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DETAILED SITE PLAN VARIANCE APPLICATION

**DSP-03083
 VD-03083**

Application	General Data
Project Name: Sandy Spring Estates, Lots 15-18 Location: Northwest of the "T" intersection of Old Sandy Spring Road and Sandy Road Applicant/Address: Sandy Spring Estates, LLC P.O. Box 310 Ashton, MD 20861	Date Accepted: 4/16/2004
	Planning Board Action Limit: 6/25/2004
	Plan Acreage: 1.89 acres
	Zone: R-R (cluster)
	Dwelling Units: 4
	Square Footage: NA
	Planning Area: 60
	Tier: Developing
	Council District: 1
	Municipality: NA
	200-Scale Base Map: 220NE06

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Single-family detached houses, Lots 15-18	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: (CB-12-2003) 3/4/2004
	Sign(s) Posted on Site: 6/9/2004
Staff Recommendation	Staff Reviewer: H. Zhang, AICP
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

June 8, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Henry Zhang, Senior Planner, Urban Design Section, Development Review Division

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan DSP-03083, Sandy Spring Estates, Lots 15-18
Variance Application, VD-03083

The Urban Design staff has completed its review of the subject application and appropriate referrals. The following evaluation and findings lead to a recommendation of APPROVAL with conditions, as described in the recommendation section of this report.

EVALUATION

This detailed site plan was reviewed and evaluated for compliance with the following criteria:

- a. The requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the R-R Zone.
- b. The requirements of Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03114.
- c. The requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.
- d. The requirements of the Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance.
- e. Referral comments.

FINDINGS

Based upon the evaluation and analysis of the subject detailed site plan, the Urban Design Review staff recommends the following findings:

1. **Request:** The subject application is for approval of a detailed site plan for four single-family detached houses in the R-R Zone.

2. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	R-R	R-R
Use(s)	Single-family residential	Single-family residential
Acreage	1.89	1.89
Lots	4	4

ARCHITECTURAL MODELS

Model	Base Finished Area (Sq.Ft.)
Avalon	2,935
Balmoral	3,893
Courtland	2,877
Highgrove	3,576
Victoria	2,439
Waverly	3,189

3. **Location:** The subject detailed site plan covers Lots 15 through 18 of a larger subdivision known as Sandy Spring Estates, which is located on the north side of Old Sandy Spring Road, just west of I-95. The ramp from I-95 to westbound Sandy Spring Road (MD 198) is to the southeast of this property. The site is in Planning Area 60, Council District 1.
4. **Surroundings and Use:** Lots 15 to 18 are located at the southeast-most end of Sandy Spring Estates and northwest of the Old Sandy Spring Road right-of-way, which ends with a cul-de-sac in front of Lot 18. Lot 15 is bounded to the southwest by the right-of-way of Sandy Road. To the northwest of Lots 15 to 18 are other lots in the Sandy Spring Estates subdivision. Further across Old Sandy Spring Road to the east is the ramp for I-95. Lot 18 is adjacent to the ramp of I-95 to the northeast.
5. **Previous Approvals:** The subject DSP covers Lots 15 through 18 of a subdivision known as Sandy Springs Estates. The subdivision has a previously approved Preliminary Plan of Subdivision, 4-00017 (PGCPB No. 00-160), including a Type I Tree Conservation Plan (TCPI/10/00), which was approved in 2000 for 18 lots and subsequently expired. A new Preliminary Plan of Subdivision, 4-03114, was approved (PGCPB No. 04-59) in March 2004 along with TCPI/10/00-01. A Type II Tree Conservation Plan covering Lots 15-18 was approved in 2002. The subject DSP for Lots 15-18 is required by Condition 6 of the Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03114 (see below Finding 8 for more discussion) to ensure that the proposed noise barrier will attenuate the adverse noise impacts associated with I-95 and to provide a safe and attractive neighborhood for future residents.
6. **Design Features:** Lots 15 through 18 are accessed through Old Sandy Spring Road, which ends with a cul-de-sac in front of Lot 18. Four lots are plotted in a line starting at the “T” intersection of Sandy Road and Old Sandy Spring Road with Lot 15 and ending with Lot 18. A two-segment noise-attenuation wall with various heights is located along the site boundary line abutting I-95. The wall consists of an approximately 400-foot long, 8- to 16-foot-high segment along the I-95 right-of-way, and a 100-foot long, 14- to 16-foot-high segment along the north site property line of Lot 18. The concrete wall is treated with texture on the side facing the subdivision and with a smooth surface facing I-95. Since most of the noise attenuation walls along I-95 have been painted, a condition of approval has been proposed to ensure that the proposed wall will be

