

Dear Town Plan & Zoning Commission,

Under the special exception application process, there are seven criteria under Section 6.3.C of the Woodbridge Zoning Regulation that the Town Plan & Zoning Commission must review. These seven considerations include (in short-hand, pulled from the Memo to Woodbridge Town Plan and Zoning Commission from Justin LaFountain of May 28, 2025):

- (1) the health, safety, and welfare of the public . . . in particular, compliance with the Plan of Conservation and Development;
- (2) the location and size of the proposed use;
- (3) the nature and intensity of the proposed use and any operation involved in the use;
- (4) the safety and intensity of traffic circulation on the site, and on adjacent streets;
- (5) the scale of the proposed site and structures;
- (6) the harmony and appropriateness of the use and site design in relation to the general area and to adjacent properties; and
- (7) compliance with the Zoning Regulation and site plan objectives set forth in Section 6.4.C of the Woodbridge Zoning Regulations.

This special exception application fails on all seven criteria, as already identified by official reports provided to the Town Plan & Zoning Commission. I will highlight some of these and other points below.

With regard to (1), there is insufficient information with regard to review by the Woodbridge Fire Department, Police Department, Connecticut DOT, and the City of New Haven. The Statement of Use submitted by the applicant references the Woodbridge Plan of Conservation and Development of 2015 and also the Woodbridge Housing Plan of May 25, 2022. With regard to the former, there is no reference to how this application comports with the pending Woodbridge Plan of Conservation and Development 2025-2035, where information regarding the same is publicly available, including a summary of results from the survey conducted in the summer of 2024. Relatedly, there is no discussion of the State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development published November 2024. With regard to the Woodbridge Housing Plan of May 25, 2022, there has been ample public comment with regard to the flaws in that plan that have not been corrected. The data being relied upon by the application is outdated and/or inaccurate.

Focusing on the State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development for 2025-2030, published in November 2024, it addresses opportunities, including what is referred to as Transit Oriented Development ("TOD"). A few excerpts can be found here, where you see the state's desire for balancing conservation with TOD, which is particularly important for a watershed town like Woodbridge:

- At p. 21: ***"Promoting transit-oriented development to link housing to employment, education, amenities and services, while supporting climate resiliency objectives."***

At p. 24, it notes further goals:

- ***Improv[e] water quality in drinking water watersheds and conserve[e] drinking water supplies through watershed scale management of the built environment;***

- *Preserv[e], protect[ing] and enhance[ing] the **quality and connectivity of critical habitats**, natural lands, riparian and costal buffer zones, and **open spaces**;*

At p. 30, it states:

- *Coordinat[e] transportation and land use planning to **encourage mutually supportive density of development near existing and planned transit**; and*
- ***Balancing the expansion of transportation, sewer and water infrastructure** with state, regional and local needs, conservation priorities, climate considerations, and long-term fiscal responsibility.*

Accordingly, I'd encourage the Town Plan & Zoning Commission to give little weight to the Statement of Use presented by the applicant. Town Plan & Zoning should focus on TOD and conservation in broader strokes to achieve the right balance for Woodbridge and thus deny this application under this criteria and for this reason alone.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, it is unclear how long blasting the rock situated on this parcel will take, how much blasting is required, the noise associated with the blasting, the dust and debris associated with blasting and removal of rock/debris, where the rock/debris is being removed to, when and how, how the blasting may impact Route 15 and the repairs being done to the overpass thereof on Fountain St. With the outcry of residents neighboring the blasting on 110 Luciani St., also in a residential street in Woodbridge, it would follow that this alone would cause significant pause and review of the present application requiring blasting.

It is unknown what consequences will be had to native and migratory species currently living on this parcel and/or will be displaced by it. Connected lands are keys for other flora and fauna that cohabitate with us in Woodbridge, and it should be understood the impacts this will have on those species. We need to be sure conservation has received the same attention as development.

There is a lack of sidewalk between this proposed site and other sidewalks in New Haven, and it is unclear how the applicant proposes to resolve the lack of sidewalk connectivity along the adjacent parcels of New Haven.

It is unknown to me if there is an ordinance in Woodbridge that confirms a maximum number of occupants per a dwelling unit or a certain square footage. As mentioned in public comment at the May Board of Selectman meeting, it is often the case, and by way of example, that a single bedroom apartment has multiple beds. Overcrowding of a 96 unit apartment complex will inure public health issues. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSSA5MUxjpM> at 1:03:59 – 1:04:37)

With regard to (2), the location of this application has particular challenges, including the entrance/exit being along a state route that includes a blind corner. See Google Map images going westbound and thereafter eastbound, showing not only the curve but also the significant amount of rock that will need blasting:



The size of the structure greatly exceeds anything else in Woodbridge, let alone neighboring structures in New Haven. The location of the structure is remote from public transit, jobs, and necessities (e.g., groceries) that may be available to residents in our Woodbridge Business District.

