



CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

PLANNING FORUM

Note of meeting held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 19 June 2019 at Parmoor House

Those present: Rob Rimmell (Chair), Tess Beck (Secretary), Andrew Booton, Adrian Phillips, Peter Sayers, Mike Sheppard, Mike Duckering & Mike Richardson.

Apologies: Bruce Buchanan & Douglas Ogle.

Oakley Farm, Priors Road, Cheltenham

Request for EIA Scoping Opinion for land at Oakley Farm

Planning ref: 19/00916/SCOPE

We support the comments made by public bodies on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report. We specifically endorse the recommendations of the Cotswold Conservation Board (CCB). These are detailed and far more wide ranging than the scoping report itself, which surprisingly refers only once to the AONB status of the entire site. Although the report says in general terms that the EIA will address a wide range of issues, it does not refer to the need to consult key documents: the NPPF guidance on development in AONBs (a national landscape designation on par with a national park); the statutory Cotswolds AONB Management Plan; detailed landscape assessments undertaken by the CCB, GCC and CBC; and relevant local planning policies, including JCS policy SD7. So, we fear that in undertaking the EIA too little attention will be given to current policy, which is broadly to keep the area clear of development.

We recognise that no plans have yet been put forward, but we consider that any large-scale development of Oakley Farm would be in conflict with national policy towards AONBs and policy in the JCS and local plans. We therefore expect Cheltenham Borough Council to uphold the protection of this area. If developed, it would be very visible from the Cotswolds scarp and would destroy an important visual feature which contributes to the quality of life of people living nearby (as is clear from comments made by objectors).

However, its value would be far greater if it were more accessible. So, we urge the Council to consider treating Oakley Farm as a Local Green Space. It fits the criteria and could be of far greater landscape, ecological and recreational benefit to this part of Cheltenham. The land should remain in agricultural use but be managed (perhaps under an agreement with CBC and CCB) so that it would provide better public access and encourage greater care for landscape and nature. Such an initiative would offer great public benefit to this part of the town and link it better to the rest of the AONB. We would be pleased to discuss with the Council how it might be achieved.

We have in-principle objections to the development of this site and we agree with the justified concern of many local residents about the infrastructure implications of so much new development, especially additional pressure on local roads ill-equipped to carry even today's traffic.

325 High Street, Cheltenham

Alterations, extension and change of use to create 5no. one-bedroom apartments and 2no. studio apartments

Planning ref: 19/01100/FUL

The Forum welcomes the improvements to the St Paul's Street South elevation getting rid of an unattractive spot and unpleasant blank wall. However, the ground floor of the High Street elevation design is poor, as is the whole of the side elevation. The side could easily be improved by introducing traditional and simple details such as string courses, etc. The mansard roof is not appropriate for this area of the Lower High Street.

The Forum feels that this is an over development of the site to create 7 individual units most of which are below 37m². The sizes of the studios in the mansard roof are especially mean, below 30m² with no indicated storage and with the sloping roof making that space even smaller. The bin store is inadequate for refuse and recycling for 7 units in an area of town which already has a problem with fly-tipping.

Rutland House, The Reddings, Cheltenham

Erection of three bedroom chalet bungalow in rear garden

Planning ref: 19/01090/FUL

The Forum welcomes this infill development which appears to be in keeping in the area. This is generally a well thought out scheme, though there is inadequate detail in the application about the landscaping. The Forum has some concerns about the amount of visitor parking available for both Rutland House and the proposed chalet.

5 Langton Grove Road, Cheltenham

The erection of a freestanding log cabin for use as additional guest accommodation and domestic storage as part of one family household. The timber chassis of the cabin will be sited on concrete padstones, but not affixed to these

Planning ref: 19/01091/FUL

The Forum does not agree with the description of this log cabin as being in keeping. (It is not appropriate to compare it with garden sheds.) Notwithstanding the proposed cabin not being visible from the highway, there are far better designs of prefabricated outbuildings & garden rooms on the market which should be considered as alternatives.

2 Bethesda Street, Cheltenham

Erection of new dwelling to the rear of 2 Bethesda Street

Planning ref: 19/01141/FUL

This is a full planning application, so why has the applicant submitted conceptual drawings? The Forum has no objection to the infill development on Chapel Lane. (The applicant's inclusion of the existing street scene on their application is much appreciated, this being frequently omitted from other similar applications). The third storey is unacceptable in a street scene of 2-storey cottages and in relation to 2 Bethesda Street. The street elevation with 3 "front doors" and a window extending to ground level is very odd and not in keeping with the area.

3 Cleeve Cloud Lane, Cheltenham

Various extensions, alterations and remodelling of the existing dwelling

Ref. No: 19/01163/FUL

Whilst the Forum admires the bravado of the applicant in wanting to improve the existing building, the proposed design constitutes over-development with details that are inappropriate.