

November 26, 2019

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Jillian Dierks, Planner, Department of Building & Planning

SUBJECT: TENTATIVE SKETCH & CONDITIONAL USE PLAN – 600 N. Ithan Avenue, Harriton High School, Bryn Mawr, LD# 3848 & 3848C, Ward 6

Proposal

The applicant, Fred Fromhold, Esq., and property owner, the Lower Merion School District, are seeking Tentative Sketch Plan approval for the following:

- Construction of a 4,865 sq. ft. classroom addition;
- Construction of 29 surface parking spaces shown in a new west lot which consist of 22 new parking spaces and seven existing parking spaces relocated from elsewhere on the site;
- Installation of additional concrete sidewalks and pads;
- Installation of six stormwater management systems; and
- Construction of a pedestrian bridge over the existing stormwater biofilters in the east parking lot.



600 N. Ithan Avenue, Harriton High School, Bryn Mawr

The applicant is also seeking Conditional Use approval to hold 124 required parking spaces in reserve, per Zoning Code Section 155-95.1. The 124 reserve parking spaces are shown in the location of the lacrosse fields.

A Conditional Use Hearing has been scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on [Tuesday, December 10, 2019](#) in the Caucus Room of the Township Administration Building located at 75 E. Lancaster Avenue, Ardmore.

The proposal is illustrated on the attached four sheet plan set dated September 13, 2019, last revised November 15, 2019, prepared by Chester Valley Engineers, Inc.

Property Description

The parcel is approximately 50 acres and contains the existing high school, athletic fields and associated parking areas. The property is bordered to the north, east and west by residential properties. To the south, the site is bordered partially by Beaumont at Bryn Mawr and residential properties.

Montgomery County Planning Commission Review

At the time that this memo was completed, staff had not received the County's review. If received prior to the December 2, 2019 meeting, staff will provide it to the Planning Commission.

Environmental Advisory Council

The Environmental Advisory Council reviewed the application at their November 19, 2019 meeting and was supportive of the applicant holding parking spaces in reserve rather than paving them.

Zoning

The property is located in the R1 Zoning District; however the Public School Use is regulated by Zoning Code Section [155-11.E](#). The following table details the applicable bulk and area requirements for the existing and proposed conditions. There are no proposed changes to lot area, lot width, required setbacks or building height.

R1 Zoning District		Existing	Proposed
Minimum Net Lot Area (sq. ft.)	30,000 sq. ft. .69 acres	2,144,497 sq. ft. 49.23 Acres	
Maximum Building Area	18.75%* 402,093 sq. ft.	9.3% 200,236 sq. ft.	9.6% 205,101 sq. ft. (+ 4,865 sq. ft.)
Maximum Impervious Surface	45%** 965,023 sq. ft.	30.2% 647,812 sq. ft.	36.3%*** 777,962 sq. ft. (+ 130,153 sq. ft. or 3 acres)

*Per Section [155-11.E.1.b](#) the building area of each lot may not exceed the maximum permitted building area in the underlying zoning district by more than 25%. R1 max. is 15% x 1.25 = 18.75%

**Per Section [155-11.E.1.c](#). Public schools in the RAA through R-2 Zoning Districts located on parcels of 20 acres are permitted a maximum of 45% impervious surfaces.

***Includes the impervious associated with the proposed reserve parking.

Required Parking

The parking requirement for educational uses is regulated by Zoning Code Section [155.95.AA](#), which states:

- (a) One and one-half spaces per two students/participants of driving age;
- (b) One space per faculty/staff member or volunteer;
- (c) One visitor space per 25 students/participants; and
- (d) One space per five seats, or 50 square feet of floor area where seating is not installed, for the largest place of public assembly on the site, except that parking for assembly places to be used no more than six times a year may be accommodated on unpaved areas, if their availability can be demonstrated.