The review by Trinkaus Engineering, LLC, submitted May 30th, 2025, demonstrates inadequate stormwater management that will impact wetlands. (see <https://www.woodbridgect.org/DocumentCenter/View/6892/804-Fountain-Street-Trinkaus-Engineering-Review-related-to-Petitions-for-Intervenors>) Keeping in mind the devastating flooding in neighboring Oxford, CT last August, the new standard has to be for overdesigning water runoff systems.

The size and location is simply ill-suited for this residential neighborhood.

With regard to (3), the nature and intensity of the use and operations thereof, the intensity far exceeds its neighboring residential properties that include a single unit per acre, where such parcels have a single home on 1.5 plus acres. The density will cause a stark intensification for this area (e.g., congestion/traffic) that will change the nature of this residential neighborhood.

With regard to (4), the safety and intensity of traffic circulation in this and surrounding areas will be negatively impacted. Woodbridge has intersections that include strained visibility and frequent accidents. Adding this much potential traffic entering/exiting on a blind corner on a hill will be problematic.

With regard to (5), the scale of the proposed site and structures is plain to see. The below rendering is fictional, created by Google Gemini Flash 2.5, but demonstrates that this apartment complex is out of scale with the neighboring landscape and structures.



In addition, it has been advised by experts at a recent housing meeting on April 30th, 2025, that when seeking affordable housing, it should be commensurate with surrounding areas. (See discussion by resident and former First Selectwoman Amey Marrella at the May 14th, 2025 Board of Selectmen meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSSA5MUxjpM> at 1:04:38 to 1:10:13; and also see the April 30th housing meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYjEwPgZQJ0>). The applicant further suggests that this development will support affordable housing, but it has near-zero statistical gain for the town in terms of the percentage of affordable housing. The addition of nearly 100 units of housing, however, makes our housing denominator larger, meaning it will be harder for Woodbridge to make meaningful strides in increasing the percentage of affordable housing going further. Affordable housing is important to Woodbridge residents, but this project will slowdown making meaningful statistical gains.

It is clear that the proposed structure does not meet this criteria.

With regard to (6), the harmony and appropriateness of the use and site design in relation to the general area and adjacent properties is lacking. There is nothing akin to this structure in Woodbridge, in any zone let alone Residential A, nor is there an analog in the bordering residential zone of New Haven. The above rendering is exemplary of this point. It has been well noted in numerous meetings and surveys that residents of Woodbridge prefer a rural atmosphere with large lots permitting privacy and quiet, while preserving nature. This proposed development does the opposite.

With regard to (7), compliance with Woodbridge Zoning Regulations, it was mentioned by Commission Member Cherry at the May 20th Special Town Plan & Zoning meeting for the Steve Mason application (while referencing the recent hearing for a special exception permit for 67 Pease Road) that he lacks confidence in the process associated with special exception review (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACcWB0wnrVA>, 2:15:30 to 2:16:28). It is with this in mind that I hope the Commission strenuously reviews this application against these criteria, taking into consideration the views of the public, and ultimately votes to deny this application.

Concluding Thoughts & Analogs in other Connecticut Towns

There are analogous decisions in other Connecticut towns, including this decision in **Greenwich** late last year: <https://www.registercitizen.com/news/article/greenwich-mason-street-affordable-denial-2024-19771255.php>. Amongst the reasons to deny the application included “scale of the project as well as pedestrian safety issues”, and “safety from environmental hazards, fire, traffic and flooding”, and that “information provided by the development team on storm water drainage and traffic safety at a pedestrian crossing on Mason street were incomplete, among other issues”. Further still, despite approval by the Greenwich Affordable Housing Trust Board, the Planning & Zoning Commission still denied the application. This project included retail and 28 below market rate dwellings, or roughly 30% of the total units (2.5x the current 804 Fountain St. proposal). The article notes “[t]he proposal drew extensive criticism from neighbors and residents of central Greenwich, who were concerned about the size and scope of the project, as well as pedestrian safety.” It is clear that the Planning & Zoning Commission took into account resident feedback, considering public health and safety, in denying this application.

Westport has also recently rejected an application for a structure that also included affordable housing at a much higher percentage than the diluted percentage provided in the present 804 Fountain St. application: <https://westportjournal.com/government/hamlet-hearing-attracts-400-people-developers-announce-revamped-parking-and-architectural-changes/>. “ROAN Ventures, under intense public scrutiny surrounding the multi-use development in the village of Saugatuck, have gone back to the drafting table and revamped parking and traffic plans based on public input, and have offered several changes to mitigate resident concerns. Again, we not only see zoning commissions listen to resident feedback, but also see developers working with residents to achieve a structure that is well-received. Similar to the Greenwich application, this also includes commercial and is situated in a commercial zone, and it is well-understood that Woodbridge residents seek to promote commercial growth. This project also includes renderings showing structures commensurate with surrounding structures and is mindful of transit-oriented development (see <https://westportjournal.com/government/to-be-or-not-to-be-hamlet-plans-face-pz-scrutiny/>) This development also calls for 25% affordable units, over double our present applicant’s proposal.

