

Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 18 December 2025

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.26 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning and Building Control), Ben Warren (Senior Planning Officer), Lucy White (Principal Planning Officer), Simon Aley (Locum Senior Planning Solicitor) and Sam Reader (Tree Officer)

1 Apologies

Apologies received from Councillors Barbara Clark and Suzanne Williams.

Councillor Jackie Chelin acted as substitute and joined the meeting for item 6a.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Tony Oliver declared an interest in item 6b as his family own a commercial property on Tivoli Street. He confirmed that he would recuse himself from the meeting for this item.

Councillor Jackie Chelin recused herself from item 6b, due to her position as Ward Member for the area.

3 Declarations of independent site visits

The following Councillors attended all sites during Planning View:

- Councillor Adrian Bamford

- Councillor Garth Barnes
- Councillor Iain Dobie
- Councillor Jan Foster
- Councillor Tony Oliver
- Councillor Dr. Steve Steinhardt
- Councillor Simon Wheeler

4 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025 were approved and signed as a correct record.

5 Public Questions

There were none.

6 Planning Applications

Following the Chair's approval, the order of the agenda was amended and the applications were considered as follows:

- 1st - 6c) 25/00828/TREEPO - Rear of Mitford Lodge, Tivoli Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2TF
- 2nd – 6a) 25/00780/FUL - Pittville School, Albert Road, Cheltenham, GL52 3JD
- 3rd - 6b) 25/01296/FUL - Prinbox Works, Saddlers Lane, Tivoli Walk, Cheltenham, GL50 2UX

7 25/00780/FUL - Pittville School, Albert Road, Cheltenham, GL52 3JD

The Senior Planning Officer introduced the report as published. She noted the following updates:

- The site layout was revised recently. The revisions are relatively minor tweaks to improve garden sizes and distances between properties. Most of the revised layout drawings have been received but there are still one or two outstanding. Any drawing that shows a layout, whether that be drainage or boundary treatment details for example, needs to be adjusted in terms of the correct layout so that they all tally. If Members are minded to permit this application, once the outstanding drawings are received the officer will inform the Chair and Vice Chair of their submission, and before any decision is issued.

There was one public speaker on the item: the applicant's representative.

The applicant's representative addressed the committee and made the following points:

- The site was part of Pittville School's grounds and became redundant as a playing field, last used in 2009. The site was previously granted planning permission in 2021, but the developer was unable to bring the site forward

due to the site requiring Section 77 approval to dispose of the land to raise capital receipts for a new sports hall. This has subsequently been resolved, and the site has been purchased by Newland Homes. The funds generated from the sale of the land have provided the school with the ability to construct a much-needed new indoor sports hall.

- Planning application was submitted in May 2025 and applicants have worked with officers to agree a scheme that is aesthetically pleasing and is policy compliant.
- The scheme will deliver 58 new homes, 40% of which will be affordable. This is an appropriate density for the site.
- The site is located towards the northern edge of Cheltenham, approximately 1.6km from the town centre and within reasonable walking distance to local services. A regular bus service is also available.
- The site is just over two hectares and is rectangular shape with a narrow treeline section which extends approximately 150m from the site to the west and links with Albert Road.
- Vehicle access will be taken from Broadacre Road. Gloucestershire County Highways have confirmed that this access, along with the internal road layout and associated parking, is acceptable. Pedestrian access will be provided from Albert Road and Cakebridge Road.
- Layout provides good separation distances to existing residential dwellings.
- Ecology and biodiversity and biodiversity enhancements to the site and existing ecology corridors will be retained. Hedgehog highways and bat and bird boxes will be provided within the development, along with new and enhanced tree and shrub planting. Biodiversity net gain will be provided partly on site and partly off site, in line with current legislation.
- On site open space is provided along with S106 contributions for off site play provisions and improvements to Pittville Park. Contributions will also be provided for allotments and the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, education and libraries.
- Newland Homes is a local house builder based in Gloucestershire and established in 1991. As a sustainable developer they became the first house builder to sign up to the United Nations' Climate Neutral Now pledge, demonstrating commitment to sustainability and striving towards a greener future for all. Completed first zero carbon homes in 2022 in Somerset and build the first zero carbon site in Cheltenham in Leckhampton. Have now completed 225 zero carbon homes, which generate negative amounts of CO₂ from the prime energy required for heating hot water, ventilation and lighting, through the use of highly efficient air source heat pumps, extensive solar PV panels and high levels of insulation. Purchasers have reported that they can run their home on £367 per week, including charging an electric vehicle. Properties also include water butts to harvest water, compost areas in gardens and integrated eco bins – small measures that facilitate changes in consumer behaviour.
- Newland Homes received an award for best high volume new housing development at the Building Excellence Awards in 2025 and a Bee Bold