Factor	Required Parking
For every two students/participants of driving age	1.5
For each faculty/staff member or volunteer	1
Visitors per 25 students	1
Largest place of public assembly: For every 5 seats of 50 sq. ft. where seating is not installed	1

With 304 parking spaces, the property was non-conforming to parking in 2006 prior to being redeveloped. Following the 2006 approval to reconstruct the school, a total of **469** parking spaces were constructed on the site since the Board of Commissioners granted conditional use approval to hold **up to 173** parking spaces in reserve. The applicant only held 170 parking spaces in reserve which were provided in the following locations:

- o 20 spaces along the west access driveway.
- o 150 spaces in a parking structure above the main lot.

2006 Plan		Required Parking	% of Total
Parking Constructed		469	73%
Reserve Parking	West Access Driveway	20	27%
	Parking Structure	150	
Total		639	

The additional staff and students that have been added to the site since 2006 trigger an increase in required parking as outlined below. The site requires an additional **146** parking spaces, of which the applicant:

- Seeks to install 22 parking spaces in the new west parking lot;
- Seeks to relocate seven parking spaces to the new west parking lot;
- Seeks conditional use to hold the remaining 124 in reserve in the lacrosse field; and
- Seeks to relocate 20 parking spaces previously held in reserve along the west driveway to the lacrosse field.

Proposed Plan		Required Parking	% of Total
Parking Constructed		491	63%
Reserve Parking	Lacrosse Field	144	37%
	Parking Structure	150	
Total		785	

This would bring the total to **785** required parking spaces of which:

- 491 parking spaces are paved;
- 294 parking spaces are held in reserve (37% of the total required);
 - 144 spaces are shown in the lacrosse field; and
 - 150 are shown in a parking structure above the main lot.

	Approved 2006			Current Conditions		
	1,250 Students & 180 Faculty/Staff			1,527 Students (Increase of 277) & 236 Faculty/Staff (Increase of 56)		
	Parking Required	Parking Provided/Constructed	Parking Held in Reserve	Parking Required	Parking to be Provided/Constructed	Parking Requested to be Held in Reserve
Students of Driving Age	352	469*	170**	+78	12	66
Faculty/Staff	180			+56	10	46
Visitors	50			+12	0	12
Largest Place of Assembly	240			----	----	----
				+146	22	124
					+146	
Total	822*	639		785***	491 (increase of 22)	294 (increase of 124)
					785***	

*Although 822 spaces would be required, the site maintained an existing non-conformity of 469 parking spaces.

**150 reserve spaces shown in a parking deck and 20 shown in the driveway = 170 parking spaces.

***639 (469 paved + 170 reserve) + 146 (22 paved + 124 reserve) = 785 parking spaces.

While the applicant was legally entitled to the property's parking non-conformity, the current parking requirements for this use based on the current site utilization would generate a need for 1,397 parking spaces, of which only 35% or 491 are proposed to be constructed.

1,527 Students & 236 Faculty/Staff	Parking Required
Students of Driving Age	430
Faculty/Staff	236
Visitors	62
Largest Place of Assembly	240
Total Required	968
Total Required w/ Non-Conformity	785 (81.5%)

Reserve Parking- Conditional Use

[Zoning Code Section 155-95.1](#) enables the applicant to hold parking in reserve without actually paving the spaces when land development approval is required for proposed improvements through Conditional Use approval. The code states that the conditional use approval by the Board is subject to the following:

A. Expansion of use. Where a use regulated by § 155-95 is being expanded and the Board determines that the additional number of parking spaces required by this expansion are not currently needed, it may authorize the applicant to hold in reserve the number of spaces that the Board determines are not currently required to meet the needs of the uses to which the property will be put.

B. New or changed use. Where a new use regulated by § 155-95 is created or there is a change of use on the property, and the Board determines that the number of parking spaces required are not currently needed, it may authorize the applicant to hold in reserve up to 50% of the total number of spaces required.

C. The applicant must document that the full number of required parking spaces can be paved without violating any applicable provisions of this chapter. When constructed, the reserve parking must meet all applicable provisions of this chapter as of the date the construction permit is sought.

