

November 2, 2018

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Christopher Leswing, Director, Building & Planning Department

SUBJECT: TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN, 101 N. Merion Avenue, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, LD# 3813, Ward 10.

Proposal

The applicant, George Broseman, Esquire, is seeking Tentative Sketch 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 11,400 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 Installation. 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 an underground stormwater management system.

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 September 13, 2018 and architectural elevations prepared by Ewing Cole.

Project Description

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

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 the existing Cartref, Pagoda and Health Center buildings along New Gulph Road and construct a new 11,411 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.

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%	14.3% (323,151 sq. ft.)	14.5% (327,381 sq. ft.)
Maximum Impervious Surface	24% 519,235 sq. ft.	26% 555,390 sq. ft.*	26% 555,390 sq. ft.*

*Existing nonconformity. The property is also eligible for the 1% impervious surface expansion permitted in the Zoning Code. One percent of the net lot area equals 21,780 sq. ft. After this project is complete, there will be 10,796 sq. ft. of impervious surface available.

Tentative Sketch Plan

The Legislative Intent of the Subdivision and Land Development Code governing Tentative Sketch Plans is to promote orderly, efficient, integrated and harmonious development in the Township. Tentative Sketch Plans provide the Township with the opportunity to refine site layouts prior to the development of fully engineered Preliminary Plans. Tentative Sketch Plans identify specific circulation, stormwater, landscaping and architectural design issues to be refined at the Preliminary Plan phase. Emphasis is devoted to placement of buildings and driveways to reduce impacts to natural features and historic resources as well as ensuring that new development is properly integrated with existing development.

Montgomery County Planning Commission Review

The County review is attached. In their review the County encouraged the applicant to work with the Township to preserve Cartref and the Pagoda while exploring the use of incentives in the Historic Resource Overlay District. The County also noted that an existing crosswalk across N. Roberts Road must be relocated due to the expansion of the existing driveway which will provide access to the 16 new parking spaces.

Historical Commission

On September 24, 2018, the applicant appeared before the Historical Commission to present the project. The Commission recommended approval of the general siting of the proposed building agreeing with the College's choice of the siting and general massing of the building as shown and including the demolition of the old Wellness Center to the east.

For the Preliminary Land Development Plan, the Commission recommended that the applicant provide additional information regarding materials and products for the proposed building to better determine its impact on the adjacent historic resources, as well as final architectural elevations of the new building. Further, the Commission disagreed with the College's counsel's interpretation of the alteration provisions in the Code, which would exempt review of Erdman Hall (Class 1 as of July 18, 2018) within the context of impact of the new building, and thereby request that the Township Solicitor review this point. Finally, the Commission laments the proposed loss of Cartref, which retains a great deal of integrity and is vital to the history of the College. The Commission urged the College in the strongest terms to consider retention of Cartref alone amongst the three proposed for demolition. Retention of Cartref would not conflict with the proposed footprint of the new building and appears to be proposed for demolition to provide impervious surface area for other projects on campus.

Environmental Advisory Council

The EAC reviewed the plan at their October 23, 2018 meeting and recommended the applicant explain their long-term plans for the property with respect to stormwater management. The EAC also recommended the applicant use this project as an opportunity to enhance the green space on the site.

Issues

1. Pedestrian Connections

Currently a sidewalk exists along a small portion of New Gulph Road near the intersection of N. Merion Avenue. The Land Development Committee recommended the applicant investigate extending this sidewalk down to the intersection of New Gulph Road. The applicant indicated that there are steep slopes along the remainder of the frontage of New Gulph Road that prevent the installation of the sidewalk. In a subsequent meeting with the applicant and in lieu of extending the sidewalk to the intersection, the applicant agreed to investigate wrapping the sidewalk along the lower edge of the existing driveway into the site along New Gulph Road and connecting it to both the parking lot to the east of Erdman Hall as well as to the new Wellness Center. If feasible, this extension will be shown on the Preliminary Plan.

Staff also recommends that the applicant investigate the feasibility of installing a pedestrian path from the parking lot next to Erdman Hall down the slope to the existing sidewalk along Morris Avenue. We understand that this path will not be ADA compliant and may require the inclusion of steps but feel that this is an important link in providing a cohesive pedestrian network as this site is located within a half mile buffer 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 and campus complexes. Staff notes that 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.

2. Stormwater Management

In his review of the application, the Township Engineer noted that since one of the principal buildings on the lot is proposed to be fully demolished, stormwater rate and volume controls must be provided considering the predevelopment ground cover condition of the footprint of that building as meadow. The rate control volume must also be capable of draining in twenty-four (24) hours. The applicant shall submit soil percolation tests with the Preliminary Plan to demonstrate code compliance.

3. Relief

The applicant requested the following relief:

- 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.

Given the de minimus nature of the relief, staff supports the relief but recommends the applicant take efforts to minimize the disturbance to the minimum necessary.

4. Action

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

- A. Provide a recommendation on the Tentative Sketch Plan.
- B. Provide a recommendation on the requested relief noted above.