

Certificate of Review

Application for Demolition Permit

HPC2003090401

for 112 Chestnut Avenue

An application for demolition of the house at 112 Chestnut was submitted to the HPC on August 4, 2003 for review at its August meeting. The application was signed by the Owner, Tom Appleby.

General Description: The application is for complete demolition of the house and foundation.

Adequacy of the Documents Submitted: No material was submitted along with the application.

Visibility from public ways: The house is visible from Chestnut Avenue, Brown Street and Hickory Road.

Contributing structure: The house is listed as a contributing structure originally dating from somewhere between 1932 and 1945.

Nearby Contributing structures: There are nearby contributing structures across Chestnut Avenue.

Impact of the proposed demolition on the Grove:

Demolition of any structure is of concern to the HPC in its charge of protecting the historic character of the Grove, and particularly one listed as a contributing structure. As the exact date of construction was not precise on the list and the structure itself appeared to be significantly altered, we decided to further investigate the data both in the literature and at the site. Phil Edwards' history indicates that the house was assembled in the forties from pieces of two other Grove houses, one of which was moved from near the Circle. It comments that the reassembly left hardly a board from the original in place.

The site visit gave several of us the opportunity to examine the present structure and talk to the Owner, Tom Appleby. He provided many insights into the history of the house, including providing an early hand-tinted photograph showing the cottage where the house now stands and another house on the now empty adjacent lot. The cottage appears to have been a Grove style one and a half story cottage with one portion with a ridge parallel to Chestnut and one with a ridge parallel to Brown. There was a wrap-around porch on the Chestnut and Brown sides and dormers in the roof and gable end roof ornamentation. This was apparently the cottage that was moved from near the Circle. The other house in the photo was obscured by trees, but Tom referred to it as a Cape Cod. This house was apparently demolished and the lumber used in the alterations of the cottage.

The present house is of a somewhat Dutch colonial style with a gambrel roof and the entrance on the side facing Chestnut. There are no porches. There are many different styles of windows and doors likely from other structures and the siding is a wide board lap siding. Most of the interior has been gutted exposing rotted wood and inadequate construction. Investigation of the framing revealed that the only likely portion of the original cottage that remains intact is the first floor framing, including the original sills and some of the flooring. This consists of the roughly 14' x 30' section parallel to Chestnut and the intersecting 14' x 24' section parallel to Brown. This had remained intact in the forties while a new block and brick foundation was put under it, and then the first floor was expanded towards Brown and towards the adjacent lot to form a rectangular perimeter. This then was built on to frame the new

structure using much of the lumber and pieces from the original and the adjacent house, and likely other parts salvaged from other sources.

The Owner has considered many different approaches to the project including renovating, salvaging and modifying the current house. Much work has gone into repairs and investigations into the condition of the structure, both framing and foundation, and the Owner has concluded that the difficulty and cost of retaining it are greater than the benefits. The Commissioners certainly understand the critical balancing of these issues, and encourage Tom to seek expert guidance on the cost comparisons between demolition and retention of portions of the structure including the foundation and original first floor structure. We also hope that he will pause and examine all options in achieving his cost goals, including possible salvage companies.

Should he conclude that his goals would only be achieved by demolition, we encourage him to propose a design that reflects the character of the houses in the Grove. This can best be done by keeping the apparent scale of the house small. Some of the suggestions for doing so include keeping the predominant eave line one or one and a half stories, having multiple roof forms and dormers to break up the roof lines, and having one larger form with smaller ones added to it, including porches. We would also encourage him to retain the historic orientation toward Chestnut and Brown with the ridges possibly reflecting the original ones and porches orienting towards them. We would also encourage the use of natural materials on the exterior.

And lastly, we encourage him to bring his proposed design in early for help in making the design compatible with the historic character of the Grove.

Please note that the Historic Preservation Commission acts only in an advisory capacity to both applicants and the Planning Commission. The reviews undertaken are designed to assist homeowners in their projects, to provide input to deliberations of the Planning Commission and, more generally, to contribute to historic preservation in Washington Grove.

Further information regarding the scope, powers, duties, and structure of the Historic Preservation Commission may be found in Article XV of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Washington Grove. Section 5 (a) of Article XV describes the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission in the building permit process. This section reads as follows:

The Commission shall review all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, or compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission may recommend to an applicant alternative historical designs, materials and sources for the same which may be more historically compatible. The Commission shall forward its recommendations regarding the same, if any, in an advisory capacity, to the Planning Commission for consideration by the Planning Commission within thirty (30) days from the Commission's receipt of the application from the Planning Commission.

Bob Booher
for the Historic Preservation Commission

Date

cc: Applicants
HPC Binder
Web Site