



MEMO

To: Lori Burchett, AICP
Planner II, City of Dublin

From: Christine Trebellas, AICP, LEED Green Associate
Historic Preservation Consultant

Date: September 21, 2017

Re: REVISED Demolition Application Review of 5927 Rings Road Addition

BACKGROUND

The approximately 4.7-acre property at 5927 Rings Road is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Washington Township MRA (Multiple Resource Area). This state-significant multiple property nomination contains approximately 46 properties in Washington Township as well as 18 properties in the City of Dublin. The 5927 Rings Road property (also known as the Myer property) was listed on the National Register in 1979 for significant contributions to the areas of architecture and agriculture.

The applicant first submitted material to the City of Dublin for review in June 2017 to demolish the rear portion of the historic home as well as a small garage outbuilding located to the southwest of the main house. This reviewer felt that the new addition was not “subordinate” to the historic home. Rather, the new addition was almost three times the size of the original structure, not including the attached three-car garage. The mass of the west portion of the addition overpowered the historic structure and provided no “breathing room” between the original and the new. A suggestion was made to push the west addition back from the road and main house. In addition, concerns were raised about the removal of an early brick addition to the historic home which contributes to the historic character of the building.

To address the concerns above, the applicant made a second submittal to the City of Dublin in August 2017. The designers reduced the size of the west addition by reducing the size of the garage from three cars to two and pushing the garage addition back behind the 80’ building setback. Two small garage outbuildings located to the southwest of the main house will be demolished to accommodate a new carriage house. I appreciated that the applicant has responded to the earlier comments and made changes, but felt that many issues remained. Again, concerns were raised over the removal of the historic one-and-a-half-story brick extension without clear documentation regarding its structural deficiencies. The mass of the west addition also remained an issue; it was still almost the size of the historic core. The removal of the two small garage outbuildings was felt appropriate due to their diminished integrity and problematic location in the floodway.

In September 2017, the applicant submitted another design proposal along with a structural report addendum summary to address the structural conditions of the historic building fabric proposed to be demolished. The ridge of the rear second story addition was dropped below the historic core so the addition did not overpower the original structure. The mudroom/porch addition was pushed back to expose more of the historic building and preserve two character-defining windows while the eave of the garage addition was lowered to lessen the impact of the addition on the historic structure. In addition, photographs were submitted indicating structural damage to the roof, walls, and foundations of the existing additions to the main house. Based on this documentation, removal of this historic fabric may be the only feasible option. There are, however, several opportunities to mitigate or lessen the impact of the loss of this historic portion of the home.

The review below is provided to suggest issues that should be addressed before an application for demolition is approved for the house and outbuildings, and is based upon this reviewer's understanding of Section 153.176 Demolition of the City of Dublin Zoning Code. These comments are based on the reviewer's professional experience and judgment regarding historic architecture and preservation projects. However, these comments do not (and cannot) identify every issue that may be of concern to the City of Dublin and its various review boards. As always, the final determination of these issues lies with the City of Dublin.

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED ADDITION

DESIGN REVIEW

Once again, I appreciate that the applicant has responded to earlier design comments and made changes to address them. Overall, I think the style and design materials of the new construction are appropriate and sympathetic to the historic building. The contribute to the rural architectural character of the building, yet are clearly new additions. This is the goal. I also agree with the design decision to move the mudroom/porch addition back to expose more of the historic building and preserve two character-defining windows on the west side of the house. This small move has a great impact on the historic portion of the home; one can clearly see where the old building ends and the new begins. The applicant also dropped the ridge of the rear second story addition below the historic core and reduce the eave height of the west garage addition. These design changes are appropriate for the mass and scale of the structure; the new additions no longer overpower the historic core and let the historic building take precedent.

