

Gregg A. Griner
11 Bradford Road
Wellesley, MA 02481

November 1, 2023

Town of Wellesley Planning Board

Re: 489 Worcester Street Proposed Development (the "Project")

Dear Members of the Planning Board of the Town of Wellesley,

I am writing to you as a direct abutter to 489 Worcester Street (together with the parcels located at 4 Cliff Road and 14 Cliff Road, the "Property") and as a concerned resident. I had hoped to speak to you all during the most recent meeting of the Planning Board on October 30, 2023, but the Chair only allowed 30 minutes for us to speak about the Project, so not everyone who wanted to speak had the opportunity to do so. There is nothing on the town's website that I could find, nor was there anything on the Planning Board's agenda, indicating that Citizen's Speak would be limited to just 30 minutes. I find it remarkable that, for something as controversial as this Project is, the town officials who are responsible for reviewing the impact of the Project on the town, its environment, and its residents, are not willing to spend whatever time is necessary to listen to and fully understand the concerns of its residents. I understand that you all have lives, families and work to attend to, and that your service on the Planning Board is a significant time commitment, but this is the most important issue that many of us are facing at the moment, and if you cannot allocate the time to satisfy your duties to the town and its residents, then you should not have agreed to serve in this position. Moreover, I did not appreciate the warning at the beginning of the meeting that we were not to repeat what others have already said. The fact that so many of us who wanted to speak, or did have the opportunity to speak, would echo what those before them may have said, should be an obvious indication to you all that these are not "one off" concerns – they are widely held by literally hundreds of residents. This is not just an issue being raised by abutters who don't want the Project in their backyards, this is an issue that will affect residents all across town, including anyone who regularly travels through town on Cliff Road, Washington Street or Worcester Street. This Project is simply not good for Wellesley. You need to hear this.

My opposition to the Project relates primarily to the following four concerns, all of which you have previously heard from my fellow residents: character of the neighborhood, traffic, wetlands, and property value.

Character of the Neighborhood

We, like I'm sure many of the other residents of Cliff Estates, moved to this neighborhood because of its character. It is a quiet, established, heavily wooded, single-family neighborhood comprised largely of older homes, many of historical significance. Our home, for example, was built in 1840. When we moved to Wellesley from Duxbury

nearly twenty years ago, we were looking for a neighborhood that would provide a safe and comfortable environment for our family. After a great deal of searching, we found our home. Although close to Route 9, once you enter the neighborhood, you feel secure and calm. Our neighborhood is full of families of all ages as well as older empty nesters. We now fall into the latter category. Our streets have no sidewalks, yet they are safe for pushing strollers, riding bikes, or taking your dog out for a little exercise. Dropping a 40+ unit multi-family dwelling into the middle of this neighborhood will forever change the look, feel and character of Cliff Estates. This is a change that cannot be undone. Had a building of this type been on the Property when we were originally looking to move into the neighborhood, we never would have taken a second look at our house. It would have been an immediate turnoff, as it will be for anyone looking to move into the neighborhood in the future if the Project is allowed to move forward.

Traffic

Increasing the housing density and the number of vehicles entering and exiting the Property, will only exacerbate an already unacceptable traffic situation, making it even more difficult to enter Route 9 westbound from Bradford Road, Edmunds Road and even Arnold Road than it currently is. It is already difficult to enter Route 9 during much of the day, particularly after the light changes at the fire house next to the Department of Public Works. Once that light turns green, cars, trucks and oftentimes motorcycles race up the hill on Route 9, making it nearly impossible to turn onto Route 9 without running the risk of an accident. As they race up the hill, cars have, on several occasions, turned off of Route 9 onto Bradford Road at too high of a speed, unable to complete the turn and crashed into the fence at the southwest corner of Bradford Road and Route 9. As proposed, the Project would include parking, both underground and surface, for at least 100 vehicles based on the developers' latest renderings. The principal entry and exit point for the Property will be directly from and onto Route 9, more than half-way up this hill. Anyone *entering* the Property from Route 9 will risk either (i) getting rear-ended as they slow to approach the turn into the Property or (ii) taking the turn too quickly, resulting in either a single vehicle or multi-vehicle accident. Anyone *exiting* the Property onto Route 9 will likewise risk getting rear-ended as they try to enter the flow of traffic. Any attempt to jump into this traffic flow from the Property will be dangerous.

