

Brita Heimark and Victor Coelho
24 Burke Lane
Wellesley, MA 02481

January 23, 2019

Blythe Robinson, Executive Director, Board of Selectmen
Michael Zehner, Planning Director
Jeanette Rebecchi, Planner

Dear Town of Wellesley Board of Selectmen and Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns at the Town Hall meeting on Tuesday January 22nd, we are grateful for the opportunity to be heard. I am writing to share my comments and concerns in writing so that they may be attached to your upcoming letter of response to MassHousing regarding the building proposal for 3 Burke Lane, Wellesley, and their application for MA Site Eligibility.

As I noted on Tuesday, I have many, many concerns regarding safety and environmental concerns for the area. Burke Lane is a small curved lane with no sidewalks in between two dangerous and overcrowded intersections. My great fear is that increasing the traffic by 10-20 more cars than we currently have on our street, would cause numerous dangerous if not fatal accidents both for drivers and for pedestrians in the area. Let me explain. Very close to this proposed development project, Burke Lane exits directly into an on-ramp of fast moving traffic on its way to route 9 east near the 95 on ramps. Commuters in the early morning traffic are numerous and drivers at other times of day also have their sights on getting quickly onto route 9 east and they do not yield or slow down for Burke Lane residents entering there. Therefore, adding ten times the traffic from Burke Lane at this intersection with renters who may be new to the area is inviting the potential for dangerous accidents here. In fact, several very serious accidents have already occurred at this intersection, one or two leaving a car dangling over the cliff to a yard and house on Willow Park below, and one recently involving the school bus that takes Middle and High School students from McLean St. down Burke Lane to rt. 9 every morning. As the regular school bus tried to get on rt. 9 east a car on the on-ramp (access road to rt. 9 east) had to stop suddenly and they were hit from behind by another car who must have been rushing close behind. We do Not want to see these kinds of dangerous accidents occurring on a regular basis at the end of our street. The fence on the eastern side near the corner of Burke Lane and rt. 9 has been knocked down numerous times by these accidents.

The other overcrowded intersection is at the top of McLean St. where it meets with Cedar Street. Hastings St. and Wellesley Ave. and Cedar from Needham direction as well as McLean St. all meet with Cedar St. going towards rt. 9 here in a complicated intersection that gets Very busy at rush hour as traffic from Needham enters Cedar St. here and Wellesley traffic is also rushing towards the main routes to Boston and rt. 9. A traffic light is not an option here since it is not an even grid format but rather more diagonal lines from different directions so everyone has to

watch closely and try to enter the flow carefully. Trying to cross Cedar to get to the Fiske School or to get to the Wellesley Middle School or High School via Wellesley Ave. is very difficult and can take a long time waiting patiently for an opening to get through, especially if turning left from McLean St. Adding 10-20 more cars potentially backing up at this intersection from McLean St. would be dangerous on this steep slope, and would be non-functioning at the least. It could cause serious accidents at this five-way intersection as well. This intersection is even more dangerous when considering that many young children who attend Fiske Elementary School just a block away from McLean St. are walking up McLean St. and down Cedar St. to school every morning and home every mid-afternoon. It is not possible for children to cross Cedar at this five-way intersection but they are crossing McLean to get down Cedar St. to the crosswalk for the school. There is a flashing light and cross guard by Fiske on Cedar and still I have seen cars go through the light while children are beginning to cross there! I once saw the crossing guard hit a car for passing while children were about to cross. Increasing the back up of cars at this intersection of McLean clearly has dangerous implications for pedestrians, especially these young children attending Fiske School.

Safety is a keen cause for concern regarding the 3-Burke Lane proposal because numerous employees from the SunLife building at the bottom of McLean walk up the street daily M-F to get lunch at the Wok Chinese Restaurant, for which they walk down Burke Lane! Of course, they have to walk in the street since there are no sidewalks. Sunlife employees also tend to walk up McLean St. to Cedar but they always walk in the street, even though there are occasional sidewalks on McLean. This may be due to snow and ice, or simply their preference and habit over many years of considering this a reasonably calm neighborhood. I hate to think how many pedestrians might be hit by increased traffic in this area, both on Burke Lane, or on McLean St, both of which tend to be pedestrian walkways in the area.

While I would welcome seniors or families with children in the 3-Burke Lane site, I don't see how seniors would navigate the area with no sidewalks and no public transport close by. I would also worry about young children and adolescents walking down Burke Lane to get to Fiske or to catch the bus.

My second main concern is an environmental one: the steep slopes to the left side of 3 Burke Lane (south side), and in the back of the yard (west side of the property). There is also a very steep slope, nearly a cliff, dropping off from 2-Burke Lane to the Willow Park properties just below it. These steep slopes do not bode well for water drainage if the hillside is cut steeply into and if retaining walls are inserted there. The building and parking and retaining walls would not absorb the storm-water or overflow from the high elevations above and some serious water storage would need to be carefully devised to keep the water from flooding into Burke Lane or down to someone's house and backyard on Willow Park. Also, if the hills were cut into and not properly secured, it could be disastrous for the houses abutting this property, 15 Burke Lane at

the top of the southern hill side, and Sheehan Circle and Cedar above the back of the yard and at the top of the western hillside. It is my sincere opinion that the footprint of the proposed building is far too big to enable a safe handling of these issues, both in terms of safety and environmental concerns. I firmly believe the building, if it passes eligibility at all, should be much, much smaller, perhaps 4-6 units, which would allow the trees currently holding the hillside in place and environmental concerns regarding the hillsides on this property to be safely managed. 4 units would allow 1 affordable housing apartment, 8 units would allow 2.

The third major safety concern is regarding the space requirements for safety vehicles such as fire trucks or ambulances to get into the 3-Burke Lane structure and assist in an emergency, as well as sufficient parking space to turn around on the lot and exit again onto Burke Lane. If the density were reduced to 4, 6, or 8 units as suggested above for space and environmental considerations, then the parking spaces could more reasonably accommodate two cars for each unit, much needed for young professionals who might live here, and additional parking spaces for visitors and access for emergency vehicles. Surely a firetruck or ambulance is not expected to back out of an overcrowded parking strip into a small lane with no visibility?

For all of the reasons above, I hope you will seriously reduce the footprint of this proposal to make this a safe project for all. Thank you very much.

With serious and sincere concerns,

Brita Heimarck

Victor Coelho

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24 Burke Lane residents, homeowners