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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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**IRAM FAROOQ**  
Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
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**To:** City of Cambridge Planning Board  
City of Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeals  
**From:** Central Square Advisory Committee  
**Date:** 7/24/20  
**Re:** 55 Norfolk St, 759 Mass Ave and 50 Bishop Allen Dr.

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The Central Square Advisory Committee (the "Committee") met on Wednesday, July 22, 2020 to review and comment on the following project.

- **50 Bishop Allen Dr:** Applying for a Special Permit to waive front and side yard setbacks, reduce the open space requirement, build increase height over 55', and to waive/reduce required parking from 17 spaces (.75) to no parking.

This meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.300 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Committee is appointed by the City Manager to undertake all large project reviews of variances and special permits for activities within the Central Square Overlay District (the "District"), and to monitor the progress of the Central Square Non-Zoning Recommendations of the 2013 K2C2 Study (the "Study").

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The meeting minutes from the Committee meeting are summarized below. The applicants presented their project and took questions and comments from the committee members. Public comment was taken after each presentation and its subsequent committee discussion.

**50 Bishop Allen Dr.**

Presentation

- Ben Deb, owner's rep
- Sean Hope, attorney
- Evan Stellman, project architect

The proposed project is a 7-story 22-unit multifamily rental building. There are several three-bedroom units and it is planned to be 20% affordable, as a whole. The development provide no on-site parking and does not lend itself to underground parking. There will be bike parking provided. The special permits being sought are for setbacks, parking and open space relief.

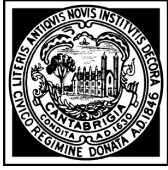
There was concern expressed for the current tenants that are renting from the owners. The owners of the current building are also the owner/developer of the proposed building. There were offers made to current tenants to re-let the units once the building is completed or rent a similarly priced unit in nearby buildings owned by the owner. Additional issues that were brought up by the committee members were the timing and duration of construction considering the current construction that has been taking place along Columbia. Furthermore, the committee wanted assurances that the applicants have spoken with all neighbors, especially the Elks Club across the street. In general, the committee supports additional housing in the area, especially

The follow questions/comments further summarize the meeting.

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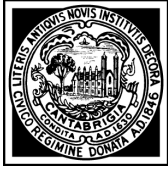
### Committee Questions and Comments

- Q1: The electrical vault seems to dominate Bishop Allen Dr. Is there something that can be done about this? Really would prefer that is not
  - The design presents the smallest vault option possible. The building will be all electric, which limits how small it can be.
- Comment 1: Strong support for new housing in Cambridge and belief that expanding housing supply is the only way to make Cambridge more affordable. Does not believe that the relief being sought should prohibit the project from moving forward.
- Comment 2: Agreeable to the zero parking but feels that abutters might have concerns that new occupants will receive parking permits and take up additional parking in the neighborhood.
- Q2: Have they met with the Elks Club yet, as part of the outreach?
  - The applicant did say that they met with members of the Elks Club, and that they expressed concern over the construction management.
- Q3: The construction impacts on Bishop Allen Dr from Mass and Main, and public utility infrastructure, have been horrendous. Will there be overlapping construction schedules between this project and Mass and others? What is the construction timeline?
  - A3: It will be 14-16 months before construction would begin on this project. They are not sure whether or not there will be overlap with The Port compensatory stormwater project.
- Comment 3: Appreciates the articulation of the façade and glad to see more housing, as well as working with current tenants. Feels that the building fits in well with the surrounding context. Thinks that partnering with Street Theory could be a good idea to put art on the electrical vault on Bishop Allen.
- Question 4: Is there an opportunity for solar panels on the roof of the building? This could help if the building is all electric, and could there be charging for micro-mobility?
  - A4: Not certain about solar panels at this point, but there will be space, most likely. Charging for micro-mobility will be looked into, as well partnering with Street Theory.

### Public Questions/Comment

Two points of concern were brought up by the public audience

1. The design and scale of the project: There is concern about the difference in scale between what is existing and what is being proposed. There is a feeling that this building is way out of scale with the neighborhood and will dominate the adjacent buildings. Would like to see a more careful consideration of transitioning down to a residential neighborhood.
2. The impact on current tenants and the impact on affordable housing options in Cambridge: Would like to see the provision of more public housing and not just the incorporation of affordability into market rate rental and condos. Belief that it is cheaper at this point to produce affordable housing than market rate housing at this point. Additional concern was for the existing tenants and potential future tenants of the existing property. Are prospective tenants being made aware of the fact that the building will be redeveloped in the future? Also, has concerns over the fate of the street trees and additional outreach to the Elks Club. The applicant assured the audience member that they have communicated clearly with tenants about the future plans for the building and that they will not be removing any existing street trees as part of this development.



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**Committee Members Present**

- Melissa Greene
- Esther Hanig
- Tahir Kapoor
- Robert Winters
- Joel Altstein
- Christopher Sol Gully
- Michael Monestime

Submitted on behalf of the Committee,  
**Drew Kane, Land Use Planner**  
Community Development Department