. Yaro, J. Wigglesworth, C. Snow, A. Fanning, M. Friend, Friends of Waldingfield, J. Howard, J. Lichten/M. Milgrom, A. Burkhardt, D. Murphy, N. Pulsifer, E. Schimdt, W. Merck/N. Brady, M.&M. Schrage, D. Holmboe, M. Miserandino, J. Lamendolo, K. Grieshaber, Sprouse family.

