

FINAL MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, August 1, 2022, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony, Hsiao, *Chair*, Charles Redmon, Monika Pauli, *Members*, Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

Absent: Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Katinka Hakuta

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: See attached list

Meeting held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MCaug2022>

Due to statewide emergency actions limiting the size of public gatherings in response to COVID-19, this meeting was held online with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform. The meeting ID was 830 4081 7839.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao made introductions, explained the process, and called the meeting to order at 6:04.

Case MC-6519: 7 St. Mary Road, by Martin Udengaard & Alice Kung. Remove chimney.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, preservation administrator, presented slides of the property and history.

Mr. Dan Foote, builder, explained the chimney removal as part of a renovation project that includes getting more useful living space on the top floor, installation of heat pumps to fully decarbonize.

Commission Questions

Commissioner Charles Redmon asked if the chimney is structurally sound. Mr. Foote replied that he did not investigate its structural stability. Mr. Redmon asked if keeping the chimney above the roof line was considered. Mr. Foote answered that it is too costly to support the weight of the existing chimney and that constructing a faux chimney is possible, but he didn't think this particular chimney was worth replicating.

Public Questions and Comments - none

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon asked about the window configuration. Mr. Foote described the window changes in the rear (not visible from public way).

Mr. Hsiao recalled the previous reviews for this house including the solar panels.

Commissioner Monika Pauli expressed concern over setting a precedent if they approve of the removal, but also noted that this particular chimney does not appear architecturally significant.

Mr. Redmon agreed with Ms. Pauli.

Mr. Hsiao asked if anyone would like to make a motion. Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the application as presented. Commissioner Margaret McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Case MC-6503: 11-13 Goodman Road, by 11-13 Goodman Road LLC. Demolish existing building and construct single-family house.

Ms. Allison Crosbie presented slides of the property and history.

Mr. Matt Hayes, the applicant, introduced the project and the designers involved on the project. He then handed the presentation over to architect Peter Quinn.

Mr. Quinn went over the existing conditions and street context. He noted that the existing building is 6 feet from the lot line. He then presented the proposed design, explaining that it will have a similar vocabulary on the front to the existing house. He also presented the proposed basement with sunken patios and light wells, and the showed first floor layout. Mr. Quinn described the front as a traditional style with 2/2 double hung windows, flat cedar siding, bedroom layout, attic as office space with roof deck, porch details. He then presented the back portion as a contemporary design showing elevations and plans. Mr. Quinn then showed shadow studies and pointed out that there is very little additional shadow.

Ms. Erin Hossaini-Fitch, a landscape architect with Verdant Landscape Architects, presented the proposed landscape design. She noted two key elements including rejuvenating the existing ecology (the site is presently overgrown with invasive species) and creating key entry points into the property. She presented hardscape details including paving and fencing. She mentioned some trees will be preserved, a woodland path will be created, seasonal plantings will be installed as well as planters around the upper deck.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked about the planting plan and asked specifically if there are trees to be removed. Ms. Hossaini-Fitch replied that two trees will be removed, a 14-inch cherry tree and a 16-inch sycamore maple.

Mr. Hsiao then asked how the proposed new house footprint compares with the existing house. Mr. Hayes answered that the proposed structure is very similar to the existing footprint. Mr. Quinn noted that the square footage is pretty much the same, the house is set further back from the property edge. Mr. Hayes stated that the width is the same, possibly a little under. Mr. Hsiao asked about the rear. Mr. Hayes said it was pulled back 2'-4." Mr. Hsiao asked about the height of the proposed building compared to the existing. Mr. Hayes explained that the existing height is 30.29' and the proposed is 34.8,' and noted that they want it to cascade down with the grade.

Ms. Pauli asked why he wants to tear down the building. Mr. Hayes replied that he first intended to renovate the building and mentioned that the building hasn't been lived in for over

a year and is very dilapidated, but he did have an engineer assess the structure and it is not very sound. Ms. Pauli asked if the project requires zoning relief. Mr. Hayes answered it does not require relief. Mr. Quinn added that the FAR is actually being reduced.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the landscape plan noting that vegetation is increasing but is the paving area changing? Mr. Hayes replied that the garage is being removed and the driveway will be reduced, increasing the outdoor space significantly. Mr. Quinn pointed out that permeable pavers are also going to be installed.

Mr. Redmon asked about the jog in the plan, instead of a plain gable house. Mr. Hayes answered that it is a very long building and they wanted to add more outdoor spaces and light wells. Mr. Redmon commented that this specific move has altered the character quite a bit. Mr. Hayes agreed but stated that the character of the street façade is being maintained and that he understands that new construction can be contemporary, not a copy of traditional buildings.

