



CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

PLANNING FORUM

Notes of online meeting held at 5.00 pm on Tuesday 26 May 2020

Those present: Rob Rimell (Chair), Andrew Booton, Peter Sayers, Adrian Phillips, Andrew Kitching, Mike Richardson, Tess Beck (Minutes) & Mike Duckering

Apologies:

Land adjacent to Oakhurst Rise, Cheltenham

Outline application for 43 dwellings including access, layout and scale, with all other matters reserved for future consideration

Planning ref: 20/00683/OUT

OBJECT. Before commenting on the merits of the current scheme (see below), the Civic Society Planning Forum agreed that the history of this case was evidence of poor planning.

As noted by the inspector in the appeal decision of 19 August 2019, the site lies within the defined Principal Urban Area of Cheltenham but is not allocated for any form of development. However, neither is the site subject to any policy restriction on development. So, there is no objection to the principle of residential development and some development is inevitable. But the way in which this is being resolved is wrong.

This application is now the third in the past 2 ½ years. Each time the number of new homes proposed has been reduced (91, 68 and now 43). The developer aims to maximise the number approved; the planners and the appeal inspector cut them back. Greater emphasis on placemaking rather than just numbers of dwellings might have been more constructive on such a sensitive site. A great deal of expenditure has been incurred, and much public anxiety, even anger, has been generated as result.

In our view, some 25 or so homes could be built on part of the site, as the council itself has indicated (Policy HD4 in the emerging local plan). The site also has important environmental values, including veteran trees, wildlife, heritage assets and fine views which should be protected. However, little public benefit is being derived from this at present.

The public interest would best be served if those parts of the site that cannot be developed with housing were to be dedicated as public open space, to be managed in order to retain their environmental qualities.

We conclude that a plan-led approach should have been adopted here rather than an appeal-led one. Once it became clear that there were pressures for development, Cheltenham Borough Council should have worked with the landowners, the developer and the local community to draw up a master plan for the whole site. This should have indicated in broad terms where development would be acceptable and where it would not, and what form it should take. It should have also ensured lasting public and environmental benefits by dedicating most of the site as public open space.

We ask that the Council learn the lessons from this expensive, time-consuming and divisive experience. The architectural quality of the proposed buildings is poor, and they will date badly. Given local concern about the site and its environmental importance we should expect better. On this site, the aim should be an outstanding development, which could relate to the density and style guidelines of the adjacent Battledown estate. There is no indication in the application of what will happen to the non-developed green area and what the plans are for the management of the green spaces. There is also no mention of energy conservation.

114 High Street, Cheltenham

Change of use from A1 (retail) and B1 (offices) to create 6no. flats on first, second and third floors (of 114/116 High Street and 33 Cambray Place) including bin and bicycle storage on ground floor, alterations to elevation to provide replacement entrance door and new post box, including new louvre door and replacement windows.

Planning ref: 20/00691/FUL

SUPPORT. The Civic Society Planning Forum supports the conversion of the upper floors to residential use. We commend the light touch of the reconfiguration, and we hope that the integrity of the interiors can be maintained with appropriate fire protection systems.

We would like to see a better solution for the ventilated doors on the Cambray Place elevation, to a more appropriate design for a significant Victorian building. For example, the louvres could be integrated into the fanlight.

This building is in a prominent location on the High Street. There is an opportunity to do something innovative yet appropriate with the integral sign area at first floor level.

Renovating the ground floor shop fronts would reinforce the quality of the scheme.

Flat B, The Grange, Malvern Road, Cheltenham

Repair and alteration of existing outbuilding to provide ancillary accommodation.

Planning ref: 20/00761/LBC

OBJECT. The Civic Society has no objection on principle to this development which could enhance the courtyard, but the submitted drawings are not acceptable. They lack the details and specification needed for a listed building application. This application should not have been registered or sent out for public consultation until suitable plans and drawings had been submitted.

Manor Farm, Church Road, Swindon Village, Cheltenham

Demolition of redundant outbuildings and construction of 5no. dwellings with associated tree and landscaping works (Phase 2).

Planning ref: 20/00749/FUL

OBJECT. The Civic Society Planning Forum objects strongly to this application. These designs are ugly. The forms are inappropriate for this location, especially given that it is a conservation area. The visualisations are shockingly unprofessional. The site is overdeveloped and the internal layouts are too tight.

It is unclear what is to happen to the farm building near the entrance. It has been included in the Heritage Statement, which says "to remain as is". But given its state of disrepair, this is not an acceptable solution. There is no accommodation for visitor parking, and the Design and Access statement makes no reference to the adjacent estate.

A development in a conservation area should enhance its surroundings. There is the potential for a good scheme here, for example a mock stable yard development might be appropriate.