

# Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee Minutes

**Meeting date:** 18 January 2024

**Meeting time:** 6.00 pm - 7.45 pm

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**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Paul Baker (Chair), Garth Barnes (Vice-Chair), Glenn Andrews, Adrian Bamford, Bernard Fisher, Paul McCloskey, Emma Nelson, Tony Oliver, Diggory Seacome, Simon Wheeler and Barbara Clark

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor Dr David Willingham, Councillor Richard Pineger, Michael Ronan, Ben Warren (Planning Officer), Lucy White (Principal Planning Officer) and Chris Gomm (Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance)

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## **1 Apologies**

There were none.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

## **3 Declarations of independent site visits**

There were none.

Some Members visited Lansdown site as part of Planning View.

## **4 Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 were approved and signed as a true record.

## **5 Public Questions**

There were none.

## **6 Planning Applications**

### **7 23/01899/FUL 53-57 Rodney Road, Cheltenham GL50 1HX**

The planning officer introduced the report as published.

The following response was provided to a member question:

- The refuse bins are not within the application site and are not part of this application.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to permit:

Unanimous – permitted.

### **8 21/02828/OUT Unit 22, Lansdown Industrial Estate, Cheltenham, GL51 8PL**

Please note that the following items are being presented in a different order to the published agenda. Agenda item 6b will now be 6c and 6c will be 6b.

The planning officer introduced the report as published.

There were no member questions or debate.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to permit:

Unanimous – permitted.

### **9 21/02832/OUT Lansdown Industrial Estate, Cheltenham, GL51 8PL**

The Chair then stated that although the three applications are for the same site they are very separate applications and will be decided on separately. The objectors, the agent, supporters and ward councillors will speak after the first presentation.

The planning officer introduced the report as published.

Public speaking:

The Civic Society addressed the committee and made the following points:

- The applicant has used a tick box approach to the application.
- The Civic Society have been excluded from any consultation that has been carried out and have been trying to enter into conversation with the applicant for 2 years with no success.
- Policy MP1 states that there should be employment led re generation of areas, how can the proposal for 215 homes be squared with the policy.

- The applicant is trying to hoist onto the town a low grade development that they would never grant in their own area.
- There is a climate emergency this application will release low levels of carbon to the area.
- Heritage buildings can be reused in a mixed developments, such suggestions have not been listened to.
- The applicant should go back to the drawing board and come up with a better scheme.

Jill Waller a local historian then addressed the committee speaking in objection, she made the following points:

- The plan that has been submitted has been under researched, she has fully researched the area and there over 60 errors in the appraisal.
- So much of historical interest has been manufactured on the industrial estate.
- Iron works that were manufactured on the site can still be seen in the V&A.
- She has been able to find out and date most of the sites original uses and the shells of most of the original building remain.
- Surely that application could be mixed use and buildings re-purposed.

The agent on behalf of the applicant made the following points:

- Three years ago had a positive pre app with officers and more detailed pre app followed with highways and extensive community engagement. Local people and councillors raised some concerns at that time but nothing which could not and has not been addressed.
- The result is a really good solution and effective reuse of a brownfield site and new studio for the artists and a host of other significant benefits.
- Two applications submitted December 2021 with the art studios following last year.
- We have had total of four different planning officers and five heads of planning, some continuity has suffered.
- Developing 200 or more units on this brownfield site is preferable to loss of green space. The site is wholly sustainable.
- Whilst it may be technically possible to retain some of the existing buildings the cost of doing so along with the inability to make them as sustainable or energy efficient as new buildings does not make it a viable solution.
- The existing buildings are in poor condition and some had to demolished a few years ago and the others have been unsuccessfully marketed for years.
- The site is not in a conservation area and there are no listed or locally listed buildings. Whatever heritage value the buildings had in the past does not exist anymore, as the buildings have been extensively altered over time. Heritage interpretation boards and reference to its past in the new design will create a far better awareness of the sites heritage than what currently exists.
- The benefits are many including providing energy efficient and affordable homes where there is no five year supply and making effective use of brownfield land in a sustainable location. Creating better connections to

Honeybourne Line for pedestrians and cyclists. Facilitating a purpose built long term home for the artists.

- More than 40 of the objections relate to the loss of the artists' studios with new studios confirmed a lot of these concerns are addressed.
- There were no objections from statutory consultees and the applicant has worked hard to address, where it can, issues raised.

The chair of the Lansdown Art Studios Association made the following points:

- Lansdown art studios is a not for profit organisation that provides over 20 affordable studios for local artists for around 25 years.
- We support the full application for a new artists studios to replace the current quite dilapidated and non-compliant studios and also supports the application for residential development which if approved makes it possible for the new studios to be built. Initial objections to the application were due to the loss of the artists' studios and this no longer applies and have been withdrawn.
- Cheltenham has a unique cultural identity with the festivals but feel art is overlooked as grassroots artists are struggling due to pressures of high property values and new developments threaten the few places available for artists to work.
- Commend the applicant for taking a pragmatic approach and working with us to find a viable solution to accommodate the art studios in their plans.
- These applications provide a unique opportunity to not only provide much needed housing but also to secure the long term future of the largest group of art studios in Cheltenham.
- Rent for the new studios should be affordable and we ask the committee and officers to consider that the proposed section 106 for the residential development should also include some cost towards the art studios.

