

August 18, 2021
6083

Town of Ayer Planning Board
1 Main Street
Ayer, MA 01432

**RE: Open Space Residential Development
Stratton Hill
Ayer**

Dear Members of the Board:

Our office has submitted a Definitive Subdivision & Open Space Residential Development Plan for Stratton Hill. The site is identified as Assessor Map 6, Parcels 1,2,3,7,8 & 11 through 55. The proposed project is the redevelopment of the previously approved Stratton Hill Subdivision utilizing a smaller project area and incorporating open space. The open space is intended to abut existing open space and provide for the preservation of over 150 acres of the property.

This letter has been prepared to supplement the Conservation Analysis submitted for the proposed Stratton Hill Road Open Space Residential Development and provide the information requested by the seventeen (17) items contained within "Step One" of the draft of the Appendix C, Ayer Open Space Residential Development Subdivision Design Process dated December 20, 2019. Enclosed with this letter is a revised Conservation Analysis incorporating additional items requested during discussions with the Town. Below are details specific to the seventeen (17) items requested in "Step One" of the Town's draft document referenced above. For ease of reference the seventeen (17) Conservation Site Analysis and Guidelines are in *italics* with details for the Stratton Hill Open Space Residential Development in plain text below:

1. *A site context map. Existing physical conditions surrounding the development parcel within 500 feet. These can include such notes as "adjacent residential homes," "connection to trail networks" or "view to historic barn." The size and extent of existing adjacent open space areas shall be noted, as well as any further open space connections these spaces may have.*

A site context map has been incorporated in section 1.0 of the enclosed Conservation Analysis. The size and extent of existing open space has been added to section 1.0 of the Conservation analysis.

2. *A topographic analysis identifying slopes at two (2) foot intervals. The topographic map should have a scale of one-inch equals 100 feet or more. Hilltops and ridge lines should be*

highlighted. Slopes in excess of 20% as specified in Section 10.1.4 A.1 of the Ayer Zoning Bylaw should be identified.

Please refer to Topographic Exhibit Plan prepared for the site. This plan depicts the topography of the site and identifies slopes more than 20% by shading them in orange. This plan has been added to the appendix of the Conservation Analysis.

3. *A delineation of soil types and identification of selected soil characteristics, as provided by the information in the regional soil survey completed by the U. S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Such characteristics will include, for example, suitability of soils for crops, pasture, woodland, wildlife habitat, and recreation, as well as for building foundations, roadways, and onsite sewage-disposal systems. Prime agricultural soils and alluvial floodplain soils shall be noted.*

Section 4.0 of the Conservation Analysis includes a description of soil types on the site. A Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil map with soil characteristics of each series is contained within the appendix. A Land Cover and Soil Type Exhibit Plan has also been incorporated in the appendix of the Conservation Analysis. Both the NRCS soil map and Exhibit Plan delineate the location of these soils.

A Prime Farmlands Map is included within the Conservation Analysis. The prime farmlands are depicted as shown on MassGIS. Site investigations have found that the area designated as Prime Farmlands is located within wetland resource areas. As such, it is unlikely that it could be utilized as agricultural or farmland due to the presence of wetlands and restrictions imposed by the Town of Ayer Wetlands Bylaw.

4. *Boundaries of wetlands and buffer zones defined by Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act and certified by a Professional Wetlands Scientist (PWS). (see Cal's comments on process.)*

Section 2.0 of the Conservation Analysis provides an outline of wetland resource areas on the site. The proposed development area is subject to an Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD), issued by the Ayer Conservation Commission, confirming the limits of wetland resource areas on this portion of the site. Prior to the issuance of the ORAD the area was subject to an independent peer review working on behalf of the Conservation Commission. Wetland resource areas on other portions of the site were also field delineated by Dillis and Roy Civil Design Group, Inc.

5. *A description of drainage patterns, including intermittent streams, potential vernal pools and certified vernal pools.*

Section 2.0 of the Conservation Analysis and ORAD issued for the site identify the specified details. A pre-development watershed map has been incorporated in the appendix of the Conservation Analysis. As depicted on the ANRAD plans referenced within the ORAD issued for the site, both mapped and unmapped potential vernal pools are present. These locations along with the location of an intermittent stream are detailed on the Wetland Resource Area Exhibit Plan contained within the appendix of the Conservation Analysis. There are no certified vernal pools located on the site.

6. *Land within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).*

The entirety of the site is located within the Petapawag ACEC. This ACEC extends from the New Hampshire state line to Sandy Pond Road, south of the site.

The FEMA 100-year and 500-year recurrence interval floodplain boundaries and elevations.

A detail of FEMA FIRM map number 25017C0208E has been included in the Site Maps within the Conservation Analysis. The 100 year floodplain at the site is limited to Long Pond and the area immediately abutting it. The remainder of the site is located within FEMA Zone X (areas determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain).

7. *Areas delineated as "BioMap Core Habitat" or "Supporting Natural Landscape" on the Massachusetts BioMap II Project developed by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.*

The entirety of the site is located within BioMap2 Core Habitat with a portion of the site being located within BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape. A figure detailing this has been added to section 1.0 of the revised Conservation Analysis.

8. *The extent of any Wellhead Protection Areas and Aquifer Recharge Areas.*

The site does not contain any Zone I's, IWPA's or Zone II's. The site is not located within the Town of Ayer Aquifer Protection Overlay District.

