



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
Review Memorandum: 67 Powder Mill Road

November 30, 2020 Virtual Meeting

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

Proponents in attendance: Molly Obendorf with Stamski and McNary, and Sven Heistad with Boston Design Partners

Documents Reviewed:

New Mixed Use Property For 67 Powder Mill Road dated May 01, 2020 prepared by Boston Design Partners.

Page titles:

C-1 Cover Sheet

C-2 Notes Page

PR-1 Proposed Elevations 1

PR-2 Proposed Elevations 2

PR-3 Proposed Sub Basement and Basement

PR-4 Proposed First Floor and Second Floor

Site Plan for 67 Powder Mill Road dated August 20, 2020 prepared by Stamski and McNary

Page titles:

Sheet 1 Cover Sheet

Sheet 2 Existing Conditions Plan

Sheet 3 Grading & Drainage Plan

Sheet 4 Layout Plan

Sheet 5 Construction Details

Sheet 6 Erosion and Sedimentation Plan

Sheet 7 Landscape Plan

It is proposed by the project proponents to develop an approximate 6000SF four story mixed use building comprised of four 1100 to 1500SF residential units and one 800SF office suite. The building is to be located on a steeply sloped portion of a uniquely 'L' shaped site where only a modest upland level section of the

property is suitable for development. The buildable portion of the site is accessed from Sudbury Road via a right of way through a neighboring property's parking lot.

DRB comments regarding site work as proposed:

1. The area of the site to be cleared for construction of the building and associated parking and arrival is necessarily limited by the available buildable terrain. However, a significant portion of the hillside will be heavily altered to establish the large quantity of foundation and retaining walls that are proposed to be constructed. Little visual information is provided regarding retaining wall design, other than as noted in plan form. The DRB would like to see the detailing of the retaining walls given these will establish a very significant portion of the visual impact of this development. As well, many of the retaining walls, by code, will require 42" high safety railing systems, adding to their visual importance to the project.
2. Members questioned how a fire truck can turn around within the available paved area in front of the building entrance. Molly Obendorf explained that this should be feasible. DRB members asked for a graphic illustration.
3. Egress from the sub basement level residential unit will be via an exterior door out to a level area at the "bottom" of the developed hillside. DRB members would like to see how an egress stairway will be built into the hillside to bring the egress path up to the right of way to comply with the building code for ending a means of egress path at a public way.
4. Other than the level area outside of the residential building located at the subbasement, no other outside area has been set aside for the residents. Sven Heistad suggested some areas may be able to be established on the terraces between the retaining walls. This needs development. The DRB would like to see how this is developed.
5. The site will be accessed through the senior center's parking lot. The DRB wondered about the compatibility of using a parking lot, especially one for senior's, as a driveway for a multi-use building. In addition, the proposed location of the building puzzled the DRB since it not only has an awkward access, but that it is isolated from walkable amenities. The question is how much does Acton need this housing and if it is fulfilling a housing need.

DRB comments regarding the building design as proposed:

6. The four residential units and the office suite are individually entered from grade via five entrance porches. Three of the five porches are clustered at the center of the building facing the parking lot. The proponent wants the central entrance cluster to add some visual impact to the building that is otherwise proposed to be wrapped with conventional residential scaled clapboard and trim detailing, and thus has shown a brick veneered entrance appendage. DRB members recommended to stay true to the use of clapboards and trim detailing throughout but to enhance the entrance porch details with more refined column and railing systems and to use larger scaled trim throughout to offer a higher level of finish.
7. As noted above, the retaining walls flanking the proposed building will be an important visual of the total built environment. It is recommended by the DRB to utilize a guardrail detail on top of the walls that is consistent with railing detailing used at the entrance porches.

8. No windows are shown on either end of the 4 story building. The floor plan layouts will benefit from cross ventilation with windows on the ends and the building overall will feel more rich with windows on all sides.
9. Given the lack of ground level space for outdoor activities for residents of the property, DRB member David Honn suggested introducing cantilevered decks on the north facing side of the four story building which will offer some outdoor opportunity for the residential units on the upper floors as well as add significant visual improvement to the otherwise four floor high flat wall surface.

The DRB recommends the BOS consider as a condition of approval to have the project proponents return should the project be allowed to proceed given there is much design development of the site and building not yet established. What may be constructed will more than likely be quite different from what is currently being presented and therefore the DRB believes the town should be provided with an opportunity to fully understand the development prior to granting a permit to proceed.

Respectfully submitted,

The DRB