

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee
P.O. Box 51537
Durham, NC 27717

July 17, 2009

Hugh Osteen
Assistant Superintendent of Operational Services
Durham Public Schools
PO Box 30002
Durham, NC 27702

Dear Mr. Osteen:

The New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee has become aware that the 50+ acre tract on the SW corner of Erwin Rd. and Cornwallis Rd. was being considered as a possible site for a new public high school.

The NHCCAC was created in 1992 by the City of Durham, Durham County, Orange County, and the Town of Chapel Hill to advise them on implementation of the 1991 New Hope Corridor Open Space Master Plan. (For a copy and maps, see our website www.newhopecreek.org) Since that time, we have reviewed and commented on dozens of developments in the corridor, and have also worked with local government, state government and hundreds of individuals to preserve open space and habitat and to encourage the construction of trails and access points for public recreational use. In recent years, as Jordan Lake has seen increasing use as a public water supply, we have paid increasing attention to the impact of land use change on the quality of water in New Hope Creek and its tributaries, which flow into Jordan Lake.

The land at the corner of Cornwallis and Erwin is specifically mentioned in the New Hope Plan (Component 8, p. 50) The area is identified as having significant natural and scenic qualities, and it is recommended that it remain as a natural area. The accompanying map shows a bike and pedestrian trail crossing the property and continuing to Hwy 751. In particular, we would draw your attention to the following statement:

"Because the Cornwallis Road/Erwin Road intersection is prominently visible to travelers, it constitutes an important visual resource. As land continues to be developed in this vicinity (especially to the west) preserving the wooded quality of this major intersection will be extremely important."

The plan, and its subsequent implementation, has tried to prevent use of Erwin Road as a major thoroughfare between Durham and Chapel Hill. Construction of a

high school on this site would greatly increase traffic on both Erwin and Cornwallis, and would probably require subsequent road improvements.

We have also learned, as we have advised on implementation of the plan, of the destructive impacts of large paved parking lots and other impervious surfaces on water quality in the upper New Hope, where water is generally of high quality. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in state Clean Water Fund grants have been spent on several nearby areas, a recognition of the importance of protecting the upper tributaries of New Hope Creek. A 400 space parking lot for student vehicles, as well as access roads and building roofs, would have a major negative impact on Mud Creek, and ultimately on Jordan Lake.

The New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee suggests that a less environmentally sensitive site for a new high school be found, preferably one that already has good access for public and private transportation.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Healy
Chair, NHCCAC

website www.newhopecreek.org