

the historic character of our town, we hope that you at least partly share this goal.

Neighbors who attended these meetings raised several concerns and made suggestions for how the development's effects might be somewhat mitigated. They include ways to address not just the density, but the overall character of the development, its view from the street, its impact on the landscape, and the compatibility of its architecture with the surrounding Martin Street neighborhood. Areas of concern, and requests for plan modifications that would at least partially address those concerns, include the following:

Siting and layout

The large number of closely-packed buildings, and the associated pavement of roads, driveways, etc. are alarming to us, both visually and environmentally. Lowering the overall number of houses would, of course, be the obvious solution to this problem. In addition, whatever can be done to reduce the scale of the buildings, such as reducing the size and number of attached garages, will help. Please note the Design Review Board's observations about the projected number of vehicles per house as opposed to what is assumed under Acton zoning.

Wetlands, tree coverage, etc.

The severe flooding we have experienced in the past along Fort Pond Brook on Martin and Stow Streets was pointed out by several neighbors. Even in normal years, houses on this side of Martin Street routinely operate sump pumps due to the high water table. We thus share the concerns expressed in the recent memo from the Natural Resources Director, and ask that further steps be taken to protect the wetlands and prevent an increase in flooding that might be caused by the amount of impervious surfaces that are planned. Reducing the number of buildings on the vulnerable parts of the property would help, of course. So would the retention of as many of the large trees on the site as possible.

Architectural character

We appreciate the steps the developer has taken to preserve the three existing 19th-century houses on the site. To us, this is paramount. As one neighbor expressed in her comments last March, we hope that the buildings can be spared from the vinyl siding that was initially planned for the new houses. In fact, siding both the old and new buildings with wood clapboard or Hardiplank would go a long way to making the development more compatible with its surroundings. Having viewed some sample proposed Seal Harbor building designs, we also hope that some common "developer's details" such as triangular boards instead of returns at the roof corners, can be avoided.

Developer's commitment

We hope that we can trust what we have been told about the intentions for this development. Unfortunately, some of us have become jaded by past experience with developers' promises about the intent to save existing buildings. We have seen town permits granted for plans that include the retention of historic buildings, only to find an owner returning with the news that it "can't be done" after all--"too expensive, too far gone, not cost-effective," etc. In the case of the three existing houses here, the developer's submitted plans include saving

them, and we expect to be able to believe that it will happen.

Walkability

Requests have been made for paths or sidewalks, both along the road and within the development. In the course of any sidewalk paving, however, the Town should take care to preserve the existing 1870s stone sidewalk at the corner of Martin and Maple, which was so carefully spared when the current Martin St. sidewalk was built.

Sincerely,

Anne Forbes
25 Martin Street