Mr. Hsiao asked if there are any 3-d views to help understand how it fits into the context. Mr. Quinn replied he did not prepare 3-d views.

Mr. Hsiao noted that most of the houses on the street have simple, straightforward masses, although different. Mr. Hayes stated the house has a different massing but is a bridge between the differing masses on the street, linear on one side and wide on the other. Mr. Quinn observed that the houses on Dana are quite wide.

Ms. Pauli noted that it does seem to align with 406 Broadway. Mr. Hayes replied that it does. Ms. Pauli also mentioned that the new structure will be set back more, and Mr. Hayes explained how the proposed building is being pulled back an extra 4 feet.

Mr. Redmon asked if they could superimpose the existing and proposed building footprints. Mr. Quinn proceeds to create the image on the powerpoint.

Mr. Hsiao stated that it's important to understand how this compares with what was there, so the Commission has a lot of questions pertaining to the height, footprint, etc., and would like to see 3-dimensional renderings. Mr. Hayes responded that they are reducing the overall mass of what's on the site. Mr. Hsiao replied that they still need to compare the existing and proposed to help the Commission evaluate.

Mr. Quinn shows an overlay of the existing building outline on the proposed footprint and explains the changes in the location of the building.

Public Questions and Comments

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street had questions regarding the proposed dormer measurements, the difference in height on the drawings, the driveway and sunken patios. Mr. Quinn explained the dormer design and clarified the heights. Mr. Hsiao also explained how sea level is used in architectural drawings. Mr. Quinn also clarified the driveway and the sunken patios.

Ms. Meyer commented on the truncated roof and the flat roof, saying that the transition looks clumsy, the emphasis is on the modern, and then the picture windows are "neither fish nor fowl." It's not a pleasing transition. Mr. Hayes went over the lines of sight noting that walking

along Goodman Road you don't see the rear, the design focus is on the front. Ms. Meyer replied that her eye would go right to the proposed bump out. She would like to see something more imaginative.

Ms. Suzanne Lee of 7-9 Goodman Road had questions regarding the demolition including the timetable. Mr. Hayes responded that he will be happy to discuss the process with her and emphasized his commitment to keeping neighbors informed of major work being done. He stated that the project should take about ten months with the demo and foundation work in the winter to hopefully be less disruptive. Ms. Lee asked to see a land survey, Mr. Quinn showed a slide of the plan. Ms. Lee asked about parking. Mr. Hayes answered there will be one space. Ms. Lee expressed concern over more pressure for street parking.

Mr. Hsiao asked how many parking spaces can be currently accommodated. Mr. Hayes answered that currently it could hold 8-10 cars.

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao thanked the applicants for the presentation but noted several things the Commission would like to see including more direct comparisons between the existing and proposed houses, 3-dimensional views, more streetscape views to show neighborhood context, there are a lot of questions regarding the nature of the infill and neighborhood context. Mr. Hsiao pointed out that this is a dense neighborhood and that a simpler form should be considered to see how it fits with the overall neighborhood character and noted the proposed is quite different. Mr. Hsiao commended the effort to conform with the setbacks, reduce impervious paving, and adding more landscaping. He also pointed out that there is a lot of sensitivity to tree removals in Cambridge.

Ms. Pauli remarked that there is something charming to the existing shingle style house with two bays and that if they are taking a traditional approach to the front of the proposed house they should go further and reflect more of the historic house without copying it exactly. Mr. Hayes asked if they should use shingles then on the front portion. Ms. Pauli said possibly, right now it looks generic, the existing house has a certain presence and rhythm with columns and windows, and you are close to that. Mr. Hayes responded that he tries not to build generic buildings.

Mr. Hsiao observed that the surrounding houses are wood shingled on Goodman Road along with the existing house. There are defining characteristics that are worth looking at.

Mr. Redmon commented that the jump in scale in the front from a 3-bay porch to 2 bays is significant and maybe not appropriate. Mr. Hayes responded that the current building is 23 feet wide and difficult to satisfy current living standards, the fenestration becomes problematic, and it would be hard to make the spaces work.

Ms. Pauli stated that the old porch could be the dominant element, the porch currently dominates the windows.

Mr. Hsiao remarked that it looks like a diminutive house in front that's half the depth of the existing, with an addition that pulls to the right, and that 3-dimensional renderings will help show how this really works in the neighborhood. The elevation is useful but looking at 3-

dimensions can be very different. Mr. Hayes suggested that they could plant a large tree on the front corner that could help direct the view to the front of the house while providing privacy, a sentinel tree. Mr. Quinn reiterated that they could provide the 3-d graphics.

