






English Manor (Bel Pre Wood Par 3), Mandatory Referral, MR2019002

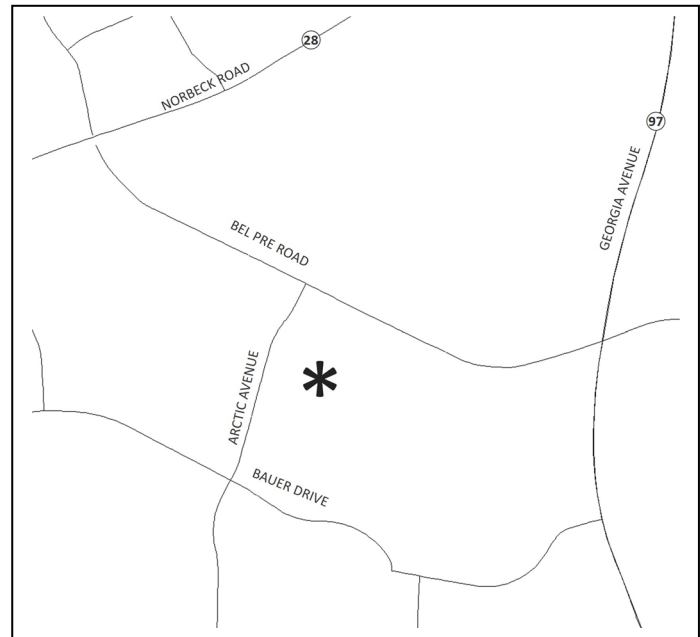
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Completed: 10-11-18

Description

Mandatory Referral to allow for increased administrative office use at a former elementary school by adding parking areas and associated stormwater management facilities.

Location: 4511 Bestor Drive, Rockville, Maryland
Master Plan: 1994 *Aspen Hill Master Plan*
Zone: R-90
Size: 8.25 acres
Acceptance Date: July 26, 2018
Applicant: Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
Review Basis: Mandatory Referral, MD Land Use Code § 20-301



Summary

- Staff recommends approval to transmit comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).
- The proposed project allows for increased office space capacity by adding 90 parking spaces and associated stormwater management.
- A new parking lot entrance is proposed on Dabney Drive. Residents on Dabney Drive disagree with development of this new entrance.
- The project is exempt from Chapter 22A, Forest Conservation Law.
- The Planning Board’s action on a Mandatory Referral is advisory.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval, with the following comments to be transmitted to MCPS:

1. MCPS should work with Dabney Drive residents to resolve issues with adding a vehicular entrance to the expanded parking lot.
2. MCPS should widen the substandard four-foot wide sidewalks to five-foot wide sidewalks along the Property frontages of Bestor Drive and Dabney Drive, in accordance with the Road Code Standard.
3. MCPS should work with the Montgomery County Department of Parks to development a Maintenance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to replace the expired MOU.
4. MCPS should submit work with the Montgomery County Department of Parks to ensure ADA accessibility to the recreational facilities.
5. MCPS should contact the Montgomery County Community Use of Public Facilities office with a timetable to re-open the site for permitting upon project completion.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides Staff's review of the English Manor Mandatory Referral for the expansion of parking areas and associated stormwater management, submitted by MCPS pursuant to the Maryland Land Use Article, Section 20-301. The Planning Board's action on a Mandatory Referral is advisory.

Site Description

The Property (outlined in red in Figure 1) is located at 4511 Bestor Drive, which is west of Georgia Avenue, south of Bel Pre Road, and east of Arctic Avenue in the Aspen Hill community.

The Property is within the boundaries of the 1994 *Aspen Hill Master Plan*. The Property fronts on Bestor Drive to the south and abuts single-family residential properties on the east and west, and across Dabney Drive on the north. Vehicular access to the site is currently provided solely from Bestor Drive.



Figure 1: Site and Vicinity

English Manor was a public elementary school until 1980, when MCPS closed the school and sold the Property to Montgomery County. From 1981 to 1998, the County leased the building to Creative Education Associates. The building was then leased to the Children's Learning Center from 1998 to 2013. From 2013 to 2015, the building was leased to The School for Tomorrow. MCPS has recently taken the Property back from the County and is using it for administrative offices and training space.

While the Property is now owned by MCPS, the Montgomery County Department of Parks maintains the permitted play field and playgrounds adjacent to Dabney Drive.

