



**Southborough Open
Land Foundation**

April 29, 2024

RE: Proposed Modification of Site Plan Requirements for 118/120 Turnpike Road

To the members of the Planning Board,

The Board of Trustees of the Southborough Open Land Foundation recently discussed the proposed modification of the site plan requirement for 118/120 Turnpike Road. We found the proposal to run firmly counter to the original intent of land conservation. Additionally, we found the proposed alternatives to the transfer of this parcel to be woefully insufficient and hardly compensatory, especially given the sensitive ecological nature of the abutting Breakneck Hill Conservation land.

Justification of the development of 40B housing at this property is challenging at best, as several efforts are currently underway to establish 40B housing throughout Southborough, including the substantial efforts to bring the Town into compliance with the MBTA Communities Act. It makes little sense for the Town to accept the proposed project modification, which will have such a dramatic impact on the abutting signature conservation land, with comparatively small benefit to the Town's overall planned 40B availability. The original intent of the transfer of 6.2 acres as a condition of the site plan approval was in keeping with the nature and function of the abutting property. Development of this parcel would constitute a complete reversal of that intent.

We ask that the Planning Board also consider whether the proposed site plan modification request exists within a context of good faith and standing on the part of the requesting developer with regard to both the spirit of the original parcel transfer and the future of the abutting conservation land. We submit that the potential of negative ecological impact to Breakneck Hill far outweighs any potential benefits. The effects on the neighboring wetlands and habitats would very likely include:

- disruption of water flow and wetlands on the property
- the deposition and spread of contaminants from construction activity
- disruption of the sensitive pollinator and nesting bird activities on the property
- ingress of a large amount of light pollution to the property, an area currently classified as LZ-0 (most sensitive to impacts of light) in the recently adopted Outdoor Illumination bylaw.
- significant depreciation of the aesthetic value of the landscape given the location

We feel that these impacts are antithetical to the purpose and continued success of the Town's signature conservation area and urge the Planning Board to deny the request to modify the site plan.

Sincerely yours,

Destin Heilman, Ph.D.
President, Southborough Open Land Foundation
on behalf of the Board of Trustees