

Riley, Kate

From: Elizabeth Marran [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2020 8:18 AM
To: Riley, Kate; City Manager
Subject: Tobin School Project - comments

Dear City of Cambridge,

My husband and I add our names to the long list of Tobin school neighbors and concerned Cambridge residents to voice our objections to the Tobin school rebuild proposal. The city has charged ahead with a "flawed plan" that has been based on the unfounded notion that the Tobin school and fields present the "only viable solution" to the city's growing educational needs. We have attended "informational community meetings about Tobin" and have already sent one letter to city hall voicing our objections. It remains our position that these "informational meetings" were from the very start "dismissive of our objections." Far too much time has been wasted by designers who have not listened to a large number of people who have objected to the increased scale of the school, adding to the illusion that the city needs to capitalize on the momentum of this project.

Many others have made clear their own objections to the planners of this project. The city has been guilty of presenting outrageously large solutions assuming that *eventually* the neighborhood will *come around* and embrace a scaled down version (which it hardly is in its present form).

TRAFFIC along Concord Ave has never before been so bad at ALL TIMES OF DAY and this project will only add to the problem. Traffic is SO BAD that it could negatively impact a school-wide emergency evacuation plan or impede in emergency vehicle access. Increasing the number of students at Tobin will adversely affect everyday traffic patterns, tax an already difficult commute and overflow into adjacent residential streets that will absorb the traffic adding to additional environmental disruptions.

FORCED CENTRALIZATION of pre-school, special needs, and grade school is a REGRESSIVE educational policy and one that undermines the human attention to scale, dismissing the pedagogical benefits of neighborhood schools. The Tobin proposal is NOT ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY, because student commutes will necessitate more cars coming to west Cambridge from points within the city; drop-off and pick-up scenarios will create unwanted idling buses and cars, an abundance of parked cars, and the loss of existing open space to accommodate added cars and to control traffic flow. Urban planning throughout the city has been lacking for decades(take the run-away development of Cambridge north of Fresh Pond as an example) leaving Cambridge residents to wonder how it is that the scale of this project could be as "off" as it currently is. We urge the city to complete a proper impact analysis that incorporates educational values and ideals, as well as environmental efficiencies. The abutting neighbors are troubled by the environmental hazards that we will be forced to contend with due to the layers of dormant toxic waste in the existing fields. Neighborhood schools, smaller in scale, are intrinsically beneficial creating opportunities for families to engage as community and making simple activities such as WALKING to school possible.

THE PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE SHOULD REMAIN A PRIORITY In this project proposal, the architectural and city planners have failed to deliver any reasonable impression that a history of "place" and open land can be preserved alongside the city's ability to meet the challenges of the future. The community benefits from our open Tobin fields – it is not only a place for sports – it is a place where people gather.

Cambridge needs to carefully weigh ALL their options and re-frame their sights on new solutions that empower neighborhoods. The residents of this area have every reason to insist that this project be put on hold until the city can provide a more comprehensive analysis in the form of educational objectives, alongside the restraints and creative solutions/options that have so far been dismissed out of hand. It is hard for us to understand how

it is that the city manager's office has led this project with such ferocity and speed without more input from educational leaders including the school board that was brought into this process far too late when solutions were already limited to the Tobin school property. Cambridge can and Cambridge should do better. Be a good Tobin neighbor and listen to us.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Marran

Karl Baden