Project Description

The proposed parking improvements will add 90 parking spaces to the existing 42 spaces to bring the total number of spaces up to 132 spaces. As shown on Figure 2, the proposal includes converting an asphalt play area into a parking lot, with a new drive aisle that connects the parking lot to the existing, vehicular entrance on Bestor Drive. MCPS also plans to add spaces to the existing parking lot and provide a new entrance to this parking lot on Dabney Drive, also shown on Figure 2. Increasing the amount of parking within the Property will reduce on-street parking by employees and visitors to the site.

The Applicant is also adding:

- stormwater management facilities;
- pedestrian facilities to improve ADA accessibility;
- bike racks; and
- landscaping to buffer adjacent properties from impacts.



Figure 2 Proposed Development

ANALYSIS

Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed, additional parking areas within the site are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The parking that will be created by converting the hard surface play area into a parking lot will only require land disturbance to create the associated drive aisle for access to the lot. The landscape plan includes an evergreen shrub border to make sure that car headlights do not shine into houses along Arctic Avenue. There are also existing trees that help provide screening.

The extension to the existing parking lot, with the new entrance on Dabney Drive, maintains the 30-foot setback from residential properties on Blackmon Drive. While several trees will be removed as part of construction, the Applicant has proposed a landscape plan to replace the trees and provide screening.

Transportation

Master-Planned Roadways and Bikeways

Dabney Drive and Bestor Drive are not listed in the 1994 *Aspen Hill Master Plan* and are local or secondary residential streets with at least 60 feet of right-of-way. The existing rights-of-way for the streets surrounding the site are as follows:

- Dabney Drive: 63 to 68 feet wide
- Blackmon Drive: 62 feet wide
- Bestor Drive: 68 feet wide
- Arctic Avenue: 80 feet wide

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The existing sidewalks are four feet wide with a green panel along the two adjacent local streets and along Dabney Drive and Arctic Avenue. There are existing lead-in sidewalks from the two driveway entrances along Bestor Drive. MCPS proposes two lead-in sidewalk connections from the new entrance on Dabney Drive, which includes a five-foot wide sidewalk on the west side of the proposed driveway into the expanded parking area, and lead-in steps (i.e., four-foot wide and non-ADA compliant due to the steep grade) in the northwest corner of the site leading to the recreation fields. Other ADA-compliant sidewalk connections are provided, including into the site from the new proposed handicap parking spaces at both locations within the parking areas.

Environmental Analysis

Environmental Guidelines

Staff approved a Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD No. 42018250E) for the Property on July 6, 2018. The Property has no forest or streams and associated buffers on-site. The proposed project is in compliance with the Environmental Guidelines.

Forest Conservation

The Property is exempt from Article II of the Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22A (Forest Conservation Law), Section 22A-5(t) because the proposed project is a modification to an existing non-residential developed property, and: (1) no more than 5,000 square feet of forest is ever cleared at one time or cumulatively after an exemption is issued; (2) the modification does not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of any forest in a stream buffer or located on property in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan; (3) the modification does not require approval of a preliminary plan of subdivision; and (4) the modification does not increase the developed area by more than 50 percent and the existing development is maintained.

Park Issues

The Montgomery County Department of Parks has maintained the recreational facilities at the Property after 1980, when the school was closed and was sold to Montgomery County. A maintenance agreement between Parks and Montgomery County government was negotiated but expired after 10 years. A year to year agreement has been assumed since that time. Because MCPS now has retaken the Property back, a new maintenance agreement must be written and signed, reflecting the changes in operations and facilities since 1980. The new agreement should outline roles and responsibilities of both Parks and MCPS and include a surveyed delineation of maintenance responsibilities and a list of recreation facilities to be maintained and replaced when necessary. The Department of Parks will also review design drawings for ADA compliance consistent with similar recreational facilities within the park system.

The field at the site is closed to permitted use due to the impeding construction. The Department of Parks and the Montgomery County Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) office should be contacted with a timetable to re-open the site for permitting upon project completion.

Community Concerns

Staff received phone calls from several neighbors directly adjacent to the Property. The neighbors were opposed to the proposed new entrance on Dabney Drive due to potential traffic increases. The Applicant has stated that the additional entrance on Dabney Drive was proposed in response to community suggestion. Staff believes that this entrance increases connectivity to the site but acknowledges that there may be impacts for Dabney Drive residents.

Community Notification

MCPS has coordinated with the surrounding neighbors since 2017 on the proposed project. On October 5, 2018, Staff sent out notifications regarding the Mandatory Referral plan review and scheduled Planning Board date.

CONCLUSION

Staff supports the proposal to add two separate parking areas to the existing site in order to limit on-street parking in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Attachments

1. Site plan
2. Landscape plan