Furthermore, given that the principal exit point is onto Route 9 westbound, there will of course be any number of people exiting the Property who do not want to continue westbound on Route 9 and who will, therefore, immediately turn onto Bradford Road to work their way back to Cliff Road so that they can travel north on Cliff or eastbound on Washington Street or cut through Wellesley Farms. This increased traffic on Bradford and through Cliff Estates will (i) turn our quiet corner of Wellesley, where children, dogs, and the elderly walk on the street, as there are no sidewalks, into an exceptionally dangerous area and (ii) worsen an already terrible traffic problem on lower Cliff Road.

Wetlands

The wetlands on the property are home to countless species of flora and fauna, including many mature trees with large canopies that provide shade, filter the sun, and offer protection to wildlife that lives in and travels through the wetlands. Among the wildlife that I observe on a routine basis are deer, foxes, racoons, fisher cats, rabbits, opossums, squirrels, chipmunks, snakes, salamanders, turkeys, falcons, hawks, owls, doves, cardinals, finches, woodpeckers, and many other species. These animals depend upon these densely forested wetlands for their survival. Under the proposal for the Project, no less than 32 healthy mature trees are scheduled to be removed from the wetlands buffer zone alone. This does not include the dozens of mature trees that will be cut down elsewhere on the Property. As proposed, the Project would also include a walking path along the wetlands, connecting Cliff Road to Bradford Road. This walking path, which none of us in the neighborhood want or need, will only further compromise the safety and security of the wildlife. And this does not even begin to address the impact that the proposed blasting will have on the wetlands, neighbors, and nearby structures. I am concerned that with their habitat destroyed, or severely disrupted at the least, these animals will be in danger themselves, and will pose a threat to motorists on Cliff Road, Bradford Road, and Route 9 among others, as they find themselves traveling in the open seeking shelter elsewhere. As with the character of the neighborhood, once this habitat is lost, it will be lost forever.

Property Values

Many of us in the neighborhood have lived in our homes for decades and have poured a lot of time, energy, care, and money into our homes. When we bought our house, we could have, of course, torn it down and built something entirely new from the ground up so that it was exactly what we wanted. That, however, would not have been in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and would have had a negative impact on our neighbors and the environment, including the wetlands. Instead, we chose to improve and renovate our house over the years, one project at a time, while maintaining the exterior look and footprint of the house. We have invested a great deal in our landscaping, across our entire lot, as well as in the interior of our home. These improvements and renovations have significantly increased the market value of our home, and our home is our largest single investment. The trees that the developers are planning to remove provide a protective windbreak for our property and serve to screen us from the buildings that are currently on the Property. From late spring through late fall, we can barely see any of the structures on the Property. If this Project is allowed to proceed, and these trees are removed, we will see everything ... from the new mammoth three-story 42 unit building towering over our house, all the way down to the increased traffic on Cliff Road that will result from the Project, not to mention the pedestrians traversing the proposed walking path from Cliff Road to Bradford Road. All of this will undoubtedly wipe out much, if not all, of our investment, which is not something we can afford to lose. By approving the Project, the Planning Board, the Select Board, and the other town officials who would have to approve it, would be taking from us this value, which we have worked so hard for so many years to build, and transferring it to the developers, whom you must know are motivated by making a

significant profit on the Project and little else. By approving the Project, you and the developers would instantly destroy, or at the very least would set the wheels in motion leading to the destruction of, Cliff Estates, a beautiful neighborhood that has been here since the mid-1800s, with little, if any, tangible benefit to the town and its residents. And please do not lose sight of the fact that these developers do not live in Wellesley, do not care about preserving the town's history, charm or character, will not have to live with the consequences of their development and are not even likely to see it through to completion, but rather will most certainly flip the Project once the necessary approvals have been obtained.

I invite each and every one of you to come to our house, walk our property with us and see firsthand for yourselves what kind of an impact a three-story 42 unit building situated only a matter of yards from our kitchen and bedrooms will have on us and our neighbors. I'm certain that you will be overwhelmed by the sheer scope of the impact. As you all know, there are other parts of Wellesley, already zoned for multifamily dwellings, that would be more appropriate for this type of development, where single-family neighborhoods and wetlands would not be disturbed.

I, along with hundreds, if not thousands, of other Wellesley residents, implore you to maintain the current single-family zoning of the Property and not allow the Project to move forward.

Sincerely,



Gregg A. Griner

cc: Select Board of the Town of Wellesley