

TOWN OF SOUTHBOROUGH
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMISSION



17 COMMON ST · SOUTHBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS 01772

[Open Space Preservation Commission | Southborough, MA \(southboroughma.gov\)](https://southboroughma.gov)

April 26, 2024

Dear Planning Board Members,

At our March 23, 2024 meeting, the Open Space Preservation Commission determined to request that you deny the modification request for 118/120 Turnpike Road.

We did not make this decision lightly and only made it after reviewing documents related to modification of the site plan and the plans for the new 40b development at that site. We considered the competing interests and are aware of the town's need for affordable housing but felt that the ecological damage that will be caused by waiving the site plan condition to gift the town 6.2 acres far out weight the addition of 15 new affordable units at 80% of the medium income.

The Open Space Preservation Commission is charged with facilitating the preservation of open space. The key points of facilitating preservation of open space in this instance are 2 sided. First is the value of land the town should add to it's existing Breakneck Hill Property and second and more importantly, the ecological degradation of the habitat value of Breakneck Hill Conservation Land if the site plan is modified and the project is allowed to be build there. These include but are not limited to a loss of nesting birds and pollinators that will be a direct result of placing the building and parking that close to the conservation land. Lights on the buildings, streetlights and car headlights and additionally exhaust from the cars in the parking lot will undo 20 years of active management of Breakneck Hill Conservation Land that have made it a hot spot of biodiversity in Southborough and the region. The lot is too small to allow any mitigation of these impacts even if the building and parking lot were to be moved further away from the property line. I will send an addendum with research supporting these negative ecological impact

determinations.

We believe the town can find better ways to obtain affordable housing, we are aware that the new MBTA Community Zoning will potentially bring up to 750 units of multifamily housing units to town as well as that 10% will be required to be affordable, a potential for 75 new affordable units.

At the same OSPC meeting we also voted to work with SHOPC to bring forth a joint Open Space/Community Housing proposal for the Johnson Land on Northborough Road, a proposal that would allow units at 50%, 60% and 70% of medium income to be built. This is a price point of critical need in Southborough where we only build affordable units at 80% medium income, far out of the range of many in town. The Johnson property is a better way to meet the town's affordable housing needs than allowing a 40b to be built on critical sensitive open space land.

The fact that the proposed 40b will provide much needed affordable units has to be weighed against all factors and building it here, in this location with great negative consequences to the town's most important open space property is the wrong place and for that reason you should stay with the existing conditions and take whatever steps are necessary to bring that 6.2 acres into town ownership.

On behalf of the Open Space Preservation Commission, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Freddie Gillespie - Chair,
Southborough Open Space Preservation Commission