

Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 19 June 2025

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.41 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Frank Allen (Vice-Chair), Glenn Andrews, Adrian Bamford, Garth Barnes (Chair), Barbara Clark, Jan Foster, Iain Dobie, Tony Oliver, Dr Steve Steinhardt, Simon Wheeler and Suzanne Williams

Also in attendance:

Nicole Golland (Principal Planning Officer), Chris Gomm (Head of Planning), Victoria Harris (Planning Officer), Michelle Payne (Senior Planning Officer), Michael Ronan (Lawyer) and Ben Warren (Senior Planning Officer)

1 Apologies

There were none.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Wheeler and Oliver declared an interest in item 6b due to personal connections with the applicants and confirmed that they would withdraw from the meeting during this item.

3 Declarations of independent site visits

The following Councillors attended all sites during Planning View:

- Councillor Frank Allen
- Councillor Adrian Bamford
- Councillor Garth Barnes
- Councillor Jan Foster
- Councillor Tony Oliver

- Councillor Steve Steinhardt
- Councillor Simon Wheeler

Councillor Andrews declared that he had independently visited site 6b and 6c.

Councillor Clark declared that she had independently visited sites 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d.

4 Minutes of the last meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May were approved and signed as a correct record.

The following amendments were made to the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 29 May, which were then approved and signed as a correct record:

- Within the Member debate section:
 - o *"It proposes a huge number of services, including the provision of schools, GPs, the health centre, and dental suite. The community spaces were also praised. Often a lack of community is seen in the modern era, the play areas and sports facilities will be of huge benefit in this. It was positive that many of the services are included within the first phase of development, which will therefore be of beneficial to existing and as well as the developing communities."* Was changed to read: *"It proposes a huge number of services, including the provision of schools, GP allocation, the health centre, and dental suite. The community spaces were also praised. Often a lack of community is seen in the modern era, the play areas and sports facilities which will of huge benefit in addressing this. It was positive that many of the services are included within the first phase of development, which will therefore be beneficial to existing communities, as well as the developing communities"*.
 - o *"Concern was raised over traffic ultimately being the big sticking point, with lanes not adequate for the number of vehicles that can be expected to be seen and the uncertainty around the Junction 10 improvement works Government funding."* Was changed to read: *"Concern was raised over traffic ultimately being the big sticking point, with lanes not adequate for the number of vehicles that can be expected to be seen and the uncertainty around the Junction 10 improvement works and Government funding."*

The amendments to the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 29 May were approved by 9 votes in favour with 2 abstentions, and were then signed as a correct record.

5 Public Questions

One public question had been submitted. As the questioner was not present in the chamber, the Chair did not read out the question. The question and written responses were taken as read and will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting

1. Question from Mr Richard Lawler to the Chair, Councillor Garth Barnes, and the Head of Planning, Chris Gomm

I have been reflecting on my recent experience with the planning portal, particularly in relation to the Folly application, and I've also received feedback from residents who felt let down by the system after submitting their comments. A common concern was the lack of notification when the application was scheduled for consideration by the Planning Committee.

In light of this, I'd like to suggest one simple change to improve public engagement and trust in the planning process: That anyone who submits an objection or comment on a planning application is automatically notified when that application is due to go to committee.

This seems like a modest but meaningful improvement. From what I understand, it could potentially be implemented within the existing planning portal—possibly just by enabling an existing notification setting in the back end.

I hope Cabinet will consider this as a practical and low-cost step towards improving transparency and inclusion in the planning process.

Chair and Head of Planning's response

Thank you for your feedback. By registering on our public access website the progress of applications can be tracked, including automated notifications when the status of an application changes. This automated notification does not include referral to committee however nor committee dates. It is agreed that the notification process would be improved by Mr Lawler's suggestion. We will take this away and discuss with our IT colleagues. Our public access system is provided by a third party (Idox Software) which provides a significant number of local planning authorities with the same system so any changes may be dependent on the capabilities of that system.

6 Planning Applications

7 24/01868/FUL - 151 Prestbury Road, Cheltenham, GL52 2DU

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

There were two public speakers on the item: an objector, and the applicant.

