Island Autism Group Master Plan
DRI 719

Martha’s Vineyard Commission
June 9, 2022
Island Autism Group Master Plan

Applicant: Kate DeVane, Island Autism Group (with consultation by Island Housing Trust)

Owner: The Island Autism Group Inc.

Location: 515 Lambert’s Cove Road (Map 11, Lot 2), West Tisbury (7.5 acres)

Permits: Building permit, Board of Health, special permit, ZBA (variance for siting of barn within setback for Land Bank property)

Checklist: 1.3D (Previous DRI)

Proposal: Construction of a central building with guest rooms, apartment, kitchen, and office space; five separate dwelling units; a barn; and a farmstand

LUPC: 4/25/22 – Voted to waive independent traffic study
Additions to record since LUPC

• Response to LUPC questions (draft)
  o *Info on staff increase, existing building, animals, sand hardener, etc.*
• LUPC applicant presentation
• Special permit application for barn setbacks
  o *Special permit already granted for setbacks*
• Transportation staff report
• Letter from Land Bank regarding driveway
  o *States that the driveway cannot be moved per the terms of the APR but that vegetative screening could be planted south of the driveway*
• Correspondence
Project history

• Property is the site of the former Child Farm, which Island Autism Group (IAG) purchased in 2020, after which the property was subdivided with 10 acres going to the Land Bank and 7.5 acres to the Island Autism Group.

• The 7.5 acres owned by IAG includes a conservation restriction that allows for a three-acre building envelope.

• Both lots also maintain an existing agricultural preservation restriction.

• Project was referred by the West Tisbury Planning Board on Dec. 1, 2022 (received Dec. 22), with a recommendation for approval.

• All six towns have contributed CPC funds for the project.
Proposal

The proposal is to establish a residential campus for the nonprofit Island Autism Group, which was founded in 2008. The campus master plan consists of three phases for which the applicant is seeking approval:

**Phase 1**
- **Farmhouse building (Hub House):** Offices, kitchen, bathrooms, programming/community space, an apartment for the farm manager / program director, and two guest bedrooms. Will be used largely for after-school and summer daytime programming for school-age children and job training for young adults. 4,807 ft\(^2\) of heated space.
- **Barn:** Located north of the main campus building envelope. 3,350 ft\(^2\) of unheated space.
- **Farmstand:** 144 ft\(^2\) of unheated space in the lower field.
- **Driveway, parking, landscaping, etc.**

**Phase 2**
- **Two four-bedroom houses:** For residents with more intense needs who require 24-hour care; floorplans also show unfished loft space. 4,867 ft\(^2\) of heated space per house.

**Phase 3**
- **Three two-bedroom cottages:** For people with less severe needs who can live together in proximity to the 24-hour care units. 1,543 ft\(^2\) of heated space per cottage.
Proposal

- The three parts of the campus would be connected by walkways and landscaping throughout.
- An existing three-bedroom house built around 1965, along with two sheds on the property, would be removed. The applicant has stated that the house would not be adequate to serve the group’s needs, although it has been offered to Habitat for Humanity.
ISLAND AUTISM CENTER AT CHILD FARM - MASTER PLAN - 515 Lambert's Cove Road, West Tisbury MA 02575
Elevations

NOTE: The two gable elevations shown above are to proper scale. Building is 32' wide and ridge height is 25'.

NOTE: The two side elevations shown above are not to scale. Actual length of barn is 64'.
Example Photo of Lenox Carriage House Barn Island Autism Center at Child Farm - W.T.
Special Permit to reduce setback from 50’ to 4’ was granted on 5/26/22. (Land Bank had endorsed the siting, with conditions.)
Planning concerns

• Wastewater
• Stormwater
• Agriculture
• Open space
• Character and identity
• Noise / impact on abutters
• Energy
• Traffic and transportation
• Island housing needs
• Social development
• Lighting and landscape
Wastewater

• Property is within the coastal watershed, and the number of bedrooms will increase from three to 17. (There is no official nitrogen load limit for the coastal watershed.)

