



TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
Review Memorandum: 22 Elm Street - Second Review
PCRC plans
November 30, 2020 Virtual Meeting

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

Proponents in attendance: None

Documents Reviewed:

Page titles Site Plans dated November 6, 2020

The Residences at 22 Elm

C1.1 Master Plan

C1.3 Existing Conditions

C2.0 Site Development Plan

In reviewing the November 6, 2020 submittal drawings, the DRB does not see any significant changes from the 9-08-2020 drawings. It appears none of the DRB's suggested changes in our last design memo were incorporated into the revised drawings. Therefore, the comments from the first review are still applicable, please refer to the attached first review.

The DRB would like to reiterate the following comments:

- The proposed PCRC development does not follow the intent of the PCRC bylaw since the land proposed to be preserved is wetlands, which would not be developable in a typical subdivision proposal. The PCRC as proposed doesn't provide any additional open-space protection than what would be allowed under sub-division regulations. The proponent, on the other hand, is gaining a benefit – a higher density development and therefore a greater profit. The PCRC development is showing 6 units, if not a PCRC then approximately 3 houses could fit into the area of the property that is suitable for building per standard subdivision setbacks, (which also should takes into account the area required for a standard subdivision roadway and turn around), as per subdivision rules.
- A residential compound is allowed a maximum of 5 houses where a private common drive is allowed, (such as was approved for 46 High Street). The DRB doesn't understand why this project

be granted a waiver on this, especially since we think the massing is too dense and the houses are oversized for the neighborhood.

- The PCRC bylaw states the development has to fit within the surrounding community, the proposed housing units appear to be 3,000 + SF which is substantially larger than the surrounding homes. In addition, the density is significantly higher. The massing and size of the units do not blend into the scale of the neighborhood.
- At this review, the DRB cannot support this proposal because we need more information. No floor plans or elevations have been provided, which is a key tool to evaluate the image of the project, and the impact on the surrounding community. The DRB requests that the proponent provide architectural plans and elevations and 3-D renderings of the proposed development, including the surrounding neighborhood. (3-D renderings are now a standard graphic tool used by architects and planners as is graphically placing a proposed development into an existing area).

Respectfully submitted,
The DRB



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

Note: revised text in italics.

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

2 of 10 Master Plan

3 of 10 Record Plan

4 of 10 Natural Features & Existing Conditions Plan

5 of 10 Site Development Plan

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 *unbuildable* 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 accessing the open space through Elm Court a private drive as suggested on the plans. *The DRB understands that a PCRC's open space set aside requires access to a public way, in this case Elm Street. Elm Court is a private drive which fails to meet this PCRC requirement. Residents on a private drive should not be subjected to public use of their drive in order to satisfy an adjacent property owner's development proposal nor should the public be made to feel uncomfortable while attempting to access the open space.* DRB members questioned if the Elm Court residents have agreed 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