

TOWN PLANNER REPORT

Middlesex School Faculty Housing
1400 Lowell Rd – Off Pratt Ln.

Report Date: January 25, 2022
Prepared by: Elizabeth Hughes, Town Planner

GENERAL INFORMATION

Owner/Applicant: Middlesex School
1400 Lowell Road
Concord, MA 01742

Engineer: Nitsch Engineering
2 Center Plaza, Suite 430
Boston, MA 02108

Requested Action: Site Plan Approval pursuant to Sections 11.8.7 for the construction of two duplex units of faculty housing.

Location: The site is owned by the Middlesex School and is located on the east side of Lowell Road where Lowell Road forks with Westford Road. Assessor's information is: Map 3F, Parcel 1533.

Size of Tract: 289.85 acres (12,625,866 SF)

Zoning/Existing Land Use: Land The property is located in the Residence AA Zoning District and is developed with academic, athletic, faculty and dormitory buildings comprising the main campus of the Middlesex School. Portions of the site are within wetland, wetland buffer and NHESP estimated and priority habitat areas. A large portion of the property is under a Conservation Restriction.



Surrounding Land Uses/(Zoning): The property is adjacent to parcels within the Residence AA Zoning District on all sides; many have been developed with single-family residences, but overall the density is very low. A portion of the parcel and some of the surrounding parcels are protected by Conservation Restrictions.

Utilities: The site is served by Town water and electric; the site has a private on-site wastewater treatment system.

I. Proposed Project

The School is proposing to construct 4 units of faculty housing in two duplex buildings on the north end of the campus off of Pratt Lane, behind the existing faculty housing. Each unit is 1,485 s.f. with 3 bedrooms. Other related site improvements include new parking areas and driveway, pedestrian walkways, stormwater management infrastructure, utilities, and landscaped areas. Each unit will have a small exclusive use area in front of the unit that is enclosed with a decorative fence. The Applicant states that there will be no increase in students or faculty because of the project. Existing faculty that is living off campus will be relocated on-campus.

II. Zoning Bylaw Review

11.8.7: Site Plan Review for religious uses, educational uses and child care facilities

11.8.7 Site Plan Review for religious uses, educational uses and child care facilities: The purpose of this section is to ensure that all religious and education uses, and all child care facilities are reasonably regulated in regards to bulk and height of structures and determining yard sizes, lot area, setbacks, open space, parking and building coverage requirements. The Planning Board has the authority to place reasonable conditions on the aforementioned issues, but are not permitted to withhold approval of Site Plan Review

11.8.7.1 In reviewing the site plan submittal for religious uses, educational uses and child care facilities, the following issues shall be considered:

(a) Relationship of the bulk and height of structures and adequacy of open spaces to the natural landscape, existing buildings and other community assets in the area and compliance with other requirements of this Bylaw, which includes, but is not limited to, building coverage requirements, yard sizes, lot areas and setbacks.

The proposed project has been appropriately sited within the existing campus in a manner that complements the open spaces and existing buildings. The Building Commissioner has raised issues with the proposed height of the structures. The Applicant has provided revised plans and information to address this issue, but the Building Commissioner has not had sufficient time to review and comment. The structures meet the required 40-foot setback from Lowell Road; however, the Town Planner notes that there is the potential to impact existing trees within that setback area and a Tree Protection Permit will be required.

In a memo dated January 13, 2022, the Water & Sewer Division does not have any issues or concerns with the proposed project and recommends standard conditions of approval regarding water service connections and water conservation.

- (b) Physical layout of the plan as it relates to convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site, the location of driveway openings in relation to traffic or to adjacent streets and, when necessary, compliance with other regulations for the handicapped, minors and the elderly.*

The proposed housing will utilize the existing driveway for the faculty housing. The layout of the parking areas and walkways for the new housing is adequate for convenience and safety for vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site. There are no other regulations for the handicapped, minor or the elderly.