Mr. Hsiao also pointed out that a large house like the one proposed will most likely need more than one parking space. He also asked aside from landscaping are there are sustainable elements being considered. Mr. Hayes answered that the house will be pre-wired for solar panels, that he will let the new owner apply for the panels to get the state subsidies. Mr. Hayes also said he will most likely install heat pumps. Mr. Hsiao noted that other applicants are reducing fossil fuels and using sustainable materials, noting that it's not the Commission's purview but wanted to know if these things are being considered since there's an opportunity here. Mr. Hayes added that there will be EV charger on site as well.

Mr. Redmon stated that the existing house has a simplicity about it, a pitched roof from front to back with simple lines, and the proposed design breaks it up far too much into too many elements, the short pitched roof's is only half the distance of the house and diminishes its prominence, the flat roof on the side detracts from the original house form. Mr. Hayes noted how they were thinking about privacy and how they wanted to create something different, suggesting that perhaps it was originally built simply because it was just easier to do so. They don't want to create the same thing from a hundred years ago. They want to do something different, in today's vernacular.

Mr. Hsiao agreed with Mr. Redmon stating that it looks like they are trying to create a blended front that looks like it's compatible with the neighborhood with traditional vernacular with contemporary side and rear addition. A contemporary style isn't bad. It's important to explore the 3-dimensionality in relation to the neighborhood, there's a certain fabric that exists in this neighborhood that tends to be more straightforward and simpler. Deference and respect also come into play, there needs to be more study especially with the 3-dimensional.

Mr. Redmon asked if they considered a totally modern house. Mr. Hayes answered yes. Mr. Redmon commented that what they have now is cacophonous and not very pleasant. Mr. Hayes asked if the Commission would support a totally contemporary house, noting that he thought the proposed design was contextually appropriate. He also noted that he doesn't want to spin his wheels. Mr. Hsiao replied that scale is important, with a flat roof the front of the 3-story house is going to appear bigger, the scale will shift, simpler masses change the volume. Ms. Pauli noted that right now it's half and half. Mr. Hsiao concurred. Ms. Pauli suggested maybe the front gable could be longer.

Mr. Hsiao noted that living spaces are in the back and the bedrooms are in the front, this affects the design approach. Mr. Hsiao stated there are a lot of positives, but it's hard to marry the front with the rear, but it creates a hybrid approach, two different attitudes. He would like to see previous schemes from a massing standpoint, these massing studies would be helpful to understand how they got to this point. Mr. Hayes responded that they could work with these comments and reiterated that they could add trees not to hide the building but direct the view.

Mr. Redmon remarked that right now the design is caught between the old and new at exactly 50/50, and it's not working. Mr. Hayes suggested more landscaping, perhaps a hedge of

hornbeams and a sentinel tree at the front corner, not to hide but help with the view to the front.

Mr. Hayes noted that the front has more presence, and the bump out is not visible on the right side, and he can add texture to the front and corner, but he understood the Commission's concerns. Mr. Redmon replied the tree is not going to solve the problem and suggested carrying the pitched roof shape back over part of the deck and make the bump out on the left side not the full length of the rear of the house but pull back from both ends and keep the pitched roof character at both ends.

Ms. Pauli suggested adding another parking space if you push the back and can add volume on the top floor.

Mr. Redmon reiterated the need to see more design options and 3-d views and that the use of aerial 3d models will also be very useful. Mr. Hayes asked for clarification, aerial or just 3-d renderings? Mr. Hsiao answered that they would like to see both types of 3-d renderings, they need to see context on the street and aerial for overall effect.

Mr. Hayes asked if the Commission wants to keep the building, he expressed concern with having to work with the existing building which is not economically feasible and would have more adverse impact on the neighbors (jacking the building up and bring in more steel). Mr. Redmon answered that's not what has been proposed, the Commission is working off of what has been proposed.

Mr. Hsiao explained the Commission wants to see further development of the design, more options/ideas and look at the volumetric issues and relationship with neighborhood. He also restated that they are not suggesting at this point to preserve the building, they want to see more ideas.

Mr. Quinn stated that they will meet and come up with solutions.

Mr. Redmon motioned to continue the hearing to allow the applicant to provide more design development of the overall project, and not confined to preserving the existing profile of the existing house. Ms. McMahan seconded, and the motion carried 4-0.

Ms. Crosbie announced Ms. McMahan's resignation from the Commission and thanked her for her years of serving on the Commission and that she will be missed. Mr. Hsiao reiterated how much she will be missed and that it has been a pleasure working with her and hopes to see her in the neighborhood.

The July 5, 2022 minutes were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on August 1, 2022Panelists:

Matt Hayes	matt.smvh@gmail.com
Milton Yu	myu@pqarch.com
Peter Quinn	pquinn@pqarch.com
Erin Hossaini-Fitch	eh@verdantla.com
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Attendees:

Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
Suzanne Lee	7-9 Goodman Road