

March 1, 2019

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Jillian Dierks, Planner, Building & Planning Department

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 101 N. Merion Avenue, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, LD# 3813, Ward 10.

Proposal

The applicant, George Broseman, Esquire, is seeking Preliminary Land Development Plan approval for the following on behalf of Bryn Mawr College, the property owner:

- Demolition of three structures and associated sidewalks including Cartref (229 N. Merion Avenue), the Pagoda (714 New Gulph Road), and the Health Center (712 Old Gulph Road);
- Construction of a new two-story Student Life and Wellness Center with an 11,399 square foot footprint;
- Extension of an existing one-way driveway into the site to connect to an existing surface parking lot adjacent to Erdman Hall. Four new parking spaces are proposed along this new driveway;
- Installation of 16 new parking spaces located along North Roberts Road adjacent to the Pensby Center (229 N. Roberts Road); and
- Installation of underground stormwater management systems.

The proposal is illustrated on the attached set of plans that includes seven sheets prepared by Site Engineering Concepts, LLC, dated July 13, 2018, last revised February 15, 2019 and architectural elevations prepared by Ewing Cole, dated February 25, 2019.

Project Description

The applicant has stated that the proposal will not result in any increase in the College's student body, faculty or employees.

Application History

- Zoning Hearing Board: On September 13, 2018 the applicant appeared before the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) to request a special exception under §155-11S(2) and/or §155-11X to 1) demolish Cartref, the Pagoda and the Health Center buildings and construct a new 11,399 sq. ft. (footprint) two-story Student Life and Wellness Center building and 2) install 20 parking spaces near the Pensby building along N. Roberts Road. On October 25, 2018 the Zoning Hearing Board approved the special exception. The decision is attached.
- Tentative Sketch Plan: The applicant received Tentative Sketch Plan approval on November 19, 2018. Relief from the Natural Features Code, Section 101-5.C.2.b, to disturb slopes greater than 25% for the expanded driveway on N. Roberts Road and for proposed utility work and stormwater connections/improvements was granted by the Board of Commissioners.

Changes to the Plan

Since the Planning Commission reviewed the application the following changes have been made to the plan:

- A sidewalk was added adjacent to the driveway located on New Gulph Road;
- The configuration of the interior walkways was adjusted; and
- The striping of the surface parking lot was adjusted to allow for an additional ADA parking space.

The following table details the bulk, area and setback requirements for the existing and proposed conditions of the site.

R-2 Zoning District Requirements		Existing Bryn Mawr College	Proposed Bryn Mawr College
Maximum Building Area	18%	12.3% (83,540 sq. ft.)	12.7% (86,451 sq. ft.)
Maximum Impervious Surface	24% 519,235 sq. ft.	35.5% (240,222 sq. ft.*)	36.4% (246,693 sq. ft.*)

*Existing nonconformity. The applicant maintains an impervious surface non-conformity of 36.7% (248,405 sq. ft.). After this project is complete, there will be 1,712 sq. ft. of impervious surface available.

Montgomery County Planning Commission Review

The County review letter is attached. The County recommendations have been either addressed on the attached plan or have been incorporated into the issues below as well as into the recommended conditions of approval.

Historical Commission

On September 24, 2018, the applicant appeared before the Historical Commission to present the project. The Commission recommended approval and agreed with the siting and general massing of the building as shown, including the demolition of the existing Wellness Center to the east.

The applicant appeared before the Historical Commission again on February 25, 2019. The Historical Commission determined that the new construction would have a limited impact to surrounding historic resources. The Commission strongly encouraged the College to explore additional methods to re-use, re-purpose, or re-invent the Cartref building, as the loss of such a resource, listed on the Inventory or not, would be a deep loss to Bryn Mawr College, its history, and the community it fosters. In addition, the Commission strongly urged the College to document the building if it is demolished, and to provide those documents to the Lower Merion Historical Society.

Environmental Advisory Council

The EAC reviewed the plan at their February 26, 2018 meeting and recommended locally adaptive native species be provided on the landscape plan where feasible.

Issues

1. Historic Preservation

As discussed at the Tentative Sketch Plan phase, the proposal includes the demolition of Cartref. While not individually listed on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory, the Historical Commission noted that the building retains a great deal of integrity and is vital to the history of the College. The building is also listed under the "Additional Buildings in District" category on the original National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Bryn Mawr College Historic District. During their review of the Tentative Sketch Plan, the Historical Commission urged the College in the strongest terms to consider retention of Cartref amongst the three buildings proposed for demolition.

A condition of Tentative Sketch Plan approval required the applicant to "consider alternatives to the demolition of Cartref and the Pagoda". In their response to the conditions, the applicant stated that they are considering possible alternatives.

While the retention of Cartref would not conflict with the proposed footprint of the new building, its demolition would increase the available impervious surface for future development. The applicant could either pursue Conditional Use to increase the permitted impervious surface pursuant to Zoning Code Section 155-152 or remove approximately 1,000 sq. ft. of existing impervious walkways and replace them with porous paving. The current proposal includes the installation of 2,000 sq. ft. of porous paving.