The objector addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- Addressing the Committee on behalf of a group of objectors. They raised concerns that they had had inadequate time to respond and believe the process is unfair. As they only received the officer's report and recommendation on Friday, they had fewer than five working days to review it so had been unable to respond meaningfully to the report due to work and family commitments. As objectors they have not been provided with

comparable access to information and discussion as that granted to the applicant throughout the process, as reflected in the applicant having months of pre-application discussions and throughout the consultation period. This means there is not a level playing field for objectors.

- Policy SD9 requires a 10% biodiversity net gain, but the officer's report confirms that there will be a 39.7% net loss of habitat units. No formal confirmed mitigation has been identified, and no clear plan is included. They asked that the application does not proceed until a deliverable biodiversity gain plan is secured.
- The officer report calling this underutilised land is deceiving. It was a private garden until developers had trees removed and building contractors dug the surface garden into a central mound, covering debris from the extension at 151 Prestbury Road. If accepted this sets a precedent that anyone with a garden large enough could class it as underutilised land and build on it regardless of character, impact or infrastructure. It undermines Cheltenham's Garden Land SPD and policy D1 on overdevelopment. The dwellings footprint, closeness to neighbours, and overbearing presence were all acknowledged in the report, yet the application was still recommended for approval, directly contradicting the spirit of local policy and guidance.
- Residents have raised concerns around loss of local amenity through overshadowing, privacy loss, and glare from solar panels – all in breach of policies D1 and SL1. No daylight/sunlight assessment has been provided.
- The site plan inaccurately includes the house and front garden of 151 Prestbury Road, misleading Members about the development's scale and context.
- Concerns were raised about highway safety due to the plan's limited turning room, in breach of policy INF1 which mandates safe access and suitable parking. Recent comments from the Highway Safety consultant raised that there are conflicts with original plans submitted for 151 Prestbury Road, which have not been addressed.
- The modern character of the design and materials chosen do not align with the Edwardian context in conflict with policy D1 and SD4, which stresses the need for contextual respect. The modern proposal is incongruous with surrounding properties. Maybelle is cited as a recent development precedent, but this property does not have windows overlooking neighbouring properties on three sides.
- The public have submitted significant evidence, supporting videos and photos across the consultation periods. They have no assurance that Members or officers have been able to review all of those.
- They are also concerned that the applicant has made private offers of new fencing. Whilst the boundary between 149 and 151 Prestbury Road did benefit from a new fence in the process the boundary was altered. Photo evidence of this change was provided to officers. In the case of 153 Prestbury Road, an offer of land exchange was also made for the use of their garage as a suggested mitigation to one objection.
- Following a party at 151 Prestbury Road over the weekend, neighbours are concerned that this is being used as an unregulated house of multiple occupation (HMO). Concerns that this and the new dwelling may both become unregulated HMOs have not been addressed.

- In conclusion the application fails to meet key planning policies: D1 (poor design), SL1 (harm to residential amenity), INF1 (unsafe access), and SD9 (biodiversity net loss). From a personal perspective this process has taken its toll from the way the application has been handled. There have been multiple retrospective design changes during the process that have not been made clear or transparent. This has damaged the peace and quality of life of residents, and if this development goes ahead several longstanding residents have expressed that they will move.

The applicant addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- The proposed development is in Cheltenham's principal urban area. There are other garden developments in the area, such as Maybelle and the Coach House. The application should be supported as it aligns with the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) SD10 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for sustainable development in a well-connected location.
- Since the first planning refusal, the applicant has worked closely with the planning team as recommended in the pre-application planning process to ensure the refusal reasons raised have been addressed. This has resulted in a reduction of height to a single storey dwelling, moved further from the neighbouring boundaries, and updated to red brick design keeping with surrounding buildings. The applicants have reviewed the design against the BRE 2009 standards for daylight, sunlight, and overshadowing and privacy standards to confirm they have been met.
- The site coverage is only 22% of the plot. This is better than a lot of other planning approvals in the areas around Prestbury Road which take up 40% of the plot. Similarly, the proposal provides 200sqm of private amenity space, significantly above the average of 70-80sqm for local developments. Some garden developments on Prestbury Road have only 20-40sqm. The building is centrally located on the plot to try to further avoid overbearing impact or loss of light. Fencing and landscaping will help assure additional privacy.
- The building will improve the current street scene as it will be replacing an overgrown site and an old garage with an asbestos roof.
- In terms of landscaping, some trees were lawfully removed in 2013 to help with sunlight, daylight and overshadowing. Whilst some people were unhappy with the change there have also been positive comments from neighbours due to improved sunlight, daylight and satellite signal. New planting will be a condition of approval, which should help soften visual impact and maintain privacy.
- To address concerns about ecology the applicants have made contributions to mitigate pressure on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC. The council ecologist has also confirmed that the proposal meets the 10% biodiversity net gain requirement. Which contradicts the objector's statement that there would be a 39.7% net loss of habitat units. The officer confirmed in their presentation that contributions to mitigate pressures on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC had been made.
- To improve sustainability the design includes solar panels, an air source heat pump, and a sustainability statement confirms that they want to put in an EV charging point, natural ventilation and solar gain by design. This complies with JCS policy SD3 and Cheltenham Climate Change SPD.

