



**Alewife Study Group Response to  
IQHQ's Proposal for Alewife Park in North Cambridge  
February 12, 2021**

**Introduction:** The Alewife Study Group (ASG) has reviewed IQHQ's proposed plans for its North Cambridge property, as presented at IQHQ's community meeting on January 21.

ASG has also reviewed hundreds of comments and questions shared by community members about IQHQ's proposal. We have collected these comments and questions from our January 14 and 31 community meetings, the registrations for these meetings, IQHQ's January 21 meeting, and many other recent communications.

ASG has 25 years of experience with the IQHQ site, formerly owned by W.R. Grace. Over the years, we have worked with the property owners, their Licensed Site Professional (Haley and Aldrich), the Cambridge City Council, Cambridge city agencies and boards, Massachusetts DEP, United States EPA, the surrounding community, and many other individuals and organizations regarding this site.

Based on all of the information and experience listed above, ASG respectfully submits the following response to IQHQ's proposed plans for the site. Our response is partly an updated summary of the hopes, concerns, questions, ideas, and proposals we have heard from the community regarding the development of the site. Our response is also presented as a possible draft agenda for our meeting with IQHQ today, February 12, and as a possible outline for future discussions. Our response is meant as a working document that can be updated as needed to incorporate new information and ideas.

We understand and appreciate that IQHQ has already agreed to a number of the requests listed below, sometimes even before the requests were made. We include these requests anyway, both to document them, and to bookmark them for further discussion of details and implementation.

**Table of Contents:**

1. Status Update
2. Timeline
3. Future Development
4. Asbestos, Other Contamination, and Public Health
5. Jerry's Pond
6. Sustainability and Climate Resilience
7. Flooding
8. Habitat
9. Transportation, Traffic and Parking
10. Community Benefits
11. Conclusion and Next Steps

1. **Status Update:** ASG is interested to understand if IQHQ has made any changes to the site plan since your January 21 presentation meeting, or is considering any changes.

## 2. **Timeline**

- When is IQHQ planning to submit applications for each of the required permits listed on pages 8 and 9 of the IQHQ January 31 presentation?
- Are there any other permits required for this project that were not listed in the January 21 presentation?
- Assuming no extended delays in obtaining the necessary permits, when is IQHQ planning to begin construction activity on the site?
- What is the planned sequence and timing of construction-related activity on the site, including (but not limited to) environmental testing, soil borings for engineering purposes, demolition of existing buildings, utilities, footings, foundations, pile driving, construction of new buildings, roads, sidewalks, paths, boardwalks, observation piers, and landscaping?
- Assuming no unexpected delays, how much time does IQHQ expect will be needed to complete the proposed development of the site?

## 3. **Future development**

- Many people in the community have requested a commitment to preserving the undeveloped natural areas that will remain after the proposed plan is built. This request is based on a number of issues, including, contamination, flooding, traffic, climate, tree canopy, heat islands, habitat and more.
- We are pleased that IQHQ has no plans for development of these natural areas beyond the current proposal, and is considering the possibility of a conservation easement or other legal means to assure the community that this decision will remain. What is the current status of IQHQ's thinking about a conservation easement or similar action?
- What future development on the Whittemore Avenue parking lots is IQHQ considering? As you know, there are a variety of opinions in the community about the possible uses for this part of the site.

## 4. **Asbestos, Other Contamination, and Public Health**

- ASG appreciates IQHQ's strong commitment to the protection of public health and the environment during and after development at the site, including compliance with the Asbestos Protection Ordinance, the Activity and Use Limitation, and the Public Involvement Plan.
- ASG is ready to work with IQHQ on the design, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of all environmental testing, AUL and APO compliance, and any other measures necessary to protect public health and to further environmental justice.
- We have substantial experience working with Mass DEP, Haley and Aldrich, W.R. Grace and the City of Cambridge on environmental testing at the former Grace site, and with the City of Cambridge on testing, remediation and reconstruction at Russell Field.
- We want to discuss the details of our collaboration as soon as possible, and in time for ASG to have meaningful input on all actions in this area.

- We also want to discuss the role that Alewife Neighbors, Inc. (ANI), might play in obtaining independent professional review of sampling plans, monitoring of sampling, testing of split samples, etc., as needed. ANI is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization formed by residents of North Cambridge in 1996.
- For each location where soil will be disturbed below the top 6 inches, ASG requests the following information ahead of time: purpose and type of activity, dimensions of excavation, and plans for protection of public health under the APO.
- IQHQ's plans show many areas of grass, trees, and other vegetation around all of the buildings. Given the high level of asbestos contamination at the site, and the AUL, what is IQHQ's plan to ensure that these areas will be safe for public use?
- Which areas of the site that are currently fenced off to public access will remain fenced off? Which areas will no longer be fenced off? What is IQHQ's plan to ensure that these areas will be safe for public use.

