

October 3rd, 2023

Town of Reading
Community Planning & Development Commission
Attn: Andrew MacNichol
16 Lowell Street
Reading, MA 01867

**Re: Response to Comments Letter
McDonald's Restaurant
413 Main Street
Reading, MA**

Dear Mr. MacNichol,

Please find below our responses to Planning Division comments provided via email from Mary Benedetto, Senior Planner, on August 23, 2023 and a Memo provided by the Town of Reading Engineering Division dated August 31, 2023. For clarity, the comments are in italics, while our responses are directly below in normal font. This response letter references plans by Bohler Engineering revised through 8/15/2023.

Planning Division comments via email dated August 23rd, 2023

Comment 1: *Parcels: The project site is actually two lots, Map 17, Lots 64 & 85. Please revise this information in your cover letter and project narrative.*

Response 1: The cover letter, project narrative, and plans have been revised to include Map 17, Lots 64 & 85.

Comment 2: *Parking: Please include the parking calculation information for the 32 new spaces proposed. How many seats are proposed inside the restaurant and what will be a max employee count?*

- *Please revise your documents to consistently refer to the parking as 43 current and 32 proposed spaces in your cover letter and project narrative, we consider the handicapped spaces part of the total.*
- *Please clarify if the loading/unloading spaces included in your parking total? None are indicated on the site layout plan.*

Response 2: Parking calculations have been provided in the Zoning Analysis Table on Sheet C-301 of the "Proposed Site Plan Documents". 44 Seats are proposed within the restaurant and the max employee count is 12 employees. Based on the required parking for a restaurant use (1 space per 4 seats plus 1 space per employee on the max shift), the minimum required parking is calculated as 23 spaces. 30 parking spaces are proposed as part of the redevelopment project and is reflected in the cover letter, project narrative, and plans accordingly.

There is no designated loading space proposed on the plan or included in the total parking calculation. McDonald's has control over their loading operations where delivery times are schedule during off-peak and non-business hours, to avoid impacts to business operations, where loading vehicles will pull around the building and into the row of parking on the North side of the building.

Comment 3: ***Drive-thru stacking capacity:** Please provide the total lane stacking capability in feet of both the existing drive-thru and the new proposed dual order point. Our bylaw requires 198ft in length, of which at least 90ft are for ordering and transacting, and at least 54ft stacking capacity exiting onto the road.*

- *Separately, under current conditions approximately how many cars could stack up behind the order point in the drive-thru lane before running out onto the road, has this changed under the new proposed layout?*

Response 3: The total lane stacking capacity for the existing drive-thru is 105 FT (approx. 6 vehicles) from the present window to the order point, and 137 FT (approx. 8 vehicles) from the order point to drive-thru lane entrance at the Main Street ROW. The distance between the existing present window and the exit drive is 55.2 FT.

Under proposed conditions, the stacking capacity for the side-by-side drive-thru layout is to be 187 FT (approx. 10 vehicles) from the present window to the order points and 108 FT (approx. 6 vehicles) from the order points to the drive-thru lane entrance. It is notable there is an additional 225 LF of stacking to the Bolton Street and Main Street ROW (approx. 10 vehicles). The distance between the proposed present window exit and the roadway is 58.4 FT. The zoning analysis table on sheet C-301 has been updated with this information and existing and proposed drive-thru stacking exhibits have also been included as part of this resubmittal.

Comment 4: **Elevations / Renderings:** Please provide renderings of all sides of the building.

Response 4: Elevations and rendering of all sides of the building have been included as part of this resubmittal.

Comment 5: ***Screening:** Please provide images, samples, or renderings of the proposed screening on the east side abutting the residential neighbor. Particularly given that the fencing will transition between two types, please provide a mock-up of what that will look like, ideally with the proposed landscaping in front of it.*

Response 5: Renderings of the proposed screening along the east property line showing the proposed fence types and landscaping has been included as part of this resubmittal

Comment 6: ***Lighting Plan:** The lighting plan doesn't include the photometric information out over the landscaped areas of the site, please include it. It also doesn't seem to include any lighting on the building. In the sign package there is an LED light in the canopy fascia and potentially what looks like other lights at the top of the building that should all be included in the lighting/photometric plan and info if they are indeed lights.*

Response 6: The lighting plan has been updated to include building lighting and the photometric information over the landscaped areas of the site. Please refer to Sheet C-703 of the "Proposed Site Plan Documents" for additional information.