I, however, still question the size of the west garage and its prominent location toward the front of the house. I understand that site constraints and the location of the floodway to the rear of the house dictate some of its placement. However, a standard builder-grade two-car garage is approximately 22' x 24' (a generous car parking spot is considered 10' x 20'). This garage appears to be around 23' x 31' while the historic portion of the home is approximately 22' x 40'. Again, the garage is quite large compared to the size of the historic core of the home and has the potential to overpower the historic building. If the garage cannot be reduced in size and/or pushed back farther to lessen its impact on the historic core, I would recommend

landscaping to help reduce its presence. Landscape renderings (straight ahead, from the east, from the west, etc.) of the street views of the historic home would be helpful to see how the garage addition will impact the historic home. The second submittal had landscape plans which were not revised for this new submittal; I doubt they have changed, but I would ask for clarity. Ideally, a combination of both evergreen and deciduous trees of varying sizes could help screen the new additions from the road and lessen their impact on the historic structure.

STRUCTURAL INFORMATION REVIEW

The applicant provided a structural report addendum summary to address the structural conditions of the historic building fabric proposed to be demolished and answered many outstanding questions regarding the structural integrity of the historic one-and-a-half story brick addition to the home. According to the National Register database, the period for significance for the property is from 1850 to 1874. This means that any changes to the structure from this period are part of its historical development and significance—including the brick extension which appears to date to 1856-1872. While the loss of this portion of the structure is unfortunate, the addendum suggests that it is economically unfeasible to repair it. It is also important to note that the structure to be demolished is independent from the historic core structure so its removal will not impact the historic core.

According to the structural addendum, the additions to the main house have sustained significant damage from insects, water infiltration, wood deflection, rot, and mold infestation. There is substantial structural damage to the foundation of this portion of the building; photographs indicate that the joists have diminished due to rot, pests, and the addition of HVAC, electrical, and plumbing lines which were cut into structural members. The loads and joist spacing will not meet current building standards and the structural members would have to be replaced or reinforced with new members. This would be impractical and cost-prohibitive.

Information in the structural addendum also indicates that the additions have sustained substantial structural damage in the roof from water infiltration and rot. While the wood trim can easily be replaced, the brick chimney is more problematic. The interior end brick chimney in the historic brick addition has sustained structural damage and is listing. Although this condition might be remediated by repairing the top portion of the chimney, the structural damage probably goes to the foundation and would require removing the whole chimney structure and rebuilding it. This is not economically feasible and it is inadvisable from a preservation perspective to rebuild something exactly like the original (a reconstruction) because it gives a false sense of history.

Furthermore, prolonged water infiltration in the roof has led to mold infestation and rot in the roof structure above the ceilings. While photographs indicate that this ceiling is a replacement gypsum wallboard ceiling and not a historic plaster-and-lathe ceiling, the whole ceiling would need to be removed to expose the extent of the damage and treat the mold infestation. To remove the whole ceiling and replace it in kind, in addition to repairing any structural damage, is not practical. The structural integrity of the exterior loading-bearing walls in this portion of the building is also questionable. Prolonged water infiltration and the subsequent freeze-thaw

cycle has damaged the wall in multiple locations; the extent of this damage cannot be determined until portions of the wall are removed. Again, this is not economically feasible and inadvisable from a preservation perspective.

The applicant also proposes to demolish the attached slate-roof garage to the rear of the historic house. While the garage has some nice features such as the slate roof, it is clearly not original to the historic structure and has some structural issues. The roof ridge is bowed, indicating that the roof structure is failing and needs to be replaced. In addition, the slate shingles are weathered to the point that they are trapping moisture within the roof structure. The wood rafters, sheathing boards, and purloins are all rotted due to moisture and need to be replaced. Overall, replacing these elements piecemeal to a non-contributing element is not cost-effective and does not make sense from a historic preservation perspective.

According to Section 153.176 Demolition of the City of Dublin Zoning Code, an applicant must demonstrate economic hardship, unusual or compelling circumstances, or two out of four of the following conditions must be met:

1. The structure contains no features of architectural and historic significance to the character of the area in which it is located.
2. There is no reasonable economic use for the structure as it exists or as it might be restored, and that there exists no feasible or prudent alternative to demolition.
3. Deterioration has progressed to the point where it is not economically feasible to restore the structure and such neglect has not been willful.
4. The location of the structure impedes the orderly development, substantially interferes with the purposes of the district, or detracts from the historical character or its immediate vicinity; or, the proposed construction to replace the demolition significantly improves the overall quality of the Architectural Review District without diminishing the historic value of the vicinity or the District.

