



**ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING**  
**STAFF REPORT SUMMARY**

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| <b>Proposal:</b> SP202200019 The Keswick School                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Staff:</b> Kevin McCollum, Senior Planner                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Planning Commission Public Hearing:</b><br>October 25, 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Board of Supervisors Hearing:</b> To be scheduled                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Owner:</b> Little Keswick Education Corporation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Applicant:</b> Donna Stewart and Marc J. Columbus                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Acreage:</b> 21.62 acres                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Special Use Permit for:</b> A request for a special use permit amendment under Section 18-10.2.2 to modify the school's conceptual plan to include a new arts center, storage building, and horse barn. No increase in student enrollment is proposed. |
| <b>TMP:</b> 08000-00-00-11000<br><b>Location:</b> 505 Little Keswick Ln                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>By-right use:</b> RA Rural Areas - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots).                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Magisterial District:</b> Rivanna                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Conditions:</b> Yes <b>EC:</b> No                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>School Districts:</b> Stone-Robinson Elementary, Burley Middle, Monticello High<br><b>DA (Development Area):</b> N/A                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Comp. Plan Designation:</b> Rural Area – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources; residential (0.5 unit/ acre in development lots) in Rural Area 2 of the Comprehensive Plan.              |
| <b>Character of the Property:</b> The property is home to an existing private boarding school known as the Little Keswick School. The property has several buildings and structures associated with the school including dormitories, classrooms, a gym, pond, playfields, offices, and associated parking. | <b>Use of Surrounding Properties:</b> Rural Area uses including low-density residential, agricultural, Post Office, and blacksmith.                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Positive Aspects:</b><br>1. The use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan/Rural Area Plan.<br>2. The proposal has no increase in student enrollment.<br>3. No detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated.                                                                           | <b>Concerns:</b><br>1. None                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Recommendation:</b> Staff recommends approval of SP202200019, Keswick School, with conditions.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

**STAFF PERSON:** Kevin McCollum, Senior Planner  
**PLANNING COMMISSION:** October 25, 2022  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:** January 18, 2023

**PETITION:**

PROJECT: SP202200019 The Keswick School

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Rivanna

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 08000-00-00-11000

LOCATION: 505 Little Keswick Ln

PROPOSAL: An amendment to an existing special use permit for a private school use.

PETITION: A request for a special use permit amendment under Section 18-10.2.2 to modify the conceptual plan to include a new arts center, storage building, and horse barn. The proposed amendment does not include any increase in student enrollment.

ZONING: RA Rural Areas - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots)

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR: Yes

OVERLAY DISTRICT: EC Entrance Corridor, FH Flood Hazard Overlay

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Rural Area – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources; residential (0.5 unit/ acre in development lots) in Rural Area 2 of the Comprehensive Plan.

**CHARACTER OF SURROUNDING AREA:**

The property is home to an existing private boarding school known as The Keswick School. The property has several buildings and structures associated with the school including dormitories, classrooms, a gym, pond, playfields, offices, and associated parking (Attachment 1 – Location Map). The character of the surrounding area includes Rural Area uses including low-density residential and agricultural uses, farmlands. The Keswick Post Office is located to the north and Stokes of England Blacksmith adjacent to the east. Keswick Hall resort and golf course is located southwest across the abutting railroad line. Two churches are located nearby to the east. (Attachment 2 – Surrounding Areas Aerial Map).

**PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:**

The Keswick School has been in operation since 1963. County records show that the Little Keswick School, as it was known at the time, has had several approved special use permits for the private boarding school use. These approved special use permits date back to the early 1980s. The most recent approved amendment, SP200700009, was to add an additional dormitory building and was approved May 2, 2007. The school's property has been developed in accordance with approved Site Development Plans, SDP199000073, approved September 4, 1990. A boundary line adjustment plat was approved in February of 2022 and combined The Keswick School's property from several smaller parcels into one singular 21.62 acre parcel.

**DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL:**

The applicant has requested an amendment to The Keswick School's existing special use permit for the private boarding school use to modify the conceptual plan to include a new arts center, storage building, and horse barn. No increase in student enrollment is proposed. The applicant has provided a detailed explanation of the proposal in the application narrative and the conceptual plan (Attachment 3 and 4).

**COMMUNITY MEETING:**

The required community meeting for the proposal was held at The Keswick School on Monday, October 10, 2022. The applicant shared details and answered questions regarding the proposal

to the community members of the public who were present. The two community members that were in attendance were in favor of the proposal.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST:**

Special Use Permits are evaluated under reasonable standards, based on zoning principles which include the proposal's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Any impacts caused by the proposal may be addressed through conditions which must be reasonably related and roughly proportional to the impacts.

