

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Building & Planning Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Certificate of Appropriateness 501, 503 & 507 Old Lancaster Road, Haverford

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Date: October 6, 2017

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

The Building and Planning Committee will consider a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish contributing resources within the Haverford Station Historic District and consider granting conceptual approval of a subdivision proposal to mitigate the impact of the demolition via removal of a non-conforming commercial use, addition of historic resources to the Historic Resource Inventory, renovation of an existing single-family home and construction of three new units.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

The Building and Planning Committee makes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on all Certificates of Appropriateness.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

N/A

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

The 2-parcel subject property includes two dwellings and is the site of the former Johnston Tree Service, a non-conforming commercial use in an R-6A residential district. The parcels are located within the Haverford Station Historic District. Both parcels contain contributing historic resources. The garages referred to as 501 Old Lancaster Road occupy one parcel and the single-family homes referred to as 503 and 507 Old Lancaster Road occupy the adjacent western parcel. Unlike other Historic Districts within the Township, contributing resources within the Haverford Station Historic District are not listed on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI), although they are eligible to be added.

The applicant seeks to:

- Adaptively repurpose parts of 501 Old Lancaster Road (the garages) and all of 507 Old Lancaster Road (as a single-family home);
- Demolish 503 Old Lancaster Road (currently a single-family home); and

- Consolidate and subdivide the two parcels into 4 new, fee-simple lots containing 2 single-family detached homes and 2 semi-detached (twin) homes (total of 4 units). The proposed density is consistent with the underlying R-6A zoning.

The applicant first met with HARB on July 25th and has attended several follow up meetings with HARB, subcommittees of HARB and staff to justify the demolition and to also refine a subdivision plan to mitigate the impact of a potential demolition on the Historic District. On October 3rd HARB rejected the applicant's proposal by a 4- 2 vote and as a result denied the request for demolition.

HARB is charged with the preservation of Historic Resources within Historic Districts. HARB denied the applicant's proposal primarily on the grounds that the applicant did not provide sufficient information regarding the economic and physical infeasibility of preserving the dwelling on 503 Old Lancaster Road. In their deliberation HARB also acknowledged that there were 'planning considerations' beyond their purview. The Building & Planning Committee may wish to consider the larger planning considerations when evaluating this application.

Planning considerations include:

- The current and future negative impact of the non-conforming commercial use upon the surrounding residential neighborhood (some of which is located within the Haverford Station Historic District);
- The positive impact of the adaptive reuse of 507 and parts of 501 Old Lancaster Road; and
- Development of a subdivision plan incorporating adaptive reuse and new construction, which is physically and architecturally compatible with the Haverford Station Historic District and surrounding residential neighborhood.

Staff notes that the subject properties are constrained by an unusual triangular configuration and are bounded by the SEPTA Paoli line. An appropriate subdivision would most likely require the addition of some of the historic resources to the HRI and conditional use approval for setback relief through the land development process.

V. Impact on Township Finances:

There is no significant impact on Township finances.

VI. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Building and Planning Committee consider the HARB recommendation to deny demolition of 503 Old Lancaster Road, consider the impact

of the removal of an individual historic resource on the overall Haverford Station Historic District, as well as the beneficial impact that the removal of an existing nonconforming commercial use will have on the larger neighborhood.

If the Building & Planning Committee determines that the removal of the non-conforming commercial use from the neighborhood combined with the proposed conceptual site plan outweighs the impact of the demolition of the dwelling on 503 Old Lancaster Road then staff recommends the approval of this application subject to the applicant returning to the HARB for review and approval of the site and architectural plans.