

September 22, 2020

Town of Darien
Planning & Zoning Commission
2 Renshaw Rd.
Darien, CT 06820

RE: Business Site Plan Application #128-B, Special Permit Application #314 (7-Eleven, Inc.; 306 Post Road)

To the Commission:

My hope with this letter is to share neighborly perspective and evoke a more thoughtful discussion around the proposed plan to develop the property at 306 Post Road into a 7-Eleven gas station and convenience store.

I am the owner of the neighboring office buildings, contiguous with the Property's western boundary line, at 320-330 Post Road (Darien Crossing). I purchased these buildings back in 2018 and at the time, both buildings and the 5-acre campus were fatigued, outdated and undesirable. The property was neither memorable nor akin to other commercial properties in Darien. Over the last 2.5 years, I've invested millions of dollars and thousands of hours to transform my property into a first-class office campus that has attracted sophisticated, high credit tenants who are willing to pay premium rents for quality office space in Darien.

If there is anything I've learned over the last 2.5 years about leasing office space, it's the importance of first impressions. We are in an anemic office leasing market that has many landlords vying for few tenants and consequently only the best and brightest properties are the ones that prevail. My success is driven by my commitment to exceed expectation and mitigate distractions.

I am not disputing the proposed use of the site but I do take issue with the manner in which the applicant has decided to develop the site. As a builder/developer myself, the development plan for this land is overburdening. I understand that the unique shape and orientation of the property presents specific challenges for the proposed use, but this does not constitute a 'hardship'. The applicant is attempting to maximize the site but at the expense of their ONLY neighbor...They've literally and figuratively taken the ass of their site development and faced it all towards my buildings. Most notably, the elevated mechanical equipment, trash containers, and cooking related infrastructure. For tenants that I've worked so hard to obtain, this will be a **very** unwelcoming sight. Unlike the existing site and structure, the applicant has decided to locate the building nearly 58 feet closer to my property line and has relocated the trash containers directly outside the windows of my office tenants. It's also worth mentioning the

concerns I have around cooking, trash and gasoline odors coming from the proposed use. Unfortunately, I don't believe the applicant has given much thought as to how their business will affect their neighbor.

More importantly, as a business owner and a member of the Darien community, I cannot ignore what a 7-Eleven represents and how it impacts the narrative when you enter town. One of the many roles and responsibilities of the Commission is to preserve the character of neighborhood. I'm afraid that introducing such a brand/concept detracts from the current vibrancy and demeanor. There are both physical and qualitative changes that need to be addressed.

First and foremost, I would like to draw attention to the cadence and pattern of spacing from one property to the next along this portion of the Post Road. As one travels west from Norwalk into Darien, there is honest and consistent spacing between each building. This has become a physical attribute of the neighborhood and gives breath and flow to the road. Even the current structure is centrally located on the parcel and follows suite. To place the proposed building directly next to my building will make this side of the road feel congested and unbalanced with the surrounding buildings.

Under the proposed concept of gas station and convenience store, the property will draw more traffic off I-95 and a more transient demographic to the property and to the Town. Related to that are the hours of operation and the intensity of use throughout the day and night. Most of the traffic off the highway will be from out of town individuals who may lack the conduct and etiquette that you, the Commission, and I would expect from ourselves or our neighbor. This draws into question safety and its impact on my property, the personal property of my tenants and the residence of Darien. I have tenants leaving cars overnight and I fear that we run the risk of theft or potential damage.

While the above is not an exhaustive summary of my concerns, it does focus on major business points that I believe, deserve the Commission's attention and the applicant should be held accountable for. Collectively, these concerns translate into tenant distractions and unnecessary encumbrances that are avoidable. From what I've read and what I've heard to date, not enough is being done by the applicant to make this a responsible and valuable addition to the Darien business community.

I appreciate the Commission allowing me the opportunity to share my remarks.

Thank you,



Nick Fletcher

320 BPR Holdings

Partner