

My name is Craig Guild and I live at 68 West St.

I want to address the council today regarding the sale and development of the Colonel Ledyard School Building located at 120 West St. in the City of Groton.

As the council is aware, the school sits on a property of 8 acres. The majority of that acreage is wooded with a forest that spreads to the adjoining Colonel Ledyard Cemetery and Sacred Heart School properties as well as along the Clarence B. Sharpe Highway.

This wooded area provides home and shelter to a large number of animals, from barred owls and to red bellied woodpeckers to white tailed deer. The trees and plants of this property also support an embankment that descends to the Birch Plain Creek, an important waterway to the ecology of Groton.

While the first step of the proposed development limits work done to the property to the old school building, the current footprint of the proposal shows infringement upon the wooded areas of the property with the first additional building.

While current zoning regulations are intended to prevent development on the wetlands immediately around Birch Plain Creek, the entire hillside is well within the creek's immediate watershed and any runoff into the Creek from either construction or later inhabitation will potentially impact the whole waterway's ecosystem, all the way down to the Conservation area and Birch Creek Open Space by Thomas Rd.

Further, the deforestation of the land will result in habitat loss for a great number of local wildlife, driving them into conflict with human habitats. This comes not only in the form of lost food and shelter, but also disrupted cycles through increased light pollution and noise.

The Colonel Ledyard Forest is one of, if not the, last wild space in the City of Groton west of Rt. 349, it is clear the development of this property beyond the immediate school building is in direct conflict with multiple priorities established just in November by the Town's new Open Space Conservation Plan that includes the maintenance of the current tree canopy, preserving land for native plants and wildlife threatened by Groton's continued urbanization, and the ensurance of open spaces in their natural state throughout the community.

Given the potential environmental impacts the sale and development of this land would have on the immediate environment and the larger ecology of Groton, the recent changes to the Open Space Conservation Plan, and the rarity of this type of wooded land in the City of Groton, I would ask council members to vote against the sale of the Colonel Ledyard School Property.