



Oak Consulting Group

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

Village at Bailey's Pond

Amesbury, MA

(Submitted with Application for Modified Site Plan Approval)

October 2015

The applicant is applying for a Modified Site Plan Approval for a significantly revised project design for its Village at Bailey's Pond project. This overview contains the following sections:

- Existing Conditions – Summarizing existing conditions at the Property
- 2015 Project Overview – Summarizing the project in its currently proposed configuration.
- Project History – Focusing on the primary design revisions presented during the Planning Board's previous Site Plan Review process during the 2010-2013 site plan review process and summarizing the project revisions reflected in the 2015 Site Plans now being submitted to the Planning Board.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Current site conditions have been extensively documented through the previous Planning Board and Conservation Commission proceedings. The +/- 26 acre project site, owned by the City of Amesbury, is bounded by Bailey's Pond to the east, residential areas to the north and east, Route 150 and the former truck stop property to the south and Summit Avenue and Interstate-495 (I-495) to the west. Portions of the Property are now well vegetated. However, the majority of the Property consists of weedy brush and invasive species and includes areas of exposed substrate and other degraded conditions due to the extensive historical gravel mining that occurred at the Property and more recent dumping and motorized use of trails within the Property.

The site is bisected by a culverted stream that daylights on the north edge of the property adjacent to Summit Avenue. The site slopes steeply down from Route 150 and Summit Avenue with a 30 to 50 foot change in elevation and flattens to a more moderate slope across the bottom of the site. Drainage outlets contribute off-site drainage to the project area and the pond without detention or retention areas, contributing to significant erosion, undercutting of headwalls, and discharge of sediment to Bailey's Pond. In addition to its past use as a gravel pit, much of the site has been used as a dumping ground with tires and miscellaneous trash located throughout the site.

See the Stormwater Management Study submitted with the application for additional details related to existing conditions.

2015 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The applicant's currently proposed project consists of a 100-unit residential development (26 buildings) with associated infrastructure, including new utilities, access drives, sidewalks, drainage controls, lighting and landscaping. A cluster of 6 buildings is proposed within the northern portion of the Property. 20 buildings are proposed in the southern portion of the Property. A perennial stream and Riverfront Area bisect the two development areas. Key aspects of the project are summarized below:

Roadways and Sidewalks

The southern pod has primary access off of Route 150 with emergency access from Beacon Street. The main entrance into the site is designed as a boulevard-like entrance with a landscape strip dividing the entering and exiting lanes to create a more aesthetically pleasing gateway to the development. The driveway from Beacon Street was originally proposed as full access. However, in response to concerns expressed by the Planning Board about traffic on Beacon Street, this drive is proposed to be gated and limited to emergency use only.

The main entrance to the southern pod is designed with a 26' overall pavement width with a sidewalk along the western side. A 4-foot pedestrian shoulder will be demarcated with stamped pavement along the eastern edge of the driveway to allow for pedestrian use while also providing additional pavement width for emergency vehicles. The driveway through the main portion of the southern pod is designed with a pavement width of 24 feet with sidewalks on both sides.

The northern pod is served by a short cul-de-sac off of Summit Avenue approximately 900 feet from its intersection with Route 150. The northern pod driveway is designed with a 24' pavement width and a sidewalk along the eastern side. This sidewalk will connect to a new sidewalk from the site drive, along Summit Avenue to Route 150. To deter right-hand turns by vehicles exiting the northern pod (in response to concerns expressed by residents), this drive has been angled with a minimum right hand turn radius and "No Right Turn" signage at its exit point.

The roadway and sidewalk designs throughout the project will help to maximize pedestrian circulation throughout the site while still maintaining sufficient emergency access and minimizing the project footprint.

Trails and Public Access

The site has several trails that have been historically used by local residents for passive and motorized recreation. The project has been designed to incorporate portions of these trails and new trail sections along the perimeter of the pond to maintain public access for passive recreation along the pond perimeter throughout the project area.

