

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Notice of Decision

Permit No: #230
Address: 220 Alewife Brook Parkway
Applicant Owner: Hotel Tria Associates, LLC
Zoning District: Business A District / Alewife Overlay District
Application Date: September 13, 2007
Public Hearing: October 16, 2007
Planning Board Decision: October 16, 2007
Date of Filing Decision: December 13, 2007

2007 DEC 13 P 4: 45
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Application: Alewife Overlay District Special Permits for height in excess of 35 feet (Section 20.95.2) and reduction in Open Space requirement (Section 20.96.1); a special permit for waiver of the glass area and open space requirements (Section 19.51.2 and 19.56 and 19.59); and a special permit for expansion of a non-conforming structure (Section 8.22.2(a)).

Decision: GRANTED with conditions

Appeals if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board
For more information concerning this decision, please call Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, TTY: 617-349-4621, or lpaden@cambridgema.gov

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Application Documents

1. Alewife Overlay District Special Permit Application dated September 13, 2007 including site plan, elevations, architect's narrative, dimensional form and supporting statement for a special permit. Plans dated August 20, 2007 entitled "Tria Hotel, renovations and Guest Room Additions, Special Permit Application Drawing Set."
2. Letter to Liza Paden from James Rafferty, dated October 12, 2007 attaching Revised Site Plan, Enhanced Elevations, and Architect's Narrative.

Other Documents

1. "Presentation to the City of Cambridge Planning Board: Tria Hotel Renovations and Guest Room Additions" dated October 16, 2007
2. Memo to the Cambridge Planning Board from Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation, dated September 25, 2007.
3. Letter to the Cambridge Planning Board from Richard McKinnon re: Planning Board Case # 230, Hotel Tria LLC, dated October 16, 2007.
4. Site Plan, A1.0, dated 12/7/07.

Findings

Based on its review of the Application Documents, other documents submitted, testimony taken at the public hearing and submitted in written form to the Board, and review and

consideration of the relevant special permit criteria the Planning Board makes the following findings:

1. Conformance with the criteria for issuance of a Special Permit within the Alewife Overlay Districts, Section 20.93.2.

In issuing a special permit for any relief within the Alewife Overlay Districts, the special permit granting authority is to be guided by the purposes of the Overlay Districts (Section 20.92), the objectives and design guidelines for development contained in the *Concord Alewife Plan*, November 2005, and the general standards for issuance of a special permit (Section 10.43). The project is located within the Shopping Center District.

The project involves limited modifications and additions to a long-existing use, building and site development. The changes being approved are modest in scope but nevertheless advance in incremental ways the objectives of the Alewife Overlay Districts in general, the objectives of the Shopping Center District in particular, and the general urban design objectives for the city as a whole.

a. Purposes of the Alewife Overlay Districts

(1) Encourage forms of development, mix of uses, and range of improvements that will facilitate and encourage walking, biking and transit use;

Modest improvements will be made to the landscaping on the site, particularly along the Parkway edge, which will create a more pleasant environment for both bicyclists and pedestrians.

(2) Preserve and enhance the capacity to store floodwater, recharge groundwater and manage the collection and disposal of stormwater in ways that add to the quality and visual appeal of the built environment;

There will not be wholesale changes to the characteristics of the site, which would be the case if the project involved a total redevelopment of the parcel. Nevertheless, the project will require review and approval of a stormwater management system for the new construction by the Department of Public Works and the modest additions of landscaped green areas around the building and in the parking lot will provide modest stormwater management and permeability benefits in a visually pleasing way.

(3) Minimize the negative impact of new development on the adjacent Cambridge Highlands residential neighborhood;

The project is well removed from the Cambridge Highlands neighborhood and will have no direct impact on it.

(4) Integrate the entire area through the creation of new pedestrian paths, roadways, green spaces and bridges that will facilitate movement within the several Districts.

