



Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency
One Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108

TEL: 617.854.1000 | FAX: 617.854.1091
VP: 866.758.1435 | www.masshousing.com

March 1, 2012

Saw Mill Pond Village, LLC
85 Chestnut Street
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
Attention: Mr. Iqbal Ali

Re: Saw Mill Village
Easton, MA
PE-512
Project Eligibility (Site Approval) Application

Dear Mr. Ali:

This letter is in response to your application for a determination of Project Eligibility (Site Approval) pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B and 760 CMR 56 (the "Comprehensive Permit Rules") under the following programs:

- Housing Starts Program of the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency ("MassHousing")
- New England Fund Program ("NEF") of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston.

The proposal is to build 36 affordable homeownership units (the "Project") on approximately 12.94 acres of land (the "Site"), of which 10.72 acres are buildable, located on Foundry Street in Easton (the "Municipality"). The project is located within the Canoe River Aquifer Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and adjacent to the Hockomock Swamp ACEC. Much of the land surrounding the site is identified as Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW) and riparian zones.

As a result of our evaluation of the information that was presented and the site reviews conducted by MassHousing staff, we are unable to approve your application for a determination of Project Eligibility.

MassHousing staff has performed an on-site inspection of the Site, which local officials were invited to attend, and reviewed the pertinent information for the Project submitted by the applicant, the Municipality and others in accordance with the Comprehensive Permit Rules and the Guidelines.

MassHousing staff revisited the Site on February 1, 2012. MassHousing staff also reviewed the revised plan that you submitted that reduces the number of units from 44 in the original proposal to 36 in the current plan in addition to reconfiguring the layout of the previous site plan.

The reasons for our denial of your application for Project Eligibility are as follows:

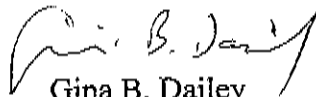
1. We consider the design of the buildings and the proposed site layout to be inconsistent with the design requirements outlined in 760 CMR 56.04(4)(c) and the related Comprehensive Permit Guidelines (“the Guidelines”) dated July 30, 2008. In particular, we focus on the poor relationship to existing building typology and to adjacent streets as factors in our determination. Also, the proposed access and egress to the site is not ideal given the existing road layout of Foundry Street and the volume of traffic typical during peak hours. Regardless of the site’s relative proximity to commercial districts, there is no safe means to accommodate pedestrian trips to and from the proposed development. The introduction of a new housing type, fundamentally designed to maximize the number of units it may yield, into this neighborhood is not consistent with local needs, given the Town of Easton’s recent progress in meeting affordable housing goals.
2. In accordance with 760 CMR 56.04(4)(b) and the associated Guidelines, we have taken into consideration the previous municipal actions by the Town of Easton. Our review of the Town of Easton’s formal response to your application indicates that:
 - (a) The Municipality has approved a Smart Growth Overlay Zoning District under M.G.L. c.40R. This district permits a total of 158 units of housing by right and includes a requirement to include affordable housing within the district. The developer is currently in the process of preparing a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). This district is in close proximity to the only existing public transit in the Municipality and is located within walking distance of a nearby commercial & employment center.
 - (b) The Town of Easton also has recently approved a Comprehensive Permit for 113 units within the Shovel Works development in the heart of the Municipality’s historic mill village. This site is directly adjacent to a proposed Commuter Rail Station and within walking distance of the mill village commercial and civic district, including the Municipality’s main public education complex. Approval of this development has enabled the Municipality to have its Housing Production Plan certified by the Department of Housing & Community Development (one of only four communities statewide currently certified). The Municipality also has made a significant financial contribution to the Shovel Works development, with the commitment of \$7.5 million in Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and an additional \$3.5 million appropriation for the development of a wastewater treatment facility.

Taken together, these municipal actions demonstrate to MassHousing that the Town has made measurable progress in creating opportunities for affordable housing and multi-family housing that address the purpose of M.G.L. c. 40B, and has committed significant local resources to advance these efforts.

We do not focus, in our analysis, upon any one factor in isolation. We look at a site as a whole, as well as other factors such as municipal actions, and ask ourselves whether, after considering everything, the development of a site would advance the affordable housing policy that our agency was created to support. We cannot make that conclusion in favor of this Site.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Greg Watson, Manager of Comprehensive Permit Programs, at 617-854-1880.

Sincerely,



Gina B. Dailey
Director of Comprehensive Permit Programs

cc: Mr. Aaron Gornstein, Undersecretary, Department of Housing and Community
Development
Ms. Colleen A. Corona, Chair, Easton Board of Selectmen
Mr. Walter Mirrione, Chairman, Easton Zoning Board of Appeals