



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: May 30, 2018

Re: Special Permit **PB #329, 3-5 Linnaean Street – Continued Hearing**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 3-5 Linnaean Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Update

Since the last Planning Board meeting, 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 additional information about the project in narrative and graphic form. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes.

Planning Board Action

As a reminder, the project is proposing to create 5 additional one-bedroom units in the basement of the existing 37-unit multi-family residential building located at 3-5 Linnaean Street, within the Basement Housing Overlay District. The proposal initially included addition of 5 long-term bicycle parking spaces in the basement of the existing building, but currently proposes 13 bicycle parking spaces in the basement. No new off-street vehicular parking is proposed.

The project is within the Basement Housing Overlay District and requires a Special Permit for the creation of new basement dwelling units per Section 20.600. The project is also requesting that required parking for the additional units be waived, which is allowed by Paragraph (e) of Section 20.630. The application also references the general criteria for reduction of required parking in Section 6.35.1. The applicable special permit findings are summarized below.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Conversion of Basement into Dwelling Units (Section 20.600)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project complies with all the requirements set forth in Section 20.640. • The project meets the affordability standards as set forth in Section 20.650.
Reduction in required parking (Section 20.630, Paragraph e; Application also references Section 6.35.1)	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
General special permit criteria (Section 10.43)	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 (see appendix).

Planning Board Comments from First Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the August 29, 2017 hearing. The Applicant has provided some responses in the submitted materials.

- Provide renderings and elevations showing the access points of the buildings, changes to windows, other exterior changes to the building, changes to landscaping.
- Site plan should include information about site changes, including excavation, new pathways and entrances.
- Careful consideration of exterior alternations to windows, ramps, stairs etc. to complement the existing building.
- Provide street parking analysis at night and discuss TDM measures for the new units.
- Provide plans for bicycle parking, including access routes, and confirm whether the plans comply with zoning standards.
- Provide information about collection and storage of trash.

Staff Comments on New Materials

Questions were raised previously about the bicycle parking requirements. Per Section 20.630, one new long-term bicycle parking space is required for each new unit created in the Basement Housing Overlay District. The spaces would need to meet the access, layout, and design standards of Article 6.000, though a separate special permit from the Planning Board could be sought to modify those standards. For example, bicycle parking spaces must be at least eight feet long, bicycle racks must be spaced at least three feet side-to-side, and spaces must be accessible by a minimum five-foot-wide access path except at doors and other openings.

The revised plans show a total of 13 bicycle parking spaces, of which 10 are labeled “long-term” and three are labeled “short-term,” although all bicycle parking spaces would be considered “long-term” because they are provided in the basement of the building. Short-term spaces are not required, but if they were provided, they would be located near the main building entrance where visitors can use them. Dimensional details and bicycle rack details are needed to show that the zoning requirements for bicycle parking design and layout are being met. Also, the ramp is proposed to be 4 feet wide between the proposed concrete walls instead of the required 5 feet. If the required standards can be met, the bicyclist must still negotiate six doors in the internal access route (Sheet A-18) to reach the bike storage room. Therefore, it is recommended that flat stairway channels be installed along the edge of the two external stairs to access the new external door in the rear of the building as it will provide an additional direct access to the bike storage area.

The Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department has not yet reviewed the proposed plans, and it is recommended that detailed bicycle parking plans be reviewed for compliance prior to issuance of a building permit.

The Planning Board’s comments about the project design principally focused on the impacts the new basement units would have on the public environment. Additional plan materials have been provided that clarify the details associated with the entrances to each new basement unit, including stair and railing dimensions, and façade alterations. Across the Linnaean Street façade, the existing basement windows openings will be lowered by 1’6”. The windows will replicate the existing, and the new doors will be recessed and trimmed in wood, which is consistent with the fabric of the building. The proposed openings are generally in proportion and scale with the existing building; however, further information regarding specific window and door types, including divided lights and muntin details, should be provided as part of the continuing review process. The wrought iron railings around each new unit entry, while quite tall due to Building Code requirements, are consistent with the character of the building.

A significant improvement has been the preparation of a detailed site landscape plan, which clarifies site changes associated with creating the new entrances and pathways, and proposes additional landscape improvements across the entire site. Landscaping along the street edge will include ornamental trees, grasses and boxwoods, which will help to define the streetscape, and complement the building and the residential context. The proposed landscape treatments also address the grade changes across the site, and will buffer the appearance of the tall guardrails around the new entrances. In response to public comments at the last hearing, landscape improvements are also proposed for the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Linnaean Street, including a new bench added to the sidewalk edge. The bench will be nestled within the existing privet hedge facing Massachusetts Avenue, which is the approach suggested in the *Draft Massachusetts Avenue, Harvard to Porter Square-“The Avenue” Streetscape Master Plan, 2012*. As also suggested in that document, an additional seating opportunity could be explored for the Linnaean Street sidewalk.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be further studied by the Applicant, either in preparing revised materials if the Planning Board continues the hearing to a future date, or as

conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit. Further development of plans, including:

- Landscape details including plant species, railings, and walkways.
- Bicycle parking and access (to be reviewed by the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department).
- Exterior façade changes, including new window and door details.
- Utility connections and stormwater management measures (to be reviewed by the Department of Public Works, as outlined in the City Engineer’s memo dated July 11, 2017). Prior to approval of the building permit the Landscape plan shall be reviewed against the Civil Site plan to ensure that none of the proposed plantings will have an adverse impact on the long term operation and maintenance of the proposed drainage system.