Comment 7: ***Hours of Operation:** The hours are listed as being fully open until midnight even though you state that the operator will not use the outside drive-thru lane past 9pm. Please clarify the hours in the cover letter and please explain how they plan to "close" the outside drive-thru lane.*

Response 7: The cover letter has been updated to clarify that the McDonald's restaurant will be open until midnight, and only the outside drive-thru lane will close at 9 PM daily. The outside

lane will be closed by turning off the speaker in the lane, and the outside lane will have of a freestanding sign in front of the lane which will state this lane closes at 9 PM daily. The outside lane is being closed at 9pm as offered by the applicant through the Zoning Board application process and issued Decision.

Comment 8: ***Sign Package:** Please see attached memo for comments and revise and resubmit the sign application and program book, only including the wall mounted and free-standing signs that require CPDC approval.*

Response 8: The proposed sign package and permit application has been revised per the comments included in the staff memo. Please refer to the “Sign Program Book” prepared by Persona for additional information.

Comment 9: ***Sidewalk treatment:** Should the front recirculation lane be maintained, the outstanding comment from the DRT that a stronger treatment of the crosswalk that crosses that front circulation lane will be required before approval. The stop bar should be located before the crosswalk.*

Response 9: The plans have been updated to show that the proposed crosswalk within the recirculation lane will be treated with red stamped asphalt in contrast to the asphalt surface previously proposed. The stop bar has also been relocated prior to the crosswalk. Please refer to the “Proposed Site Plan Documents” for additional information.

Comment 10: ***Drainage:** We’ll defer to the Town Engineer for forthcoming detailed comments, but unless I missed it I do not see the pre-treatment infrastructure noted on the plan sheet?*

Response 10: Two (2) stormwater quality pre-treatment units (CDS-1515-3) are proposed along each of the two drainage lines prior to discharge of stormwater into the underground culvert. Labels have been updated to “SWQU-1/2” on sheet C-401 for clarity.

Comment 11: ***TIA:** Please provide data from a site with a similar context to Reading for pre- and post-addition of a second drive-thru lane. We’d like to know what level of induced demand there is for a dual lane when built.*

Response 11: McDonald’s customer transaction data is proprietary information of McDonald’s and we do not have any available traffic study data from a site following the implementation of a side-by-side drive-thru. A traffic assessment, prepared by Traffic Engineering Consultant McMahan Associates, for the proposed McDonald’s redevelopment was submitted with the application. Their findings were based on current Institute of Transportation Engineers’ (ITE) publication, Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition which establishes trip rates based on traffic counts conducted at similar types of existing land uses. In the case of a fast-food restaurant with drive-thru use, demand is driven by building square footage, seating, and pass by traffic, not how many menu boards or order points are on a site. As seen in the report, the proposed redevelopment is anticipated to result in up to 13 additional trips during peak hours, but a significant portion of these are pass-by trips from traffic already on the roadway. The proposed redevelopment is not anticipated to significantly generate additional vehicular demand to the site and is more intended to better manage the existing volume of traffic with more efficient drive-thru operations resulting in reduced customer wait times.

Comment 12: ***Lot Line Adjustment:** We would ask that the Applicant consider an 81X, or other plan as necessary, to adjust the lot lines so that the property limits are not extended into the Town sidewalk. This would be a benefit for both parties.*

Response 12: McDonald's is agreeable to adjusting the lot lines and transferring the area of the property extending into the Town sidewalk through an 81X plan or other similar process with the City.