***Section 33.8(A) states that the Commission, in making its recommendation, shall consider the following factors:***

***1. No substantial detriment. Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.***

Staff believes the proposed new buildings will not be detrimental to adjacent parcels. The proposed arts center and horse barn will be located internal to the site. The proposed storage building will be located no closer than existing school buildings and there is a landscape screen on the school's property along the northern boundary. Since this is a boarding school and there is no proposed increase in enrollment, there will be no increased traffic impacts.

***2. Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.***

The character of the nearby area is not expected to change with the additions. The proposed buildings will meet Rural Area setbacks and there is no proposed increase in student enrollment.

***3. Harmony. Whether the proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter,***

The current school use has been determined by past special use permit approvals to be in harmony with the Rural Areas and the proposed additional buildings are anticipated to be compatible with this area.

***with the uses permitted by right in the district,***

The proposed amendment would not affect by-right uses in the district on this property or adjacent properties.

***with the regulations provided in Section 5 as applicable,***

The proposed amendment will comply with any special regulations as applicable.

***and with the public health, safety, and general welfare.***

The public health, safety, and general welfare of the community are protected through the special use permit process, which assures that the proposed use is appropriate in the location requested. Transportation Planning, Engineering, Zoning, Building Inspections, Fire-Rescue, VDH, and VDOT, have all reviewed this application and have raised no concerns. Following special use permit approval, a site plan amendment will be required, along with the water protection ordinance

permit process, and building permitting process which will further ensure the public health, safety, and general welfare are addressed.

**4. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.**

The Rural Area Chapter ([Chapter 7](#)) of the Comprehensive Plan designates the subject property for this proposal for Rural Area land uses. The intent of the Rural Area designation is to allow uses that preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic, and scenic resources; and also to allow residential uses at a density of up to 0.5 acres per dwelling unit. Under the Rural Areas Section of the Comprehensive Plan allowing these additions to the existing school supports the following Guiding Principles:

*Rural citizens supported by community meeting places, a basic level of services, and rural organizations and other cultural institutions at traditional rural scales, with opportunities to take part in community life and decisions.*

*Protect and enhance rural quality of life for present and future Rural Area residents.*

*Address the needs of existing rural residents without fostering growth and further suburbanization of the Rural Areas.*

The proposed private boarding school provides an education opportunity for boys with special needs without encouraging suburbanization or impacting the character of local historic, scenic, or cultural resources. The school's campus is spread out across 22+ acres and provides services at size and scale that are in keeping with Rural Area character. The proposed amendment is for two new buildings, an expansion of a horse barn, and does not increase the current student population. For these reasons Staff believes the proposed special use permit amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

**SUMMARY:**

**Staff finds the following factors favorable to this request:**

1. The use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan/Rural Area Plan.
2. The proposal has no increase in student enrollment.
3. No detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated.

**Staff finds the following factor(s) unfavorable to this request:**

1. None identified

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Based on the findings contained in this staff report, staff recommends approval of the special use permit application SP202200019 The Keswick School with the following conditions:

1. Development of the use shall be in general accord with the conceptual plan titled "SP202200019 Keswick School Concept Plan," last revised September 26, 2022. To be in general accord with the Conceptual Plan, development shall reflect the following major elements within the development essential to the design of the development.
  - a. Location of buildings and parking areas.Minor modifications to the plan which do not conflict with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance or improve safety.
2. Along the eastern most shared property line of TMP 80-114A (the adjacent neighbor) a planting material screen of approximately one hundred twenty-four (124) feet in length and seventeen (17) feet in width, as shown on the Conceptual Plan, shall be established

and maintained. The planting material shall consist of a minimum of seventeen (17) Leyland Cypress, each a minimum of eight (8) feet in height and shall be planted approximately six (6) feet on center.

3. Along the other shared property line of TMP 80-114A (the adjacent neighbor), a plant material screen of approximately three hundred forty (340) feet in length and forty (40) feet in width between the existing gym building and the Depot building, as shown on the Conceptual Plan, shall be established and maintained. Starting at the gym and proceeding towards the Depot building, the first two hundred sixty (260) feet in length shall be planted with a minimum of forty-five (45) Juniperus Virginia, each a minimum of eight (8) feet in height and shall be planted approximately six (6) feet on center. The remaining eighty (80) feet in length shall be planted with a minimum of thirteen (13) Leyland Cypress, each a minimum of six (6) feet in height and shall be planted approximately six (6) feet on center.
4. The maximum enrollment shall not exceed thirty-five (35) students.

#### **POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION- SP202200019:**

A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:

**Move to recommend approval of SP202200019, The Keswick School, with conditions as stated in the staff report.**

B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:

**Move to recommend denial of SP202200019, The Keswick School. *Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending denial.***

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Location Map  
Attachment 2 – Surrounding Areas Aerial  
Attachment 3 – Application Narrative  
Attachment 4 – Concept Plan