- The site lies on a flood zone 1, so there is no flood or surface water risk. It is also proposed that a sub-report on sustainable drainage is produced as well.
- They have worked with Highways officers to address their original concern that a car wouldn't be able to get down the drive. They have been satisfied by the tracking plans that 2 vehicles will be able to get down the proposed drive in a forward gear. This meets policy INF1.
- The development will support local jobs, using local builders' merchants, and skilled local labour.
- Single storey properties aren't normal for the area; it is offering different style housing that will support those who struggle with steps.
- To address concerns raised in objections:
 - o No HMO license has been applied for, and a change of class has not been submitted.
 - o This is a secure single-storey dwelling, so it is unlikely that criminals would enter the plot to access other dwellings.
 - o 149 Prestbury Road have confirmed that there is no boundary dispute with the applicant following the erection of a new fence.
- The applicant has worked closely with planning officers to ensure the proposal is policy compliant in terms of location, design, amenity, biodiversity, highways, drainage and sustainability. They respectfully ask the Committee to support the officer's recommendation to permit the application.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The officer report was published on the planning portal on Friday morning, which is within the requirement for 5 working days. There was a full period of consultation carried out after the second design was submitted.
- Highways were originally concerned about the lack of tracking for the internal site within the application but were satisfied with this element once it was provided by the applicant. Highways were not satisfied that as part of the application no. 151 would lose a parking space, however officers feel that the remaining space is reasonable for the property. Officers felt it would not be reasonable to reject the application on the basis of the lost space, particularly as the property is well located and connected to public transport. The new proposed dwelling would have two parking spaces.
- The landscaping condition will also cover hard surfaces such as the driveway and will include what material is used. Currently believe this will be a permeable surface based on the sub-strategy.

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

- Can see how this may impact on some of the neighbours, particularly no. 153 which will be left with a very small garden. However, this is the garden that is present today and the application matches the current boundaries of the properties.
- As this is a single storey building it should not significantly change views from neighbouring properties.
- Concern was raised over the silver birch in the southwest corner as it was felt that the condition that it must be retained for 5 years was not sufficient protection. It was suggested that a tree protection order (TPO) should be issued instead. As the garden is not very big, the residents in the new property might feel that removing those trees would be advantageous.

- The application has gone through a lengthy process of discussion and amendment, which has brought us to a reasonable situation.
- Biodiversity will be addressed through conditions if the application is approved.
- They recognise why the application was referred to the Committee as the design has been squeezed into the maximum space and could be considered overdevelopment. Could not see a satisfactory reason for refusal on planning grounds.

The Principal Planning Officer clarified that a TPO could not be implemented through a planning condition, but the tree department could choose to introduce a TPO in the future. The wording of the landscaping plan condition will include these trees, paragraph 6 states: *“Any trees or plants indicated on the approved scheme which, within a period of five years from the date of planting, die... shall be replaced.”*

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

For: 8

Against: 1

Abstentions: 2

Voted to permit.

8 24/02082/FUL - The Garden House, West Drive, Cheltenham, GL50 4LB

Councillors Oliver and Wheeler left the meeting.

The Senior Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

There were three public speakers on the item: an objector, the applicant, and the ward member.

The objector addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- Speaking on the behalf of residents of Wellington Square which is recognised as one of the finest Regency squares in Cheltenham, if not nationally. It is a heritage asset to the town and is of historical importance. It lies within a conservation area, is truly unique and has been safeguarded for almost 200 years. The residents are, rightly, subject to stringent planning restrictions in relation to even the smallest details on their own properties.
- Understand the shortage of housing stock and the pressure upon the council and accept that the plot of land in question is potentially suitable for development. From the outset we made a proposal which would permit development of a new house, following the line of the most relevant property – that of the close next-door property, Rosehill House. We believe this to be a reasonable compromise intended to minimize harmful impact, but it has been ignored.
- There has been widespread opposition:
 - o Firstly, from a very large numbers of residents.