Award in 2024. These awards highlight the company's outstanding efforts to achieve sustainable homes as well as high standards of design and construction.

- Hope that the committee see the scheme has been well thought out in terms of design and, with the additional sustainability provisions, will enable the provision of much-needed homes in the area, and contribute positively to local house needs.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The main circular estate road is a herring brick surface with a designated side area for a footpath, which may include a curb line. The detailed road design will go through the Section 38 process. As you come into the site the grey area shown on the submitted drawings will be tarmac that then changes to the proposed brick surface. The road width appears ample for a pedestrian section which we would expect to be made clear to any pedestrian accessing the site. The internal road is designed to be of an adoptable standard.
- Swift bricks have not been specified within the ecological enhancement proposals, but hedgehog tunnels and homes, and bat and bird boxes have been included.

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

- This is a nice development that ticks a lot of boxes councillors have been asking for under the green umbrella. It is relatively low density, relatively similar to local neighbourhoods. Think it has everything going for it and can see no reason to reject the application.
- Particularly pleased to see 40% social and affordable housing. Do not foresee it causing any problems relating to parking due to design. Do wish that more developers would install swift boxes in terms of net gain. Believe this is about as good a plan as you can get on the plot.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to permit subject to a S106 obligation.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the officer recommendation to permit the application subject to a S106 obligation.

8 25/01296/FUL - Prinbox Works, Saddlers Lane, Tivoli Walk, Cheltenham, GL50 2UX

Councillors Oliver and Chelin recused themselves from this item. Councillor Chelin remained at the back of the Chamber until she had spoken in her capacity as Ward Member.

The Senior Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

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

The objector addressed the committee and made the following points:

- They are a chartered town planner speaking on behalf of the Cheltenham Civic Society. Living in Tivoli he knows the site well and supports the principle of it being used for a new residential development. The existing buildings are unattractive, so redevelopment of the site is an opportunity to provide more and better housing, and to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Section 72 the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 creates a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. The Civic Society objects to this proposal because it does not do that. On the contrary, it wastes an opportunity to make the area more attractive.
- The applicant claims that the scheme shows particular sensitivity to the Tivoli character area but in fact the design completely fails to match the vernacular of the area. The area is quite distinctive as the council's own character assessment explains clearly. Looking at the existing early and mid-Victorian terraces in the area, three features stand out:
 - o scale;
 - o treatment of the street frontage;
 - o style, proportions and materials.
- In terms of scale, while the surrounding streets in Tivoli are two storey artisan terraces, with pitched roofs. This proposal is for a three-storey development, with a flat roof. Though the CGI images are designed to make the third storey almost disappear.
- In terms of the street frontage, the existing houses have small front gardens, with railings to the pavement, but generous back gardens, with plenty of amenity space. None of them have on-site parking or use pavement crossovers or have roof terraces. The proposed houses have on-site parking spaces, which require pavement crossovers, thus privatising some of the on-street parking that others use. The large parking bays create gaping empty spaces opening directly on to the pavement – completely out of character and potentially messy and unsettling. The outdoor amenity space provided is minimal and mean, and in trying to create a bit more, the proposal includes first floor terraces. Not only are they completely out of character, but they will also face directly to the bedrooms of houses across the street, causing intrusive overlooking and noise nuisance that a windowed bedroom would not.
- As for style, the existing terraces look attractive and coherent, through the consistent use of proportions and materials. This proposal ignores these essential features of the Tivoli character area. Instead of stucco they are using "buff-coloured brick, and vertical stack patterns, with vertical timber cladding". Instead of painted front doors there will be "natural timber front doors and garage doors". In addition there are: "Timber louvre panels and balustrades, along with bronze cladding". These currently and temporarily

fashionable materials will create a busy mish-mash that will be wholly out of place in the terraces of the Tivoli character area.