	%	Sq. Ft.
Max Permitted Impervious	36.7	248,405
Proposed	36.5	246,693 (1,712 sq. ft. under max.)
Proposed + Cartref	36.8 (.1 over)	249,395 (990 sq. ft. over max.)

Lastly, the Township anticipates adopting a new Zoning Code in July 2019 that contains Institutional Zoning Districts. As currently drafted, the code increases the available impervious surface up to 40% with a campus master plan.

Staff recommends that the applicant preserve Cartref, by either replacing approximately 1000 sq. ft. of impervious paved areas with porous pavement, pursuing Conditional Use, or delaying the demolition until the proposed zoning code is adopted.

2. Pedestrian Connections & Improvements

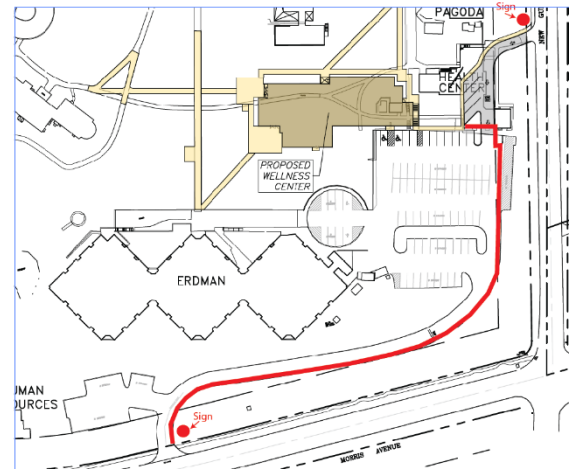
The following condition was imposed on the Tentative Sketch Plan:

- The applicant shall investigate providing a pedestrian pathway from the lower parking lot adjacent to Erdman Hall to connect to the existing sidewalk along Morris Avenue. If determined feasible, the connection shall be shown on the Preliminary Plan.

Staff met with the applicant on-site to discuss the possibility of making this pedestrian connection. The applicant reiterated concerns related to the impact to slopes, cost and the need for the connection. In our Tentative Sketch Plan review staff indicated that this is an important link in providing a cohesive pedestrian network as this site is located within a half mile of the Bryn Mawr Train Station on the Prioritized Pedestrian Improvement Map that was created as part of the Comprehensive Plan. The site is also within close proximity to several other institutional complexes as well as residential neighborhoods. A new sidewalk will be installed on New Gulph Road along the frontage of the Church of the Redeemer and it is important to add as many links as possible to provide a complete pedestrian network.

Considering the cost, impact to the slopes and the impervious surface limitations, staff recommends the applicant provide one of the following options:

- A. A four foot (4') wide painted pedestrian/bicycle pathway be provided within the existing drive that connects the proposed sidewalk to the lower parking lot adjacent to Erdman Hall to the existing sidewalk along Morris Avenue. The applicant should also provide directional signage at both Morris Avenue and New Gulph Road to indicate that the pathway connects New Gulph Road to Morris Avenue; or
- B. A porous walkway adjacent to the curb line of the existing drive that connects the proposed sidewalk to the lower parking lot adjacent to Erdman Hall to the existing sidewalk along Morris Avenue. The applicant should also provide directional signage at both Morris Avenue and New Gulph Road to indicate that the pathway connects New Gulph Road to Morris Avenue.



The existing driveway currently measures approximately 20 feet wide and accommodates two-way traffic. In his preliminary review, the Township Engineer stated that since the driveway appears to have low traffic volume that either of the above alternatives are feasible. Both options have been included in the attached conditions of approval.

In his review, the Township Engineer also noted that pedestrian activity in this area could increase with the proposed development and recommended that flashing warning devices be added or updated at the two existing crosswalks on New Gulph Road.

In addition, the Township is in the process of performing minor pedestrian upgrades to the intersection of Morris Avenue and Pembroke Road which includes the installation of a painted crosswalk across Morris Avenue, removal of an existing dead tree and minor grading and/or the installation of a small retaining wall to allow a small concrete pad to be installed. The Township requests that the applicant consider installing the following additional amenities to further improve pedestrian connections in the vicinity:

- Three ADA ramps at the intersection of New Gulph Road, Morris Avenue and Pembroke Road; and

- A painted crosswalk across New Gulph Road.

Staff requests the applicant install these items provided it does not result in additional improvements being requested by PennDOT as part of the overall plan of improvement for the intersection.

3. Architectural Elevations

The Historical Commission reviewed the architecture of the new building and expressed concerns regarding the choice and combination of building materials. Staff strongly recommends that the applicant consider these concerns. Since many of the buildings on the campus exhibit thoughtful, original design and complementary modern adaptations, staff would like the proposed structure to continue that tradition.

4. Relief

At Tentative Sketch Plan review, the following relief was granted and remains in effect with this application. No further action is needed.

- Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.b, to disturb slopes greater than 25% for the expanded driveway on N. Roberts Road and for proposed utility work and stormwater connections/improvements.

5. Action

The Planning Commission must take the following action for this application:

- A. Provide a recommendation on the Preliminary Land Development Plan.