harmonious with other existing noise attenuation walls. Landscaping has also been provided along the noise-attenuation wall facing the residential subdivision.

COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA

7. **Zoning Ordinance:** The subject application has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements in the R-R Zone and the site plan design guidelines of the Zoning Ordinance.

- a. The subject application is in conformance with the requirements of Section 27- 441(b), which governs permitted uses in residential zones. The proposed single-family detached houses are a permitted use.
- b. The detailed site plan is in general compliance with the requirements of Section 27-442, Regulations, for development in the R-R Zone. But Section 27-420, Fence and Walls, requires that fences and walls (including retaining walls) more than six feet high shall not be located in any required yard and shall meet the setback requirements for main buildings. The application provides a two-segment noise barrier with a height varying from 8 to 16 feet along the property line adjacent to I-95 in order to efficiently mitigate the noise impacts associated with the interstate highway. The applicant has filed a variance application to allow the noise wall to be erected as close as possible to the noise source without observing the setback requirement of 25 feet from the street for the main building in the R-R Zone.
- c. Per Section 27-230 of the Zoning Ordinance, a variance may only be granted when the Planning Board finds that:

“(1) A specific parcel of land has exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape, exceptional topographic conditions, or other extraordinary situations or conditions;”

Comment: Lots 15 through 18 are located at the southeast-most corner of Sandy Spring Estates subdivision abutting the ramp of the intersection of I-95 and Sandy Spring Road. The four lots are accessed through Old Sandy Spring Road, which serves as a frontage road to the site. The site has irregular configuration and is in close proximity to I-95, exposing it to noise levels from the highway in excess of allowable limits. The approval of this subdivision in March 2004 created an extraordinary situation for the site in that the approval requires installation of a noise wall prior to construction of the houses, but the wall, to be most effective, must be at a height and location that are in violation of the building setback. The subject DSP is required by Condition 6 of Preliminary Plan 4-03114 (See Finding 8 below for more discussion).

“(2) The strict application of this Subtitle will result in peculiar and unusual practical difficulties to, or exceptional or undue hardship upon, the owner of the property; and”

Comment: The strict application of the required setback of 25 feet from the street, in this case, would cause the proposed noise-attenuation wall to fail to meet the mitigation standard. An even higher noise wall would be needed that would have an extremely detrimental impact on the aesthetic appearance of the neighborhood. The denial of the variance application would make it impossible for the applicant to achieve the required 65 dBA (Ldn) noise level for outdoor activities and 45 dBA (Ldn) for internal activities with a reasonably sized wall, which would result in the applicant not being able to develop Lots 15 through 18.

“(3) The variance will not substantially impair the intent, purpose, or integrity of the General Plan or Master Plan.”

Comment: The subject site is in Planning Area 60. The site is also in the Developing Tier of the 2002 General Plan. According to the referral comments of the Community Planning Division, there are no master plan issues raised through the review of this detailed site plan application. The State Highway Administration has also agreed that the proposed noise abatement wall is appropriate. The variance will not substantially impair the intent, purpose, or integrity of the General Plan or the master plan.