Comment 13: ***Sustainability:** Please provide a statement from McDonald's on how this redevelopment achieves its sustainability goals. Especially in relation to the company's Net Zero 2050 initiative and how this building, and the traffic generated that will idle in a downtown with residential use, is achieved. While many of the company's goals are focused on its food and package processing this auto-centric development is seemingly at odds with current and future Town objectives of pedestrian centered development, reduction of single-vehicle traffic generation, and GHG emission reduction.*

Response 13: The proposed project will result in a brand new restaurant facility with new energy efficient systems including LED lighting, refrigeration and heating, and ventilation and air conditioning systems. McDonald's has been investing in building and site improvements across their footprint from 2019–2023. As these new and remodeled restaurants become operational, the energy generated is expected to contribute to a 33% reduction in GHG emissions associated with their U.S. restaurant electricity usage from their 2015 baseline. McDonald's portion of these renewable energy projects is expected to help prevent approximately 3,500,000 metric tons of CO₂e emissions annually.

Relative to the site improvements the new side-by-side drive thru is not intended to generate more vehicle traffic to the site but instead to better manage their existing traffic. The dual order point configuration, second drive-thru window, and new kitchen equipment will optimize the drive-thru efficiency resulting in reduced customer wait time and reduced vehicle idling time. As it exists today there is only a single order point and a single window for payment/order pickup. Under proposed conditions the second order point will allow for drive-thru orders to continue processing should a patrons be taking time for a larger order or reviewing the menu.

McDonald's has been operating their business since the restaurant was first constructed in 1963 and with drive-thru operations since 1994 which has become the preference for the majority of their customer base to complete transactions through. Furthermore given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic more customers have chosen to stay in their vehicle in the drive-thru for safety and contact purposes which is why the drive-thru layouts have been critical to the businesses success through the pandemic. The proposed modifications and improvements to the existing restaurant are important because of the protection they will continue to provide to public health, safety, and welfare concerns.

Town of Reading Engineering Division Memo dated August 31st, 2023

Comment 1: *The Town's sidewalk is shown to be within the property lines of the existing site. The Applicant shall confirm layouts and location of the Town's sidewalk and travel way. In the event the property lines are correct the Applicant shall provide either an easement to the Town or give land to the Town so the sidewalk is not on private property.*

Response 1: McDonald's is agreeable to adjusting the lot lines and transferring the area of the property extending into the Town sidewalk through an 81X plan or other similar process with the City.

Comment 2: *The internal traffic patterns appear to send traffic crossing over itself and should be reconsidered. Large trucks will have issues making the turning movements.*

Response 2: The recirculation lane allows vehicles entering from the Bolton Street driveway to access the parking area on the South side of the building without having to exit onto Main Street and turn back into the Main Street entrance driveway. The recirculation lane is a significant aspect operationally for McDonald's to allow for customer's circulating the restaurant to stay on site and is a design priority for new and redevelopment sites. Larger passenger vehicles can make this maneuver as seen in the vehicle turning exhibit modeling a F-150 truck included in this resubmittal. Loading vehicle will not make this maneuver through the recirculation lane and instead will exit out the Main Street Exit only driveway.

Comment 3: *Thought should be given to the placement of the crosswalk in front of the building to provide better protection to pedestrians. The stop bar is after the crosswalk allowing vehicles to stop on the crosswalk, the stop bar and/or crosswalk should be relocated.*

Response 3: The crosswalk location has been proposed in order to provide an accessible connection from the public sidewalk as required by ADA/AAB regulations and also the furthest point away from vehicles making the turn into the recirculation lane. The plans have been revised to relocate the stop bar and signage before the pedestrian crosswalk and the crosswalk will be treated with red stamped asphalt in contrast to the asphalt surface for improved visibility. A "Pedestrian Warning" for vehicles is also now proposed prior to the crosswalk. Please refer to Sheet C-301 of the "Proposed Site Plan Documents".

Comment 4: *There are three driveways on this site. The applicant should consider closing one of the entrances.*

Response 4: The three (3) driveways on site is an existing condition and McDonald's would prefer as proposed that these driveways be maintained for business operations. The entrance-only and exit-only driveways to Main Street allow for more efficient vehicles movements accessing and egressing the site while the full access driveway to Bolton Street allows vehicles to avoid having to turn to/from Main Street.

Comment 5: *The drainage report indicates the use of NOAA Atlas 14 Rainfall data and shows a reduction in post-development runoff volumes and flows for the 2, 10, 25 and 100-year storms.*

Response 5: Comment acknowledged.

