

**CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY  
PLANNING FORUM**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

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**Date:** 19 November 2019 at 5pm

**Venue:** Municipal Offices

**Present:** Cllr Paul Baker (CBC Planning Committee Vice Chair), Tess Beck (Secretary), Mike Duckering, Dave Oakhill (CBC Head of Planning), Adrian Phillips, Mike Redman (CBC Director of Environment), Mike Richardson, Rob Rimell (Chair), Peter Sayers & Mike Sheppard.

**Apologies** None

**Distribution:** Those present + Trustees.

**Next Meeting:** 17 December

| <b>Ref</b> | <b>Item</b>   | <b>Action</b> |
|------------|---|---------------|
| <b>1</b>   | <b>Carbon Neutral Cheltenham</b>  |               |
| 1.1        | AP briefly presented his recent paper.  |               |
| 1.2        | PB advised The Carbon Neutral Cheltenham report was just the start of the process. Currently looking for budget to push the project forward and develop it further.   |               |
| 1.3        | DO explained that planning priorities were determined by government policy. Function of planning is to facilitate new development, and in Cheltenham, any new development is likely to be on greenfield sites. Within the town centre, possible conflict with conservation areas. Green energy generation could impact on prestigious landscapes. Planning policy is governed by national policy and locally by the Local Plan and JCS. Environmental policies in the JCS were watered down in order to prioritise affordable housing provision. Planning legislation is easier to enforce than policy. The key government driver is delivery, especially of housing. As a planning authority, it is possible to ask developers nicely and be persuasive, but cannot require. Looking at the 3 planning decisions given as examples by Adrian in the paper:-<br>(1) Train Station car park. The removal of trees didn't require planning permission.<br>(2) Matalan/ Lidl site. The planning application only covers the subdivision of an existing building. The Planning Committee pushed back against tree removal, and Lidl are submitting revised plans.<br>(3) Monkscroft school site. This is only an outline application at this stage. |               |

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| 1.4  | RR asked if the CBC declaration of climate emergency was just a paper exercise. DO stated the declaration was far broader than the planning system. AP suggested that the declaration is undermined by every scheme permitted which ignores the target. Does it not make the Council look bad if the planning system cannot deliver? PB admitted that stymied by government to some extent. There is some hope perhaps with regard to flooding and bio-diversity – possibly supplementary guidance on those matters in the future.   |     |
| 1.5  | PB advised the Planning Committee values the contributions of the Civic Society Planning Forum and the Architects Panel, and does take them into account when deliberating their decisions. If forum members attended Planning Committee meetings they would hear themselves and the Architects' Panel being cited frequently. RR appreciated the positive comments. Following a recent meeting between RR, Andrew Booton and David Oakhill, it was agreed to let DO and colleagues know meeting dates.  |     |
| 1.6  | MD asked about the use of S106. DO advised S106 is mostly used for affordable housing.   |     |
| 1.7  | MRe questioned whether the planning system nationally was keeping pace with the speed of climate change. Previously the council had tried to set higher energy standards for applications but this resulted in a string of appeals which the council lost – which of course has a public cost. National government target of zero carbon by 2050 is at odds with the majority of local authorities which have set 2030 as a target. This is a lobbying opportunity. Is growth compatible with action on climate change? Planning is based on promoting growth. Need for retro-fitting as well as new development. CBH housing stock can be upgraded to improve its carbon footprint. This is at a cost of £15-20K per property – and these are modestly sized properties. PS asked if there is guidance for people on what they can do in existing properties, the Civic Society could promote this in Our Town. MRe will find link to guidance on CBC website so PS can action. | MRe |
| 1.8  | PB suggested a planning response to the climate emergency would be useful for planning committee members. DO will consider a planning guidance note, based on what already exists and what might be supplemented for both the Planning Committee and the Civic Society Planning Forum.   | DO  |
| 1.9  | AP suggested Heritage Policy is another challenge; eg St Philip & St James church was looking at putting solar panels on its roof, but the CBC conservation officer said no (as did the diocese). Building with Nature has been used as a condition for new development in Cornwall and has been incorporated into Tewkesbury District Council's Local Plan. AP to forward Building with Nature to CBC as an example of good policy.   | AP  |
| 1.10 | DO mentioned the Municipal Offices as a good example of inefficient use of energy and space in a listed building. MD thought conservation can be too controlling. In previous eras, buildings would adapt and change rather than being preserved   |     |

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|      | in aspic. PB advised the planning officer's report and the planning committee's decision will weigh up and balance these different views.  |     |
| 1.11 | MRe noted there is also a balancing (of cost) when CBC/CBH is developing more housing stock, deciding between building more houses or building to the highest levels of efficiency.  |     |
| 1.12 | In terms of lobbying, following the Declaration of Climate Emergency, the Leader of the Council has written to the Secretary of State, Andrea Leadsom, to request more money to implement this. MRe to find out if this letter has been published and to share it with the Chair of the Planning Forum if it has.  | MRe |
| 1.13 | MD asked about the rôle of building control and has this been watered down? DO responded that insulation and materials are covered by Building Regs rather than Planning, but yes, requirements have been watered down.  |     |
| 1.14 | PS asked if CBC can do anything about the Monkscroft site. PB advised no, not until it comes back to planning. Ideally CBH will be able to develop the site, in which case it could be an exemplar. But it could be a private developer. DO added there would be several conversations during the process, to encourage and cajole. But any planning decisions will need to be legally sound. "Better to focus on the big stuff rather than to tinker round the edges."  |     |
| 1.15 | AP asked if supplementary planning guidance was being considered. DO replied that supplementary planning guidance required a lot of effort for something that is not enforceable. MRe added that rules need to be set nationally. CBC can't risk losing a large amount of appeals.   |     |
| 1.16 | DO suggested there was opportunity to promote high sustainability standards in CBH cross tenure developments. PB asked if sustainability was something that can be used to market properties to potential buyers. DO advised no, not according to Persimmon and other bigger developers.   |     |
| 1.17 | AP asked what else is the Council doing? PB confirmed the declaration of climate emergency affects every area of activity. MR added the next step is to decide which recommendations from the Carbon Neutral Cheltenham report to pursue. AP asked how can the Civic Society help? MRe noted that the council needed more positive voices in the community. DO advised the work being done with Andrew Booton and Cheltenham BID to promote the use of redundant space above shops is a good example, using persuasion rather than a stick. RR wondered if the Civic Society should actively contact developers. DO agreed to consider this. |     |
| 1.18 | MRe suggested the Civic Awards might be used. TB noted there is an environment category, but it is dependent on nominations and the nominations need to be of suitable quality. (In the last round of Awards, there was only a single nomination and it was not considered worthy of the award!)   | DO  |

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**2**      **DONM** (agreed after the cllr & officers from CBC had departed)  
2.1      Tue 17 December 2019, 6pm. Venue: Parmoor House.