The proposed single-family detached dwelling and the required noise-attenuation wall have unique circumstances that justify approval of the aforementioned variance. Due to the property being located in a cluster development in the R-R Zone, within such close proximity to I-95, granting the relief requested would not substantially impair the intent, purpose or integrity of the General Plan or the master plan, while denying the variance request would result in a practical difficulty upon the owner of the property. Staff, therefore, recommends approval of the variance from the required setback to allow the noise-attenuation wall to be located as close as possible to the noise source in order to effectively mitigate noise impacts associated with I-95 to provide a safe and attractive neighborhood for future residents.

8. **Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03114:** The Planning Board approved Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03114 on March 18, 2004, subject to eight conditions that are applicable to this DSP review as follows:

3. **A Type II Tree Conservation Plan shall be approved prior to the issuance of permits, or at the time of detailed site plan approval for Lots 15 through 18, whichever comes first.**

Comment: A Type II Tree Conservation Plan (TCPII/87/02) for Sandy Spring Estates was approved in 2002. Lots 15 through 18 were covered by the approved TCPII/87/02.

5. **Prior to approval of building permits for proposed Lots 15-18, the applicant shall construct a noise barrier to mitigate noise impacts from I-95. The following note shall be placed on the final plat: “Building permits for lots shall not be approved until the noise barrier adjacent to Lots 15-18 is constructed.”**

Comment: This condition will be carried forward as a condition of approval of this DSP.

6. **Prior to approval of the final plat that includes Lots 15-18, a limited detailed site plan shall be approved by the Planning Board to ensure that the proposed noise barrier will attenuate the adverse noise impacts associated with I-95 and to provide a safe and attractive neighborhood for future residents. The site plan shall include the proposed fine grading, house locations and house types for Lots 15-18. The site plan shall also reflect the location and design of the proposed barrier along with proposed screening through the use of trees, shrubs and other plant materials. Finally, the plan shall be submitted to PEPCO or BGE to evaluate the location of the proposed noise barrier with respect to the location of the existing overhead electrical transmission lines. If determined necessary by PEPCO or BGE,**

the overhead electrical lines may need to be relocated or elevated by the applicant. The material used for the construction of the wall as a sound barrier shall be limited to concrete and/or masonry materials or other materials found to be accepted by the Environmental Planning Section due to the longevity of the materials and the need for little or no maintenance.

Comment: The subject DSP was submitted in order to satisfy this condition. The DSP includes fine grading, house footprints, and architectural models for the four lots. The site plan and landscape plan also show the location, design and the proposed screening of the noise barrier. The noise wall consists of two elements with various heights starting from the southeast boundary of Lot 18 that is adjacent to I-95 and turning to the frontage along Old Sandy Spring Road and ending around the intersection of Old Sandy Spring Road and Sandy Road. The lowest point of the wall is eight feet and the highest point is 16 feet. The submitted noise-attenuation wall details indicate that the wall is made of precast concrete panels with a textured surface facing the subdivision and a smooth finish toward I-95. The concrete panel is four inches thick with reinforced steel bars. A review by the Environmental Planning Section (Shirley to Zhang, May 21, 2004) indicates that the proposed noise-attenuation wall is acceptable.

By a letter dated July 10, 2003 (Hartley, Director of New Business Growth & Design, BGE, to Norris, Heritage Homes Development Corporation), BGE has approved the applicant's request to put a 14- to 16-foot-high noise barrier on the location as proposed in this DSP (Refer to the attached letter for more details).

The applicant also submitted a noise study entitled I-95 Traffic Noise Evaluation—Sandy Spring Estates, Prince George's County, Maryland. According to the noise study, the proposed noise barrier will attenuate the adverse noise impacts associated with I-95 and provide a safe neighborhood for future residents.

9. ***Landscape Manual:*** The proposed development is subject to the requirements of Section 4.1, Residential Requirements, of the *Landscape Manual*. Section 4.1(e), for cluster subdivisions in the R-R Zone, requires that three major shade trees and two ornamental or evergreen trees shall be planted on each lot. The applicant has provided the required number of plant units on each lot.