- Then, the independent planning consultant report (David Jones, January 2025 and March 2025) concluded that the proposed development and development revised conflicted with policy and identified a compromise: re-siting of the proposed dwelling to the eastern boundary adjoining Wellington Lane was the answer. It would maintain the openness of the site, alleviate concerns regarding overlooking/amenity issues and reflect a type of development more consistent with the historic environment.
- The Planning Officers originally told the applicants to re-think because the proposal in *“this sensitive location was considered to be harmful to the character of the area”* concluding that it was too big for the plot and the design approach was inappropriate.
- The Cheltenham Architects Panel advised it to be *“an over development of the plot... and was harmful to the wider street scene.”* They have not been consulted again on the revised proposal.
- There have been a number of recent developments: the applicants have sold (subject to contract) the Garden House, the new owners’ intentions are not known; the owner of Rosehill House sold the property due to the stress caused by the applications and the potential harm to their property if granted; the new owner has sent a firm objection and the applicant’s architect, whose house is situated directly opposite this controversial proposal, has also put his house on the market at one point.
- The Civic Society opposes the application, as do both our ward councillors.
- I refer you to two principal grounds for refusal:
 - Design, layout and siting -
 - The siting of the dwelling house in the revised proposal remains the same but has not materially lowered in height and still maintains an obtrusive and forward building line.
 - The revised design provides for a house which is marginally smaller but there is now a far larger two-storey garage/Coach House (increased in size from 28m² to 126m² with a west facing balcony at the upper floor); the overall increase in floor area is 30%.

So:

- The garage is now effectively a second building capable of being a dwelling contrary to the planning officer’s advice that one single home was suitable.
- The massing has increased such that it would still constitute an overly prominent and discordant feature. Remember the Architects panel said this could be an overdevelopment in limited space.
- The proposal will neither preserve nor enhance the conservation area and will negatively impact the setting of the listed buildings: that was what the planning officer had meant by the “sensitive nature” of the location. This harmful impact to heritage assets (the conservation area, the listed buildings of Wellington Square and the character of the area) is contrary to policy.

- We fundamentally disagree with the assertion made by the planning officers that the proposed siting of the dwelling would respect the historic and established building line of the properties on Wellington Square. The historic line relates to the historic houses on Wellington Square. The reasoning is flawed. That line was interrupted when it came to build Rosehill House, which was set back from that historic line and for good reason: Rosehill is of contemporary design of a wholly different character to the historic line of houses. It sets a precedent as to how to successfully accommodate contemporary buildings into a conservation area and an historic environment. Consistency is required here.
 - Impact Upon Neighbouring Amenity - The window-to-window separation distance (proposal to Rosehill) remains well below 21m in breach of the standard required. It is not cured by frosting of windows or by screening from trees. The existing trees will be cut down and will take 20 years to regrow.
- These plans are in breach of the Framework. There is no benefit to the scheme, and they respectfully ask the Committee to refuse these plans and request that the owners resubmit plans for an appropriate property in line with Rosehill.

The applicant addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- Speaking in support of the application on behalf of the family, who lived at Garden House for over 45 years. They were respected and well loved by their community, and they loved their home and their town.
- Over the years they were regularly approached by developers looking to acquire a plot of their garden. The family has always been keen to prevent developers putting a block of flats or inappropriate buildings in the garden.
- They were pillars of the community. They loved Cheltenham and were active members of many organisations such as the Civic Society and Friends of Pittville. As regular church goers, they were instrumental in keeping and turning St Mary's parish church into a minster.
- Unfortunately, a few years ago due to changes in their personal circumstances, including the death of one of the owners, the remaining owner decided they no longer wanted to live in the house and decided to go into a care home to avoid burdening their children. As you might imagine care home fees are very expensive and unfortunately the Garden House valuation was less than anticipated, the property being the owner's major asset.
- Applying for planning permission is a way for them to maximise the value of the house to support any future care needs. The family's desire is to leave the Garden House with a significant garden and develop a new property respectful of the surroundings rather than maximising value. This application allows them to protect the Garden House as an important Pittville property and avoid its demolition and replacement by overdeveloped flats as has been proposed for this site by developers and planning consultants. Sadly, this has happened all too often in the local area – with examples at Morcote Villa, St Martins Terrace and Lawnswood Court where firms with deep pockets and patience have been able to overcome local opposition.

