

Subject: FW: Trevett: Babcock Place - Still not a good fit

From: David Trevett [mailto:detrevett@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2018 2:19 AM
To: Maria Morelli
Subject: Babcock Place - Still not a good fit

To the Zoning Board of Appeals:

I have examined the latest plans for Babcock Place, as well as the associated Town and 3rd party reviews and reports, and read many of the recent comments by nearby neighbors.

(1) I find that, in spite of some welcome adjustments by the developer over the past 6 months, these do not go far enough in reducing the overall mass of the building, increasing the setbacks, and ensuring compatibility with the neighborhood. They do not even conform to the most recent charges from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Therefore, I reiterate the general objections we raised six months ago -- this project, even as modified, is still not a good fit for the Babcock/Stedman site for which it is proposed.

Others have already documented the key issues of insufficient setbacks, fire safety, tree removal, remaining tree risk (including on abutters' properties), slope stability at the rear, excessive shadowing, lack of open space, parking, privacy issues, and more. I will not repeat all those concerns, but wish to be clear that I endorse and support them. The

(2) Too little attention seems to have been paid to the implications of the January 22 decision by the Brookline Transportation Board to create a dedicated 5-foot southbound cycle lane along the entire length of Babcock Street.

With no loading zone included in the Babcock Place plan, one can anticipate that delivery vans, moving vans, taxis, and other vehicles will want to stop directly in front of the building -- i.e., squarely on top of the new cycle track. This would force cyclists to swerve out into the path of motor vehicles, a deadly risk. To ensure safety for cyclists, the Town of Brookline must prohibit all standing and stopping in front of this building, and that prohibition must be vigorously enforced -- or else require that the building have a semi-circular front driveway, a robust loading zone with ample turn-around space, or equivalent.

There is an issue for pedestrians as well. Today, the parking lot at the side and rear of the existing structures on this site serves as a kind of buffer for street congestion. Without that buffer, more congestion is likely to occur on Babcock street itself. This site is directly across from the attractive Freeman triangle park, the Babcock Place driveway is situated between two planned crosswalks across Babcock Street, and a sizable percentage of southbound Babcock Street vehicles turn left onto Freeman street. This potentially confusing combination is likely to prove a danger for pedestrians attempting to cross Babcock Street. For instance, a car emerging from the Babcock Place garage, with the driver focused to the left while waiting for southbound traffic to clear so that the car can turn right onto Babcock Street, may fail to spot a pedestrian entering the crosswalk immediately to the right.

These are public safety issues which are important to address, especially as traffic along Babcock Street -- vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians -- continues to increase.

Thank you,
David Trevett
177 Babcock Street, Unit 1

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