7 Arlington Ave. Demolition
DRI 718

Martha’s Vineyard Commission
June 16, 2022
7 Arlington Ave. Demolition

Owner/Applicant: Eunu Chun and Lisa H. Kim; Chuck Sullivan (architect)
Proposal: Demolition of a house built in 1875 and listed in MACRIS
Zoning: Residential 2 (R2)
Permits: Demolition permit, building permit, special permit
Checklist: 8.1a (Demolition of a house listed in MACRIS)

Mandatory review

LUPC 4/11/22 – No recommendation, but asked for OB Historical Commission input
OBHC 6/8/22 – Voted to designate building as “preferably preserved,” in addition to earlier designation of “significant”
Additions to the record since LUPC

• Revised plans for replacement structure
• Peer review memo regarding historical significance
• OB Historical Commission draft notes from 6/8/22 meeting
• Clarification regarding OB Conservation Commission jurisdiction
The three-story four-bedroom house is listed in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) as the Palmer Villa House, built in 1875, which was divided and moved from Beecher Park in 1917. (Palmer Villa had been a seasonal guest or rooming house.)

Other half of the house was moved to 11 Arlington Ave. (Associated with the Rice Playhouse and School of Elocution, which operated from 1925-1950 and was believed to be the second summer theater in the nation.)

House is significant as part of the Vineyard Highlands (laid out in 1869 as an alternative to the Wesleyan Grove Campground) and because the original house was built in the Campground cottage style.

The house is aligned with other large houses along the part of East Chop Drive known as Institute Hill (named for the Martha’s Vineyard Summer Institute).

The town assessor’s office lists the building’s condition as “minus good” (considered above average for Oak Bluffs), with an assessed value of $371,300.

Various work has been done on the building since 2016, including unspecified renovations in 2012.
Proposal

- Demolish most of the existing house, while retaining and relocating two stories of the main three-story section (minus the second-floor ceiling).
- Expand the structure as shown in the tables below. [NEEDS TO BE UPDATED]
- An existing detached bedroom would be renovated and expanded in the same footprint (425 ft$^2$). And a new 484 ft$^2$ garage would be added.
- An existing driveway along the side of the house would be removed and replanted, and a new driveway added toward the front of the site.

### Existing Square Footage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Area (SQFT)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing First Floor</td>
<td>1,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Second Floor</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Third Floor</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,233 ft$^2$</td>
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### Proposed Square Footage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Area (SQFT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed First Floor</td>
<td>2,108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed Second Floor</td>
<td>1,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Third Floor</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,054 ft$^2$</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1887 Bird’s Eye Drawing of Cottage City
11 Arlington Ave.
View from Highlands, Oak Bluffs, Mass.
Comparison of previous and revised plans
Comparison to previous plan
Comparison to previous plan

PREVIOUS

REVISED
Comparison to previous plan

PREVIOUS

REVISED
Comparison to previous plan

PREVIOUS

REVISED

NORTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED
Comparison of revised plans and current conditions
Detached bedroom and garage
Detached bedroom
Garage
Planning concerns

• Historical significance
• Character and identity
• Wastewater
• Drainage
• Energy
• Landscape
Historical significance

- **Age**: The structure was originally built in 1875, and divided and moved to two other locations in the Vineyard Highlands in 1917.

- **History/Culture**: The building is significant as part of the Vineyard Highlands, and is an example of Campground cottage construction. The original structure in Beecher Park was an elaborate seasonal home built in the Campground style and later divided and moved.

- **Design/Construction**: The existing structure retains some of the proportions, massing, and roof shapes of the original, but few of the original decorative features remain, as indicated by a photograph of the original Palmer Villa. The building was apparently constructed with high quality methods and materials, as indicated by its age and condition.

- **Historic Portion of Existing Structure**: The entire structure as it stands is considered historic.