- The architect, a near-neighbour of the house, worked with them to deliver this vision whilst reflecting the planning desire for a contemporary rather than pastiche property. The applicants have worked closely with the planning team from a pre-planning assessment in 2024 and have developed multiple iterations in response to feedback to ensure that the house is in keeping with its surroundings and neighbours' properties. The application is now for a single storey garage, not a double storey.
- Money and time have been spent working in conjunction with the planners to ensure a high-quality design that is in harmony with the surrounding buildings which are of varied design.
- In its current format the Garden House plot has a much bigger garden than all surrounding properties and can easily support substantial development. The proposal is for one detached house with garage and a good-sized garden. The main building is in line with the others on the street. It does not reduce available street parking by having only pedestrian access from West Drive and a rear garage with parking spaces.
- Whilst subjective opinions will always vary on any design, they believe the plan is well developed and sympathetic to the area. The plan increases the housing stock locally without negatively impacting the area whilst allowing the Garden House to continue to as a large family home with generous garden for future generations.
- In summary this proposal has been continuously developed with the support of the planning team to meet planning requirements, reflect local feedback without over-developing this important plot of land in Pittville. The proposal adds to housing stock within Cheltenham and meets all the planning requirements. The development will support the owner's future needs whilst leaving a legacy of the house and area that the family loved.

Councillor Garcia Clamp, as Ward Member, addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- Attending to support the view of large numbers of residents of Wellington Square and adjoining streets as well as to present the opinion of both Pittville Ward Members.
- Considering the existing plot of Garden House and the council's pro-development stance, development of the plot should be permitted. However, they are opposed to the development as currently proposed. The Council unanimously supported Councillor Tooke's motion for the appropriate use of materials in street repairs to maintain the character and feel of these beautiful, connected, historic Regency squares. Both squares that will be affected by this development are within the conservation area.
- The objection is based on the principal of protection and retention of the Regency, and unique architectural environment of this area of Pittville. Strongly feel the development on the current design fails to do this. The design is unapologetically contemporary and is jarring in both scale and design language. It will produce a negative impact on the architectural cohesiveness of the area and the more appropriate later additions to it, such as Garden House itself or Rosehill House.
- The property will be nestled between two more modern builds, evidently much later than Regency, but their design and, more importantly, placement is much more sympathetic to Wellington Square. Both are set back from the

main road and shielded by vegetation. The trees proposed in the new development will take decades to grow.

- Rosehill House is much more pertinent to this case as it sets a clear and sympathetic precedent for development in the conservation area. It is more discrete, and less intrusive in scale and design compared to the proposed development, causing minimum impact on street view. The CGI images provided do not accurately portray the scale as the street is narrower than shown.
- Therefore, on behalf of a large number of residents and its councillors they ask that the Committee reject the application based on the detrimental impact on the conservation area, and the dangerous precedent that it may set for future developments within it. They would encourage a new proposal which provides a more sympathetic and heritage conscious development and does not break so radically with the architectural environment of the area.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The scheme has gone through consideration of alternative options. Re-orientating the house was discussed with the applicant but they ultimately felt that the scheme would not achieve what they were looking for due to the difficulty of providing off-road parking access from Wellington Square.
- The first submission did include a two-storey garage, but the current application has revised this to a single-storey garage with a flat roof.
- The Architects' Panel and Civic Society are not consulted as statutory bodies. They select what they wish to comment on from the weekly planning list.
- There is no clear definition of 'visually attractive' within the NPPF as it is a subjective matter. From an officer's perspective they feel the design submitted is acceptable overall and in line with policy.

