

**Cornwall Conservation Commission
Review Form for Subdivision and Variance Applications**

Name of Applicant: **Gregor Kent**

Location/Address of Property: **18 Lemon Fair Road, Cornwall, VT 05753**

Date of Preliminary: **December 1, 2021**

Date of Commission Review: **November 22, 2021**

Recommended Request for additional natural resources information to be provided by applicant: (describe type of information and why it is requested)

Yes No

Request for site visit:

Yes No

Request to question applicant or applicant's representative:

Yes No

Request to have a review of the application completed by a natural resources professional: (if yes, provide rationale for this request)

No.

Conservation Commission has no concerns with the project as proposed

Conservation Commission has the following concerns with the project as proposed:

Determination of whether the property has natural resources of importance, including but not limited to:

- Rare, threatened, endangered, uncommon species
- Natural communities
- Historic forest cover (mature forest in 1942 photos)
- Wildlife habitat
- Wildlife connectivity

- Wetlands
- Surface waters
- Vernal pools
- Prime or Statewide agricultural soils

(describe resources and sources of information relied upon)

In reviewing the application the CCC consulted the VT Natural Resources Atlas, the Vermont Conservation Design resource prioritization maps, the Cornwall Ecological Inventory (2015), and the Cornwall Draft LUDR Special Features Overlay: Map 2 (2019). Members of the CCC also made a visit to the site.

M. Dodge and D. Burns conducted a site visit on the afternoon of November 16, 2021. The site recently had been clear cut, with only a hand full of pole-sized trees left standing. The footprint of the proposed house and septic system were marked with orange flagging. The perimeter of the cut area was marked with pink flagging, reportedly delineating the proposed building envelope, but the dimensions of the cut extended much beyond toward the property lines on the north and south. It was unclear how much wooded area to the west of the cut area remained on the property.

Assessment of whether the application proposal would likely have negative impacts on natural resources of importance, including but not limited to those bulleted above:

(describe possible impact and sources of information relied upon for analysis)

The proposed house site is located on the center-eastern side of a larger ribbon of forest area that runs north-south along the east side of Lemon Fair Road. Connecting with the Cornwall Ledges on the south and a large forest in Weybridge on the north, it has been identified by the VT Agency of Natural Resources (VT ANR) as both a Connectivity Block* (Highest Priority) and a Physical Landscape Diversity* area (Highest Priority).

The recently clear cut building envelope, including the proposed locations of the house and septic system, dramatically reduces the forest of this high priority connectivity area, making it likely that the project will have an impact that extends beyond its footprint (building envelope).

***Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks contain important Habitat Connectors (or Wildlife Corridors) defined by the State (24 V.S.A. § 4303) as “land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes”. The forest block provides connectivity on a regional scale. Highest Priority Physical Landscape Diversity areas contain physical features that support a diversity of plants, animals and natural communities.**

Recommendation of Cornwall Conservation Commission:

At this time, it is unknown why the recently clear cut building envelope is so extensive relative to the proposed locations of the house and septic system. This has greatly reduced the width of an already narrow section of the Connectivity Block.

Approval of the request of the applicant to reduce zoning setback distances, particularly the proposed eastern setback (25’ vs 100’), would reduce some potential impacts to the local forest and wildlife corridor that remain by moving the house site further to the side of the Priority area.

If there is a remaining wooded area left on the western portion of the applicant’s property, preserving it for the future could benefit the local wildlife in terms of maintaining a protected north-south travel corridor. Also, if there are areas in the clear cut, especially those adjacent to the remaining woods, that will not be required for the use of the property, consideration should be given to reclaiming them as wildlife habitat. Over time this would help rebalance and enhance the ecological viability of the remaining woods in the area.

Attachments:

Kent-Area Landscape Map

Kent-Landscape Map with Parcel Boundaries

Kent-Landscape Priorities Overlay

Kent-Building Site-Connectivity Block

Kent Photo 1-View to the South with House Site Flags

Kent Photo 2-View to West

Kent-CCC Review Questions