

Letter of concern regarding proposed project at 75 Plain St

Heather Lewis <hllewis6@hotmail.com>

Mon 11/22/2021 12:21 AM

To: Hopedale Planning Board <PlanningBoard@hopedale-ma.gov>

Cc: Thomas Lewis <telewis843@gmail.com>

Hello,

Having attended or watched most all of the town meetings (of the various boards) regarding the planned warehouse at 75 Plain Street, we did want to take this opportunity to share our concerns (as residents of Bens Way, towards the end of the street and very close to the current Rosenfeld property).

There are a number of concerning issues with a 24/7-type of warehouse business in this location.

- Noise: We're aware that a sound study was to be conducted, but not aware of the status of that study. We can say for certain that on the occasions that Rosenfeld Concrete performs certain activities, they are heard loud and clear from our property. The current occurrence of this is VERY occasional, so not overly bothersome, however it would be absolutely a different story for a 24/7 warehouse facility – tractor trailer truck engines, back-up beeping, etc.
- Traffic: We attended the most recent Planning Board meeting and raised a number of questions/concerns regarding traffic:
 - While the traffic study completed by the applicant only looked at 8 intersections, please know that the effects of this project will be felt far beyond those intersections. For example, it is very well known that many commuters from south Hopedale, Bellingham, Mendon and Uxbridge looking to head north on 495 will use Neck Hill Road to Bicknell to Mill Street, then through Hopedale center to Dutcher to 140 to Fiske Mill Rd to meet up with 495 in Hopkinton. This project, with its increased traffic on Hartford Ave will create more traffic on these side roads as modern-day GPS systems such as Google Maps, Waze, etc. constantly evaluate current traffic conditions and routinely send its users through residential side streets in an attempt to avoid busy intersections. "Counting cars" and using a 30 year-old formula/procedure does not, and cannot, account for these variables. And that's just cars... what about the tractor-trailers themselves seeking 'short-cuts'? For instance, on Neck Hill Road which is incredibly narrow. As it stands now, if a large truck is traveling on this street, you almost have to come to stop until one vehicle gets by. Additionally, this will create increased traffic problems and intersection congestion in unsuspecting neighboring towns that must be traveled through to get to/from 495 or 146 (Bellingham, Mendon and Uxbridge). The location of 75 Plain is not a 'right off the highway' ideal location for a warehouse business.
 - It seems unlikely that the existing intersections (expected to be used by the tractor-trailers) are sufficiently wide enough for the turn radius required. We're certainly not experts, but having seen larger trucks attempt turns at some of these locations in the past certainly substantiates this concern. If they are not wide enough, there is a cost to the town to widen them.

- The volume of traffic in this area, particularly heading toward the highway from Hartford Ave and getting through the lights at Cape Rd/Hartford Ave is already heavy. Add an increased volume of cars and tractor-trailers and this has the potential to become unbearable (and supports the 'seeking of alt routes' concern). As well, additional traffic lights at some intersections may or may not aid the issue, but again will cost the town money to implement.
- The in-and-out traffic, in and around Plain Street, would be occurring along school bus routes and in highly residential areas, not conducive to tractor-trailers.
- Contamination:
 - As 75 Plain is in a ground-water protection area, while we understand that some wetlands will be displaced/replaced, this is still very concerning given the town's current 'dire-straits situation' for water supply. There is no doubt this groundwater area will be susceptible to snow & ice treatments, and likely other pollutants.
 - Diesel fumes are a known carcinogen – again, in a highly residential area (both on Plain Street and other abutting neighborhoods on the back-side of the property).

We are not opposed to a business operating at this location (Rosenfeld has obviously been operating for years), but this 24/7 warehouse type of business is not the right type of business for this location. We understand the appeal of the tax revenue to the town, however, some thoughts on that are:

- There are other businesses attempting to set-up shop here in Hopedale that would be extremely lucrative for the town's tax revenue – the grow facilities on Condon way for instance which are quiet/non-disruptive businesses, generating no traffic to speak of, and planning to recycle water usage.
- The revenue from a warehouse facility going into this location doesn't come without a direct cost to the town – widening of intersections, traffic light installations, etc. – not to mention indirect costs such as decreased quality of life for the property's many neighbors, decreased property values, traffic, etc.
- There is an existing business operating at this location already, which is paying the town taxes, so that must be subtracted from the expected revenue of the warehouse to identify the real 'new' revenue (then subtracts the almost certain direct costs to town as noted above).

There are several area towns that have been, or are currently, going through the same thing. We'd like to suggest that the board do the diligence of contacting town officials in some of these peer towns to get their perspectives on why they did, or did not, green-light a warehouse in their town.

- Holliston – voted it down and did not allow a warehouse (<https://stop555hoppingbrook.com/>). What factors made them decide this way?
- Milford – voted in favor and did allow a warehouse. How is that working out for them? Regardless of the tenant, the same concerns apply when it comes to warehouse-generated

traffic and disturbances...

- <https://www.milforddailynews.com/story/news/2021/06/24/amazon-changes-warehouse-milford-traffic-trash-noise-complaints/5323972001/>
 - <https://www.nbcboston.com/on-air/as-seen-on/amazon-causes-traffic-woes-in-milford-mass/2060053/>
 - <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-delivery-warehouse-hub-town-sees-truck-traffic-headaches-report-2021-7>
- Bellingham – currently in process. Some residents appear to have created a website in opposition, whereby many of the points they make are the same concerns for us in Hopedale (<https://protectbellingham.com/>) – and that project expects only 380 daily vehicle trips vs. the 1,072 daily trips in our case.

Anecdotally, it seems those in favor of this project live on the ‘other side of town’, where there would be much less impact, and are only seeing dollar signs. Ultimately, this type of business is not fitting with the character of our small town, and we believe not aligned with the goals of the town for open-space/conservation. Another type of non-disruptive business in this location would certainly be welcome. A warehouse is not right type of business and is not easily, if ever, undone once allowed.

We urge the board to conduct as much diligence as possible in consideration of this proposed warehouse and to look wholistically at the big picture -- of the impact to the town and the quality of life for the many residents who live ‘on this side of town’.

Respectfully,

Heather & Tom Lewis
17 Bens Way