



**PLYMPTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

5 Palmer Road, Plympton, MA 02367

781-585-3220

15 November 2005

Plympton Planning Board  
Jack O'Leary, Chair  
5 Palmer Road  
Plympton, MA 02367

RE: Plympton Service Center development

Dear Jack,

The Plympton Historical Commission (Commission) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed Plympton Service Center development by Steve Craig in Plympton Center, particularly since the proposed site of development abuts the historical Plympton Village area and National Register eligible Plympton Village District. The Commission further appreciates the effort by Mr. Craig to redevelop and improve the area.

On September 29, 2005, the Commission reviewed the most recent plans in the possession of the Plympton Planning Board (Board). While the plans certainly were more complete than previously submitted plans, we did find certain details were not included. As a result we have a number of comments with respect to the proposed development. The Commission is generally concerned with the following attributes of the site plan and proposed structures and requests that the Board consider requiring modifications to address these concerns:

- **Convenience Store Building:** We are generally concerned about the convenience store building as proposed.
  - The drawings submitted appear to suggest that the entire building will be white, including the building trim, window trim and siding. We are concerned that the architectural characteristics of the building will be lost given the monochromatic characteristics. We believe that additional color and/or architectural detail is needed to better define the building.
  - The use of vertical siding on the building is of concern as it is out of character with other structures in the adjacent district. All siding should be horizontal in nature to better blend with the surroundings.
  - The suggested use of vinyl clapboard is of concern as well. On the sides of the building that will receive frequent traffic, we are concerned that the vinyl will not withstand long-term abuse. Vinyl, when used in a high-traffic area can become cracked, stained and dented, resulting in a deteriorated look. We propose the use of HardiPlank clapboard for the sides of the building that will receive frequent traffic. This is the same material that was proposed and used on the front of Plympton Plaza for its durability and low maintenance. This material is available in a number of factory finish colors backed by a 15-year finish warranty. Additional information on this product can be found at [www.jameshardie.com](http://www.jameshardie.com). Additionally, we suggest the use of vinyl shingles instead of vinyl clapboard on the sides of the building that will not receive frequent pedestrian or vehicle traffic to better incorporate the building into the surrounding district. Both of these suggestions should allow for a low maintenance, long lasting finish on the building.
  - As at the Plympton Plaza building complex, any HVAC roof or ground units should not be readily visible. If placed on the roof, the units should be shielded from view by the architectural elements of the building. If on the ground they should be shielded by appropriate landscaping and/or hardscape. Additionally, we are concerned with their proposed placement on the north side of the building and their ambient impact on the adjacent National Register eligible property at 2 Parsonage Road. Appropriate measures, such as low noise unit(s), should be considered to minimize the impact on this property.
- **Signage:** The signage, as proposed, appears to conflict with Plympton's lighting bylaw by being internally illuminated. The sign's illumination also does not appear to be indicated on the lighting plan provided to the Board. It is likely that sign mounted lighting pointed downwards; similar to that used on the Rte 58 Dunkin

Donuts in Carver would satisfy the requirements. Also the proposal for a 20-foot tall sign is excessive in scale given surrounding properties and lack of other signage in the area. Plympton Plaza will not have any freestanding signage and thus there is no other signage with which the service station will compete. We strongly recommend that the Board require that the size of the signage be reduced to a scale that is more in keeping with the surroundings, thereby reducing the impact of the signage on the bordering properties and the district as a whole. We note that a number of other Mobil stations have low profile signage that minimizes the impact of the signage on the surrounding landscape while still providing significant opportunity for advertising (note stations in Duxbury, Westford and West Concord, Massachusetts as examples). Another example of low profile signage can be seen at the Halifax Stop & Shop.

Additionally the plans do not reflect any planned signage for the Repair Shop Building. The placement, lighting and detail of this signage should be reviewed to minimize any potential impact.

- **Drive Thru:** The Commission is further concerned with the inclusion of a drive thru at this location. In addition to the plans not being clear about the purpose for its inclusion, the drive thru, as designed, would directly face at least 1 property in the District. Without a clearer understanding of the proposed use or the placement of the ordering device, it is difficult to provide specific comments. That said, we have the following general concerns:
  - The noise emanating from the ordering device and idling vehicles have the potential to negatively impact the property to the north of this development.
  - The hours of operation also have the potential for negative impact. For instance, if the drive thru were allowed to operate into the evening hours, or particularly early in the morning, the above listed concerns could be magnified.

We strongly encourage the Board to carefully consider these issues when considering the inclusion of the proposed drive thru.

- **Repair Shop Building:** The Commission, understanding the purpose and need for this building, and recognizing that it is located furthest away from the District, has limited comments to the building itself. That said, appropriate measures should be considered to allow the building to positively contribute to the new development. The addition of architectural elements to the structure may improve the visual impact of the building itself. For instance, to the extent that the building looked more like a barn (note the large building on Rte 58 near Halifax) it could positively impact the development. At a minimum, steps should be taken to ensure that the color of the building is appropriate given the other surrounding structures. Based on the information submitted, it appears that the proposed color is gray, which concerns the Commission since Plympton Plaza is a similar color. A different, but complementary color would help to ensure that the mass of structures in this area is not overwhelming.
- **Landscaping:** The Commission appreciates Mr. Craig's efforts to include detailed landscaping for this project. The use of trees and other shrubs will certainly improve the overall area and will provide positive benefits to the District. We encourage the Board, through the site plan approval process, to make sure that appropriate expectations are set to ensure that the trees and other plantings are maintained and replaced should they not take. We would also ask the Board to verify that the inclusion of the various plants suggested is appropriate for the site and will provide a long-term benefit to the development and the District.

The Commission looks forward reviewing any additional information received as part of this site plan review and to work with the Board and Mr. Craig to address the above concerns. Please contact me directly with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jon K. Wilhelmsen, Chair  
Plympton Historical Commission