



**TOWN OF ACTON  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Review Memorandum: 97 Great Road Mixed Building Use Conversion  
July 12, 2023

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), David Honn, Richard Keleher, Holly Ben-Joseph, Thomas Doolittle, and Dean Charter – Select Board liaison.

Proponent in attendance: Leo Bertolami

Documents Reviewed: Drawing Sheets titled: Residential Design, 99<sup>th</sup> Great Road Acton, dated March 26, 2023, prepared by soulveplus and photos of existing building.

P0.1	Title Sheet and Notes
P1.1, P1.2	Existing 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor and Demolition Plan
P1.3, P1.4	Proposed 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor
P2.1, P2.2	Proposed 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor
P3.1	Proposed Roof
P4.1, P4.2, P4.3, P4.4	Existing and Proposed Elevations
P5.1, P5.2, P5.3, P5.4 (3D)	Exterior Views

The proponent permitted and constructed a small 270SF one storey building during phase 1 of development for the Wetherbee plaza in anticipation of a bank leasing for an ATM use. In time, when it became evident that the intended use was not playing out, the proponent elected to use the building as a leasing office space.

The current proposal, requiring an updated site plan special permit from the SB<sub>2</sub> is to rebuild and expand the building to become an approximate 900 square foot two story mixed residential and office building. The proponent states they will be the future occupant of the expanded building with the intent to continue the use the lower level for a leasing office and to occasionally utilize the second floor bedroom level when a weather event knocks out power for an extended period of time at the proponent's nearby Pope Road primary residence.

The proposed footprint of the expanded building is approximately twice the floor area of the existing building. The southern face of the new building will remain where located presently. The eastern, western and northern building sides will relocate to the outer edges of the current building's concrete podium. The current podium is elevated to varying amounts above the surrounding pitched pavement and or vegetated site conditions. The second floor level is approximately 50% of the first floor level in area and is substantially held back on the east and west sides of the gabled roofline.

The proposed expanded building is designed in a style that reflects the neighboring brick veneered retail buildings within Wetherbee Plaza 1. The building exterior is proposed to be faced in brick veneer, with painted wood trimmed detailing and punched casement windows openings. The 45 degree gabled roof lines are to be finished with “architectural” asphalt shingles.

Following are comments/recommendations made by the DRB:

- DRB members are comfortable with the general building design direction presented.
- Discussion on the window style arrived at a unanimous consensus that for this building, the proposed punched casement windows are an appropriate style.
- A proposed attic dormer on the north facing gable roof would be better to be finished in painted wood rather than the suggested brick veneer.
- The proposed chimney should be raised higher in relation to the upper ridge line, it presently proportionally low to the building height and likely not code compliant.
- The building as designed does not relate to the immediate surrounding topography of the site. The building appears to be designed as if placed on a relatively flat site, it is not. The north side of the building drops off approximately 30” from the first floor level. The east and west exterior sides have a pitched relation between the grade and the first floor. The DRB recommends the proponent request the design architect to assess and propose how to connect the building with the surrounding topography.
- Given two plus sides of the existing concrete podium upon which the building is to be constructed are raised above the surrounding grade, it is suggested to consider facing the concrete walls below the first floor level with stone.
- Given the building is surrounded by pavement and vehicular traffic on three out of four sides and due to the existing traffic patterns, DRB members believe the proposed “front door” at the south west corner is a potential safety concern. Various locations were discussed for a pedestrian door placement. The board recommendation is for the north facing door to be considered for the main entrance.
- In order for the north facing entrance to reach natural grade steps have been proposed. DRB members recommend that the pair of stacked parking spaces immediately adjacent to the north side of the concrete podium be converted to a small landscaped yard that will allow for a proper pedestrian access to the steps required, will offer some natural pervious landscape opportunity for the enlarged building, and should the property be utilized as a residence at any point, will provide a modest outdoor opportunity for the occupant.
- DRB members and the proponent discussed a return visit to review how the building’s relation to the immediate surrounding grades is proposed to be resolved once the select board has weighed in on the proponent’s request for an amended special permit to allow for the building alteration.

Respectfully submitted,

The DRB