



D U R H A M

## Open Space & Trails Commission

Durham City-County Planning Department ▪ 101 City Hall Plaza ▪ Durham, NC 27701

Oct. 5, 2014

July 13, 2014

Memorandum

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To: Members of Durham City Council

From: Annette G. Montgomery, Chair, Development Review Committee  
Durham Open Space and Trails Commission

Re: Z1400011 Sheetz Inc.

Background

The project would be located adjacent to the floodplain of New Hope Creek, an area protected in the upper reaches by the New Hope Creek Corridor Plan. The plan provides for protection of open space for the benefit of water quality as well as wildlife habitat. As a Durham County Inventory Site, this area is known as the, "Lower New Hope Creek Floodplain Forest and Slopes" and is one of three sub-impoundments created as mitigation for wildlife. The area abutting the site is owned by US Army Corps of Engineers and leased by NC Wildlife Resource Commission.

At the north end, the project site is bisected by a Significant Natural Heritage site known as the Lower New Hope Creek Floodplain Forest and Slopes considered "One of the best flood plains in North Carolina in terms of mature Canopy." Preservation of the upland buffers along the edges of the bottomlands will aid in keeping this flood Plain and wildlife corridor functional. The entire area is part of the Triassic Basin containing the easily eroded sedimentary rock and making a necessary requirement to control both velocity and quantity of storm water run-off.

Applicant Request

The applicant's site sits approximately 20' below grade from Hwy. 751. Overhead utility lines sit in the adjacent right-of-way. The applicant plans a mix of retail and restaurant uses. As Sheetz is a vendor of gasoline, we assume that the mix will include sales of gasoline and diesel fuels for vehicles.

We appreciate that the applicant's engineering consultant has performed both an aerial and field investigation of the project area on one portion of the property, consideration needs to be given to the remaining portion as well. The investigative report recognizes the needs for the fauna and wildlife identifying and describing 4 points (areas). In accordance with the NC Wildlife Resource Commission's standards of 164' minimum corridor width for birds and mammals along with 300' for bird travel, the applicant's consultant identified the project to limits of disturbance with a range from 170'-325' from the 100' year floodplain. We point out that these uplands serve as vital areas of habitat for wildlife as well as refuge during flooding and that the sub-impoundment to the southwest serves as a feeding area for wildlife.

The Consultant did not provide any discussion of efforts to be utilized to minimize dangerous run off from the site onto the adjacent area. It is vital to protect the hydrology in this area. For site planning, we recommend that the building and parking areas (impervious areas) for development be pushed toward Hwy.751, allowing as much natural vegetative cover as possible with as little grading as possible, between the project and the Army Corps boundary. Additionally, low impact development (LID) efforts should be utilized to the greatest extent possible. Retaining walls, (due to required

grading), and containment, spill over devices need to be considered carefully due to the applicant's proposed gasoline sales directly adjacent to the Lower New Hope Creek Floodplain Forest and Slopes.

The applicant's plan indicates an area of tree coverage at the south end of the property. This area is additionally impacted by the required 100' Major Transportation Corridor (MTC). We recommend that this area remain as undisturbed, permanent open space and tree coverage to further buffer the project from the sub-impoundment as well as hunting activities which are allowed on the US Army Corps land. We request that the applicant consider a larger buffer directly adjacent to the Corps land to assist with filtering runoff from the project.

Lighting is a concern. It is recommended that the height and number of fixtures be limited and that they be downsized and provided with shields that control any direct spill onto and into the adjacent habitat area.

Thank you for your consideration of our remarks.