

Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 23 April 2026

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 8.39 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning and Building Control), Chris Gomm (Head of Planning), Michelle Payne (Development Management Manager), Ben Warren (Senior Planning Officer), Lucy White (Principal Planning Officer), Cheryl Lester (Legal officer), Nigel Potter (Housing Enabling Officer) and Ewan Wright (Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Tony Oliver and Suzanne Williams.

The Chair noted that the members of the committee were up for re-election and took a moment to thank the whole of the committee for the commitment and hard work they have put in over the years. They have had some very hard, difficult decision to make and have considered very significant applications, such as the Cyber Park and the Junction 10 area. He thanked them for how they had dealt with these matters in the past and expressed his hope that their example will continue. In particular he thanked his Vice Chair, Councillor Frank Allen, for his invaluable and incisive contributions to the committee, and his diligence. He offered him his deepest thanks for all the work he has done and the support he had given as Vice Chair, and wished him luck in his next venture.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Simon Wheeler declared that he has been on a working group for the Neighbourhood Plan centred around the development in item 8. He noted that a member of the working group had independently submitted an objection, but that he himself was not pre-determined on the application.

3 Declarations of independent site visits

The following Councillors attended all sites during Planning View:

- TBC

4 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2026 were approved and signed as a correct record.

5 Public Questions

There were none.

6 Planning Applications

7 23/01874/OUT - Land at West Cheltenham, Northern Parcel, South of Old Gloucester Road

The Head of Planning introduced the report as published.

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

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

- The scheme forms part of the West Cheltenham strategic allocation and it follows on from two already approved schemes. Together they demonstrate real progress in delivering this important allocation, something that the council deserves great credit for particularly in the current economic and political climate.
- This is a really important enabling scheme. While the housing proposed is needed in its own right, it also plays a key role in unlocking the wider employment and infrastructure ambitions for Golden Valley.
- The principle of development is largely established through the allocation. What is before the committee is precisely what policy anticipates, a coordinated and sustainable urban extension, not piecemeal development. It comes forward as part of a comprehensive master plan for the whole allocation aligned with a clear infrastructure delivery strategy.
- It integrates effectively with the adjoining parcels, ensuring that growth is planned, coherent, and properly supported. It also provides land for a primary school and sports pitches, alongside contributions to education, and transport,

including improvements to junction 10, new bus services, and strong walking and cycling links. These aren't just aspirations. They are embedded and secured by the proposal.

- There is a clear and pressing need for housing and this scheme will deliver a significant number of new homes including 31% affordable housing with a mix that responds to identified local needs. This is a significant public benefit of the scheme.
- A detailed design code will be secured as part of the application to give Members confidence about the quality of development that will be delivered. It is not leaving this to be resolved later.
- Environmentally, the proposal performs well. It delivers biodiversity net gains, extensive green infrastructure, and appropriate mitigation. Natural England has confirmed there will be no adverse effects on protected sites.
- Importantly there are no objections from statutory consultees on highways, drainage, ecology, or landscape subject to the recommended conditions within the report.
- In planning terms, this is a sustainable development. It delivers homes, infrastructure, and environmental enhancements while supporting the wider vision for Golden Valley. Officers are clear in their recommendation. The proposal accords with the development plan, and where the policies are out of date, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The access to the application site from Hope Orchard Lane will be pedestrian and cycle only with no access by vehicular traffic. In the parameters plan it is identified as the indicative pedestrian access position. The existing properties in Hope Orchard will still be accessible by car, but there will not be access to the application site from this route by car.
- As with any housing development constructed on a field that has a public right of way through it, the public right of way will need to be diverted to follow the layout of the streets where it crosses the site so there is no interruption to the public right of way. There is a footpath that runs just beyond the eastern boundary of the application site within the existing residential development, and additional linkages will be created between existing developments and the new public open space. Any issues with potential footpath diversions will need to be resolved by the developer through a separate process to divert these routes in line with the rights of way legislation. The county council may have preferences about where footpaths should go but that will be part of a separate process with a public consultation.
- The designing out crime officer originally raised concerns based on the fact that as an outline application it does not contain the level of detail in terms of design that they would have liked. These elements will be brought forward through reserved matters applications, which will be consulted on with the police design liaison officer at that stage.
- It is expected that odour mitigation works will be undertaken and condition 47 of the planning application prevents occupation of more than 200 dwellings

before those works have been completed. Clause 48 includes a requirement for details of the work to be submitted to the council prior to occupation for approval.