• As proposed, an existing five-bedroom Title 5 system will be refurbished and used for the Hub House in phase 1.

• Once the residential buildings are completed in phases 2, a new 18-bedroom KleanTu nitrogen reducing septic system will be installed to serve the entire campus, and the Title 5 system will be abandoned.
Stormwater

• The proposed building footprints, including porches, would total about 16,700 ft$^2$.

• The parking area and main driveway would consist of permeable sand hardener, and would connect to the western portion of the building envelope via a dirt driveway.

• A walkway consisting of permeable stone pavers would run east-west through the campus.

• The applicant has stated that all roofs will be guttered with multiple drywells, and that site slopes will allow for surface drainage in all permeable areas.
Agriculture

- The property is the site of the former Child Farm, and has an agricultural preservation restriction, including the front meadow which will be used as open space and vegetable gardens.
- Most of the property is designated as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance (USDA) with well-drained soils.

Island Plan (2009):
- About 1,687 acres of the Island are classified as farmland with about 935 acres in production for human consumption, 493 acres in hay and pasture, and 259 acres of horse farms.
- Only about 300 acres of the farmland used for food production is permanently protected.
- Island Plan includes objectives and strategies to increase farmland and food production

- As proposed, the campus would be a working farm as well as affordable housing for people with autism and full-time farm manager.
Criteria for prime farmland

- available water capacity of 3.5 in (8.9 cm) or more within a depth of 40 in (1 m) or the depth to an impermeable layer if less than 40 in (1 m)
- pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 in (1 m)
- water table, if present, not shallower than 15 in (38 cm) during May through October
- infrequent (less often than once in 2 years) or no flooding during May through October
- the product of Kw (erodibility factor, whole soil) of the mineral soil surface and percent slope is less than 2.0
- permeability rate of at least 0.06 in (0.15 cm) per hour in the upper 20 in (50 cm)
- upper 6 in (15 cm) of the soil surface contains less than 10 percent rock fragments by volume coarser than 3 in (7.6 cm) diameter
- not more than 0.1 percent of the soil surface is covered by stones 10 in (25cm) to 24 in (60cm) diameter, and/or boulders >24 in (60 cm) diameter
- less than 2 percent bedrock exposures
Criteria for farmland of statewide importance

- available water capacity of 2.0 in (5.1 cm) or more within a depth of 40 in (1 m)
- pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 in (1 m)
- water table, if present, not shallower than 15 in (38 cm) during May through October
- infrequent (less often than once in 2 years) or no flooding during May through October
- the product of Kw (erodibility factor, whole soil) of the mineral soil surface and percent slope is less than 4.22
- permeability rate of at least 0.06 in (0.15 cm) per hour in the upper 20 in (50 cm)
- upper 6 in (15 cm) with less than 35 percent rock fragments by volume coarser than 3 in (7.6 cm)
- not more than 3 percent of the soil surface is covered by stones 10 in (25 cm) to 24 in (60 cm) diameter
- not more than 0.1 percent of the surface is covered by boulders >24 in (60 cm) diameter
- less than 2 percent bedrock exposures
Open space

• Most of the property would remain as open space or agriculture, with forest clearing within the three-acre building envelope.

• Outdoor spaces between the buildings, including a courtyard between the two four-bedroom houses, will be used as common activity space.

• The campus will incorporate a Land Bank walking trail along the west and north property lines, and additional walking paths between the campus and vegetable gardens to the east.

• The proposed barn will stand four feet from the Land Bank property and a special permit was granted for the setback. (The Land Bank endorsed that location.)
Character and identity

• The proposed buildings are designed in a rural style, with wood siding and gable roofs. The height of the proposed buildings would be 31’ (farmhouse), 25’ (four-bedrooms houses), 23’5” (cottages), and 25’ (barn).

• A fly-through video rendering of the campus is available online.
Noise / impact on abutters

• The distance between the proposed buildings and two existing residences to the south would be about 242 ft and 205 ft, respectively, with pool fencing and a vegetated buffer in between.

• The applicant has stated that the buildings and outdoor common areas are oriented as far from abutters as possible, with interior activity spaces focused toward the center of the property to further reduce noise.