Open Space and Protection of Natural Resources

The project has been designed to minimize areas of disturbance, use of impervious surfaces, and adverse impacts. The project has been designed to maintain mature tree growth to the extent practicable and to minimize impacts to the more valuable wetland buffer zone areas and the Riverfront Area. No buildings are proposed within the Riverfront Area. The project proposes approximately 7 acres of impervious area, resulting in approximately 19 acres or 73% of open space where 50% is required. Additionally, of the +/- 26 acres of total area on site, +/-18 are contained within the development envelope leaving +/-8 acres or 30% of the site left as unaltered preserved natural areas. Large open grassed areas have been incorporated into the design to provide usable open space throughout the Project area.

The project has also been designed to preserve a minimum 40' natural vegetative buffer between the project and abutting residential properties. Additionally, the developed areas are at least 15 feet below the surrounding street elevations and 40 feet below the street elevation opposite abutters on Summit Avenue. The elevation differences, together with existing vegetation to remain, will aid in minimizing visual impacts.

Village at Bailey's Pond Project Narrative

The project also requires an Order of Conditions from the Amesbury Conservation Commission, which will review the Project as related to the protection of the wetland resource areas on the Property. The applicant expects to commence that process shortly.

Slopes

The project has been redesigned to better accommodate the existing steep slopes at the Property, to concentrate development in the lower, flatter portions of the Property, and to eliminate the need for maintenance of the previously-proposed 1:1 slopes. With respect to the northern "pod" in particular, that portion of the project was redesigned as a cul-de-sac and the number of buildings was reduced from 9 to 6 to shrink the development footprint and to minimize clearing and use of retaining walls. The former mining activities on the site have left steep slopes around the entire perimeter of the site, requiring tiered retaining walls, with associated landscaping, in limited areas of the project.

Building Styles

The proposed buildings have been redesigned to reflect a more traditional town house style with horizontal linear siding, asphalt shingles and gabled roof features. The building designs throughout the project will vary from building to building by the mixing of different floor plans. Building locations are also staggered and offset to the extent practicable. However, the positioning of buildings is constrained by site features and has been designed in manner that also accommodates the goals of minimizing land disturbance and the need for steep slopes and retaining walls.

Garages for some buildings were placed on the side of the unit. The applicant understands the Board's preference for locating garages on the side of units, rather than the front. However, garages at the side of units require a substantial amount of space to accommodate the garage and driveway with the appropriate amount of room to maneuver a vehicle. Due to the site topography and linear nature of the site, side garages are not feasible for most units.

Parking

The Zoning Bylaw requires 1.5 parking spaces per unit. A majority of the proposed units in this project will have 4 parking spaces – two side by side interior garage spaces and two side by side outdoor spaces. Units not having two garage spaces will have 3 parking spaces – a single garage with two side by side outdoor spaces.

Stormwater Management

The stormwater management system combines "country drainage" with infiltration basins to provide a high level of stormwater treatment and groundwater recharge. The proposed drainage system not only manages stormwater generated on site, but will also capture existing piped stormwater discharges currently coming on to the site at four different locations. The stormwater management system is described in detail in the Stormwater Management Study submitted with this application. As demonstrated in that study, the system has been designed to meet all applicable regulatory requirements and will result in improvements over existing conditions.

Village at Bailey's Pond
Project Narrative

Utilities

The project proposes to connect to existing municipal water and sewer systems in the adjacent streets. The proposed water system will create a new looped system by connecting to the existing dead end main in Summit Avenue, continuing that main through the northern pod and then into the southern pod, which will be connected to the water mains in Beacon Street and Route 150. A new sewer pump station will be located in the southern pod and be fed by gravity from the northern and southern pods. A force main from this pump station will connect to the existing gravity sewer in Beacon Street. The City previously marketed this Property as being suitable for a 200-unit multifamily development, specifically representing that there is sufficient sewer capacity for a 200-unit development (400 bedrooms) – significantly more than currently proposed. The applicant will review the proposed Project with the City Engineer to ensure that there will be no excessive demand on the City services or infrastructure.