Comment 6: *The site has reduced impervious area by 3,775 square feet but shows very limited water qualities BMP's with only the addition of deep sump catch basins result in in only 33% TSS removal. The applicant shall make an effort to provide more detention and recharge on site and increase TSS removal to 80%, instead of directly discharging into the Towns drainage system. The applicant shall include phosphorus removal calculations.*

Response 6: In addition to the deep-sump and hooded catch basin, two (2) stormwater quality pre-treatment units (CDS-1515-3) are proposed along each of the two drainage lines prior to discharge of stormwater into the underground culvert. Labels have been updated to "SWQU-1/2" on sheet C-401 for clarity. Due to the existing topography, lot configuration, and proposing to maintain the underground culvert a portion of the property is proposed to continue to sheet flow to Bolton while TSS removal has been implemented to the maximum extent practicable to treat stormwater being captured and routed on-site.

The proposed redevelopment project is anticipated to result in less than 1 acre of disturbance and therefore will not require a stormwater management permit which phosphorus removal is required for. As such, the stormwater management system has been designed to meet the MADEP stormwater regulations to the maximum extent practicable for a redevelopment and no phosphorus treatment proposed as part of the stormwater management infrastructure.

Comment 7: *The applicant shall CCTV inspect the Town's box culvert prior to construction.*

Response 7: A culvert assessment was conducted by Whitestone Associates who completed a CCTV inspection of the existing culvert and did not identify any significant issues with the existing condition.

Comment 8: *The size and type of all existing and proposed utilities shall be labeled on the plan.*

Response 8: Size and type of all available existing utility information and proposed have been labeled on the plan. Please refer to Sheet C-401 and C-501 of the "Proposed Site Plan Documents" for additional information.

Comment 9: *Fire flow test shall be performed.*

Response 9: There is an existing domestic water line servicing the current building. A fire service line is not proposed as part of this project nor is it required for the proposed building. As such, we would respectfully request that a fire flow test not be required.

Comment 10: *Sewer flow study shall be performed.*

Response 10: Please refer to the "Sewer Memo" prepared by Bohler, dated 9/8/2023 which is included as part of this resubmittal.

Comment 11: *There should be more of a natural buffer from the properties in the rear. Applicant should consider plantings to screen the site.*

Response 11: Under existing conditions, the area along the easterly property line has been previously developed and consists primarily of a paved parking area, drive-aisle, concrete retaining wall, light pole, and stockade fence with no natural buffer. The project proposed to replace the existing fence along the property line a portion of which will be a 12' high sound barrier wall and providing a 3'-4' landscape buffer with plantings which is a significant improvement upon existing conditions. A rendering of this area illustrating the improvements has been included in the resubmittal. It is notable the project is anticipated to result in a 3,775 square-foot reduction of impervious area on-site.

Comment 12: *Trench paving in the Town ROW shall meet Town Standards for this area.*

Response 12: Comment acknowledged. Plans have been revised to specify trenching within ROW shall meet Town standard as seen on the Plan sheets C-301 and C-501.

Comment 13: *The site may be subject to a Sewer Connection Fee.*

Response 13: Comment acknowledged.

Comment 14: *All utilities shall be approved materials and installed in accordance with the Department of Public Works Standards.*

Response 14: Comment acknowledged.

Comment 15: *Engineering Division shall be notified 72 hours in advance to mark out Town utilities.*

Response 15: Comment acknowledged.

Comment 16: *All water, sewer, curb cut, street opening, and Jackie's Law excavation permits shall be obtained at the Engineering Division prior to any excavations.*

Response 16: Comment acknowledged.

Comment 17: *All site work shall be inspected by the Engineering Division. The Applicant/Owner's contractor shall submit a construction schedule of proposed work. All inspections shall be scheduled 48 hours in advance.*

Response 17: Comment acknowledged.

Comment 18: *An approved site as-built shall be submitted to the Engineering Division within 60 days of certificate of occupancy. The as-built shall be submitted in mylar and electronic ACAD format.*

Response 18: Comment acknowledged.

We trust the provided information is sufficient for your needs at this time and look forward to discussing the project at the October 16th Community Planning & Development Commission Meeting. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact either of us at 508-480-9900.

Sincerely,

BOHLER



Eric G. Dubrule , PE



Daniel Allen, PE