



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: August 25, 2021

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

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

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 March 2, 2021, 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 an 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.

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 3/2/2021 in addition to comments from staff memos:

- Consider revisions to the loading and drop-off area in consultation with TP+T staff.
- Conduct additional public outreach.
- Provide more details for the rooftop mechanical screening.

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 includes minor changes to the design with no changes in the total area of the building or total number of guest rooms. There are no changes to the proposed number of off-street parking spaces and bicycle parking spaces. The long-term and short-term bicycle parking spaces are located in the vehicular forecourt area. As per zoning (Section 6.104.1), long-term bicycle parking located adjacent to vehicle parking and loading facilities should have a physical barrier to prevent damage to bicycle by other vehicles. No such physical barrier is provided in the proposal. At the very least, protective bollards are recommended to protect the long-term bicycle parking area from the turning vehicles.

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.

Comments on the new materials:

- Since the transit forecourt and vehicular turnaround will now be open to view from the sidewalk, it would be helpful if a perspective rendering into that space from the point of view of a pedestrian was provided. The street perspective appears very dark and it is difficult to discern what a pedestrian’s experience of the revised entry will be.
- The height of the mechanical screen has increased to better screen the rooftop equipment, which Board members had asked to be clarified.

- While there appear to be no other design changes, the glazing combined with the black trim and the charcoal gray spandrel panels seems very dark and bleak in the renderings. The rooftop screening also appears to be a darker metallic color, which draws more attention to the louvers. A lighter grey tone, which is indicated on the elevation drawings, would be more appropriate for these elements. Additionally, the visible light transmittance of the glass should be as high as possible to help mitigate an overly dark appearance.
- It is also important to note that the awning will require additional City approvals to extend over the public sidewalk on Hampshire Street, and therefore cannot be guaranteed.

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:

- Final design of the vehicular forecourt area shall be reviewed and approved by TP+T ahead of submitting building permit application.
- Final location and design of long-term bicycle parking spaces shall be reviewed and approved by TP+T ahead of submitting building permit application. Safety bollards are recommended to protect the long-term bicycle parking area from the turning vehicles.
- 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 to ensure that the rooftop maintains a clean profile, and that equipment is orderly and symmetrically arranged.