9. *An upland vegetation analysis, identifying woodlands, specimen trees, and fields. Vegetation shall be identified as evergreen or deciduous. The health and condition of each vegetative type shall be identified. Predominant species in woodlands shall be identified. Specimen trees shall be identified by species, size (approximate full height and trunk diameter at 5 feet from the ground), and health. Unique or endangered plant species shall be noted.*

The proposed project area is within the previously approved Stratton Hill Subdivision. Much of this area had been cleared during the commencement of construction for the prior subdivision with grading for the road in place. As such, this portion of the upland area consists of some scrub vegetation with mixed, second growth hardwoods at the limits of the previously cleared area.

The majority of the upland vegetation is deciduous, second growth forest, as evident in orthophotos of the site. The exception is the area within the utility line easement as this has been subject to additional clearing and maintenance. Scrub / shrub habitat is present beneath the utility lines. As the proposed development is limited to the previously approved subdivision, specimen trees within the proposed 150 +/- acre open space and land to be preserved have not been located.

The site does not contain any field areas.

10. *Boundaries and characteristics of primary and secondary environmental corridors, and isolated natural resource areas, as identified in adopted regional plans or local comprehensive plans.*

Primary environmental corridors follow the edge of wetland resource areas with connections to undeveloped woodlands and the Rocky Hill Wildlife Sanctuary to the north of the site. A primary environmental corridor exists along the intermittent stream which connects a beaver pond, north of the partially constructed subdivision road, to Long Pond, east of the site.

Secondary environmental corridors follow cart roads which serve as a connection between upland and wetland areas on undeveloped portions of the site.

The northern portion of the site has been mapped by the University of Massachusetts Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS) as an area with higher ecological integrity. Primary environmental corridors provide connections to these areas. The portion of the map depicting CAPS Index of Ecological Integrity (IEI) with existing Assessor parcels has been included in within section 6 of the Conservation Analysis.

Wildlife habitat, whether in fields, wetlands, or woodlands. Predominant species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish shall be identified when possible. The presence of rare or endangered species shall be noted, along with the boundaries of natural areas and critical species habitat sites.

It is likely that the site supports white-tail deer, chipmunks, squirrels, racoon, fox muskrat and American beaver. Except for beavers, little evidence of mammalian wildlife was observed during site visits. This is due in part to cart roads being utilized by motorized vehicles and nearby residents walking dogs.

A substantial beaver dam is present north of the partially constructed subdivision road. The resulting pond above the dam has several beaver lodges present with signs of beaver activity throughout the surrounding woodland.

The site is located within NHESP Priority Habitat of Rare Species 2043. A Rare Herpetofanal Investigation is included within the appendix of the Conservation Analysis.

11. *Scenic vistas, both into the site from adjacent roads, trails, and hilltops and outward from the site.*

Due to the wooded nature of the site, scenic vistas are generally absent. The utility line cut bisecting the site does provide some views of Long Pond, to the east. Limited vistas are available from the higher terrain and ledge outcrops on the northwestern portion of the site.

Existing streets and highways adjacent to the development parcel as well as desirable or undesirable points of entry into the parcel.

Wright Hill Road, a public way, is located immediately south of the site and provides all weather vehicular access to the site. The site contains Stratton Hill Road, a partially constructed road, previously subject to Definitive Subdivision approval by the Ayer Planning Board. See plan 829 of 2005 on file at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds. Stratton Hill Road intersects the northerly side of Wright Road, approximately 2,000 feet east of Snake Hill Road. Desirable points of entry are on the southern boundary of the site. Access along the west, north and east of the site are undesirable due to the presence of wetland resource areas and existing open space.

12. *Future area-wide plans that may affect the physical layout of the site shall also be considered. These could include, among others, plans for future parks; open space, trail, and bikeway systems; agricultural preservation areas; arterial and other street networks; stormwater management facilities and other utilities; and general land use plans.*

Definitive Subdivision & Open Space Residential Development Plans have been submitted to the Planning Board. These plans depict the redevelopment of the previously approved subdivision, within a reduced project area, while also

incorporating a continuous corridor of open space. The proposed open space provides for potential connections to abutting open space and trails.

13. *Other existing buildings and structures. Locations of existing wells and onsite sewage-disposal systems.*

The site contains an existing construction trailer at the intersection of Stratton Hill Road and Wright Road. This structure was put in place during the prior development of the property. Site surveys did not encounter any existing wells or onsite sewage disposal systems.

14. *The location of cultural and historic features including, but not limited to, stone walls, fences, geological features, archaeological and historic sites and structures.*

The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System does not show any historic areas, building, burial ground, objects or structures on the site. The Existing Conditions plans for the site detail the locations of stone walls and this information has been incorporated into the Conservation Analysis. As noted above, the site contains a construction trailer associated with the development of the previously approved subdivision. Surficial Geology of the upland portion of the site is that of a ground moraine with bedrock outcrops.

Please refer to the enclosed revised Conservation Analysis for additional details regarding the site. We trust this meets your needs at this time and we look forward to working with the Board to incorporate Open Space in the redevelopment of Stratton Hill Road.

Regards,

DILLIS & ROY
CIVIL DESIGN GROUP, INC.



Seth Donohoe
Project Manager



Stanley R. Dillis, PLS
President

cc: Fox Meadow Realty Corp
Robert Collins, Esq.
Ayer Conservation Commission