- Good contemporary design responds to its context and improves the area. We can see that in the nearby late 20th century development of Tivoli Mews. It respects the local vernacular, sits comfortably alongside existing buildings and has worn well.
- The Prinbox Works is an interesting site that offers a unique opportunity to improve the coherence of the area, yet the applicant seems determined to create something that sticks out rather than fits in. The design is inappropriate and incongruous. It bears no relationship to Tivoli. It could be absolutely anywhere and so it should be resisted.
- The multiple local objections show that those who know and care for the area, and who would have to live with the scheme, don't like it. It will not age or weather well and will never sit comfortably within its older surroundings. In years to come, people walking through Tivoli will look at it and say – "who on earth allowed this?".
- We can do better. A contemporary development with a similar number of units, that responds to Tivoli's vernacular, that fits comfortably into the area, that takes its cues from the surrounding materials, proportions and scale, and that respects Tivoli's character - that would truly enhance the Conservation Area. Urge the committee to refuse this application and request a better proposal that adds to the quality of Tivoli.

The applicant's representative addressed the committee and made the following points:

- The officer's report is very comprehensive and clearly sets out all the issues.
- Right from the beginning it was clear to the developers that the main considerations for this redevelopment scheme would be:
 - o The impact on the conservation area
 - o The impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents
 - o The tree, and
 - o Parking.
- Cheltenham-based architects Coombes Everitt have quite rightly spent a considerable amount of time designing and refining this scheme and are pleased to see that officers have concluded it would result in a significant betterment to the site and its surroundings and would not preserve but in fact enhance this part of the conservation area.
- The site is in a tightly knit built-up area with existing residential properties on all 4 sides. Officers have explained in detail in their report how the proposal is compliant with policies with regards neighbouring amenity, especially bearing in mind what's on site at present and what already has permission.
- Applicant was keen to ensure retention of the tree, especially as this is the only tree within the public realm in this specific part of Tivoli. The applicant has therefore taken advice from a local arboriculturist, and the council's trees officer is satisfied with what is proposed.
- With regards to parking, helpful to explain the engagement the applicant has had with both ward councillors prior to the submission of the application. The first meeting took place in February at the same time the permitted development prior approval application was being determined. The applicant's wish to redevelop the site was discussed and it was agreed that any scheme

would consider a comprehensive strategy for the adjoining streets to try to address ongoing residents' concerns with indiscriminate parking resulting in narrowing of carriageways. Following this meeting local transport consultants Rappor were engaged by the applicant. At the following meeting in July, Rappor's recommendation to introduce a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to improve access for emergency and refuse vehicles was explained to both ward councillors. This meant implementing double yellow lines along the southern side of Tivoli Walk. A total of 10 on-street spaces would be lost as a result of the proposed development.

- The application was submitted mid-August but, prior to this, a letter was delivered to over 50 local residents and emailed to both councillors explaining the proposed TRO. However, it soon became clear within the first few weeks of the application that the majority of the residents responding to the council's consultation were not happy about the loss of on-street parking. Following discussions with planning and highway officers, it was agreed to remove the TRO element from the scheme. By doing this, only 3 on-street spaces are to be lost and all 6 proposed dwellings will have 2 off-road spaces each, as well as secure cycle storage.
- Unfortunately, the applicant is not in a position to solve the residents' existing parking frustrations in Tivoli but we do feel the proposal reaches a satisfactory compromise solution whilst enabling the provision of 6 much-needed homes in this highly sustainable location.

