



Stantec Consulting Services Inc.
226 Causeway Street, 6th Floor, Boston MA 02114-2171

October 17, 2014

Attention: Mr. Jesse Geller
Chairman Brookline Board of Appeals
Town Hall
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Reference: Planning Board response to the Brookline ZBA regarding the proposed Residences at South Brookline Development project

We have reviewed the comment letter from the Brookline Planning Board for the above referenced project. We believe there are a number of inaccuracies and misunderstandings in the Board's response and we felt it was important to provide this response to you and your Board to clarify issues and to provide our response to the suggestions made. The comments from the Planning Board are listed below in normal text with our response provided in italics:

Most egregious is the location of the massive apartment building. The proposed use is incongruous with the existing context of multi-family townhouses and single-family homes. At 500 feet long on its South facade and with shallow setbacks inadequately proportioned to its overwhelming massing, the building is out of scale with the surrounding two-story housing. The degree of puddingstone excavation required at one of the highest elevations of the site underscores how inappropriate this location is for the development.

We believe that the location of the larger building nestled into the puddingstone and addressing the curved nature of the existing extension of Asheville Road is the best location to introduce a larger building on the site. The parking is set into the grade and the building interacts with the existing Townhome units that are accessed from Thornton Road in a way that minimizes the visual impact from that side of the property. As you know we have been engaged with the working group set up by your Board and have made significant changes to that building already to improve the design and we will continue to work with the group to minimize the impact of the building from Asheville Road and the abutters on Russet Road. We also reject the argument that the site is not appropriate for a large apartment building. In our presentations to the Board, we have also provided numerous examples of large apartment buildings located in Brookline that are located in very close proximity to single family housing.

Siting the apartment building on another location on the Hancock Village property, with direct access to primary roadways, or creating two or more moderate scale buildings rather than one massive one, would produce a better plan. One such alternative location, in the southwest corner of the site in Brookline, with better vehicular access, could certainly accommodate a multifamily building of reasonable size.

Design with community in mind



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We have provided information to the Board indicating why we believe development on other areas of the Hancock Village site including the specific area indicated above would create additional zoning nonconformities which would trigger additional permitting requirement outside of the Comprehensive Permit process. The site in question would also require the demolition of a number of existing units to which combined with the affordability requirements of Chapter 40B the Comprehensive permit would result in a significantly larger building which would have similar impacts to the existing Hancock Village that the Planning Board seems concerned about.

However, we acknowledge the constraints imposed by Chapter 40B and, within that context, are providing the following comments:

- A. The Applicant should submit the following materials to the ZBA before the next hearing on October 20, 2014:
 1. Provide site sections for this iteration of the plan that show the degree of excavation and re-grading at the apartment building; show sections at the widest depth of each of the building's three segments and in relation to existing Hancock Village housing. Provide site sections at the East elevation in relation to Asheville Road-Russett Road properties.
 2. Provide the relative size of tree calipers on the tree survey on the landscape plans to indicate how many existing mature trees will be preserved.

We have submitted a number of sections as well as simulations and elevations that depict the project and the impact on excavation and grading. Not all of this material was presented to the Planning Board during their review. We have provided plans indicating the location and size of significant trees being preserved.

B. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the following conditions are recommended:

1. Considering the proximity of the site to abutters and the amount of blasting expected, the Town should consult with a blasting expert, at the expense of the Applicant, to review the plans when they are final to minimize damage to abutting properties and vulnerable gas lines.
 2. Provide more developed plans that show how the exhaust system for the underground garage will work.
 3. Manage parking assignments in the apartment building's underground garage to reduce the amount of traffic that would be generated by drivers exiting and re-entering the garage to find parking. At a ratio of below 1.0, the number of parking spaces serving the mid-rise building is inadequate. Combined with the cumbersome design of the garage access-vehicles on the lower garage level cannot access the upper level without exiting at the South facade and re-entering the garage at the East facade unnecessary traffic will be generated on the Asheville access way without assigned parking for occupants.
1. *The project will be required by State and local regulations to submit a complete blasting plan for review by the Town and will address any impacts on abutting properties as well as*



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utilities in the local streets. Blasting is a highly regulated and insured industry and CHR and our contractor will work closely with the Town and the abutters to ensure it is done as safely as possible.

2. *Detailed design plans will include a design for the garage exhaust. This level of detail is not required during the comprehensive permit hearing process.*
3. *The parking in the garage will be assigned to residents so the concerns raised will not be an issue.*
4. *Access to the VFW Parkway will significantly reduce the traffic impact on the Asheville-Russett Road neighborhood. The proponent should apply to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation for a curb cut on the Parkway within a timely manner agreed upon with the Town of Brookline. If this access is created, the adjacent new townhouse building should be rotated 90 degrees, with the turnaround eliminated. This will allow additional parking along the extended driveway, but the overall number of spaces should be reduced and interspersed with landscaping as noted in item 5 below.*
5. *Although the overall parking ratio for the project is 2.0 spaces per unit, the parking ratios for all the surface-lots in the greenbelt are excessive. To increase open space, reduce parking in the greenbelt so that the number of parking spaces is in proportion to the housing units these lots serve, and intersperse the remaining parking spaces with additional landscaping, particularly in places where additional existing trees can be preserved. The excess parking proposed for the greenbelt area should not be used to provide additional parking for existing units.*

CHR has been very clear about their intention that once a Comprehensive Permit is issued they will work with the Town to attempt to secure access to the VFW Parkway. Should that effort succeed, site plan changes related to the access issue will be addressed at that time.

Parking is being provide to meet the requirements of the existing zoning by-law and is designed to accommodate the additional cars generated for the project.

6. *Reduce the massing of the apartment building to mitigate some of the overwhelming impact on the surrounding community:*
 - a. *Reduce the footprint of the 500-foot long building by one-fourth to substantially increase the setback from the East elevation to the Asheville-Russett Road abutters.*
 - b. *Eliminate several entire floors, or tier the building starting at the third floor to vary the*
 - c. *Monotonous roofline, which currently emphasizes the monolithic quality and horizontal massing of the mid-rise structure.*
 - d. *Examine alternative, space-saving construction methods, such as steel construction, that could possibly reduce the height of the building.*

We are working on a number of conceptual options to address the height and massing of the building for presentation to the Board on October 20 that we expect will address many of the



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suggestions made above. We have explored the switch to steel construction as suggested originally by the Board's design review consultant and it does not result in a significant reduction in height, but obviously impacts the overall cost of the project.

7. No further increase in the footprint, height, and massing of the infill buildings proposed for the greenbelt that runs along Beverly and Russett Road property lines; nor an increase in the number of units (44), and the number of structures (9) currently proposed for the greenbelt.
8. A restriction on further development in the greenbelt.

The plans indicate what we are proposing for the S-7 area and speak for themselves. We are however exploring ways to re-distribute our program throughout the 40b site to address the concerns of the massing of the apartment building

As an alternative, and as noted above, developing two (or more) moderate size apartment buildings rather than one massive one might allow the total number of housing units created to remain roughly the same, significantly reduce neighborhood impacts, distribute vehicular access impacts and parking demand, and avoid the premium cost of 5-story fireproofed wood frame or steel construction.

As we have indicated above there are no other locations on the site to accommodate a larger apartment building that would not create additional non-conformity. The only logical alternative to do what the Planning Board suggests would be to add additional and/or larger buildings in the S-7 district.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

STANTEC CONSULTING SERVICES INC.

Joe Geller, FASLA
Vice President
Phone: (617) 226-9234
Fax: (617) 523-4333
joe.geller@stantec.com