OCG

Oak Consulting Group

Village at Bailey's Pond
Project Narrative

The applicant for the Village at Bailey's Pond has developed the following project narrative. The purpose of this narrative is to describe how the proposed project meets the approval criteria set forth in the bylaw and to describe the changes made to the plans during the Planning Board review process.

Per Section XI.C.7 of the Bylaw, "In reviewing and evaluating the Site Plan, and in making a final determination regarding Site Plan approval, the Planning Board shall consider the following criteria:". The following is a list of the approval criteria and a brief description of how the project meets these criteria (*in italic*):

1. The Site Plan complies with the Development and Performance Standards contained in Subsection 8.

   The project has been designed per the Amesbury Development and Performance Standards. Waivers from these standards have been requested regarding certain aspects of the design in order to allow the project to better adapt to the surroundings.

2. The Site Plan minimizes traffic and safety impacts of the proposed development on adjacent highways or roads, and maximizes the convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement with the site.

   A comprehensive traffic study was completed for the project which concluded the project would pose no safety concerns or significant impacts to the local and surrounding roadways. Pedestrian circulation is provided around the site with dedicated sidewalks and the roadways have been designed with smaller centerline radii to promote slower vehicle speeds.

3. The proposed development, to the extent feasible:

   a) is integrated into the existing landscape;

   The project has been designed in a tiered fashion to better accommodate the existing steep slopes.

   b) minimizes adverse environmental impacts on such features as wetlands, floodplains, and aquifer recharge areas;

   The project has been designed to develop areas outside of the floodplain and identified wetlands. The project stormwater management has been designed to help protect wetlands areas and the floodplain by maximizing the use of infiltration of stormwater so that post development rates and volumes of runoff will be less than the runoff from the site in its current state. The proposed infiltration of treated stormwater will also help to recharge the local aquifer.

   c) minimizes obstruction of scenic views from publicly accessible locations;

   The project has been designed with a nature trail along the scenic area of Bailey's Pond which will be available for use by the public. Proposed buildings have been setback at least 50' from the edge of the pond.

d) preserves unique natural or historical features;

No unique natural or historic features have been identified by the project has been designed to maintain mature tree growth to the extent practical.

e) minimizes tree, vegetation and soil removal and grade changes;

The project has been designed in a tiered fashion to better accommodate the existing steep slopes. In lieu of the use of series of tiered retaining wall systems, retaining walls along the perimeter of the project will be limited to a single 6' high wall with a vegetative reinforced slope above. The slope will be vegetated with a wildflower seed mix and left to grow in a natural state. All soil on-site is anticipated to be reused on site.

f) maximizes open space retention;

Open space has been maximized by containing the development into two separate development areas. Of the +/-26 acres of total area on site on +/-17 are contained within the development envelope leaving +/-9 acres or 35% of the site left as unaltered open space.

g) screens objectionable features from neighboring properties and roadway; and

The project has been designed preserving a minimum 30' natural vegetative buffer between the project and abutting properties. Additionally the developed areas are at 17 feet below the surrounding street elevations and 35' below the street elevation opposite abutters on Summit Ave. The elevation differences with aid in minimizing visual impacts.

h) minimizes noise and odors associated with commercial/industrial activities.

There is no commercial or industrial activity proposed for the site.

4. The architectural design of the proposed development is in harmony with the vernacular architecture of the City.

   The proposed buildings have been designed with horizontal linear siding, asphalt shingles and gabled roof features. Additional architectural features include a slight cantilevered second floor, projecting bay windows, and an irregular footprint which serve to break up the massing of the buildings. These features are consistent with residential architecture in the areas surrounding the Project.

5. The proposed development is served with adequate water supply and waste disposal systems and will not place excessive demands on City services and infrastructure.

   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.

6. The Site Plan shows or includes adequate measures to prevent pollution of surface or groundwater, to minimize erosion and sediments, and to prevent changes in groundwater levels, increased run-off and potential for flooding.

The project stormwater management system has been designed to control runoff by maximizing the use of infiltration of stormwater so that post development rates and volumes of runoff will be less than the runoff from the site in its current state thereby eliminating the potential for flooding caused by the project. The proposed infiltration of treated stormwater will also help to recharge the local aquifer. The plan includes measures to control runoff and erosion both during and after construction with the use of temporary measures such as slope stabilization, sedimentation barriers and seeding. Post construction methods include deep sump catchbasins, bio-retention basins, and stormwater infiltration chambers.

As shown above the proposed project meets the criteria for approval by the planning Board. In addition, below is a brief chronology of the project which highlights changes made to the plan in response to comments received from the Board, Staff and review consultants.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Permitting for the Village at Bailey's Pond began in summer of 2004. The project was being reviewed concurrently by the Commission and Planning Board into January 2005. The original proposed project in 2004 was designed for 176 units. This design proposed disturbing land within the 25' buffer to the wetlands and proposed 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.

These issues were resolved in 2010 and the project was ready to move forward. The project layout and design was revised and submitted to the City in the spring of 2010. This new design was based on comments received during review of the original project from the City Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Staff, as well as a master plan layout performed 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 River Front 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 was revised to mimic Dodson Concept 1 using dead-end drives and cul-de-sac's.

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.*

2. *Traffic onto Summit from North "pod': The Board and abutters were concerned with 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 with 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 of the site to address these concerns. A revised plan was presented to the Board in June of 2011. The Board requested some additional information on the current plan as well as 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 to 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 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 of 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 3' 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.

- 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 "North Pod" was straightened 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 has been 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 has been 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 has been relocated and tiered retaining walls in this area have been removed.
- In the place of the tiered retaining walls, a single 6 foot high wall is proposed followed by a reinforced 1:1 vegetated slope. The vegetated slope will be seeded with a wildflower seed mix and left in a natural state. This change will 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 100' from the revised Riverfront.

As demonstrated by this chronology, the applicant has been responsive to the concerns of the Board and the project has significantly evolved to address these concerns. Steps have been taken in the design process to minimize impervious area on the site, maximize the infiltration of stormwater on-site, minimize the impact on natural features, as well as provide a safe and desirable residential community consistent with the design guidelines of the City of Amesbury.