

May 19, 2022

To: Durham Planning Board (c.c. Todd Selig & Town Council)
From: Martha Andersen, 8 Chesley Drive, Durham, NH
Re: Proposed parking lot that would abut my home

I want to thank the Planning Board for giving such close attention to my public comment at about 9:15 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. I write now with a written version of my remarks to include in the formal record.

My name is Martha Andersen, and I live at 8 Chesley Drive.

Probably most of you know that my husband, Peter Andersen, who has spoken to the Planning Board many times, died on December 3, 2021. That's why you haven't heard recently from my household, even though our home is directly adjacent to, and downslope of, the massive proposed parking structure.

Peter was more comfortable than I am about speaking at Public Hearings.

Peter was a lot more comfortable than I am giving voice to outrage.

Peter was better than I am at adlibbing with passion.

But I need to find some of Peter's lost voice tonight to express the outrage of the surviving Andersens about the proposal to destroy the peaceful enjoyment of our home, to irreparably damage our lifestyles, and to significantly lower the long-term value of our property.

I have to say on the side that it troubles me greatly tonight [May 11, 2022] to hear all the small details being discussed as if this plan has already been approved.

I am sure that I do not need to remind you that the proposal before you is not a simple "permitted," or "by-right," use. It is a *conditional* use. That "Conditional Use" term is written and spoken so often that its core meaning may get lost. But "conditional" means that a project is supposed to have a positive environmental and aesthetic impact. Also, if a proposal does not meet even a single one of a long list of criteria, it must be rejected.

And this proposal is ugly and, in my opinion, environmentally catastrophic. It also fails on almost every possible negative external impact on my abutting home and the adjacent neighborhood.

Although my home is near the downtown core, and although there are other parking lots in the general area, my household is *not* directly abutting a parking lot, and it is not directly affected by *any* other area parking lots. My property is dark and quiet at night.

I feel insulted when I hear the applicants repeatedly claim that their proposal is in keeping with Town rules for having the parking relatively invisible and "at the back." Their proposed massive structure would

be very much “at the front” for me, at the front for all Chesley Drive residents, and at the front for the Faculty Neighborhood in general. A large parking mound would loom more than three stories in height over the Chesley Marsh as neighbors cross the College Brook Footbridge on the popular wooded path from Faculty Road. The proposed lighting poles would add another one-and-a-half stories in height.

When I look out of my dining room or master-bedroom windows, I see an old rock wall with an urban forest behind it, sloping majestically up to the Red Tower and the Community Church steeple. The proposal before you would destroy most of those trees and build a retaining wall and a ghastly earthen mound about 50 feet from my property line. Additionally, I have not seen a rendering that includes the close-up look of the wall and mound or what the resulting gaping hole in the tree line would look like.

The Andersen’s is an early-to-bed household. There are no lights from parking lots that shine into my windows at night. I hear the rustle of trees blowing in the wind at night. I hear birds chirping in the morning.

I do not hear car horns, I do not hear car alarms, I do not hear car stereos blaring, I do not hear parking-lot skateboarders, I do not hear parking-spot renters speaking to each other or over phones. This proposal would change all that for the worse, with 24/7 illumination, traffic, and noise. It would also pollute the Chesley Marsh, which is on our property, and on which Peter lavished great care. And it would further pollute the impaired College Brook and the entire watershed with salt and other pollutants.

This project to turn the peaceful and quiet woods we live next to into a massive 20-foot high mound, topped by heat-generating asphalt with a 6ft-tall cedar fence, with 123 added parking spaces, and all-night lighting will have a major negative impact on my family’s lifestyle and property values.

The fact that housing prices are high in Durham does not address the variable that the Board must consider: You must compare the price of a single-family home next to woods to a similar home next to a commercial parking lot. Would any of you want to buy a home next to a large, 24/7 commercial parking lot?

To repeat: There is no simple “right” to build this parking lot. It is not a “by-right” permitted use on the hill. The project has to match conditional criteria, criteria that it cannot match. And the Zoning requires the *applicant*, not abutters, to bear the burden of proof of matching Conditional Use criteria. The applicants simply stating that it will match does not rise to the required standard of proof.

Many other residents have already expressed how this project clearly violates our Site-Plan Regulations prohibition against major changes in grade and extensive fill. But we now know that there has been admitted in writing that none of these proposals are actually “at-grade” at the southern section near my house, yet only “at-grade Surface Parking” is permitted for a principal-use lot on Church Hill.

Those are among the many other reasons that the Board must say “no” to this non-compliant proposal. Please do not allow this to ruin further my life and that of my family. Thank you.