



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Meeting Minutes
September 01, 2020
5:30 PM
Virtual Meeting

Present: Peter Darlow, (Chair), David Honn, Holly Ben-Joseph, Dean Charter, (BOS Liaison), Robert Hummel Planning Department

Citizen's attending: Thomas Doolittle, Richard Keleher, Terra Friedrichs

1. Opening

Chair, Peter Darlow opened the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

2. Regular Business

- A. Citizens' concerns – Terra spoke up about the need for the town to more progressively establish protocol if not bylaw concerning the preservation of shade trees along the town's roadways.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Minutes for the meeting of July 09, 2020 were reviewed and unanimously approved by roll call. Peter Darlow to send to town for posting.
- C. We discussed our disappointment that the recent board review memo specific to The Apartments at Powder Mill did not lead to a condition of the project's approval to return to the board for further discussion of the building's exterior design. This significant project was approved utilizing a building design that the board found to be very poor and not visually representative of a project desired for the town of Acton. Board members have repeatedly seen the outcome of DRB project reviews not reinforced by other boards and committees within Acton. The DRB will reach out to further discussions with the town on procedures to strengthen the board's impact to the review of future development.
- D. Thomas Doolittle will become an official board member very shortly and Richard Keleher has submitted an application to the VCC to become a board member. The DRB is very pleased to welcome these two new prospective members who will provide a new depth of professional expertise when reviewing future projects.
- E. Jon Cappeta is scheduled to join the DRB as the planning board liaison. Jon hopes to be available starting with the next scheduled DRB meeting.



3. New/ Special Business

A. Review of 40 High Street preliminary subdivision documentation for Victorian Place

The proponents of this project are planning to subdivide a 2.5 acre parcel with an existing residential building into a total of 4 lots. This is the first time this project has been reviewed by the DRB. Please refer to the Project Review Memo dated September 01, 2020 for more details and for DRB comments appended to these meeting minutes.

B. Review of the proposed 22 Elm Street PCRC

The proponents of this project are proposing a residential condominium comprised of 6 individual single family homes be developed on a portion of an assembled 8 acre property by establishing a planned conservation residential community that intends to offer a 5 plus acre common parcel preserved for use by Acton town residents . Please refer to the Project Review Memo dated September 01, 2020 for more details and DRB comments appended to these meeting minutes.

4. Adjournment

At 6:55 p.m.

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

40 High Street Preliminary Subdivision Plan for Victorian Place:

Page titles dated July 14, 2020:

Sheet 1 Title Sheet

Sheet 2 Proof Plan

Sheet 3 Preliminary Plan Residential Compound

22 Elm Street PCRC:

Page titles Site Plans dated June 15, 2020

The Residences at 22 Elm

1 of 10 Title Sheet

2 of 10 Master Plan

3 of 10 Record Plan

4 of 10 Natural Features & Existing Conditions Plan

5 of 10 Site Development Plan

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Darlow



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
Review Memorandum: Victorian Place
40 High Street
Preliminary Subdivision Plan
September 01, 2020 Virtual Meeting

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), Holly Ben-Joseph, David Honn, and Dean Charter, (BOS Liaison),

Guests and potential members: Tom Doolittle, Richard Kelleher

Robert Hummel, Planning Department

Proponents in attendance: None.

Documents Reviewed: Preliminary Subdivision Plan for Victorian Place, Acton MA, July 14, 2020.

Page titles:

Sheet 1 Title Sheet

Sheet 2 Proof Plan

Sheet 3 Preliminary Plan Residential Compound

It is proposed by the proponents to subdivide an existing approximate 2.5 acre lot, located at 40 High Street, into a residential compound comprised of four house lots. Lot 1 will preserve the existing residential building and a portion of the existing west facing front yard directly adjacent to High Street and will be the largest of the four proposed lots at .86 acres. Lot 2, an approximate .46 acre parcel is positioned within the northern portion of the existing front yard adjacent to High Street and will potentially incorporate the existing garage building. Lots 3 and 4, each approximately .46 acres, will be developed within the eastern portion of the existing property behind the existing house.

This is the first review of the proposed 40 High Street subdivision, a residential compound proposal immediately north of the just approved Preserve at Audubon Hill. The DRB notes the obvious similarity to the residential compound to be located at 46 High Street. Though board members are very concerned at the quantity of parallel development to be undertaken at this portion of High Street, the board concludes that, legal and logistical issues aside, there is little to be gained by suggesting the projects be combined into a single subdivision.