No new pathways will be created but the Parkway edge will be made more pedestrian friendly and the Permittee has indicated a willingness to work with the adjacent land

owner to explore creating direct connections between the project and the adjacent shopping center, which is a major destination for residents at the hotel;

(5). Introduce a significant component of residential living and support retail services to enhance the area's appeal for all persons who come to work, shop as well as live within the Districts;

The hotel use, long present on the site, will continue; No housing will be constructed.

(6) Create an identity and sense of place for the Alewife Districts that parallels the development of the historic urban centers that characterize much of Cambridge.

The development permitted by the issuance of these special permits is quite modest and does not substantially change the character of the site and its fundamental relationship to adjoining properties. Nevertheless, the visual impact of the site and hotel structure will be improved and the relationship of the finished construction on private abutters and the public realm will be enhanced. A substantially reoriented development on the site in the image of more dense historic urban settings in Cambridge will have to await a more substantial redevelopment of the site at some point in the future.

b. Goals for the Shopping Center District in the Concord - Alewife Plan

The goals for the Shopping Center District very much mirror the purposes of the Overlay Districts outlined above: encouraging a mix of uses including housing, site and building designs that create a walkable environment, improved circulation particularly within the shopping center precinct, enhanced accessibility to the T and other locations within Alewife. As indicated above, the approved development advances those objectives modestly, in proportion to the work being proposed. The use continues to be a good one for the district, the addition to the hotel is architecturally pleasing and a substantial improvement on the somewhat disjointed building forms being replaced, the additional green landscaping enhances the visual impact of the site on the general public and immediate private abutters, and opens up the possibility for more direct pedestrian connections between this site and abutting properties.

c. Permitted Height within the Alewife Overlay Districts, Shopping Center District - Section 20.95.20

The height of the proposed building addition (45 feet) is consistent with the existing building and allows floors of the addition to line up with the floors of the existing structure, and on the exterior allows the new and old buildings to be presented in an organized fashion. The height is less than the general base height of fifty-five feet in the Shopping Center District and well below the seventy to eighty-five foot maximum height permitted in that District. The Board finds that the 45-foot height requested for the building addition is appropriate given the large site on which the hotel sits, the height of the portion of the existing hotel structure that will remain, and the placement of the hotel on the site well removed from abutting buildings on adjacent properties, which themselves range in height from 12 to 45 feet.

d. At grade open space and permeable area requirements - Section 20.96.1

The site, developed many years ago when open space was generally not required for commercial uses, is non-conforming as to the open space requirements of both the Alewife Overlay Districts and the Building and Site Design Requirements of Section 19.50, both of which provisions require a 15% allocation on the lot. At ca. 13.7% the project falls somewhat short of the requirement. Nevertheless, the Planning Board finds it appropriate to waive the requirement for open space to the lesser amount to be provided, as that additional open space on the site will substantially improve the visual qualities of development on the site, contribute to the objective of the Alewife Overlay Districts to provide more open space on all lots, and is a reasonable amount given the limited scale of redevelopment being proposed on the site.

The number of at grade parking spaces on the site will be reduced, to make room for additional landscaping along the public sidewalk at the Parkway edge and elsewhere on the site. New green areas will be created primarily along Alewife Brook Parkway at the entrances to the property, adjacent to the shopping center lot, and alongside the new guest room wing. The dumpster will be relocated on the lot in order to be out of view site from Alewife Brook Parkway, tucked behind the existing adjacent office building and to allow more green area in more visible locations. An outdoor terrace area with table and chairs will be constructed adjacent to the Starbucks retail venue.

The Board finds that there is an opportunity to create more landscaped green area in the front yard as required in the both the Alewife Overlay Districts and in the Parkway Overlay District through the elimination of four of the proposed parking spaces shown on the revised site plan submitted to the Board in a memo from the applicant's attorney, James Rafferty dated October 12, 2007.

It is anticipated that the permeability requirement of the Alewife Overlay Districts will be waived through approval from the Department of Public Works for the installation of additional stormwater management measures as permitted in Section 20.96.1

2. Conformance with the criteria for issuance of a special permit to waive the Building and Site Plan Requirements of Section 19.50.