## 5. Jerry's Pond

- We believe that the community and IQHQ have a shared understanding of the need to balance public access, public safety (including from contamination), habitat protection, flood storage, and the maintenance of tree canopy at Jerry's Pond.
- What is IQHQ's current vision for how to achieve the best possible balance between all of these important factors?
- ASG is ready to contribute our knowledge and experience, and to work with IQHQ, Friends of Jerry's Pond and other stakeholders to find a good solution.

## 6. Sustainability and Climate Resilience

- ASG is pleased that IQHQ is designing with a focus on sustainability and climate resilience, which are strong priorities of the community.
- IQHQ has proposed roof-top solar for the parking garage, and high albedo on the roofs of all buildings. Some members of the community have proposed a vegetative or biosolar roof for the parking garage, with public access, like a park.
- Members of the community have also proposed, where possible, vegetative, biosolar, or solar roof areas on the office/lab buildings.
- What has IQHQ learned about the options for bird-safe windows for its buildings?
- Does IQHQ have any data yet from the tree study?
- What is IQHQ's plan to provide electric vehicle infrastructure? We recommend the installation of EV charging stations on the parking lots and in the garage that are accessible to the community at reasonable rates.
- Where possible, we recommend the addition of greenery and walkways on the parking lots.

## 7. Flooding

- Community members have proposed enhanced flooding compensation, including the following measures.
- Retain rain water from building areas within the building footprint, ideally with a green roof

- Look at green infrastructure methods for stormwater handling vs. engineered solutions wherever possible
- When planning compensatory flood storage, instead of providing just enough storage to replace the volume lost by filling, provide an extra 50% where safe to do so.
- Elevate the first floor of uses for community benefits, such as community space and restaurant/retail above the future 100-year flood elevation instead of only the 10-year flood level. The difference in the area is only six inches, and small businesses are less resilient to down-time from unexpected damage.

## 8. Habitat

- What are IQHQ's plans for protecting wildlife during and after development?
- What are IQHQ's specific plans for protecting the heron population at Jerry's Pond?
- What can IQHQ do to improve the connection between the habitat on the site and other nearby habitats, such as Alewife Reservation?

## 9. Transportation, Traffic and Parking

- What are the details of IQHQ's Parking and Transportation Demand Management plan, beyond those provided at the January 21 meeting?
- We appreciate that IQHQ will honor the current arrangement whereby neighborhood residents can park on IQHQ lots. If IQHQ is going to use a parking sticker system for tenants and visitors, we ask that IQHQ provide parking stickers, at no cost, to residents who request them.
- How will IQHQ ensure sufficient parking capacity to avoid the risk of tenants parking on neighborhood abutting streets?
- The restriction on right turns onto Whittemore Avenue can now include an exception for residential abutters. The City Council passed a resolution in 2020 to allow this. So, traffic signs should reflect this change.
- Given recent feedback and proposals from the community, how can IQHQ design paths on the site to allow for the safe and convenient passage of pedestrians and bicycles through the site?
- And, how can the design of paths on the site contribute to the safe and convenient passage of pedestrians and bicycles on paths near the site?
- Would IQHQ be interested in supporting efforts to have a commuter rail stop at Alewife, on the existing MBTA Fitchburg Line? Having a commuter rail stop could expand access to and from the IQHQ site and Alewife area, while simultaneously reducing traffic.
- How will IQHQ manage truck traffic to and from the site to minimize the impact on the residential streets near the site?
- How will IQHQ manage vehicular traffic going to the parking garage to minimize traffic on Whittemore Avenue?

## **10. Community Benefits**

- Once the site is developed, could space be made available for community meetings and activities when not being used for business purposes?
- What can be done to provide jobs at the site for people without a college degree?

## **11. Conclusion and Next Steps**

- ASG is committed to working with IQHQ, neighbors, stakeholders, city and state agencies, and all others, to find the best possible solutions to all issues related to the development of the site.
- ASG proposes regular meetings and communication with IQHQ, for the duration of the development, to address these issues in a timely manner. We propose that we discuss specifics at our meeting today.

**End of report.**