



TOWN OF ACTON DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Review Memorandum: 40 High Street
Fairy Place Definitive Subdivision – Option B
May 16, 2024

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow, (Chair), Holly Ben-Joseph, Tom Doolittle, and Jon Capetta, PB Liaison

Proponent representative in attendance:
Robert Melvin, Stamski & McNary Inc.

Documents reviewed:

Fairy Place Subdivision Plan Concept B – Colored Copy Dated May 7, 2024
Prepared by Stamski and McNary, Inc.

The proponents for a proposed 2.5-acre residential compound located on a sloped site at 40 High Street, comprised of 3 new single-family lots and an existing 4-unit apartment building on a 4th lot, have prepared an alternative subdivision layout, Plan B, in response to GCG Associates' peer review comments concerning the previously submitted definitive subdivision plans for Fairy Place, (Plan A). The alternative plan is in response to the request that additional mitigation specific to water retention be included within the residential compound. The alternative plan B locates the 3 proposed new dwellings onto the east half of the site "behind" the existing 4 apartment building and shifts the proposed new private roadway towards the northerly boundary of the tract to reduce the quantity of impervious surfaces near High Street and to allow for the increased scale of water retention near to High Street. Additionally, the water retention basin on the eastern end of the site is increased in scale to address the additional impervious surfaces that have been shifted to this portion of the development. The alternative subdivision plan results in the creation of some less than conventional house lots and leads to the removal of most all trees extant on the site due to the significant quantity of sitework needed to accommodate the dwelling septic systems, the new road structure, and the enlarged water retention systems.

Understanding the town's and neighborhood's concerns for managing water runoff in light of the increasing scale of rainstorms and the water runoff difficulties resulting from the development of the very similar adjacent 2.5 acre 4 house lot subdivision at 46 High Street, the DRB offer the following observations concerning Plan B should this be the direction taken:

- Whereas in Plan A several significant mature trees are to be maintained and a section of the woods along the southeastern portion of the land tract is to be left untouched, in Plan B it is quite likely that most all of the existing 2.5 acres within the 40 High Street tract will be essentially clear cut. The outcome could visually be very similar to the current barren looking 46 High Street subdivision. Given this, the DRB

advocates that at minimum a condition of approval be to ask for trees to be planted along the proposed new road consistent with the requirement for new trees as cited in section 9.8 of the Subdivision Rules and Regulations.

- Additional to new tree planting, there appears to be an opportunity to maintain a handful of mature trees near the existing 4 apartment building with some careful planning to minimize grade changes near the noted trees. Namely the 42" Maple immediately in front and just to the south of the existing 4 apartment building and the 14" Elm and pair of 16" Maples just to the rear and slightly north of the existing building. The DRB encourages an effort be made to protect these trees, utilizing a tree wall or tree well if necessary, as a condition of approval.
- The reorganization of the site per Plan B has shifted one dwelling position from the northwest corner adjacent to High Street to the opposite end of the site on the northeast corner. DRB members had preferred the position of the dwelling on the northwest corner as this continues the historic rhythm of dwellings sited in close proximity to the street along the length of High Street.
- Proposed lot 4 in Plan B runs the full length of the land tract on the northern boundary. It is the latest example of an extreme manipulation of a lot shape allowed per the current zoning code for residential lots. Due to the unusual linear lot shape the dwelling and the leaching field will be located approximately 400 ft apart requiring a significant septic infrastructure.
- The east facing yards of the dwellings proposed for Lots 3 and 4 will be notably constrained by the large retainage basin proposed to absorb water runoff at the east end of the development.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Darlow, for the DRB