- **Previous Alterations**: Unknown, apart from the division and relocation in 1917.
Historical significance

- **Contribution to Streetscape/Community:** The house is part of a wooded and gently developed area in the Highlands. It stands on a hill overlooking Oak Bluffs Harbor and is among the first and more visible houses on Arlington Ave., as approached from East Chop Drive. The house is aligned with other large houses along the part of East Chop Drive known as Institute Hill (named for the Martha’s Vineyard Summer Institute), but is more heavily screened by trees and other vegetation. It is somewhat larger than other houses in the neighborhood, and stands farther back from the road. The construction dates of houses in the immediate area range from 1890 to 1930. The other half of Palmer Villa is located next door at 11 Arlington Ave.

- **Historic Designation:** The house is listed in MACRIS, but no other historic registers.

- **Visibility:** The house is visible from East Chop Drive, Arlington Ave., and Oak Bluffs Harbor, but is partly obscured by trees and other vegetation.

- **Condition:** A structural report has not been provided, although Squash Meadow Construction, which has done work on the house, provided an email noting that they had observed areas of rot and stating that the deck and roof need to be rebuilt. The applicant has stated that the kitchen, as well as most of the ceiling framing on the second floor, appears to be insulated, but that the insulated spaces might not be up to code.
Historical significance

*Alternative Solutions*: The proposed work is generally too extensive to be considered a rehabilitation of the existing structure. A portion of the existing structure would be retained.

The applicant has stated that windows, soffit and porch details, and some trim details will be similar to the existing house, but no exterior materials will be salvaged for the new house. Portions of the main stairway, including railing, balusters and newel posts, will be salvaged, along with interior paneling, and interior doors and hardware. The chimney of the new house would be brick with a chimney cap to match the existing chimney. The height of the new building would be 31 feet, compared to the existing height of 29 feet.
Peer review by Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

1. Identify those portions of the building (including any previous additions or renovations) that have architectural significance, including the dating of all portions where possible, and describe why each portion is significant.

2. Assess the relationship of the building to its streetscape/neighborhood, including with respect to the age and style of other buildings in the area.
1. **Historical significance of building**
   - Originally one half of Palmer Villa.
   - Footprint of house has not changed since 1917.
   - Several alterations over the years:
     - Removal of all ornamental trim. The house in its original form was highly ornamented, including vergeboards, roof-top finials and cresting, patterned roofing (presumably slate), and turned porch posts with ornamental brackets.
     - Replacement of corner turret with larger tower.
     - Replacement of wrap-around porch. This was likely done when the house was moved in 1917. The replacement porch has no ornamental details, and the corner steps with clipped gable roof were not replicated.
     - Infilling of dormer decks.
     - It is unclear if the rear ell is original to the house. The ell appears to have a similar roof height, but in the original location, the second story appears to have been stepped back, which is no longer the case.
     - Window replacement and resizing. None of the windows appear to be original or historically significant. The majority of the windows appear to originally have been wood, 2/2 double-hung sash. These windows have all been replaced with modern, thermal 2/2 windows and large fixed sash.
Photo 2. View of 7 Arlington Avenue, looking south (annotated).
1. Historical significance of building

- MHC classifies the style as Victorian Eclectic, meaning that it was built in the Victorian era but does not display sufficient characteristics to clearly identify with one style.

- Palmer Villa included features associated with the Queen Anne style and Second Empire style.
  - Character-defining features of the Queen Anne style include irregular massing, including corner turrets, varying roof shapes, and use of different siding materials to animate the elevations. Character-defining features of the Second Empire style include most notably the use of Mansard roofs for the main roof and/or turrets.