D. The applicant shall install stormwater management facilities, as required by the Township, for the total required number of parking spaces, including those held in reserve, unless the applicant demonstrates to the Board's satisfaction that the economic and practical benefit of currently installing such facilities for the reserve parking spaces is not significant when compared to the destruction that would be caused to natural features on the site.

E. The applicant must agree in a recorded covenant, approved by the Township Solicitor, to install the reserve parking spaces at any future time if and when the Zoning Officer determines that the reserve parking spaces are needed to accommodate the use of the property. The applicant may appeal such order to the Zoning Hearing Board.

F. Regardless of the number of spaces actually developed, a parking area to accommodate the aggregate number of parking spaces required shall be fully designed, and the area held as reserve parking shall be clearly designated on the plan. The reserve parking area shall be considered in calculating the impervious surface ratio. The parking reserve area shall be planted with vegetative cover and integrated into the site's land development plan. Such area shall be required to be developed as designed if and when the Zoning Officer determines the need.

Staff would like the benefit of hearing the applicant's testimony at the Conditional Use hearing as to why the parking spaces are not needed prior to making a recommendation on the conditional use application or making recommendations for physical improvements. The applicant should be prepared to explain to the Planning Commission the rationale for their request to hold parking in reserve and explain the implications of holding parking in reserve for large events (such as graduation) and the impact of providing structured parking for some or all of the required spaces.

Issues

1. Long Range District Plan

Over the last few years staff has been tasked with reviewing and providing recommendations for school district projects aimed to address district wide enrollment increases. These projects have been brought forward as piecemeal measures to address systemic needs. Staff would like the applicant to present district wide enrollment projections at the Planning Commission meeting so that staff and the Planning Commission can better understand the overall impact district-wide.

The following recommendations were included in the Community Facilities Element of the Township's Comprehensive Plan. The applicant should continue to work with the Township to further these recommendations.

- **F21** – Establish an intergovernmental structure to coordinate long range planning between the Lower Merion School District and Lower Merion Township.
- **F21.a** – Establish a schedule of regular town meetings to publicly discuss issues common to both LMSD and Lower Merion Township. The meetings should be co-hosted by representatives of LMSD and Lower Merion Township.
- **F21.b** – Work with the LMSD to understand land use implications resulting from public school facility needs. Develop options permitting public schools to evolve to meet the community's needs while balancing larger municipal needs as well as land use concerns of neighbors resulting from expanded public school facilities. Evaluate current public school Zoning Code provisions against various future enrollment scenarios.
- **F22** – Continue working with LMSD on joint planning, development, use and maintenance of ball fields and game courts by Township residents.

2. Reserve Parking Location

During the 2006 redevelopment of the site, staff had concerns with the amount of surface parking proposed and recommended the applicant consider structured parking. Staff reiterates that recommendation with this application as structured parking is a more efficient use of land on a constrained site such as this. Given that there is an existing district wide shortage of athletic fields that is likely to increase in the next few years, staff questions the practicality of installing reserve parking on an existing athletic field and recommends the applicant investigate the possibility of including the reserve parking spaces in a structured parking facility.

In 2006 the applicant indicated that the cost of structured parking was too high and that all on-site programs can be accommodated with surface parking. Given the cost associated with installing the required stormwater management for the additional runoff generated by the proposed reserve parking spaces which totals three (3) acres and the added cost of potentially busing students to off-site fields, staff recommends that the applicant revisit this option.

Staff has included conditions requiring the applicant to investigate structured parking to accommodate portions of the reserve parking either:

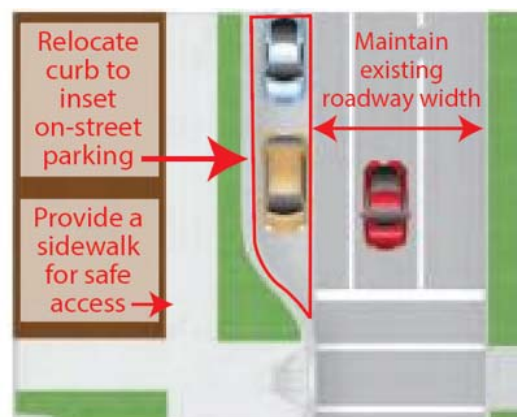
- Above the existing east parking lot; or
- In the location of the existing tennis courts, with the tennis courts to be located above the structure, as was similarly completed on the Shipley campus.