In addition, landscaping has also been provided along the noise barrier per Condition 6 of Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03114, but the landscape plan shows the noise barrier in the same location as the plant materials. A condition of approval has been proposed in the recommendation section of this report to correct the presentation oversight.

10. **Woodland Conservation Ordinance:** The Sandy Spring Estates Subdivision (Lots 1-18) is subject to the provisions of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance because the gross tract area is in excess of 40,000 square feet; there are more than 10,000 square feet of existing woodland on site; and there is a previously approved Type I Tree Conservation Plan TCPI/10/00.

A Type II Tree Conservation Plan (TCPII/87/02), including Lots 1 through 18, was approved in 2002. Currently TCPII/87/02 is still valid. No additional tree conservation plan is required to be approved with this limited detailed site plan.

11. **Referral Comments:** The subject application was referred to the concerned agencies and divisions. The referral comments are summarized as follows:
- a. In a memorandum dated June 9, 2004, the Community Planning Division noted that there are no master plan or general plan issues related to this detailed site plan application.
 - b. In a memorandum dated May 13, 2004, the Subdivision Section staff indicated that the detailed site plan is subject to the three conditions of approval of Preliminary Plan 4-03114. The staff listed each condition applicable to this DSP review. See Finding 8 for a detailed discussion.
 - c. The Transportation Planning Section, in a memorandum dated April 23, 2004, noted that the plan is acceptable.

In a separate memorandum from the Transportation Planning Section dated June 9, 2004, on detailed site plan review for master plan trail compliance, the trails planner indicated that there are no master plan trail issues identified in the adopted and approved Subregion I master plan for the subject application. The required sidewalk has been shown on the DSP.
 - d. The Environmental Planning Section, in a memorandum dated May 21, 2004, indicated that the plans as submitted have been found to meet all applicable environmental requirements. The staff recommended approval of this application subject to one condition that has been incorporated into the recommendation section of this report.
 - e. The Permit Section, in a memorandum dated May 3, 2004, made four comments regarding the DSP's compliance with the requirements of the *Landscape Manual* and required certain information.

Comment: By a response dated May 12, 2004, the applicant revised both site and landscape plans to address each comment.
 - f. The State Highway Administration (SHA), in a memorandum dated May 4, 2004, indicated that the proposed noise-attenuation wall is appropriate. The SHA engineer concluded that SHA does not have an objection to the approval of DSP-03083 and VD-03083.
 - h. The City of Laurel had not responded to the referral request at the time the staff report was written.
12. The detailed site plan represents a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines of Subtitle 27, Part 3, Division 9, of the Prince George's County Code without requiring unreasonable cost and without detracting substantially from the utility of the proposed development for its intended use.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing evaluation, analysis and findings, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE Detailed Site Plan, DSP-03083

and Variance Application VD-03083, for Sandy Spring Estates, Lots 15-18, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certificate approval of this detailed site plan, the applicant shall
 - a. Revise the plans to identify the location and height of the existing overhead electrical power lines, if any.
 - b. Revise the landscape plan to ensure that the proposed plant materials are properly located in relation to the proposed noise attenuation wall.
 - c. Provide lot numbers of the adjacent lots.
 - d. Provide a note on the site plan indicating that the proposed noise-attenuation wall will be painted in a harmonious way with other existing walls along I-95.
2. Prior to the issuance of any building permits for Lots 15-18, the applicant shall construct a noise barrier to mitigate noise impacts from I-95. The following note shall be placed on the final plat:

“Building permits for lots shall not be approved until the noise barrier adjacent to Lots 15-18 is constructed.”
3. No two units located next to or immediately across the street from each other may have identical front elevations.
4. The developer, his heirs, successors and/or assignees shall display in the sales office all of the plans approved by the Planning Board for this subdivision, including all exterior elevations of all approved models, the detailed site plan, and the landscape plan.