

April 25, 2022.

Via email: ethanp@ipswich.gov

Carolyn Britt, Chair
Planning Board
25 Green Street
Ipswich, MA 01938

**Re: 55 Waldingfield
Questions for the Planning Board**

Dear Chair Britt:

As we approach the April 28th meeting, I respectfully bring to the Planning Board's attention some key questions to consider in evaluating yet another new proposal from the Applicant:

1. What is the build date of the **apartment** attached to the Barn? This structure has been included by the Applicant for both purposes under the GEPD Bylaw. However, as a modern structure, we do not know the apartment was built before 1997 (for purposes of inclusion under qualifying gross floor area ("GFA"), with an aggregate minimum of 30K SF). **Further, the IHC has not deemed the apartment as "significant," so, at a minimum, the apartment should not be included by the Applicant in the aggregate GFA for the generous 5x buildout under the GEPD Bylaw.**
2. What is the build date of the **lean-to** attached to the barn? The lean-to is simply an open-air, outdoor feature for hay, and was partially attached to the barn, at some point still unknown, to help service the livestock in the paddock area. What is important to note, besides attributing a build date required by the GEPD Bylaw, is that the **lean-to lacks four exterior walls and lacks a built floor**. By any measure, you cannot calculate GFA on an open air structure without having four exterior walls from which to measure. Additionally, there is no built floor on which to stand to claim it is a fully contained "built" structure per GEPD Bylaw. **By virtue of being open and not enclosed, the lean-is neither a qualifying built structure nor could it be deemed to be "built within" the Barn and thus should be removed from both GFA calculations.**
3. Does the Planning Board have any evidence of whether or not the **Barn has a fully-built second floor**? Any missing built floor area on the second level should be removed from the GFA generous 5x buildout calculation. Currently the Applicant shows a fully built second floor in its floor plan schematic, but there has been no evidence provided to the Town to confirm that assertion, and, to-date, no Town official as entered the barn to inspect. Please note, there remains a question with respect to the **Barn's dirt cavity** below the built structure, for which the Applicant has asserted it contributes 1,056 SF to the qualifying GFA calculations (as "built within" the Barn). How does one say what the build date of a dirt cavity? How does one say that any dirt floor is "built within" a structure? If one cannot rightly make such assertions, then one should remove any dirt floors from the GFA calculations, and, that alone, would then disqualify the Applicant, as they would not have the necessary 30,000 SF of qualifying GFA built before 1997. Currently the Applicant shows just over 30,000 SF by using dirt floors under the Barn and under the Lean-to. Also, the **GEPD Bylaw requires a build date associated with all structures, including the Barn, and no Town official has attributed a build date to the Barn.**
4. **Will the Chief Assessor provide to the public the specific calculations the Applicant used in a slide to present to the Planning Board in its December 2021 presentation?** The Town deserves to have some check on the Applicant's GFA calculations and there is still a key question as to what, if anything, will go on the record as the Town having done its work to derive its own GFA calculations.

5. Why is the Applicant **proposing to remove the iconic entry drive, with its historical features of two cement-dressed fieldstone entry columns**? Why is the Applicant making a new curb cut into the scenic road, with a differently sited entry drive (further west on Waldingfield) that will provide for a much larger curb cut, with what looks to be new cemented machine-cut, stone columns with pre-cast cement finials, and cobblestone in place of gravel driveway for some portion of the entry? How is this new entrance an appropriate treatment for guidelines and restrictions related to either the GEPD Bylaw and/or the Scenic Road Designation?
6. Why has the Applicant not yet provided the Planning Board with critical details of the proposed **Conservation Restrictions ("CR")**? For this next iteration, the Planning Board should ask what public purpose the CR will provide (beyond those already granted to the Greenbelt under its CR for part of the property). What new environmental goals will be established, if any? What non-profit entity will hold the CR? What significant **landscape features** will be incorporated into the CR for landscape preservation purposes? Such features may include century-old trees, any specifically designed (Olmsted) garden features, stone walls, paddocks, horse trails and valuable viewsheds. Why is the Applicant not showing any connection of their proposed walking trail and riding trails with those already established on the property and adjacent acreage?
7. Is the Applicant still planning on **moving several "significant" buildings** in their phased development? Usually, any significant building loses some of its intrinsic historical value when moved from its original site, as any preservationist will attest. What is the design response for moving and/or altering any of the "significant" buildings and/or "significant" landscape features?
8. How will the **landscape's equestrian vernacular**, characterized by the open horse paddocks and farm structures, be respected in the context of the buildouts by the Applicant in all phases of the proposed development? How will the addition of corporate structures impact the look and feel of a relatively small, equestrian landscape? The iconic historical bank barn, with its adjoining paddock area, is the central feature of the landscape, and, as such, requires a thoughtful and measured approach on how to insert a large modern office complex in and around such a landscape. Any conversion of open paddock areas to large parking lots will greatly degrade this equestrian landscape.

Within the context of the Applicant's efforts to designate 55 Waldingfield's main house (listed for sale at 7,000 SF) and various farm outbuildings as a "great estate," many observers of this application process have pointed out that the comparatively smaller site, with its unique equestrian landscape, located along a protected watershed, presents **distinct, adaptive re-use challenges** in how such redevelopment may or may not be sympathetic to such a landscape, including any response to the scenic road restrictions. Such challenges were absent from the two Great Estates previously preserved in Ipswich, namely New England Biolabs and Turner Hill. Both of these two great estates are sited on significant acreage suitable for a corporate campus, and structures located well off the roads that service them.

Let's also remember those two notable great estates were successfully awarded their designations under the Great Estate Preservation Development Bylaw under higher standards for: (1) qualifying gross floor area for both the mansion size, and the aggregate building total; and, (2) minimum acreage, as there was no such allowance for the Applicant to claim adjacent, non-owned land, as deemed contributing acreage to meet the 60 acre total.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Bryan Townsend

of Candlewood Rd.