Councillor Chelin, as Ward Member, addressed the committee and made the following points:

- Called the application into the planning committee owing to the level of disquiet with the plans which centred largely around the design of the buildings and the implications for parking, plus concerns around the impact of the building work itself, as well as links to the drainage infrastructure. On the latter points, I note that the planning officer's report is heavily conditioned, which is welcome.
- The developer reached out early on to ward councillors, to understand the context of the area, and they also wrote to the residents. Ward councillors also sent a letter to residents to ensure they had seen the plans, and many of them then came to one of the monthly drop-ins, just round the corner from the site. This was the most well attended drop in event they have held.
- The ward councillors mentioned to the developer the likely issues with parking, and the issue of egress from Sadlers Lane because of cars parking too close to the corners on Tivoli Walk. It was interesting to see the outcomes of the review that was commissioned which included the proposal to introduce extra double yellow lines. This is one of the elements that has been changed, following feedback from objectors, in order to reduce (although clearly not eliminate fully) the concerns about parking. Having followed up with the traffic engineers at Gloucestershire County Council, understand that a permit scheme, which some people are suggesting, will not solve the parking difficulties in Tivoli as the issue is with the number of cars owned by the residents, and, indeed, could potentially make things worse.
- This still leaves considerable concern about the design of the new buildings which the expert objector has outlined in more detail. Suffice it to say, as with many others in the area, have always felt the Prinbox Works were out of

place, if not ugly (whilst appreciating that aesthetics are very personal). It's true to say that elements of the design have been amended to deal with concerns about privacy and light but the fact remains that many people, including an architect who lives down the street, see it as a missed opportunity to meld a more sympathetic contemporary design into the existing Victorian street scene.

Councillor Chelin left the meeting.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The Architects' Panel have reviewed the application and provided a comment. They are supportive of the design approach and scheme but have questioned the scale of the development and whether it is a potential overdevelopment of the site.
- It was originally proposed that the outdoor terraces would serve the 3rd floor but officers felt that spaces on top of the flat roof did not feel appropriate so they have been removed from the application. They now exist in a different context on the 1st floor, not fully enclosed but with an open roof and open sides, and are more akin to a balcony. There will be no terraces on the top of the development.
- Any opening on the external boundaries, including the terraces, are on the road side of the development and will align with the front elevation of terraces around the site, as is the case with the existing building. Whilst there will be an element of overlooking, this will not be different from the current situation.
- Timber cladding is only proposed in the recessed areas of the undercroft parking and is not on the higher levels. As this parking is open the timber will be visible from the street scene but is not a significant part of the development.

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

- One of the things a Member has loved about Cheltenham is how the town has looked after its architecture. Appreciate the comments of the Cheltenham Civic Society but things have changed since Tivoli and other areas were built. Back then there were no cars, homes were heated from coals and fires and windows were kept small to prevent heat loss. These properties provide two parking spaces per unit which he believe will improve the parking arrangement and will certainly not make it worse. To provide these spaces it was not possible for the design to match the style of existing buildings. Things have to change. Not possible to have a rubber stamp of older buildings, just need modern buildings to fit in nicely. The artists' impression shows bigger windows that will let the light in, and the height is similar. Whether the drawing is accurate to show the impact of the third storey is uncertain. Believe the design is cleverly put together and has made reasonable accommodations, it is a sensitive and well-built design that the Member is happy to support.
- Opposite this space are a modern pastiche of genuine and authentic Victorian houses built two years ago, aware that the Cheltenham Civic Society prefer this approach. However, agree with the Architect's Panel that a sympathetic modern style is better than pastiche. Matter of opinion but a lot of architects do agree..

- The site sits within one Member's county division. There are elements of the application that he is pleased with, particularly that the tree will be more prominent. Hope that more trees will be introduced to Tivoli. The provision of two parking spaces per unit is fairly neutral in terms of parking, which is important in this particular area. Whilst the loss of three parking spaces is not great, it is better than losing ten, especially as permit parking is basically impossible in such a tight area. The balcony provision on the first floor and facing the roads is no different than bedroom windows. In balance this is not a bad design given the space limitations and is certainly an improvement on the Prinbox Works themselves.
- Slightly surprised to hear criticism of the scale of the proposal as it feels appropriate. Design is deeply subjective. One of the primary issues is solving the local parking issue. This has a significant impact on the design unfortunately, given the situation believe this is the best compromise so will be voting in favour.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to permit subject to a S106 obligation.