The approved development will add 21,536 square foot onto the existing hotel building. That Gross Floor Area does not trigger the provisions of Section 19.50 which only apply to new buildings or additions to existing buildings of 25,000 square feet or more.. Therefore the minimum glass area and minimum open space requirements of that section (19.56 and 19.59) do not apply to the project and do not have to be waived by the Planning Board.

3. Conformance with the criteria for issuance of a special permit to expand a non-conforming structure, Section 8.22.2 (a).

Development on the site is non-conforming with regard to a number of site development standards of the Parkway and Alewife Overlay Districts However, the

hotel use at this location has been in existence for over thirty years and is permitted as of right in the District. The property abuts a large retail complex and a multistory office building. These uses will not be adversely affected by an increase in the number of hotel rooms at the property and by the modest increase in the size of the building. The addition will be built and operated in accordance with all applicable building, health, and safety requirements and within the dimensional limits of the Alewife Overlay Districts. The net increase in building on the site is only 6,777 square feet, within the limits imposed by Section 8.22.2 (a)

4. Conformance to the General Special Permit Criteria, – Section 10.43.

Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest.

The planning Board finds that the requested special permits should be granted, as the project authorized will not be a detriment to the public interest because:

a. The requirements of the zoning ordinance can or will be met:

The proposed addition conforms to the use and dimensional requirements of the District as set forth in Article 20.000 after the issuance of the special permit relief granted in this Decision.

b. Traffic generated or pattern of access or egress would not cause congestion hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character for the following reasons:

The existing driveways, parking and egress patterns will be unchanged by the proposed addition. And as the number of parking spaces at the site will not increase (and a very active shuttle service is already operating at the site) it is not likely that there will be generated more traffic to the site after the expansion. However, it is recognized that the arrangement of exits and entries is not ideal as they are located at the Alewife Brook Parkway rotary where many travel desire lines intersect. The Board, however, realizes that there is probably no better arrangement for access to serve the needs of persons coming to the site. Therefore the Board is comfortable with minor site plan revisions to help the entry points operate more safely for cars, bicyclists and pedestrians.

c. The continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would not be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed uses for the following reasons:

The property is abutted by a large retail and an office complex with many other smaller commercial buildings in the vicinity. These uses will not be adversely affected by an increase in the modest number of hotel rooms at the property.

d. Nuisance of hazard would not be created to the detriment of the health, safety

and/or welfare of the occupants of the proposed use or the citizens of the City for the following reasons:

The hotel will be built and operated in accordance with all applicable building, health, and safety requirements. The hotel is a good complement to the other uses in the Alewife area.

e. For other reasons, the proposed use would not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district or otherwise derogate from the intent or purpose of this Ordinance for the following reasons:

The hotel use at this location has been in existence for over thirty years and is permitted as of right in the District. This modest expansion is fully consistent with all applicable zoning regulations.

f. The new use or building construction is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

The Board finds that the proposed development is consistent with the City's Urban Design Objectives as set forth below.

(1) Section 19.31: New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.

The proposed addition does not significantly alter the pattern of development that has existed on this site for decades. Its relationship to abutting properties remains essentially the same. There are, however, small improvements to the site plan, particularly with the greening of the parking lot, that point to the desired future for an Alewife that is more urban, green and pedestrian friendly.

(2) Section 19.32: Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.

Improvements to the site, proportional to the modifications to the existing development that is being approved in this permit, will significantly improve the pedestrian friendly character of the site.

(3) Section 19.33: The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.

The site, as it was developed in the past, does not meet current environmental standards. However, proportional improvements to the site in that functional area are being made.

(4) Section 19.34: Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.

The modest increase in rooms at the hotel will not overburden city infrastructure.

(5) Section 19.35: New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.

The project is taking small steps to advance the urban design objectives for the Alewife area outlined in Section 20.90 and in the Concord-Alewife Plan.

(6) Section 19.36: Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.

No housing will be constructed as part of this proposal.

(7) Section 19.37: Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.

Modest landscaping improvements will be made to the site as discussed above.

