

Rochester, Jacqueline

Subject: FW: Post to town website for HDC Fwd: 19 Cannon Road, Wilton, CT 06897
Attachments: 19 Cannon Road Letter HDC Commission.docx; ATT00001.htm

From: Barbara Geddis <barbarag@geddisarchitects.com>
Date: March 20, 2022 at 7:55:23 PM EDT
To: "allison.sanders@wiltonct.org" <allison.sanders@wiltonct.org>
Subject: 19 Cannon Road, Wilton, CT 06897

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Good Evening,

This are some of my observations on the 19 Cannon Road Referral for which the Commission has a special meeting this Wednesday.

I have addressed to to the full Commission and hope you can distribute it to all of them.

I plan to listen to this important meeting as well.

Thanks very much,

Barbara

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March 20, 2022

Historic District Commission

Town Hall

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, CT 06897

Attention: Allison Sanders, Chair and Commissioners Pojano, Weatherly, Bendremer and Fusco

Re: 8-24 Referral (MR#152) – Wilton Water Pollution Control Authority – to P & Z: Extension of sanitary sewer line from 19 Cannon Rd to Danbury Rd: Discussion of Draft Statement

Commissioners and Chair Sanders,

I was glad to see this on your agenda for a special meeting this week on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. Its importance to our Town and our future land use policy is far-reaching. I have followed this closely from the February WPCA meeting where the articulate Town Counsel clearly defined the precise authority of what an “extension” really means. I also listened to the Planning and Zoning Commission's less focused and more diffuse commentary when it was referred to their attention. I did send them a public letter in advance of that meeting. P and Z needs your help.

I am hoping HDC can support clarity of what this is all about. We ask that you recommend to P& Z that this referral be denied.

I am writing this not as a neighbor. I am writing this as a student of history and as a Certified Historic Architect. There are two clear bases for a recommendation to deny:

First, the request does not arise from its current permitted use, nor does it serve its current permitted use. The request comes from a proposal for a fundamental change of zone, a major change of use and a change of density and intensification of scale not present anywhere in Wilton's Villages today. This is merely a single parcel with two-acre zoning.

The house is noted as 1860, pre-Civil War. Like other single-family homes around here, it is on a septic system. Like it neighboring uses, it is within the National Historic Register District of 1992. Like its neighboring uses, it is also part of a village district overlay called

“Cannon Crossing.” Surely, any single-family home has no requirement for a sewer extension. It is naïve to pretend the developer’s proposal to support seventy apartments (at least seventy toilets, seventy kitchens and additional sinks) does not come under the purview of townland use and historical commissions.

As you all know very well, The Cannondale Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. Fifty-eight buildings were considered contributing and twenty-four noncontributing. This address is clearly within that district, but not specially highlighted. Buildings in the historic district date from 1800-1940, a span of 140 years with three distinctive styles listed: Colonial, Greek Revival and Late Victorian. In the immediate area around the depot, the “iconic” Cannondale Village would be described by the public as Victorian.

This 1860 home directly across from the train station is certainly part of the character and scale of nineteenth century Cannondale. As the 1992 nomination states “The cluster of buildings around the depot continue to exhibit the scale and texture of a small late 19th century commercial center.” As early as the 1860’s when this house was built, the area “constituted a town school district, and it was served by a single post office, which adopted the present name Cannondale in 1915.

As you also know very well, this is not a local historic district and prior attempts to create such a local historic district did not succeed.

By no means am I arguing that this residence ought to be landmarked. I merely note as an intact 1860 structure, it is eligible. As such, at the very least, it ought to have consideration and dialogue before allowing demolition.

Second, the request has nothing whatsoever to do with Cannondale as a district. Master planning for Cannondale is planned soon. I hope 2023. In the POCD’s call for master planning, Cannondale Village’s boundaries surely need better definition. The National Register boundaries include Danbury Road and Seeley Road, The Cannon Crossing overlay does not. There is no question that it is confusing to all.

The POCD has an overarching theme of three closely intertwined and balanced factors: the natural and historical environment (fragile in Cannondale Village), the human and economic environment (which protects low density where it is established and investigates ingenious housing options in certain designated areas of Wilton that can support it) and the Built Environment (which specifically references the unique design and historical character of the Cannondale Area’s nineteenth century,

History includes “SCALE.” It is not at all about absolute height. It is not at all about selecting details from a past period and using an applique in 2022. It is about the overall building to land to depot to village scale

Among these criteria set aside by this request are five (5) that directly refer to history or infer a historic context.

- **3.1 Conduct a master planning process for Cannondale.** *This will start sometime, Visioning for this area will engage the community in an important conversation about economic stimulus, blends of use including some residential uses that will reinvigorate this iconic part of Wilton. Will sewer extensions be recommended to support such a master plan? That is quite possible that a public sewer extension, properly sized for planned density, would be part of an orderly plan. This includes the goal to “establish zoning incentives for preserving historic structures.”*
- **4. 0 Preserve Wilton’s Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes.** *This plan would essentially “obliterate” a gateway site to Cannondale Village across from the station just off Danbury Road.*
- **6.2 Strengthen the economic viability of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character.** *This proposal is radically dissonant from the unique design and historical character of the 1856 Cannondale Village.*
- **7.1 Water and Sewer goals that reflect land use goals.** *“Extensions of sewer and water should be limited to those that address risks to environmental and/or public health or as requested by the property owners of a certain area in accordance with the recommendations of this Plan and the Town Water and Sewer Plan.” (Page 910) How does this tightly defined limitation apply to this one two-acre site up here?*
- **Cannondale Node:** *“Densities should be lower than the Greater Wilton Center are and should align with the gradual decrease in density north of Cannon Road.” This is clearly stated and this plan of thirty-five units an acre on a small lot of two acres is more than double digit times over the very densest areas of Wilton. This is one of the most important guiding principles.*

The size of this private infrastructure extension presumes a fundamentally different scale and character of a future, invigorated Cannondale Village.

This “working village” by a mill and river and local spur train station is distinctly different from Wilton Center and even from the quite different industrial mill scale of the also intriguing village of Georgetown.

That is why it is on the National Register. Its mill “brand” and a vernacular offer many examples from other nineteenth century mill riverfronts that have been vital, desirable places to work, to live, to visit, to dine, to celebrate and be together.

It is patently obvious that Cannondale Village will not survive this kind of development's density and fundamental misfit of “scale.”

I am on record a half dozen times about promising innovative ideas for Cannondale. There will be a lively public dialogue about this important are where history meets

transportation. Surely, your Commission will undoubtedly have an important voice in this community-wide conversation.

This is an important moment for your Commission. We trust you all to weigh in.

Best,

Barbara

Barbara L. Geddis, FAIA