**Conclusions:** In its current form, 7 Arlington Street retains some of the Queen Anne-style irregular massing of the original 1875 villa, most notably the roof forms with clipped-gable dormers on both sides of the corner tower. However, the house has lost all ornamental trim that animated the elevations and roof; and the primary reference to the Second Empire style – the Mansard-roofed turret – was replaced by a larger, astylistic corner tower with shallow hip roof.
1. **Relationship to streetscape/neighborhood**

- **1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Oak Bluffs**
  - Show a small stretch of what was then called Eaton Avenue (now East Chop Drive) developed with a row of cottages that were located close to the each other but were otherwise in relative isolation. [Institute Hill]
  - 7 Arlington Avenue was the most recent addition; the other five had been built or relocated in the late-19th century.
  - A comparison of 1923 map to current Assessor map shows how that pattern has been retained, although a few houses have been replaced, and a few contemporary houses have been added or replaced older houses to the south.
  - 7 Arlington Avenue is aligned with, but slightly separated from the row of cottages on the ridge above East Chop Drive. The four most adjacent houses date(d) to the late-1800s, but 19 Mill Square Road has been demolished and a new house is under construction. The remaining 19th century cottages are similar in scale and siting.
Photo 6. View looking north from East Chop Drive (annotated).
Figure 1. Detail, 1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Oak Bluffs, Map 5.

Figure 2. Oak Bluffs GIS Assessor Map.
1. **Relationship to streetscape/neighborhood**

• 7 Arlington is aligned with, but slightly separated from the row of cottages. The four most adjacent houses date(d) to the late-1800s, but 19 Mill Square Road has been demolished and a new house is under construction. The remaining 19th century cottages are similar in scale and siting.

• The row of cottages is of a heterogeneous mix of styles.
  • The cottage at 21 Mill Square Road is most similar in style and form to 7 and 11 Arlington Drive.
  • Both Palmer Villa and 21 Mill Square Road were moved from elsewhere in Oak Bluffs, and they were built in their original locations within a year of each other (1875 and 1874 respectively).
  • 21 Mill Square Road was originally located on Ocean Park. It was moved to this location in 1891. Palmer Villa was moved here and divided into two cottages in 1917.
  • Unlike 7 Arlington Street, 21 Mill Square Road has retained its Mansard-roofed corner turret, and retained or replaced-in-kind a fair amount of the ornamental detail.

**Conclusion:** It was likely intended that 7 Arlington Avenue be located in a manner that continued the row of summer cottages on the ridge overlooking Vineyard Sound. Although somewhat altered, 7 Arlington Avenue does provide the north terminus to a distinct row of late-19th century cottages.
Oak Bluffs Historical Commission review

• Voted unanimously to designate the house as “Significant” on 5/18/22, initiating hearing process
• Revised plans were submitted to OBHC
• Hearing held on 6/8/22 – OBHC voted 4-3 to designate the house as “Preferably Preserved,” and provided comments on the revised plans

Comments on revised plans:
• Large scale compared to existing house, including tower
• Would involve demolishing 70-80% of existing house
• The proposed addition would not be subordinate to the original
• The retained portion would not be apparent
• The architecture would be attractive in another location
Wastewater

• The property drains into Vineyard Sound.

• There are currently five bedrooms on the property, including the detached bedroom, and plans show a total six bedrooms, including the detached bedroom.

• An existing six-bedroom septic tank will remain, with the septic tank relocated slightly to the east.

• An existing leaching field on land once owned by the Highland Trust (now East Chop Association) will remain. The East Chop Association has stated that there are no current restrictions on that portion of the property.
Other planning concerns

**Stormwater and Drainage:** The property is partly within the FEMA VE flood zone, but the proposed house is located on higher ground and is just outside that area. A drainage plan shows a gutter and drywell system for the main house and detached bedroom.

**Energy:** The proposed building would be all-electric, with a heat pump HVAC system and hybrid hot water tanks. (The existing house has electric water heating, and plug-in AC units and radiant hot water heaters.)

**Landscape:** The new driveway will require the removal of trees, but the applicant has stated that the demolition and new construction will not. A landscape plan has not been provided.

*Conservation Commission jurisdiction:* 100 feet from the flood zone, which would include about half the property, including the land, trees, and exterior of the house if it were to be rebuilt or renovated.