The Community Safety Officer does not have any significant issues or concerns with the proposed project but recommends that there is appropriate fencing and other safety precautions in place during construction.

- (c) Adequacy of the arrangement of parking and loading spaces in relation to the proposed uses of the premises.*

The project provides two parking spaces adjacent to each unit, which is adequate in relation to the proposed residential use.

- (d) Physical lighting of the site, especially the adequacy of the method of exterior lighting for convenience, safety and security within the site and for protection of neighboring properties, roadways and the night sky.*

The Applicant has provided lighting cut-sheets for the proposed exterior building lighting on the units, which is in compliance with the Lighting Bylaw and is adequate for convenience, safety and security within the site and for protection of neighboring properties, roadways and the night sky.

- (e) Protection of adjoining premises against seriously detrimental uses by provision for surface water drainage, sound and sight buffers, and preservation of light and air.*

The Public Works Engineer has reviewed the stormwater drainage report and plans and, in a memo, dated January 14, 2022, has identified various issues or concerns. The Applicant has provided revised plans and information to address those issues, but the Engineering Division has not had sufficient time to review and comment. The front yard setback area along Lowell Road is an existing wooded area that will provide a buffer and help screen the buildings. The proposed project is located within the campus and will have no impact on adjoining premises.

- (f) Adequacy of the methods of disposal of refuse and other wastes resulting from the uses permitted on the site.*

The Public Health Division notes that the proposed project (4 units containing a total of 12 bedrooms) would generate 1,320 gpd of wastewater, using Title 5 design flows. Wastewater will be sent to the school's wastewater treatment plant. Middlesex School is currently served by a wastewater treatment plant which has a NPDES surface water discharge permit (NPDES Permit MA 0102466) for discharge of treated wastewater directly

to Spencer Brook. The NPDES permit is administered and enforced by MA DEP. As such, the Board of Health has no regulatory authority to allow or disallow new wastewater flows to the treatment plant; these approvals or any changes to the NPDES permit must be issued by MA DEP. If MA DEP will not allow new wastewater flows to the treatment plant, the Applicant will need to design and install a Title 5 compliant septic system to accommodate wastewater flows from the new homes. It is recommended that prior to any site work and issuance of a building permit, the Applicant shall obtain any necessary approvals and/or NPDES permit modifications from MA DEP to allow new wastewater flows to the treatment plant. If approval is not granted by MA DEP, the Applicant shall submit to the Health Division for review and approval a Title 5 compliant septic system to accommodate wastewater flows from the new homes.

Trash disposal for the 4 units will be incorporated into the School's current waste management schedule.

(g) Adequacy of fire protection measures

Given the time and distance it takes the Fire Department to get to the School, the Deputy Fire Chief recommends a monitored fire alarm system in the units, and installation of a Knox box on the buildings in a mutually agreeable location with keys for both units. This would allow the Fire Department to gain access to both units for safety reasons should an alarm be triggered in one of the units.

The CMLP Engineering Division does not have any issues or concerns with the proposed project and recommends standard conditions of approval.

(h) Incorporation of sustainability and resiliency principles into the site design that result in a plan that is responsive to the environment and actively contributes to the development of a more sustainable community

The Applicant states that the proposed project incorporates sustainability by reducing the amount of vehicle trips currently required for by the faculty members that will be living in these units, as well as the incorporation of construction methods to increase the energy efficiency of the dwellings. The Sustainability Director supports the use of all electric utilities and encourages the Applicant to evaluate potential opportunities to enhance the building envelope through measures such as insulation and air sealing to ensure optimal sizing of HVAC equipment and efficient use of energy appliances.

IV. Town Planner's Recommendation

The Town Planner recommends that the Planning Board continue the public hearing to February 8th to allow the Engineering Division and Building Commissioner time to review the revised plans and information. The Town Planner does not believe there will be any outstanding issues and suggests a draft decision with conditions be prepared for that meeting.