



TOWN OF ARLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

TOWN HALL, 730 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02476
TELEPHONE 781-316-3090

MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Board of Appeals
From: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Dept. of Planning and Community Development/kl
Date: 11/15/2021
RE: Docket 3675 – 137 Robbins Road; Special Permit under Zoning Bylaw Section 5.4.2.B(6) (Large Additions) and Section 5.3.9.A (Projections into Minimum Yards)

The applicant, Jie Zhao, seeks a Special Permit in accordance with Section 5.4.2.B(6) (Large Additions) and Section 5.3.9.A (Projections into Minimum Yards) of the Zoning Bylaw. The applicant seeks to construct a large addition on the first and second floor of their single-family home, extending the building footprint 7.2 feet into the left side yard and 15.1 feet into the rear yard of their property. They also seek to enclose the existing open deck on the front façade to create a mud room of approximately 100 square feet, which exceeds the maximum 25 square foot projection into a minimum yard allowable by right in the Zoning Bylaw. The proposal would result in an increase in square footage from 1,549 to 2,702 square feet (+1,153 square feet). Lot coverage would increase from 16% to 28% (+12%).

The existing structure is nonconforming with the current Zoning Bylaw's lot size, frontage, and front yard dimensional requirements. The proposed addition introduces a new nonconformity by reducing the usable open space from 30% to 22% (-8%). The following is an application of the Special Permit criteria (Zoning Bylaw Section 3.3.3):

Criterion #1: Requested Use

The requested use is permitted through a Special Permit in the R1 zoning district.

Criterion #2: Public Convenience/Welfare

This proposal would provide additional living space.

Criterion #3: Undue Traffic Congestion/Impairment of Public Safety

There would not be an increase in traffic congestion or an impairment of public safety.

Criterion #4: Undue Burden on Municipal Systems

The Engineering Division should review the application's stormwater analysis report to determine whether the addition will increase the surface water runoff rate relative to the predevelopment runoff rate, as per Article 15 of the Town Bylaw.

Criterion #5: Special regulations

This proposal would not result in the need for special regulations.

Criterion #6: Integrity/Character of District; Detrimental to Health, Morals, Welfare

The addition will expand the footprint of the structure by 569 square feet, with most of the addition located along the side and rear of the existing structure. The applicant proposes to remove 264 square feet of the existing driveway, which is impervious, and replace it with new landscaping.

No single architectural style predominates on Robbins Road, which displays a mix of Colonial Revivals, Dutch Colonial Revivals, Capes, and Bungalows. Several of these structures have additions along the side yard or in the rear that appear to have been introduced in the last decade. As one travels northeast toward Gray Street, there are a number of properties that have been entirely rebuilt.

The proposed addition appears to be designed to contrast with the style of the existing structure. While creative design solutions are encouraged for new additions, the elimination of windows on the proposed mudroom combined with the contemporary addition and multiple rooflines detract from the principal entrance and create a feeling of imbalance to the structure. It is possible that this could be clarified through the provision of a rendering, as the tallest elements of the addition are set back to the rear of the structure. However, mixing the proposed number of roof forms is not recommended and creates a disorganized appearance.¹ The applicant could consider a more cohesive organization of the roof lines and complexity. Along the front façade, the applicant could consider introducing windows to the proposed mudroom to create a more welcoming appearance, as blank facades are not recommended on public-facing sides of a house.² Adjusting some of the roof lines and introducing a window(s) to the proposed mudroom would improve the renovated structure's contribution to the existing streetscape.

It appears from aerial imagery that there may be mature trees in the rear yard close to the existing structure. The applicant may need to receive approval of a Tree Plan from the Tree Warden prior to commencing work on the property per Article 16 of the Town Bylaw.