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the officer recommendation to permit the application subject to a S106 obligation.

9 25/00828/TREEPO - Rear of Mitford Lodge, Tivoli Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2TF

This item was taken first on the agenda. As Councillor Chelin was not present for the start of item she did not take part in the debate or vote.

The Tree Officer introduced the report as published.

There was one public speaker on the item: an objector.

The objector addressed the committee and made the following points:

- Appealing against the proposal to convert the Tree Protection Order (TPO) on the Holm Oak at Mitford Lodge, Tivoli Road, from temporary to permanent.
- Misguided by previous advisers and now understand the process. The tree can be satisfactorily maintained under the arrangements in place for managing trees within the conservation area, without the need for a TPO.
- The trigger for the temporary TPO came about because as 'laypeople' they didn't fully understand the process for the application to undertake remedial work. The advice given at the time was that the application would lead to a conversation and agreement on the detail of the work.
- Do not recall point 4.5 in the officer's comments whereby they were advised against the proposal by original consultants.

- Also refer to point 6.1 of the Conclusion and Recommendation that “despite attempts by the tree officer to negotiate a more moderate approach to the tree, the applicant was unwilling to change their proposal until a TPO was served”. These comments were made directly to previous advisors and the applicants had no knowledge of these attempts. This was no fault of the officers.
- Now understand that the original application was a statement of intent and this can only be declined by the council through the introduction of a TPO. Have since engaged a new professional consultant who has explained the process fully. This has already led to an approved programme of work for the tree which has recently been successfully completed.
- Look forward to working with these professionals along with the council to maintain Holm Oak. In their opinion there is no need for the TPO to be made permanent.

In response to Members’ questions, officers confirmed that:

- If the TPO is agreed, the residents can approach the council’s tree officers if they want to carry out maintenance work. Providing it is acceptable this work would be approved.
- Officially, technically and by the letter of the law all tree works should be submitted to the local authority and approved prior to work commencing. From a procedural perspective there is very little difference from the customer’s experience of submitting a tree works notice if a TPO is present or not. In either case they would need to submit to the council. It is unlikely that the council would prosecute someone for removing epicormic growth without prior notice to the council, as it is unlikely to be in the public interest to do so. Submitting the correct paperwork does not take a lot of energy or time and contractors can do this on the owner’s behalf. There is no fee from the council, it is a small administrative obligation that they notify the council prior to works commencing.

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

- The committee has been here with other trees a number of times. If the applicant has a plan that officers have approved for works, can see no hindrance in there being a TPO in place. The only reason to not have a TPO is so that works can be carried out that are not allowed.
- This is an important heritage tree in Cheltenham, 150-200 years old and predates the building. A TPO is the only legal way to protect it.
- Introducing TPOs on lovely, mature trees is a custodial process. Whilst there has been a lot of misunderstanding hope that can look beyond that and see the TPO is intended to protect the tree. More mature trees in Cheltenham should have TPOs as they are important parts of the landscape.
- Truly stunned when they saw the tree, a magnificent specimen that would not be out of place in Kew Gardens or Westminster. Sure the current house owners’ owe it no ill will but should do all possible to protect it in the future.
- Very impressed with how clear it was to see from the road and from many other properties. It is very much part of the local landscape which has likely been there since there was a much larger house in the area. The landscape that can be seen through this tree and others throughout Tivoli Road tells you about the heritage of Cheltenham, which was once a town within a park.

Likely predates most of the houses in the area. This tree deserves to have a TPO.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to confirm the Tree Protection Order without modification.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the officer recommendation to confirm the Tree Protection Order without modification.

10 Appeal Update

Councillor Chelin returned to the meeting.

The appeal updates were noted.

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

There were none.