



October 3, 2023

To Members of the Conservation Commission:

We were pleased to attend the Conservation Commission (Con Comm) hearing on Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup> regarding the proposed Thorndike Place development. As members of the Coalition to Save the Mugar Wetlands, we appreciated your questions, comments, and your invitation for public comment.

We would like to raise our concerns about several topics that were briefly discussed during the hearing.

### **1. Trees**

The impact on existing trees and insufficient replacement of trees will affect the neighborhood flooding, tree canopy, noise/pollution from Route 2, carbon dioxide intake, oxygen output, and the habitat for many birds and animals. *We urge the Con Comm, with input from the Town's Tree Warden, to request a complete inventory of existing trees, the number of trees proposed to be removed, how many new trees will be planted, and the maturity and size of those trees.*

### **2. Wildlife**

The developer appeared to minimize the existence of wildlife. It is important to document the diversity of wildlife that inhabits this area. *We ask the Con Comm to request a comprehensive wildlife habitat report, including asking residents to provide sightings with their documentation and photos.*

### **3. Well testing timeframe**

Questions seem to remain regarding the timeframe of the installation of the test pits for the hydrology study. *We ask the Con Comm to confirm that the test pits were installed during the optimal testing period, which we understand would have been early Spring. Documentation should be provided for each testing date and reading.*

### **4. Storm water mitigation**

Neighbors have voiced concerns that existing flooding issues will be exacerbated. The developer provided insufficient information on compensatory flood storage and the impacts this would have on the neighborhood. *The Con Comm needs to request detailed data and a plan for storm water mitigation that also addresses the **expected impacts of climate change**.*

## **5. Vernal pools**

Although a Con Comm member asked about a survey of vernal pools, the developer denied their existence on the site. It is well established that vernal pools are important to wetland ecosystems. *We ask the Con Comm to request a study to identify any vernal pools within the site and document the ways that the proposed development might affect them.*

## **6. Land grade**

An important topic not discussed at the hearing is the current land grade and how the development might alter it. *We ask the Con Comm to request the developer provide certified engineered plot plans showing grading, elevations, and contours for both pre-existing conditions and the proposed completed project.*

## **7. Proposed conservation parcel**

The conservation restricted parcel that the developer has designated for the Town currently contains invasives, dead trees, trash, the remains of homeless encampments, and potentially toxic waste. This area would need to be cleaned and cleared prior to the transfer to the Town and sufficient funds allocated for continued maintenance. *We ask the Con Comm to request the developer provide a detailed plan to address these concerns.*

## **8. Meeting with the neighbors**

The neighbors have valuable information to share regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed development. We will be meeting with the Town Manager and Select Board members at an upcoming site visit to the property. We strongly encourage Con Comm members to attend.

In conclusion, the proposed Thorndike Place development prioritizes housing for older and low-income adults. However, given the development site is prone to flooding, this drastically conflicts with goals of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) 2.0 Program that Gov. Healey recently approved for Arlington; specifically protecting vulnerable populations (i.e., older and low-income adults) from the effects of climate change. We encourage the Con Comm to take these factors into consideration.

Thank you for your time and attention to these matters on Behalf of the Coalition to Save the Mugar Wetlands,

Jeanette Cummings, 32 Dorothy Rd.

Julie DiBiase, 29 Littlejohn St.

Lisa Fredman, 63 Mott St.

Cc: James Feeney, Arlington Town Manager  
David Morgan, Environmental Planner/Conservation Agent  
Arlington Select Board  
Arlington Land Trust  
Arlington Tree Committee  
Community Preservation Committee