

Cheltenham Development Task Force Recommendations

The Board of the Cheltenham Development Task Force received a presentation on 25th June 2010 from the Civic Pride Managing Director regarding the potential re-development of North Place and Portland Street. This presentation was supported by

- the adopted development brief for North Place and Portland Street as adopted on 28th July 2008,
- analysis of the current market position; and
- further validation from independent specialist property consultants.

Key factors considered by the Board were:

- The current commercial viability of the scheme as previously set out within the adopted development brief;
- A more in-depth understanding of site conditions achieved through the production of reports and analysis which included utilities, ground conditions, and archaeological potential;
- Impact of the recession, and a detailed independent market appraisal of the sites including the potential to develop in the foreseeable future;
- Lack of demand for any speculative new office forms of development in Cheltenham;
- The decreasing likelihood of Portland Street being considered as an alternate site for any new build location should the Council, through its accommodation strategy, decide to relocate its Municipal Offices;
- CACI retail trend data noting a fall in retail rankings for the town and further emphasising the need to invest in the public realm;
- The need to secure a financial receipt in order to deliver the wider Civic Pride aspirations;
- Exploratory off-market discussions with potential investors;
- The need to identify a bus node at this site as part of the wider town centre traffic modelling exercise currently being undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire Highways.

Recommendations of the Cheltenham Development Task Force

The Cheltenham Development Task Force agreed the following recommendations to be made to Cheltenham Borough Council;

- a. That the sites are unlikely to deliver the level and mix of uses, in particular the civic hub as outlined in the adopted development brief (July 2008);
- b. that the design principles should be retained in that development brief. However the brief should now be amended to allow greater market flexibility, particularly in terms of the prospective use mix;
- c. that securing a capital receipt, whilst not a material planning consideration, is important to achieve the Council's wider aspirations in delivering improvements to the public realm;
- d. that the site should be taken to the market as soon as is reasonably feasible and consistent with ensuring due process for effective public consultation.