



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: February 23, 2021

Re: Special Permit **PB #358, 34-40 Hampshire Street - Continued Hearing**

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This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 34-40 Hampshire Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Update

Since the last Planning Board meeting on February 11, 2020, the Applicant has worked with staff to respond to comments and questions raised in the initial review of the application. The Applicant's recent submission provides a revised set of plans and dimensions with additional information about the project in narrative and graphic form. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes and is supplementary to CDD's initial memo on this proposal.

Planning Board Action

The current Application (as revised) is proposing to demolish the two existing buildings on a site consisting of three parcels on Hampshire Street, to construct a new 6-story hotel building with 70 guest rooms, parking for 16 cars in the basement with valet service, 4 long-term bicycle parking spaces, 12 short-term bicycle parking spaces, and 1 loading bay. The proposed building will have a total of 23,030 square feet of Gross Floor Area (GFA) – which excludes areas exempt from GFA calculations either as-of-right or by special permit – and a total of six stories above grade.

The Applicant is seeking a Special Permit from the Planning Board to modify bicycle parking standards to locate the short-term bicycle parking more than 50 feet from a pedestrian entrance to the building, pursuant to Section 6.108 of the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the project needs a few Special Permits normally granted by the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA). The project requires special permits for hotel use in IB district per Section 4.32.i(2), for reduction of required parking per Section 6.35.1, to modify access for off-street parking per Section 6.43.5, and for exemption of basement area in the calculation of Gross Floor Area (GFA). The BZA would typically grant these special permits, but since the proposal requires Planning Board review, the Planning Board may grant all necessary special permits per Section 10.45.

Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

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Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(detailed zoning text on following pages)</i>
<p>General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43) – applicable to special permit for hotel use in Industry B district (Section 4.31.i(2))</p>	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.
<p>Special Permit to reduce required parking (Section 6.35.1)</p>	<p>Lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood; or will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including assisting in provision of affordable housing units.</p>
<p>Special Permit to modify access for off-street parking (Section 6.43.5)</p>	<p>Provisions for layout of parking spaces can be modified with a valet parking arrangement for the parking facility.</p>
<p>Special Permit to modify bicycle parking standards (Section 6.108)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal is consistent with the purpose of Section 6.100 and that the Bicycle Parking Plan proposes a quantity, design and arrangement of bicycle parking that will serve bicycle users in a way that is sufficiently comparable, given the circumstances of the specific project, to the bicycle parking that would be required under the regulations of Section 6.100. • The Bicycle Parking Plan will satisfactorily serve the needs of all expected users, based on quantitative and/or qualitative evidence provided by the Applicant.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(detailed zoning text on following pages)</i>
Special Permit for exemption of basement area in the calculation of Gross Floor Area (GFA)	The uses occupying such exempted GFA support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located.

Planning Board Comments from the First Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the hearing on 2/11/2020 in addition to comments from staff memos:

- Consider modifications to forecourt and valet parking operations to remove valet parking from Hampshire Street in order to avoid future bike lane conflicts, and provide direct access from the drop-off forecourt to the lobby.
- Address concerns regarding construction in the immediate vicinity of the adjacent existing building on Portland Street.
- Review the massing of the building at the street corner and the two-story base.
- Explore design improvements to make the architectural treatment of the penthouse less incongruous with the lower floors of the building.
- Consider design revisions to improve the façade and main entrance of the building.
- Review impact of proposed loading dock on Portland Street.
- Provide additional information on rooftop mechanical screening and façade materials.

CDD Staff Comments on New Materials

Planning and Zoning

The revised proposal retains the numerous aspects of the original proposal that the Planning Board found positive, and includes changes in response to many of the comments from Planning Board members and staff. The revised proposal indicates a minor change in the footprint that slightly increases the distance to the adjacent existing building on Portland Street. The total area of the building is 24,951 square feet, including the basement area that is seeking a special permit to be exempted from GFA calculation. The total number of guest rooms have increased from 68 to 70. There are no changes to the proposed number of off-street parking spaces and short term bicycle parking spaces, but the long term bicycle parking spaces have increased from 2 to 4. The valet service operations program has been changed so that guest pick-up and drop-off are proposed to be located in the access forecourt on Portland Street. The required Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Plan for this project has been approved.

The revised materials provide sufficient information regarding zoning compliance.

Urban Design

The applicant met with staff to review the design as it was developed in response to Planning Board and staff comments. Many of the design changes recommended by the Board have been incorporated into the revised materials and staff are generally pleased with the revisions.

Comments on the new materials:

- The constructability of the rainscreen adjacent to the proximate neighbor has been addressed by further setting back the building from the property line. These setbacks appear to provide sufficient space for staging installation of the rainscreen.
- The relationship between the penthouse and the lower portions of the building has improved. The architectural treatment of the 6th floor now references the scale of the openings below. It also incorporates more solid through use of the porcelain tiles, which carries the architectural treatment of the building's piers to the roof. Thicker mullions and shading devices have also been added to the windows and curtainwall, which gives the penthouse more visual weight.
- Similarly, the alignment of the windows and stronger vertical arrangement of the facades resolves some of the concerns the Board had about the visual unity of the building. These refinements also respond to the Board's comments about the formal expression of the building's structure.
- While the two-story base with the corniced second floor remains as originally proposed, the curve has been brought down to the first floor as suggested by Board members. This creates a striking feature at the street corner and more breathing room for pedestrians. Balconies have been added to the second-floor hotel rooms at the corner.
- The appearance of the forecourt has been enhanced. The porcelain tile now wraps into the interior as was suggested by the Board, and unique lighting is proposed. It appears that the façade trim has changed from copper to a dark bronze, although the rendering on Sheet A2.6 is not updated. While this appears to create an elegant combination with the taupe-colored porcelain, it will be important to ensure that the bronze is not too bleak.
- According to the elevations and perspective views, the mechanical equipment appears reasonably well-screened. Staff will require detailed review of all selected HVAC equipment to ensure that the rooftop maintains a clean profile, and that equipment is orderly and symmetrically arranged.
- The final design of the sidewalks, including location of street trees and any street furniture elements, should be developed by CDD, TP&T and DPW.

DPW Staff Comments on New Materials

- Consistent with the comment made by the DPW in their 1/30/20 memo to the Board, the Application should acknowledge that they are aware of the Standards of the Required Stormwater Control Permit. While they mentioned that they have made some considerations for Stormwater, they did not specifically acknowledge the standards that need to be met. It is also worth noting that since the later round of hearings, it has become standard for Special Permit projects to design and size stormwater mitigation for the projected 2030 design storm events, to ensure that the system will function effectively for the life of the structure.

- We would anticipate reviewing the specifics of each tree location with respect to all of the demands for space in the Right of Way (Utilities, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.) as we review the engineered plans for the development, and so would suggest that the final permit language reflect the City staff's ability to modify the exact placement of any tree or street furnishings as needed.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Review of streetscape improvements on Hampshire and Portland Streets, including the design of the sidewalks, and street tree plantings.
- Review of all exterior materials, colors, and details, as well as review of a materials mock-up by city staff prior to any exterior materials being ordered. Coordination of the mockup's location with city staff is requested.
- Review of exterior lighting, which should follow the recommendations of the City's Draft Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.
- Review of glass specifications: ground floor and upper floor glazing visible light transmittance and reflectance.
- Review of all rooftop mechanical equipment, appurtenances and associated visual/acoustical screening.