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

- Think there are many good reasons to support the scheme as there is enough space for development. However, there are concerns around screening and around the design. Do not think it fits the area and the streetscene, and the design is garish. Whilst this is a subjective matter some Members felt they could not approve the application for these reasons and due to the impact on the Regency squares.
- Having previously worked with architects it was felt that some of the issues with the design could have been overcome by building the garages in the basement and setting the house back. The impact of the design would then have been minimised. Regret that this applicant has focused on maximising profit over their love for Cheltenham.
- There was concern that the garage may become an AirBnB in the future, so it was important that it had been confirmed that the application specified a one-storey garage.
- Another Member felt that it was important to remember that attractiveness is subjective as they felt the design would have looked worse if it had tried to mimic surrounding properties which could have been more jarring to the landscape than a modern frontage. Contrast can provide interest to an area. Although this is within the conservation area, it is important to remember that Cheltenham is not a Regency theme park. It was also noted that there were other modern houses in the area.

- Concerned over the loss of vegetation given the regrowth time but it was noted that the neighbourhood does have a large number of trees and is located close to Pittville Park.
- Concern was raised that refusal on the grounds of appearance might not stand up to appeal.

The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that the applicant was advised throughout the process that trying to replicate the Regency building style would not work. They have followed that advice. They reminded Members that the NPPF requires a presumption in favour of development unless a strong reason for refusal is identified in terms of impact on heritage assets or any identified harm would outweigh the benefits. If deciding to reject the application Members should provide specifics on the harm it will cause and consider the heritage impacts separately.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to permit subject to S106:

For: 5

Against: 2

Abstentions: 2

Voted to permit subject to S106.

Councillor Wheeler rejoined the meeting. Councillor Oliver sent his apologies for the remainder of the meeting.

9 25/00446/CONDIT - Castle Dream Stud, Mill Lane, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, GL54 4EP

The Senior Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- Concerns about sewage (which is managed through a septic tank) would be handled by the private sector housing team rather than through planning permission. Concerns were raised and then closed in 2024 following mitigating actions to address concerns. The private housing team have confirmed no further objections have been reported to date. The planning officer has been on site a number of times and has not seen any evidence of sewage issues currently.

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

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY to permit subject to conditions.

10 25/00520/FUL - 18 Bournside Road, The Park, Cheltenham, GL51 3AH

The Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

There were two public speakers on the item: an objector and the applicant.

The objector addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- Talking on behalf of residents of Bournside Road who are objecting on the grounds of overdevelopment, loss of amenity, and loss of privacy.
- Twelve objections were received during the consultation, and six letter of support. Objections were on average 1000 words, showing how serious objectors' concerns are. When the location of those objecting is considered, objections from residents living on the road are overwhelmingly negative.
- Bournside Road is mainly made up of detached houses with large gardens and large spaces between the houses. As you walk down the road between the houses you can see trees, hills and Hatherley Park behind the houses, which the SPD references in its description of good design in Cheltenham's suburbs. This streetscape is being eroded through incremental planning decisions that permit overdevelopment of individual plots. They are looking for planning committee to protect the streetscape as defined in the SPD.
- The most overdeveloped property on the street was granted planning permission retrospectively in 2022. It looks like no other house on the road, but the planning officer has chosen this house as the comparator for no. 18.
- The plan shows only a 1m gap between the buildings edge and boundary. This is just enough space for scaffolding to be erected, so the design is as wide as physically possible. The roof reaches the maximum allowed height and the building's mass from the front cannot be any larger. The floor space is increasing by 300% which the planning officer considers a modest increase in footprint. However, compared to typical houses on this stretch of road it is overdevelopment.
- Objectively the plan does not meet the SPD design principles:
 - o The character of the building has not been maintained, as the building has lost symmetry and matches neither the character of the original house or the streetscape.
 - o Due to the much larger roof and side extension taking up half of the visual bulk of the house from the front, instead of supporting the original house the extension and roof dominate it. It is not subservient to the original design.
 - o Space has not been maintained between the buildings. If a single storey garage extension had been proposed the view of trees being the house would have been maintained. The planning officer's report states that there is still a 2m gap and no terracing effect, but the view will still be lost with such a small gap.
 - o Loft conversions should follow the design guidelines and extend into roof spaces. In this proposal the flat roof elevation with Juliet balcony gives the appearance of a third floor. The SPD explicitly states that a loft conversion should not appear as an extra storey on top of the house. The SPD recommends sloping roofs with flush or recessed dormer windows in conversions to prevent overlooking of neighbouring

properties. The loft conversion has not been considered in the report and does not meet the privacy requirement.