Based on the information in the addendum, it appears that provisions 2 and 3 of the demolition requirements have been met. Substantial structural damage has occurred to the historic home over the years through no fault of the owner. The water infiltration and subsequent structural issues occurred before the current owners, Nelson and Elizabeth Yoder, purchased the property in 2013. Repairing this damage would require replacing many major building elements (foundation, exterior walls, roof, etc.). This cost-prohibitive effort would leave the remaining structure stripped of much of its historic fabric and is impractical. While the removal of character-defining historic portions of the building is unfortunate, it does not appear economically viable to do so. In addition, replacing historic fabric with a reconstruction and creating a false sense of history is not a good preservation practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Once a building is demolished, it is gone and can no longer contribute to the history of the area. While the demolition of portions of the historic fabric is unfortunate, there are several opportunities to mitigate or lessen the impact of this loss. I would recommend that the history and current condition of the historic building be recorded in written reports, drawings, photographs, etc. and placed in an appropriate area archive for future researchers. As part of the renovation process, the applicant will need to produce a set of as-built drawings; these drawings can record current historic features that will be lost in the renovation. Exterior and interior photographs of the historic building fabric and significant character-defining features will provide information on these features as well.

Historic buildings have the potential to provide information regarding past building practices and techniques. If during selective demolition, important information to the history of the area is uncovered, demolition should stop and the appropriate authorities contacted. For example, many prominent early buildings had time capsules or information in the corner stone. Others may have historic building equipment that was lost during construction. Or as we recently learned, an early log cabin could be encapsulated by later building material—only to be revealed as portions of the existing exterior sheathing were removed.

And each historic property is also a potential archeological site. Although no longer extant, historic farm complexes had numerous outbuildings and features such as privies, spring houses, wells, family cemeteries, etc. that can provide information on past farming practices and lifestyles. Every reasonable effort should be made to record, protect, and preserve archeological resources. Care must be taken when performing any demolition work or new excavations to NOT damage the historic building as well as any potential archaeological finds. If in the course of demolition or new construction, a potential archeological find is uncovered, the City of Dublin should be informed of the potential find immediately. Archeological findings should be recorded, photographed, etc. and this information placed on file at a local archive.

PHOTOGRAPHS and IMAGES



1. Current view of the 5927 Rings Rd. from the north. Character-defining features include the front door with transom and sidelights, the six-over-six light sash windows with stone sills and lintels, the seam metal side-gable roof with decorative Italianate brackets and the brick walls and stone foundation.



2. Rendering of historic house and proposed additions. The east addition is appropriate in size, scale, massing, etc., but the west addition is almost as wide as the historic core and has the potential to overpower it. If the applicant cannot reduce the size of the addition and/or push it back farther from the main house, landscaping can lessen this impact. A landscape rendering would be helpful.



3. Current view of 5927 Rings Rd. from the northwest. Note the one-story brick extension to the rear as well as the wood-frame slate-roof attached garage. These extensions/additions will be demolished in the current proposal.



4. Rendering of historic house and proposed additions from the northwest. The mudroom/porch addition has been pushed back so two historic windows will be maintained. And the height of the rear addition is reduced so it does not overpower the historic core. However, the west addition is almost as wide as the historic core and has the potential to overpower it. If the applicant cannot reduce the size of the addition and/or push it back farther from the main house, landscaping can lessen this impact. A landscape rendering would be helpful.



5. Current view of 5927 Ring Rd. from the northeast with main house and outbuildings



5. Rendering of historic house and proposed additions from the northeast. The east addition is appropriate in size, scale, massing, etc. The west addition is hidden behind the main house but is almost as wide as the historic core and has the potential to overpower it. If the applicant cannot reduce the size of the addition and/or push it back farther from the main house, landscaping can lessen this impact. A landscape rendering would be helpful.