



HISTORIC[®]
NEW ENGLAND

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HistoricNewEngland.org

April 10, 2018

Waltham City Council
610 Main Street
Waltham, MA 02452

RE: Waltham High School Building Project

To the Honorable Members of City Council:

On behalf of Historic New England and our more than 8,500 members across New England, I write today with substantial concern about the proposal to allocate a portion of the Robert Treat Paine Estate and Chesterbrook Woods for the construction of a new Waltham High School. We certainly understand the need to provide a high quality educational facility for Waltham's students and, with our strong local knowledge of Waltham through our very active Lyman Estate, we appreciate the challenges in identifying a suitable location that will satisfy regulatory requirements and the needs of the Waltham community. We encourage the City to seek an appropriate location for the high school that affirms that Waltham's irreplaceable historic places and open space resources are worthy of preservation and must be retained.

The Paine Estate, which historically included the portion of land known as Chesterbrook Woods, is a highly significant historic resource, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1989. The house and surrounding landscape are matched in their significance in Waltham only by Historic New England's Lyman Estate, immediately to the south across Beaver Street, and Gore Place, further east on Main Street. Together, these properties provide a rich experience that is enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year and the scenic landscapes at these properties are essential to appreciation by a diverse audience and continued public benefit. We are grateful to the City for its recognition of the importance of these properties, as demonstrated by the nearly \$2,000,000 in combined Community Preservation Act funds allocated for their preservation in the past decade, approximately \$760,000 of which went to the Paine Estate.

In addition to the City's own investment in the protection of the Paine Estate, it is clear from the preservation and conservation restrictions contained in the 1974 Deed conveying the property to the City of Waltham that Theodore L. Storer and Roscoe W. Brooks intended the property to remain in its then and current scenic, natural, and culturally-significant condition. Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution further protects this property based on its long and documented

NOLD TO WALTHAM CITY COUNCIL

Paine Estate and Chesterbrook Woods

April 10, 2018

Page Two of Two

use as public open space. Were the City to succeed in advancing a proposal to use this land for new development, it would set a dangerous precedent that could undermine protections for historic and open space resources across the Commonwealth. Given the recent decision in the case of *Smith v. Westfield*, it seems unlikely that such a pursuit will be successful.

I encourage the City of Waltham to continue to take pride in its historical heritage and take precautions to protect this heritage when deciding the City's future endeavors. To that end, Historic New England urges the City to reject the current proposal to develop a portion of the Paine Estate and Chesterbrook Woods as part of the new High School building project and, instead, to dedicate its valuable time and resources to finding a more suitable location for this important project.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carl R. Nold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Carl R. Nold, President and CEO