- Whilst neighbours can currently look through bedroom windows into gardens, there are minimal reasons for them to do so. By contrast a Juliet balcony is for lingering, watching sunsets, and having drinks. It is on the third floor, higher than existing bedrooms and further back. It will be much more visible once the building is taller and will be sacrificing neighbour's right to privacy, explicitly forbidden by the SPD.
- The scale of the streetscape illustration provided is misleading as the disclaimer states and should not be used in decision making.
- In summary, this application should be refused as it does not comply to SPD design principles. The neighbours understand the need to extend the property to live in and are happy to work with planning officers and developers to reach a compromise.

The applicant addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- The applicants are not commercial developers, and they bought this property with the sole aim of creating their forever home.
- Unfortunately, the property is in a state of disrepair. The roof is 'end of life', and the structure requires complete renovation. The proposed plans seek to restore and extend the property, from a relatively modest four to five-bedroom home.
- They have shown their full commitment to the council's planning process. Firstly, by completing a pre-planning application which raised no significant concerns regarding scale, form or design. Following feedback from a small number of neighbours, they took the decision to make a further series of meaningful revisions. These changes go above and beyond the recommendations of the planning officer. Following the re-submission of the amended plans they were pleased to see a decrease in the number of objections from twelve to six, and were encouraged to receive six letters of support, including from their next-door neighbours and the property opposite.
- Unable to address all of the false claims that have been raised, would like to factually address the main concerns of overdevelopment, privacy and street scene:
 - Overdevelopment - No. 18 sits on one of the largest plots on Bournside Road. Even with the proposed extension, the overall plot coverage remains under 25%, of which 6% is single storey. To reduce the perceived scale further the roof shape has been re-designed, and the conservatory and front porch have been removed. Many other homes on Bournside Road have already extended into their loft space, reflecting a precedent to support evolving family requirements.
 - Privacy concerns – as part of the revision, the size of the Juliet window has been significantly reduced. It has been designed to allow views across their own back garden and TPO trees. Due to the property location on the plot, it is set away from the border of no. 20 and does not overlook their garden. Importantly none of the rear neighbours have objected to the revised plans and one has retracted their original objection. Their next-door neighbour at no. 16 has submitted a letter of support. Full balconies and Juliet windows are already established

elsewhere on the road, demonstrating a clear precedent for this feature.

- Street scene – the street scene is already well-established with significant variations in size, form, design and gapping. Render and cladding finishes are already established in this part of the road, with no. 15 being a prime example. No. 12, three doors down, received approval in December 2024 for a sizeable extension including vertical cladding and received no objections. The street scene drawing provided clearly shows that the proposed extension sits comfortably and proportionately among its neighbours.
- The applicants have followed a thorough planning journey from the pre-application stage to their ongoing collaboration with planning officers to deliver meaningful design revisions. The process demonstrates that they've listened carefully, acted in good faith, and resubmitted plans in response to concerns. The officer's recommendation for approval gives them confidence that the application is both policy compliant and proportionate.
- They are currently renting the property whilst also paying a mortgage. Any further delay, particularly an appeal, would place a significant financial burden on the family. Respectfully ask the Committee to approve this well considered application.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- In terms of a hierarchy of planning documents, the SPD is of lower significance than the NPPF or local plan.
- The street scene was provided by the applicant and does state that it is for illustrative purposes only. The planning officer has not been able to confirm the measurements and can only work on the assumption that they are correct.
- The gap between the houses is as permitted.

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

- A Member noted that he had spent significant time canvassing in this area during the recent election and it is quite an eclectic road. He did not feel that the proposal represented overdevelopment and could see no legitimate reason to object to the application given the recommended conditions.
- On the site visit other houses on the road were much nearer boundaries than no. 18 currently is. The proposal would bring it more in line with other houses on the street.
- It was felt that the designs complied with policy and had been well assessed.
- Southwest Cheltenham have strongly resisted third floor balconies but as this has become a common feature on this road there is precedent in this particular context.
- The council is currently rendering a significant number of council owned properties to improve insulation. The rendering proposed wouldn't be out of character for this property and it would be hypocritical to consider this as a change of character when the council are carrying out the same actions throughout the town.
- The proposal will not overlook other properties and will not be able to see into other windows. It only overlooks gardens and as multi-storey properties are the majority in this area it is inevitable that gardens will be overlooked.

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

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY to permit.

11 Appeal Update

The appeal updates were noted.

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

There were none.