Councillor Willingham addressed the committee in his capacity of Borough Councillor for St Marks, he made the following points:

- He raised a procedural matter with regard to how late a 75 page document was added to Public Access. He suggested that it was not acceptable and looked like public comment was not being encouraged. He felt that this was unacceptable.
- He stated that he had raised issues about viability before.
- He gave his full support to the artists studio.
- Rowanfield Road was his main concern as due to the level crossing gates nearby it becomes a rat run as cars speed down there to avoid the gates.
- The stagecoach bus garage, the agent of change principle must apply here. Stagecoach currently do work on buses which is noisy at 3am. The noise insulation on the buildings must allow this to continue. If noise complaints prevent stagecoach from being able to do this, then buses would have to be off the road during the day instead and public transport in Cheltenham will be destroyed.
- A condition should be imposed that snagging needs to be completed before occupation of last 5 or 10 properties.

- There needs to be uplift with regard to this application. Profit needs to go towards affordable housing.

Councillor Pineger as Ward Councillor made the following points:

- It is a shame to lose industrial heritage. However, the buildings are cheap, were put up quickly and repeatedly modified to the point they are now an eye sore and not suitable for modern industrial practices.
- It is difficult to get developers to develop brownfield sites as there is a preference towards greenfield sites. The scheme is in keeping of the area.
- No local residents have made contact regarding the loss of the industrial site. Objections are more concerned with traffic and whether their properties will be overlooked.
- We do have things that were made at this site and that should be enough as we need smart new housing and this is a great place to put it close to the train station and active travel links facing the town centre.
- Did request a path along the railway bank and told by consultants that they do have a right of access all the way along, as it would be better to route pedestrians and cyclists through there instead of the industrial site.
- Pleased to see the arrangement for the art studios and want to congratulate Councillor Max Wilkinson for all the effort put into this as cabinet member for economic development, culture, and tourism.
- The passage near unit 22 is a concern for residents as they already experience crime and are worried that this will increase.
- Concern at two way cycle route being put on Roman Road as this is a one way road.

The matter then went to Member questions, the responses were as follows:

- Section 106 has a review mechanism clause in it, there may be vacant building credit and CIL relief applied, the amount of affordable housing could then go up or down but 40 properties are anticipated.
- With regard to the binder course, road adoption is reliant on 3<sup>rd</sup> parties which includes Severn Trent and cannot be conditioned.
- There is no detail with regard to the street design at the moment, there will likely be pavements, there might be a cul-de-sacs that will have a shared path.
- A revised energy statement will be required (with evidence) the condition can be amended to read air or ground source heat pumps.
- With regard to the late publication of the papers that Councillor Willingham referred to - the draft report was received on an earlier date – the redacted one not until a later date but the report date may not have been changed. The redacted document was published as soon as it was received.
- A condition requires the submission and approval of heritage interpretation boards.
- The application is for 100% residential with no employment.
- Where feasible some of the original bricks etc could be used for the residential properties.

- The type of roofs to prevent seagulls will need to be discussed at a later stage.

The matter then went to Member debate where the following points were made:

- Apology to the applicant for taking so long for the application to come to committee.
- This is an opportunity to provide much needed housing.
- Very grateful for the artists studio, must remember that the artists studio depends on the housing, ie no housing no studio.
- The heritage of the site will live on due to what was manufactured there.
- Up to the County Council to ensure that the roads are to adoptable standard.
- There have been good comments from both the objectors and the supporters. We have to move to the future.
- Heritage boards on the site will be a good idea.
- The Council do not have a five year housing supply, and cannot think of a more sustainable location than this one.
- It will provide much needed affordable homes.
- Cheltenham does not have much land to be used, the heritage will not be lost as it will be made part of the site.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to permit:  
Unanimous – permitted.

## **10 23/00728/FUL Lansdown Industrial Estate, Cheltenham, GL51 8PL**

The planning officer introduced the report as published.

The following responses were provided to members questions:

- It is only air source heat pumps that they are proposing not ground source heat pumps. As it is a full planning application we are unable to pursue the possibility of ground source heat pumps.
- There will be a period of displacement for the artists but it is unknown how long that would be as the larger residential scheme would be an outline planning permission and could take 5 years before there is any commencement of works on site.
- The section 106 negotiations will deal with the displacement of the artists and for example, there could be a need for the artist studios to be completed before a certain number of dwellings are occupied on the southern half of the industrial estate. These discussions will be in depth and there is not a way to speed up the process.
- Would like to be assured that people visiting or working in the artist studios will be able to charge their electric vehicles.

The matter then went to vote on the officer recommendation to permit:  
Unanimous – permitted.

## **11 Appeal Update**

A Member asked the Head of Planning if the tents at 131 the Promenade have now had enforcement action taken. It was confirmed that an enforcement notice had been served very recently. It was confirmed that there is a right to appeal with regard to enforcement notices.

A Member asked that the planning officer contact them regarding what the appeal costs were against the council for 6 Marsh Lane.

## **12 Any other items the Chairman determines urgent and requires a decision**

There were none.