PROJECT HISTORY

Permitting for the Village at Bailey's Pond began in summer of 2004, before the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. The original proposal was for 176 units. This design involved some land disturbance within the 25' buffer to the wetlands and also buildings and retaining walls along the waterfront within 50' of the pond. The original project plans also proposed large retaining walls and stormwater detention structures in the Riverfront Area. After months of permitting, the project was delayed indefinitely in 2005 due to contractual issues with the purchase of the land from the City. Those contractual issues were resolved in 2010. The project layout and design were revised and submitted to the Planning Board and Conservation Commission in the spring of 2010. The new design was based on comments received during review of the original project from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Staff, as well as a development layout prepared by Dodson Associates, a consultant working for the City. Dodson Associates prepared two concept plans yielding 124 units and 150 units with winding drives from Summit Ave, Route 150 and Beacon Street.

PROPOSED PROJECT 2010

The project designed and presented in 2010 made the following changes from the original project:

- Total units were reduced from 176 to 148 units (removed 28 units, 7 buildings).
- Removed all disturbed area within the 25' buffer to the pond and wetlands.
- Removed all buildings from the 50' buffer to the pond and wetlands.
- Removed all retaining walls and stormwater detention basins from the Riverfront Area.
- The stormwater management system was redesigned using low impact techniques to maximize the effectiveness of the stormwater treatment and infiltration and minimize the use of large surface detention basins.
- The building groups and roadway layout were revised to mimic Dodson Concept 1 using dead-end drives and cul-de-sacs.

During review of the project, several issues or concerns were raised by the Board. These included:

1. *Site Circulation, dead end drives: The Board was concerned about dead end drives serving multiple buildings and requested that the circulation around the site be reexamined.*

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2. *Traffic onto Summit from northern pod: The Board and abutters were concerned that traffic exiting the northern pod would turn right and proceed down Summit Ave and Swetts Hill rather than travel out to Rt. 150.*
3. *Traffic entering and exiting the site via Beacon Street: The Board and abutters were concerned that traffic entering and exiting the site via Beacon Street would create traffic issues on Beacon Street and that this access point did not have ideal site lines for safety.*
4. *Lack of continuous open space, gathering areas: The Board was concerned that there was not enough continuous open space or usable gathering areas.*
5. *Removal of existing mature trees on Route 150: The Board was concerned with the removal of existing mature trees on the southern side of the site along Route 150. This area was to be developed for a model home with direct access to and from Route 150.*
6. *Backing out onto main drives: The Board was concerned with vehicles having to back from the driveways onto the main access drives of the site.*
7. *Small bioretention areas will be difficult to maintain: The Board was concerned that the many small bioretention areas proposed would be difficult to maintain and would eventually fail from lack of maintenance.*

During the fall and winter of 2010, the applicant reviewed multiple scenarios for the site to address those concerns. A revised plan was presented to the Board in June of 2011. The Board requested some additional information on the current plan and added some suggestions regarding the layout of the site. Additional discussions with and comments from City Staff encouraged the use of alternative design techniques to minimize the amount of impervious area at the site. The proposed project layout was revised based on those comments and resubmitted July of 2011. After review and discussion of the plan with the Planning Board it was determined that the proposed unit density was appropriate for the site and that the project should move forward with fully engineered drawings.

PROPOSED PROJECT 2011

The project designed and submitted in the fall of 2011 made the following changes from the 2010 plan:

- Total units were reduced from 148 to 136 units (removed 12 units, 3 buildings).
- The site layout was revised to provide a looped driveway eliminating dead ends serving more than 4 units. This layout also eliminated the need for vehicles to back out onto the main access drive.
- The proposed driveway layout enabled more of a tiered site which better allowed use of the existing steep slopes. As a result the amount of walls needed along the perimeter of the site was significantly reduced.
- The proposed roadway width was reduced from 26' to 22' (with 4' flush pedestrian shoulder) to provide more pedestrian circulation as well as reduce the overall impervious area. Either a sidewalk with landscape strip or flush pedestrian way was provided each side of the project drives. Overall impervious area on the site was reduced by approximately 4,400 sf.

