

June 5, 2023

Land Use Committee
Newton City Council

Dear Mesdames/Sirs

We write as Trustees for the Covenant Residences at 33 Commonwealth Avenue to register our objection to the petition to amend the Special Permit #504-22 at 71 Commonwealth Avenue to amend the vibration control condition within the Special Permit. The petition is to excavate a significant portion of the ledge on the property in order to construct a 15-stall underground garage and other facilities, which will open onto the Commonwealth Avenue carriageway. In addition, there is a proposed widening of the existing driveway at 71 Commonwealth in order to build a two-stall garage, which would require further excavation.

Our objections are as follows.

- 1) The first block of the Commonwealth Avenue Carriage Road in Newton, including the proposed curb cuts and new driveways for the 71 Commonwealth Avenue development, already is heavily trafficked as it serves as the feeder road for all of the roads to the north of Commonwealth Avenue between Commonwealth Avenue and the Newton Commonwealth Golf course. These include Waban Hill Road and Algonquin Road.
- 2) The plans call for excavating a significant amount of ledge to build an underground garage housing fifteen spaces, a mechanical room, and underground entrances to all six of the proposed units.
- 3) On the property, there is currently a one-lane curb cut on the Commonwealth Avenue carriage lane and two curb cuts on Algonquin Road. The proposed plan is for all traffic to empty to the carriage lane, resulting in four lanes of curb cuts on the carriage road (two from the underground garage and two from the new garage for the existing house.)
- 4) The City of Newton recently approved two-way bicycle traffic on the carriage lane. On its website for the transportation projects, it states:

"The city's intent is to increase **safety and awareness** for all modes of transportation while formalizing bicycles' legality to travel east despite Carriage Way's One-Way westbound regulation for vehicles."

Increasing curb cuts and traffic on an already congested segment of the Carriage Way flies in the face of the city's intent.

- 5) The line of automobiles in the school pick-up line for Mount Alvernia Academy stretches as far back as Algonquin Road and often further east on the Carriage Way every afternoon of the school year. Further, whenever Boston College has a large event such as a home football game, commencement or move-in or move-out, the stretch of Commonwealth Avenue between College Road and the start of the Carriage Way becomes one-way headed east and the Carriage Way carries all west-bound traffic.

- 6) There is extensive use of the carriage road for recreation in this area. There is a wood barrier-railing with a steep slope beyond it on the left side (headed west), which increases congestion in the area. Runners, walkers, and cyclists have fewer options to move out of danger from the traffic. The additional traffic from dump trucks, earth movers and other construction vehicles that would be used to prepare the site for an underground garage will be intolerable and dangerous.

We ask that the plans for the development of the 71 Algonquin Road site be reconfigured to eliminate the underground parking garage and that entrance to the project be moved so as to minimize both the excavation required and the traffic safety considerations for an already congested section of the carriage lane.

Sincerely,

Trustees for the Covenant Residences at 33 Commonwealth Avenue Condominiums

Martin Lieberman

Bryan Nguyen

Elizabeth Rosselot