Since the redevelopment of the site safety concerns have been expressed about students and parents forced to park along N. Ithan Avenue or in the surrounding neighborhood when the parking demand exceeds the site's capacity.

The Traffic Safety Department determined that while on-street parking can be accommodated between the upper and lower driveway, without a sidewalk and especially in adverse conditions, on-street parking would be unsafe for students and visitors as it would force them to walk in the street. In response to these concerns, Ordinances 4154 & 4171 were adopted by the Board of Commissioners in 2019, at the recommendation of Traffic Safety, amending Vehicles and Traffic Code Section [145-114](#) & [145-115](#) to prohibit parking at all times and stopping and standing on N. Ithan Avenue from Old Gulph Road to Heatherwood Road.

Staff and the Traffic Safety Department recommend that the applicant investigate changes to the roadway to safely accommodate on-street parking, including but not limited to providing sidewalks along the property frontage, installing bump outs to narrow the roadway and create traffic calming. This has been incorporated as a condition of approval.



Example of the creation of inset parking

Lastly, with the various district wide facility changes, staff recommends the applicant consider utilizing some of the bus parking on this site for students and faculty while relocating the buses to a different location. The applicant currently has a pending application to construct structured parking to accommodate bus parking at their property on Matsons Ford Road in Villanova. Staff would like the applicant to provide the Planning Commission with an update on that pending proposal and whether it would alleviate bus parking needs at Harriton and potentially free up additional surface parking spaces.

3. Paved Areas

The plan shows several areas to be paved. Staff would like the applicant to provide additional information regarding the use and need for the proposed paving, so that staff can better understand the environmental impact and provide design recommendations. For example, if these are areas for athletic viewing they may benefit from the inclusion of seating and shade trees.

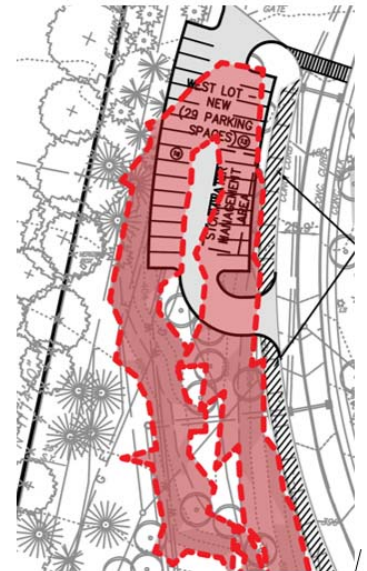
4. Relief

The application requires relief from the following Code sections:

1. Relief from Natural Features Conservation Code Section [101-5.C.2.a](#) to not minimize site disturbance on slopes exceeding 15%.
2. Relief from Natural Features Conservation Code Section [101-5.C.2.b](#) to disturb slopes exceeding 25%.

The proposed 29 space parking lot is shown in an area of steep slopes. The applicant claims that the subject slopes are man-made and were created by previous site disturbance. In his review the Township Engineer requested that the limits of steep slope be more clearly delineated on the proposed site plan in order to determine the magnitude of the disturbance and need for retaining walls. Staff recommends that the relief be deferred until Preliminary Plan and has included conditions requiring this information with the Preliminary Plan submission.

Staff notes that the proposal may also require relief from Subdivision and Land Development Code Section 135-28, Sidewalks, but staff prefers to defer this relief until the applicant has had the opportunity to investigate the above noted alterations to the site layout.



Location of steep slopes in new West Parking Lot

Action

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

1. Provide a recommendation on the Tentative Sketch Plan;
2. Provide a recommendation on the Conditional Use request; and
3. Provide a recommendation on the relief from the Natural Features Conservation Code.
 - a. Staff recommends that the relief be deferred until Preliminary Plan.