



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Meeting Minutes
July 12, 2023
7:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

Present: Peter Darlow, (Chair), David Honn, Holly Ben-Joseph, Richard Keleher, Tom Doolittle, Dean Charter (BOS Liaison)

Proponent in attendance: Leo Bertolami
Public Attending: None

Documents Reviewed: Drawing Sheets titled: Residential Design, 97 Great Road Acton, dated March 26, 2023, prepared by soulveplus and photos of existing building.

P0.1	Title Sheet and Notes
P1.1, P1.2	Existing 1 st Floor and Demolition Plan
P1.3, P1.4	Proposed 1 st Floor
P2.1, P2.2	Proposed 2 nd Floor
P3.1	Proposed Roof
P4.1, P4.2, P4.3, P4.4	Existing and Proposed Elevations
P5.1, P5.2, P5.3, P5.4 (3D)	Exterior Views

1. Opening

Chair, Peter Darlow opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

2. Regular Business

- A. Meeting Minutes:
No minutes were reviewed.

- B. Citizen's Concerns: None

3. Special Business

- A. Design review of proposed mixed-use building
We reviewed a proposal for mixed-use building titled 97 Great Road Acton. The proposal requests an enlargement to an existing small building. The proposal adds a second floor and expands the lower floor on three sides to the edges of a concrete platform that surrounds the space. The building is part of the Wetherbee Plaza site and Leo Bertolami stated that even with the additional proposed square footage, the overall site is still below the allotted FAR for zoning.



The building is surrounded by roads and parking with no landscape buffer between the building and the adjacent parking and road. The DRB found problems with the siting, the lack of a landscape buffer and issues with access into the house.

Refer to the attached document at the end of these minutes for the full DRB review.

4. Other Business

- A. Dean Charter updated the DRB on the progress of the Tree Preservation Bylaw, Site Alteration Bylaw and Land Clearing Bylaw proposals. Both proposals are on the BOS list of short term goals for 2023.

The redevelopment for Nagog Plaza. The developers are either keeping in place or relocating to a nearby building most of the existing buildings. A Subaru dealership will move into part of the space.

Gould's Plaza will remain retail at this point, with new tenants.

McManus Manor senior housing, (the Kennedy nursery site) is moving forward and will break ground soon.

Powder Mill Plaza, 40B housing, is slowly moving forward. If it does get started with construction, it will bring Acton to the 10% affordable housing required by the State.

4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
The DRB



**TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Review Memorandum: 97 Great Road Mixed Building Use Conversion
July 12, 2023

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), David Honn, Richard Keleher, Holly Ben-Joseph, Thomas Doolittle, and Dean Charter – Select Board liaison.

Proponent in attendance: Leo Bertolami

Documents Reviewed: Drawing Sheets titled: Residential Design, 99th Great Road Acton, dated March 26, 2023, prepared by soulveplus and photos of existing building.

P0.1	Title Sheet and Notes
P1.1, P1.2	Existing 1 st Floor and Demolition Plan
P1.3, P1.4	Proposed 1 st Floor
P2.1, P2.2	Proposed 2 nd Floor
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The proponent permitted and constructed a small 270SF one storey building during phase 1 of development for the Wetherbee plaza in anticipation of a bank leasing for an ATM use. In time, when it became evident that the intended use was not playing out, the proponent elected to use the building as a leasing office space.

The current proposal, requiring an updated site plan special permit from the SB₂ is to rebuild and expand the building to become an approximate 900 square foot two story mixed residential and office building. The proponent states they will be the future occupant of the expanded building with the intent to continue the use the lower level for a leasing office and to occasionally utilize the second floor bedroom level when a weather event knocks out power for an extended period of time at the proponent's nearby Pope Road primary residence.

The proposed footprint of the expanded building is approximately twice the floor area of the existing building. The southern face of the new building will remain where located presently. The eastern, western and northern building sides will relocate to the outer edges of the current building's concrete podium. The current podium is elevated to varying amounts above the surrounding pitched pavement and or vegetated site conditions. The second floor level is approximately 50% of the first floor level in area and is substantially held back on the east and west sides of the gabled roofline.

The proposed expanded building is designed in a style that reflects the neighboring brick veneered retail buildings within Wetherbee Plaza 1. The building exterior is proposed to be faced in brick veneer, with painted wood trimmed detailing and punched casement windows openings. The 45 degree gabled roof lines are to be finished with “architectural” asphalt shingles.

Following are comments/recommendations made by the DRB:

- DRB members are comfortable with the general building design direction presented.
- Discussion on the window style arrived at a unanimous consensus that for this building, the proposed punched casement windows are an appropriate style.
- A proposed attic dormer on the north facing gable roof would be better to be finished in painted wood rather than the suggested brick veneer.
- The proposed chimney should be raised higher in relation to the upper ridge line, it presently proportionally low to the building height and likely not code compliant.
- The building as designed does not relate to the immediate surrounding topography of the site. The building appears to be designed as if placed on a relatively flat site, it is not. The north side of the building drops off approximately 30” from the first floor level. The east and west exterior sides have a pitched relation between the grade and the first floor. The DRB recommends the proponent request the design architect to assess and propose how to connect the building with the surrounding topography.
- Given two plus sides of the existing concrete podium upon which the building is to be constructed are raised above the surrounding grade, it is suggested to consider facing the concrete walls below the first floor level with stone.
- Given the building is surrounded by pavement and vehicular traffic on three out of four sides and due to the existing traffic patterns, DRB members believe the proposed “front door” at the south west corner is a potential safety concern. Various locations were discussed for a pedestrian door placement. The board recommendation is for the north facing door to be considered for the main entrance.
- In order for the north facing entrance to reach natural grade steps have been proposed. DRB members recommend that the pair of stacked parking spaces immediately adjacent to the north side of the concrete podium be converted to a small landscaped yard that will allow for a proper pedestrian access to the steps required, will offer some natural pervious landscape opportunity for the enlarged building, and should the property be utilized as a residence at any point, will provide a modest outdoor opportunity for the occupant.
- DRB members and the proponent discussed a return visit to review how the building’s relation to the immediate surrounding grades is proposed to be resolved once the select board has weighed in on the proponent’s request for an amended special permit to allow for the building alteration.

Respectfully submitted,

The DRB