Decision

Based on a review of the application documents, comments made at the public hearing, and based on the above findings, the Planning Board Grants the requested Special Permits for additional height (Section 20.95.20), and for reduction in required Open Space requirement Special Permit (Section 20.96.1), for expansion of a non-conforming structure (Section 8.22.2(a)) subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the revised plans and application documents submitted to the Planning Board on October 12, 2007 as referenced above, except as modified by this Decision. The Permittee shall be required to eliminate at least four parking spaces shown on those plans that abut the Alewife Brook Parkway and convert their area to landscaped green space with appropriately sized trees.
2. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (CDD). Before the issuance of the Building Permit for the project, the CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Permit. Accompanying those plans shall be a final landscape plan, for review and approval by the CDD, for the parking lot and other green area on the site plan, detailing the plant material and other features to be installed.
3. The applicant shall initiate contact with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to explore opportunities for additional safety improvements along Alewife Brook Parkway in regards to rotary access, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and a narrowing of the curb cut opening where the driveway of the property meets the sidewalk prior to the Certificate of Occupancy. The applicant will report the results of discussions with the DCR.
4. The applicant is strongly encouraged to work with the abutting property owner to explore the joint creation of an appropriate and useful pedestrian connection between their property and the adjacent shopping center site.

5. The applicant shall address issues raised in the letter to the Planning Board from Susan Clippinger, dated September 25, 2007. Specifically, the applicant shall eliminate four proposed surface parking spaces identified and replacing them with appropriate landscaping with an emphasis on appropriately sized trees as shown on Site Plan A1.0, dated 12/7/07 as attached to this decision.

6. The applicant will cooperate with the abutting property owner in any discussions regarding pedestrian access and safety along Concord Lane.

7. All authorized development shall conform to the requirements of the City of Cambridge "Noise Control Ordinance", Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code.

Voting in the affirmative to GRANT the Special Permit were B. Shaw, H. Russell, S. Winter, T. Anninger, P. Winters, and T. Cohen, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Planning Board necessary to grant a Special Permit.

For the Planning Board,


Barbara Shaw, Chair

A copy of this decision #230 shall be filed with the office of the City Clerk. Appeals if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on December 13, 2007, Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision. No appeal has been filed.

DATE:

City Clerk of Cambridge

Appendix I – Dimensional Form

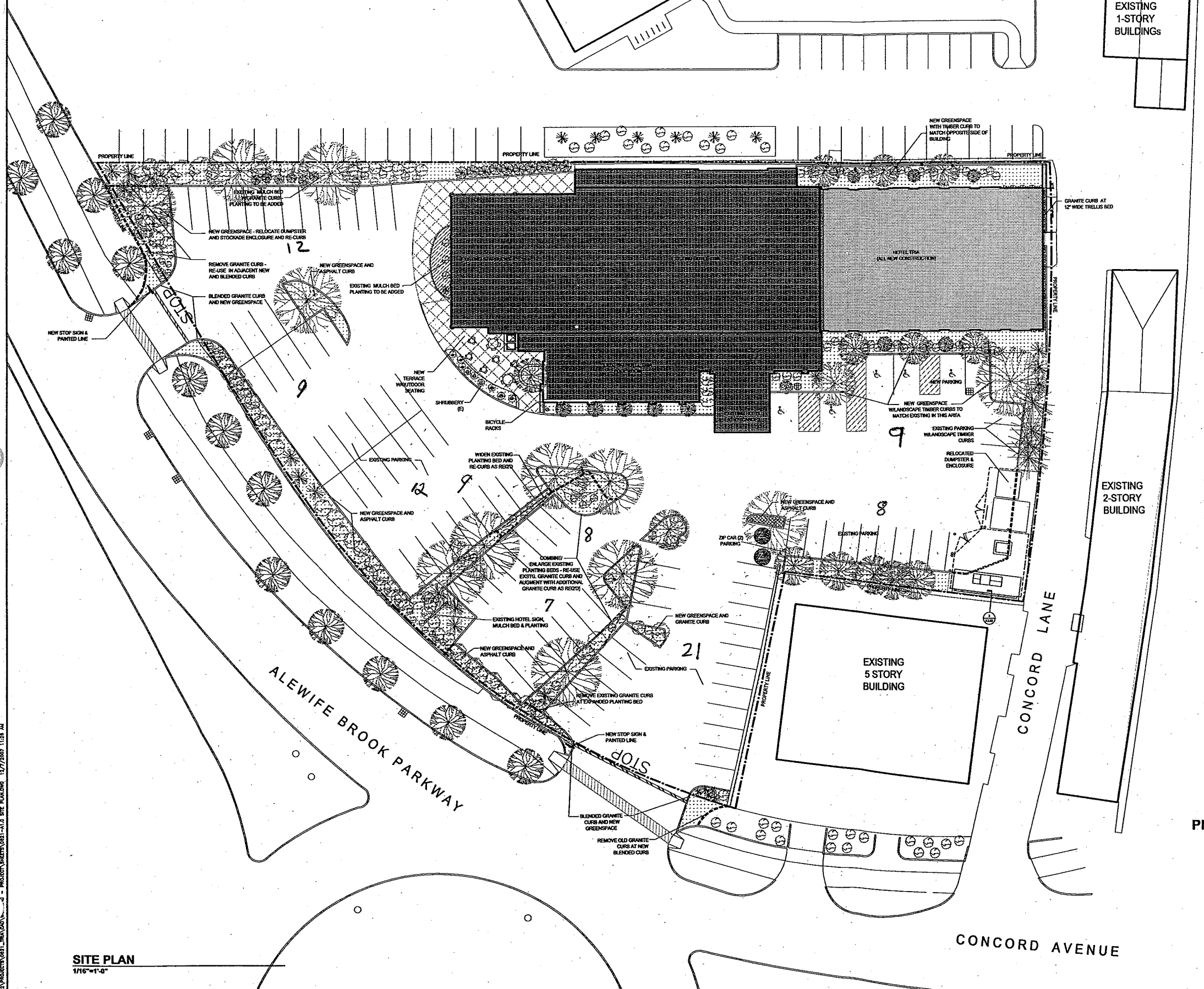
Special Permit #	Address: 220 Alewife Brook Parkway			
	Allowed/Required	Existing	Proposed	Granted
Total FAR				
Residential	1.0	0	0	
Non-Residential	1.0	.77	.84	.84
Inclusionary Bonus				
Total GFA in Sq. Ft.				
Residential	NA			
Non-Residential	68,907	52,982	57,759	57,759
Inclusionary Bonus	NA			
Max. Height				
Range of heights		27' - 41'	41' - 45'	41' - 45'
Lot Size	5,000	68,907	68,907	68,907
Lot area/du	NA			
Total Dwelling Units	NA			
Base units				
Inclusionary units				
Min. Lot Width	50	170	170	170
Min. Yard Setbacks				
Alewife Brook, Front	25'	103	103	103
Strip Mall, Left Side	None	2	2	2
Entrance	None	82	82	82
Concord Lane	25	3	3	3
Total % Open Space				
Usable	NA			
Other	10%	11.3%	12.4%	12.4%
Off Street Parking				
Min #	39	115	No change	95
Max #				
Handicapped		4		5
Zip Car				Plus 2
Bicycle Spaces	1 per 10	0	No change	No Change
Loading Bays	NA	0	No Change	No Change

EXISTING BUILDING -
WHOLE FOODS AND
CAMBRIDGE WINE & SPIRITS

EXISTING
1-STORY
BUILDINGS

Tria Hotel
Renovations
& Guestroom Additions
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Carpenter & Company, Inc.



SITE PLAN
1/16"=1'-0"

Number	Revision	Date

*As Approved
w/ Parking Spaces 10/12/07*

Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc.

Architects and Planners
2050 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02138
617 492-7000 Fax 492-7007

Job # 0621.00
Project TRI HOTEL RENOVATIONS & GUEST ROOM ADDITIONS
Drawn by DM Checked DL
Date 07 DECEMBER, 2007

Scale 1"=20'

Drawing Title
SITE PLAN

A1.0

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