

Narrative Statement  
Site Plan/Special Exception Application  
New Pleasant Valley Elementary School  
591 Ellington Road  
South Windsor, Connecticut  
DPI Proj. No. 4022.D  
March 16, 2021

The Town of South Windsor is proposing to build a new 102,150 square foot elementary school for approximately 806 students and 130 staff members at its roughly 25-acre campus easterly of Ellington Road and westerly of Long Hill Road. The “New Pleasant Valley Elementary School”, approved in a recent referendum, will be situated northerly of the existing Pleasant Valley Elementary School and is expected to open for the start of the Fall of 2023 school year. The existing school will remain open and operational during the construction of the new school, at which time the existing school will be razed to make room for future sports fields. The site design team consists of Drummey Rosane Anderson, Incorporated (DRA), architects; Design Professionals, Inc (DPI), civil engineers & land surveyors; SLR Consulting (SLR), landscape architects, environmental consultants, and traffic engineers; Consulting Engineering Services (CES), site lighting and MEP consultants; and Welte Geotechnical, P.C. (Welte), geotechnical engineers.

The site plan includes a new 30 feet wide access drive, which will connect the school with Ellington Road and Long Hill Road. The Ellington Road entrance has a boulevard-style entrance and will align with the existing Parkview Drive. The access drive will have a companion concrete sidewalk, ranging from 6 to 8 feet wide. A circumferential loop on the western side of the new building will afford access to one of the three parking lots and the parent drop-off area. The other accessways will provide entry to the second and third parking lots as well as the primary bus drop-off area, terminating at a cul-de-sac for buses and emergency vehicles. The future multi-purpose and sports fields will be accessible by a fourth parking lot off Ellington Road, in the southwest corner of the site where the current school sits. A water quality basin for stormwater management will be located to the north of the access drive in the northwest corner of the site along with a wetland creation area. Various play areas are proposed both north and south of the school and adjacent to the multi-purpose sports field, with connectivity between the two areas by walkways. There is also an outdoor classroom proposed south of the school. The school will be served by all public utilities, including public water, sewer, telecommunications, electrical and natural gas.

The new school site is a forested area. The landscape plan includes buffer plantings to compliment the remaining forested area around the site perimeter, and existing trees will remain to the east of the school as a buffer between the school’s Long Hill Road neighbors. Residential areas are to the west and east of the school. The school building is situated over 300 feet from Ellington Road and

from Long Hill Road. The closest residence to the west (west side of Ellington Road) is well over 400 feet from the proposed school building, and the closest residence to the east (west side of Long Hill Road) is approximately 200 feet from the school building beyond the remaining forested buffer.

As stated in the traffic report by SLR, traffic impacts are expected to be minimal. Indeed, the new site drive will serve to alleviate some existing traffic conditions on the school campus, by further distributing traffic rather than concentrating it. All parent drop-off and pick-up traffic will enter and leave the site via the Ellington Road entrance. All bus and staff traffic will utilize the Long Hill Road entrance. In speaking with the transportation coordinator, it was indicated that all bus traffic will enter and leave the site from and to the north towards Pleasant Valley Road. This portion of Long Hill Road was widened and improved in recent years.

A total of 241 parking spaces are proposed for the new school, 181 in the immediate vicinity of the new school and approximately 60 spaces to remain near the existing school at the southwest corner of the site along Ellington Road. These 60 spaces can be increased to 75 spaces at the time the parking lot is moved and reconstructed to accommodate the future sports fields. Of the 181 parking spaces near the new school, 118 are contained east of the school for staff use. 40 are west of the school to be used for visitors and additional staff members. 23 spaces are located north of the school to be utilized for parent pick-up from the pre-kindergarten program.