• The setback distance to the south has been increased to 50 ft in response to abutter concerns.

• The campus in general is designed with subtle enclosure areas, including split-rail fences and landscaping, to encourage residents to remain on the property, and to encourage visitors to stay on the paths or in public areas.

• The applicant has stated that the proposed sand-hardener driveway will create less noise than a gravel or pea stone driveway.

• A preliminary landscape screening plan with proposed species and heights has been provided.
Energy

• The applicant has stated that the buildings will exceed the state building code in terms of energy efficiency, and will be all-electric.

• At least one of the four-bedrooms houses, and possibly the barn, would also have rooftop solar panels or be solar-ready (total 3,200 ft² of available roof area).

• An electric van will likely be purchased for transporting children in the day programs.
Traffic and transportation

- Access will be via an existing driveway that will be extended and connect to a parking area for 12 vehicles near the Hub House.

- The vehicle access is designed to accommodate emergency vehicles per National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and delivery vehicles.

- The applicant does not anticipate a large amount of traffic, since adults with autism do not drive, and children will be delivered by the IAG van service.

- The project is expected to create about 20 jobs.

- A VTA bus stop is located about half a mile away on State Road, and the applicant has noted the possibility of working with the town to create a path along Lambert’s Cove road between the proposed campus and State Road, utilizing an existing 12-15 ft shoulder.

- LUPC waived a formal traffic study.
Traffic and transportation (staff review)

Existing and Proposed Trip Generation

• The existing average daily traffic (ADT) volume on Lambert’s Cove Road southern end is roughly 3,400 vehicles.

• The project including all buildings is expected to generate 17 daily trips. National Data shows that less than 5% of residents in this type of community own cars. The applicant has stated that the residents of this development do not own and will not be driving their own vehicles.

• Trips to and from the site will consist of employees, visiting nurses/medical care, food deliveries, and a shuttle that buses in children.

• The proposed project will not have a significant impact on the surrounding roadways.
Traffic and transportation (staff review)

- **Crash History:** This portion of Lambert’s Cove Road does not have a crash history that reaches the District or Statewide averages for concern.

- **Sight Distances:** The existing sight distances at the proposed driveway are acceptable. The required sight distance for a 30mph road is 200 feet. The sight distances in both directions far exceed the minimum requirements.

- **Parking:** The proposed project will provide 12 parking spaces. The West Tisbury bylaw requires two spaces per dwelling unit. The parking meets the Town requirement.
Island housing needs

• The project will create **17 bedrooms**, including free housing for a full-time farm manager / program director and two guest rooms, and will be the Island’s first group-living facility for people with autism.

• The property includes an **affordable housing restriction** so that 70% of the units must be affordable to households earning 80% or less of the area median income. The applicant has also acknowledged that the average person with autism earns only about 30% AMI.

• The four-bedroom houses are for people with more intense needs, who would be earning less than 30% AMI.

• The applicant cannot legally restrict units to Islanders, but there will be an applicant and point system weighted toward Islanders.

• The project is expected to create about **20 jobs**, including the farm manager / program director, 24-hour rotating staff for each of the four-bedroom houses, and other staff as needed. The 20 rotating staff would live offsite.
Farm manager’s apartment and 2 guest rooms
Social development

• As proposed, the campus would be a working farm as well affordable group housing for people with autism, and would provide after-school and summertime programming coordinated with the Island school system, and jobs and job training.

• The applicant has also worked with the town of West Tisbury to educate public safety workers about how to approach and assist people with autism.

• Community members will be encouraged to use the trails and participate in events on campus.
Lighting and landscape

• A preliminary lighting plan shows downward-facing LED wall-mounted fixtures at 22 locations, and low-level solar bollard lighting at 22 locations. (Spec sheets have been provided.) The applicant has stated that overhead lighting is not required, since there will be no regular evening activities.

• A preliminary landscape screening plan including native species and proposed heights has been provided.

• Some of the existing forest of beech and oak within the building envelope and along the south and west property lines will be retained.