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- The main entrance into the site was revised to provide a boulevard-like entrance with a landscape strip dividing the entering and exit lanes to create a more aesthetically pleasing gateway to the Project.
- The proposed layout provided for continuous open space throughout the site. The loop road and continuous open space through the middle of the site provided more of a neighborhood feel
- The proposed buildings were staggered and offset more to provide more clear view lines between the tiers of the site.
- The use of curbing was minimized to allow more "country drainage" and minimizing the need for excessive catchbasins and stormwater structures. Additionally, the stormwater management system was redesigned to use fewer larger bioretention basins which will be easier to maintain but also still provided a high level of stormwater treatment and groundwater recharge.
- A gazebo structure adjacent to a 3,000 sf (+/-60'x50') open area was added to provide a community gathering area.
- The drive to the northern pod was angled to deter a right hand movement exiting the site. Additional signage was added indicating "No Right Turn."
- The access drive from Beacon Street was gated to be used as emergency access only.
- The building previously planned at the south end of the site on Route 150 was removed to preserve the existing mature stand of trees.

This plan was reviewed in the fall of 2012 by the City's Peer Review Engineer, BSC Group, who offered several comments on the layout and design of the project. The plan was further revised in response to these comments.

PROPOSED PROJECT 2012

The project redesign made the following changes from the 2011 plan:

- The layout of the north pod was revised to minimize the disturbance of mature growth in the northern portion of the site. The building proposed in the northern corner of the site was relocated and tiered retaining walls in this area were removed.
- In the place of the tiered retaining walls, a single 6 foot high wall was proposed followed by a reinforced 1:1 vegetated slope. The vegetated slope would be seeded with a wildflower seed mix and left in a natural state. This change would also preserve at least a 30' natural buffer at the northern end of the site between site and the closest abutters on Summit Avenue.
- The Peer Review of the wetlands resource areas required revision to the Riverfront Area on the project. This was due to beaver activity in the stream bisecting the site which has caused elevated water levels and alteration of the riverfront since the area was first delineated in 2010. As a result, Building 10 was moved to keep the building outside of the first 100' of Riverfront Area.

In November 2013, the Planning Board conditionally approved the project consisting of 34 buildings and 136 units. In the approval the planning board placed several conditions on the project, many revolving around the building architecture and use of a proposed engineered 1:1 slope in the northern portion of the project. The applicant has appealed the Board's previous approval.

PROPOSED PROJECT 2015

Since the Board's 2013 approval, the applicant has been involved in discussions with City representatives regarding possible alternatives to the approved project that would mitigate many of the concerns and conditions of the Board's approval. As a result of these discussions, the applicant has designed a significantly modified project, with different building types a revised site layout. Below is a brief description of the most significant changes since the version of the project approved in the Board's 2013 decision:

- Total units were reduced from 136 to 100; total buildings were reduced from 34 to 26.
- The small northern pod portion of the project was redesigned as a cul-de-sac and the number of buildings was reduced from 9 to 6 – to minimize required roadway pavement, shrink the development footprint, eliminate the need for previously-proposed 1:1 slopes, and preserve more of the existing natural buffer.
- The proposed buildings were redesigned to a more traditional town house style with a variety of floor plans. The different floor plans were mixed to produce a variety of building styles.
- A sidewalk was added along Summit Avenue to increase pedestrian circulation and safety.
- The proposed units will be three bedrooms instead of two bedrooms.
- The total linear footage of proposed roadway was reduced by +/-1,450 feet, from +/-4,160 feet to only +/-2,710 feet.
- The overall proposed impervious area was reduced by approximately 1.68 acres, from 375,884 sf to 302,600 sf.
- A majority of proposed units will have two side by side interior garage spaces and two outdoor spaces. Units not having two garage spaces have a single garage with two outdoor spaces.
- More usable common open space was added.
- All proposed buildings were moved outside of the 200' Riverfront Area.

The current project design reflects the applicant's efforts to minimize impervious area on the site, maximize the infiltration of stormwater on-site, minimize the impact on natural features, and provide a safe and desirable residential community consistent with the design guidelines of the City of Amesbury.