Shelton recently reached a deal with a developer that included affordable housing, after such application was initially denied, and when appealed to the state court, the denial was affirmed (see <https://www.ctpost.com/news/article/shelton-mohawk-drive-apartments-appeal-settled-20340064.php> and also <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/shelton-pz-affordable-housing-deal-20270608.php>) Ultimately, the Planning and Zoning Commission accepted a proposal including 30 units (down from 40) with 8 units being affordable, or 26.6%. The building is capped at three stories. Nonetheless, this still must come before a public hearing.

Other towns are listening to public comment and taking pedantic and careful measures to ensure public health and safety are considered, with far higher percentages of affordable housing than the present 804 Fountain St. special exception application, ranging between 25% and 30%. I encourage this Commission to also listen to the public and offer ample discussion so the public fully appreciates why you are making a decision based on the totality of public comment.

Thank you and be well.

Rob Rosasco

6 Westward Road

To: Town Plan and Zoning Commission

From: Cathy Wick

Date: June 2, 2025

I am here to raise two issues, both of which involve false or misleading statements that I would urge this commission to investigate to be sure you are making your decisions based on the actual facts at hand.

First, I want to address the report by Justin LaFountain, the town planner. In the section on "Municipal Impacts" he includes his estimate that there will be – wait for it – a grand total of 7 schoolchildren residing at this proposed 96-unit apartment building.

Anyone who knows anything about our town will recognize the absurd nature of this low estimate. It is based on average yields from apartment complexes in the state as a whole. As we all know, on this measure Woodbridge is far from average, Woodbridge is extreme. While the state as a whole has experienced a decrease in school enrollment of 8% in the last decade, Woodbridge's enrollment is up by 15% during that same timeframe. Obviously, a state average is irrelevant to Woodbridge. Just look next door to Orange, where apparently the Avalon Bay apartment complex sends two busloads of schoolchildren to the Orange and Amity schools every day. Mr. La Fountain should know better – and in fact he does. When he moderated a panel presentation on housing on April 30, 2025 he expressly acknowledged that our town's school population is increasing and referred to that fact as "unique" [at one hour 47 minutes].

I understand that several town officials have objected to Mr. LaFountain's continued employment by the town, and I agree with the reasons cited for that objection. His firm, Goman & York, has a conflict of interest and should not be working for our town. Goman & York actually represented the Yale Law Clinic and the Open Communities Alliance against our town. These are the two entities that are currently suing the town of Woodbridge. In a presentation to this board, Mr. Donald Poland of Goman & York insulted our town and called Woodbridge "a landscape of exclusion." Why would we want to employ a firm that characterizes us in this way? And shouldn't that firm's professional ethics prevent it from taking on this work due to the obvious conflict of interest? I believe that professional ethics should have prevented them from seeking this

work and that we should not continue to employ Goman & York. They are not the only planning firm in the area, but they are the only firm that has inaccurately characterized our town and its people in such an offensive manner.

Next, I would like to turn to an assertion by Mr. Melisi that the rents at 804 Fountain Street will be \$500 less than rents in New Haven. This statement seemed off to me, given that the rents he quoted for his proposed building were quite high: \$2350 for a 1br apartment.

According to Zillow, median rent for 1 br 1 ba apartments in New Haven is \$2161.

I did a little bit of homework, and quickly found 12 buildings in New Haven, some in Westville and some Downtown, some brand-new luxury buildings, that offer rents below Mr. Melisi's quoted prices.

400 Blake st Westville	1br \$1895
200 Fountain St Westville	1br \$1750
Winchester Lofts NH	1br \$2145
The Taft 265 College st NH	1br \$2250
Cambridge Oxford 32 High St NH	1br \$2272
The Liberty 152 Temple st NH	1br \$1975
Curio 269 269 State st NH	1br \$2296
Bulldog Apts 954 Chapel st NH	1br \$1675
Cadence on Canal 222 Canal St	1br \$2264
James English Bldg 105 Court St NH	1br \$2195
The Novella 1245 Chapel St NH	1br \$2353
Ninth Square Apts 90 Crown St NH	1br \$1890

It seems to me that the high prices of the vast majority of the units in this building contradict the intent of our zoning regulations, which allow this building under what is called "Opportunity Housing." At these prices, 804 Fountain St is not Opportunity Housing, it is Luxury Housing. Luxury Housing should not be approved under cover of our Opportunity Housing regulations.