As a part of this application, a request is being made for a modification to the parking requirements from the 409 required per the Zoning Regulations to the 241 provided on the initial site plan, a reduction of 168 spaces. The design team has worked closely with the school administrators to ensure the 181 spaces provided in the vicinity of the school are sufficient to support the daily operations given the projected student and staff levels. This request is similar to the modification that was previously granted for the new Orchard Hill Elementary School.

The applicant is requesting a Special Exception to allow for an educational institution in a residential zone. Per the South Windsor Zoning Regulations, the proposed land use is subject to the Special Exception Review Criteria outlined in Section 8.4 B of the Zoning Regulations. We believe the proposed elementary schools building and associated site improvements meet the review criteria, namely:

1. *The proposal is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Plan of Conservation and Development.* The POCD supports the redevelopment of town facilities “that improve the quality of life for South Windsor residents”, which aligns with the goals of this proposal.
2. *The application has met the requirements of the zoning regulations.* The application meets the requirements of the regulations for an educational facility in a residential zone.
3. *The land is physically suited to the proposed use.* The land is currently used as an elementary school and will continue to be suitable for the proposed development with the expansion of the existing property to include additional town-owned lots. This property is served by all public utilities.
4. *Minimal, if any, adverse environmental impacts are created.* This development will have minimal environmental impact as demonstrated by the submitted plans and reports.

5. *No traffic or other hazards will be created.* A detailed traffic report prepared by SLR has been submitted with the application indicating the proposed school will have little impact on the surrounding roadway network.
6. *The impacts on the capacity of the present and proposed utilities, street, drainage systems, sidewalks, and other elements of the infrastructure will be minimal.* The proposed building will utilize current public water, sewer, and natural gas facilities available along the property frontage in Ellington Road. Drainage systems will collect and treat stormwater runoff and discharge at or below peak volumes for the evaluated storm events.
7. *There will be minimal or no adverse effects on existing uses in the area.* Proper buffer plantings will be installed to screen the new school from surrounding residential and non-residential uses alike. Given the majority of the site's existing use as an elementary school, the new building and site improvements will not have any adverse effects on other uses in the area.
8. *Surrounding property values will be conserved.* It is expected that existing property values will not be adversely impacted due to the enhancement of this public facility.
9. *The character of the neighborhood will be maintained or minimally disrupted.* The new school building will be minimally disruptive to the neighborhood by preservation of vegetation along residential uses and the inclusion of additional plantings in and around the proposed development. The building will compliment other public facilities in town and provide an enhanced sense of community.
10. *The general welfare of the community will be served.* The general welfare of the community will be served and improved through the redevelopment of the school with a modern educational facility that greatly improves capacity and accessibility.
11. *There is a balance between neighborhood acceptance and community needs.* This lot currently serves as an educational institution and the proposed development will allow for growth of the town's resources and provide visual and environmental enhancements to the property. As stated earlier, the proposed school is approximately 200 feet from the nearest house with a dense buffer in between. Attention has been paid to the surrounding neighbors to protect their privacy and character of their homes on both Ellington Road and Long Hill Road. Therefore, the neighborhood acceptance is balanced with the community needs.
12. *Historic factors are adequately protected; or due consideration to preservation of historic factors has been demonstrated.* There are no known historic factors that will be impacted on the site as established during preliminary correspondence with the State Historic Preservation Office.
13. *The overall physical appearance of the proposed development is compatible with surrounding development and the Commission's goals for the neighborhood/corridor.* The character of the existing school building will be improved with the architectural design and exterior finishes of the new building. The look of the new school will also be complimented by associated landscaping, lighting, and material selections throughout the site.

*14. The architectural design is aesthetically pleasing and blends well into the surrounding area.* The character of the existing school building will be improved with the proposed architectural design and finishes of the new building.

As such, the design team has reviewed the 14 criteria for Special Exception approval in Section 8.4.B., and we believe this project meets all of the criteria, therefore warranting approval to provide necessary growth for the Town of South Windsor.

We look forward to reviewing this application with Town Staff and the Commission and are available should you have any questions or comments.