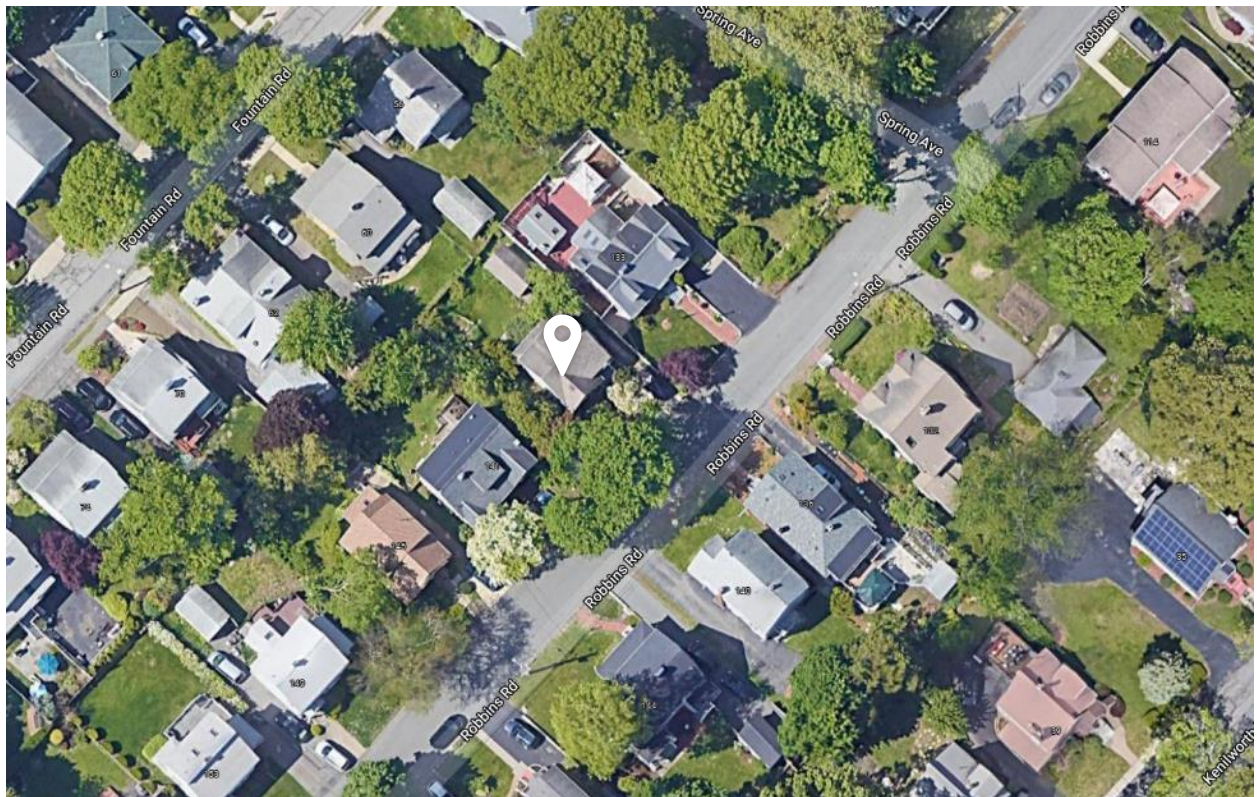
Criterion #7: Detrimental Excess in Particular Use

There would not be any detrimental excesses.

Below are aerial and street-based photos of the current building:

¹ Residential Design Guidelines, Principle C-1 <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=54518>,

² Residential Design Guidelines, Principle A-4, <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=54518>



Recommendation:

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) recommends that the applicant consider the described aesthetic improvements to the plans. Overall, DPCD maintains that owing to the small parcel size and the applicant's replacement of a portion of the current driveway with pervious surface, the reduction in the proportion of usable open space is acceptable and is consistent with the Zoning Bylaw. Should concerns about aesthetics, usable open space, and a tree plan be satisfied, DPCD recommends that the Zoning Board of Appeals approve this application.

Related Dockets:

- #3614: 20 Beacon St – Applicant sought a special permit to create a large addition of 1,896 square feet to their single-family home in an R2 district, citing a desire to remain in their property instead of moving away from Arlington. Approved on 1/28/20.
- #3603: 34 Governor Rd – Applicants sought a special permit to create a large addition of 1,575 square feet to their single-family home, citing a desire to accommodate a growing family and love for the neighborhood. Approved on 9/27/19.