The DRB offers the following additional comments:

1. Where the proposed common drive for the residential compound intersects with High Street the DRB highly recommends a study be undertaken to determine whether the required 275ft sight line can be met. The DRB observation is that the existing stone wall will need to be cut back on each side of the drive. Should this be the case the DRB recommends that the rebuilt wall be reconstructed with end posts similar to the existing endposts of the existing wall.
2. The DRB notes that the intersection of this new common drive will be within 150 feet of the recently approved Bumble Bee Way common drive at 46 High Street and will be closer than 1000 feet to Audubon Circle. These each will require a planning board waiver.
3. DRB members unanimously believe the disposition of Lot 2, as shown on the preliminary plan, is an unfortunate maneuver to establish a fourth lot onto the residential compound. As depicted, the house on Lot 2 will sit within a significant portion of the existing front yard and will visually block the existing home as seen when traveling south along High Street. Homes along this portion of High Street are commonly stepped well back of the road. Consistent with the DRB review of the neighboring project at 46 High Street, the board strongly advocates that the planning board require relocation of this house lot out of the existing front yard. If it is not possible to creatively subdivide the property to reposition this house lot behind the existing home, the DRB recommends elimination of this house lot from the proposal.
4. It is noted that the existing home is currently utilized as a 4-family residential building. It is the DRB's understanding that a residential compound consists of no more than five single family house lots. The DRB recommends the proposed occupancy capacity of the existing home be confirmed by the proponent and suggest the planning board clarify whether a variance would need to be sought for this to be maintained as a multifamily residential building if the proponent intends to continue the existing use as a part of the residential compound.
5. The DRB notes very significant trees are presently located in the front yard of the existing property. Though the plans do not suggest the trees will be removed, there is a proposed stormwater management area set tight to these trees. Typical construction of a retainage pool requires significant regrading of the area immediate to the retainage pond. The DRB recommends the relocation of the stormwater management area away from these very significant shade trees that should be maintained.
6. The DRB members are in favor of maintaining the existing garage building should a waiver to do so be allowed. The garage structure is a part of the historical setting of the existing home on this property.
7. The DRB recommends and advocates, as a condition of subdivision approval, to prioritize the maintenance of as many mature trees as possible when new developments in Acton are approved. The DRB suggests the proponent be required to walk the land with a landscape architect or arborist to identify individual and stands of mature trees to be maintained in conjunction with the subdivision as proposed and that a tree protection plan be included with the set of drawings.

Respectfully submitted,

The DRB



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
Review Memorandum: 22 Elm Street
PCRC plans
September 1, 2020 Virtual Meeting

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), Holly Ben-Joseph, David Honn, and Dean Charter, (BOS Liaison), Robert Hummel Planning Department

Guests and potential members: Tom Doolittle, Richard Kelleher

Proponents in attendance: None

Documents Reviewed:

Page titles Site Plans dated June 15, 2020

The Residences at 22 Elm

1 of 10 Title Sheet

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The proponents are proposing to develop a planned conservation residential community at 22 Elm Street, currently a single family home with a horse corral at the front of the property along Elm Street. The rear of the property consists mainly of wetlands. A portion of the rear neighbor's lot was purchased in order to come into compliance of the PCRC regulations for percentage of upland vs wetland in the open space area. The plan is divided into three parcels – parcel C contains the residences, and parcel A and B contain the open space. The proposed plan has five new residences and the one existing residence. A new garage is proposed next to the existing residence. Access into the proposed public area is indicated to be at the terminus of Elm Court, a neighboring private drive. Some of the existing trees will remain, but other are not indicated on the plan, and some will be removed.

The DRB has the following comments:

1. The DRB questions how much the public will benefit from this project. The proposed open space is largely wetlands and appears to be inaccessible. It is an island of land surrounded by private

property. In addition, no paths or boardwalks are shown within the open space on the plan- how could anyone with mobility issues use the space?

2. Regarding access into the proposed public space, the DRB questions whether persons would be comfortable accessing the open space through Elm Court, a private drive as suggested on the plans. Will the Elm Court community agree to this access or will they block it off in the future?
3. The DRB suggests that if this project is accepted as a PCRC community, then access into the site should be ironclad. Therefore we recommend that access should be on the proposed development's land, along the west property line behind the houses. This could be accomplished by:
 - a. Moving the road to the east, essentially following the existing driveway's alignment,
 - b. Moving the line of homes to the east, providing for more space at the back of the homes so that a path can be added along the property line from Elm Street into the open space.
4. The project is located adjacent to typical subdivision found throughout Acton, with single family homes on large parcels. The proposed development is significantly more dense and the DRB is concerned about the visual impact to the neighborhood. The DRB suggests that the front residence at Elm Street be facing Elm Street, so that it reflects the orientation of the rest of the homes on the street.
5. In addition to orientation of the front home, the DRB suggests other elements be added along the frontage to help blend this development into the existing neighborhood. Ornamental fencing and layers of landscaping are highly recommended.
6. The DRB would like to know what is planned for the existing row of mature evergreens on the east side of the property, between the driveway and the neighbor's fence. These are not shown on any of the documents. Will they remain?
7. The DRB is concerned that because of the density and the front garages, the streetscape will be overwhelmed by garage doors. The DRB recommends that driveways be placed to the sides of the homes and be shared, and to locate the garages on the sides of the buildings. This was successfully done on a similar development on River Street. Providing usable front porches in place of garages along the street promotes a sense of community.
8. The proposed new garage is placed in an awkward location and is on a diagonal to the rest of the buildings. It is also at the end of the siteline of the street, the DRB suggests moving it to the west side of the existing home, aligned with the existing building and planting a specimen tree in this location.
9. The DRB believes the proposed footprints of the buildings are over-sized for proposed lot sizes and suggests reducing them.

Respectfully submitted,
The DRB