



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