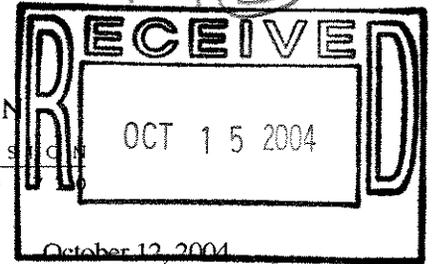




TOWN OF ACTON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
472 Main Street Acton, MA 01720



Board of Selectman
Town of Acton
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Re: 19 Railroad Street

Dear Sirs,

The Historic District Commission conducted a preliminary review of the proposed development of 19 Railroad Street, and has the following comments to offer in preparation for your site plan review. We are in receipt of a proposed site plan showing two new freestanding structures and a proposed addition to the existing main structure, along with several preliminary elevations of the new structures. There are apparent discrepancies between the site plan and elevations and there is no information on the proposed materials for the siding, trim, roof, windows, garage doors, exterior lighting, and decks. We contacted the applicant, Michael Gertner and requested his attendance at our October 4th meeting at which he provided an outline specification of proposed materials and answered many of our questions regarding the project. While the supplemental information was helpful to our review we continue to have a number of concerns about the proposal which we have outlined below, and urge you to compel a more detailed response from the applicant before rendering a decision.

The proposed elevations for the new structures indicate that the applicant intends to strongly reference the design of the former American House Hotel, the main existing structure on the parcel and the only surviving mid-19th century hotel in Acton. This is especially evident in the design of the mansard roof for the new structures. While we compliment the sensitivity of this approach, we are concerned that without appropriate materials and careful attention to proportion and detail, that the result may be a poorly rendered imitation that will devalue the original source. We also recommend that either the applicant be granted a waiver from the required parking or the size of the proposed project be reduced to minimize the extensive amount of paving proposed.

Specific items of concern that we have identified are:

- The too abrupt change in roof slope
- Window design and proportion that is inconsistent to the architectural style of the new buildings
- The use of synthetic materials for windows, doors and railings
- The lack of any information about exterior lighting
- Dormers on the front elevation that are too wide
- A pedestrian unfriendly paved entry court with few plantings
- Porch columns that are vulnerable to damage from vehicles
- Lack of detail regarding exterior trim especially at eaves and soffits
- The scale of the proposed four unit building

Finally, we also are concerned about the lack of information on the proposed addition to the American House. We understand the applicant plans to pursue this work at a later date, but we urge you to not consent to this sensitive work without a detailed proposal and urge that the applicant be required to restore the siding, windows and details of the structure as a condition of your approval. We respectfully request that you not approve this application without a detailed response to the concerns we have identified.

Sincerely,

Thomas Peterman
Historic District Commission