- 31% of the housing will be affordable, with a split of 32% shared ownership, 39% affordable rent, 24% social rent, and 4% social supported rent units to help those with low-level mental health needs to help them move on into independence. This followed quite detailed comments for the affordable housing mix, which led to an iterative process between the applicant and council officers to find a mix that was viable and addressed housing need.

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

- Not a huge amount wrong with the application, but it is disappointing that only 24% of the affordable housing is for social rent given local housing need.
- The nice open green space will be a benefit for most of the sites throughout the Golden Valley.

The legal officer noted a cross-referencing error in the officer recommendation and recommended that part B be amended to read: “completion of a S106 obligation and/or other legal document to deliver the infrastructure and other mitigation, as set out in this report *as per the planning obligation*”.

The matter then went to the vote on the amended officer recommendation to delegate authority to the Head of Planning to permit the application subject to:

A) the conditions as set out or substantially similar as may be agreed under delegated authority given to the Head of Planning; and

B) completion of a S106 obligation and/or other legal document to deliver the infrastructure and other mitigation, as set out in this report as per the planning obligation, and for alterations to s106 heads of terms as may be agreed under delegated authority given to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee.

C) In the event that the S106 obligation and/or other legal document remains unsigned nine months after this resolution, that the application be reviewed by the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee, and if no progress is being made delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning to refuse the application in the absence of an agreed S106 Agreement.

This resolution included, for the avoidance of doubt, that the final wording of Condition 43 be delegated to the Head of Planning as per the published update report dated 22 April 2026.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the amended officer recommendation.

8 26/00001/REM - Land at West Cheltenham, Southern Parcel, Fiddlers Green Lane, Cheltenham

The Interim Development Management Manager introduced the report as published.

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

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

- Attended the committee last year to present the outline application for the southern parcel. A year later back with the first detailed phase, which delivers the innovation centre and first of the mobility hubs for the southern parcel. Together they will kickstart the Golden Valley and help position Cheltenham at the forefront of cyber security, national security and advanced technology.
- Crucially this is not a speculative development, there is clear demand from organisations in the sector for high-quality, flexible workspace. The scheme is designed to meet that demand from day one.
- The principal of development has already been established, so the application before the committee is about the detail and whether this phase lives up to the ambitions that they supported at the outline stage. In the applicant's and officers' views, it does. It is a high-quality scheme that follows the approved design code, respects the parameter plans, and sets a strong benchmark for future phases.
- It is more than just an office building, it is designed as a focal point for collaboration, investment, and innovation. The investment will create jobs both on site and across the wider supply chain, including high value roles that will strengthen Cheltenham's place in the UK's national security and technology economy.
- This is about long-term opportunities, supporting skills development, partnerships with education providers, and creating opportunities for local people.
- It also plays an important role by enabling sustainable travel, reducing reliance on cars and helping to unlock future phases.
- The scheme responds well to its setting with strong landscaping, retention of key trees, meaningful public green space and a commitment to 10% biodiversity net gain.
- Sustainability is also embedded throughout with efficient buildings, renewable energy technologies and a clear ambition towards net zero.
- There are no objections from statutory consultees and no unacceptable impacts on neighbouring residents have been identified. Importantly, the site will also become publicly accessible for the first time.
- Taken as a whole, this is more than just a first phase. It delivers jobs, skills, investment, and long-term economic resilience. It's high quality, policy compliant, and officers have recommended approval.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The open spaces will be publicly accessible, not just for users of the buildings.
- It is not known whether the event spaces will be available for community use, but it is intended that commercial spaces will be accessible to the public.
- There have been discussions with the bus services, and the transport routes were agreed at the outline stage. So, this is not included as part of the current application. There will be bus gates and a bus stop is proposed on Fiddler's Green Lane. The highway authority has reviewed the transport detail and is satisfied that the associated trips will work.
- There is a requirement to provide electrical vehicle charging points within the car park.
- There will be 140 bike racks and facilities for changing on site. This cycle storage will be within the building, rather than separate.
- The council is not at this stage able to control any change in unit use through conditions, for example if it is decided later that this should be a private area. However, an application would need to be submitted for consideration for any change of use.
- The senior tree officer is currently not concerned with the condition of the retained trees.

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

- Whilst they would prefer to see green fields in the area, have to acknowledge they have been obscured by a 3-meter hedge until recently. The design of the innovation hub is really good, especially how it wraps around the trees. Whilst this is going to be closer than expected it is a very interesting building.
- The mobility hub will be a big, imposing building for those living nearby. However, as someone living locally believe that the benefits from the site will outweigh the cost. It is a good application that they are happy to support. Following enquiry from the legal officer the Member confirmed that he did not believe the application would affect him to a greater extent than the majority of other council taxpayer's living in the ward (as established within the Code of Conduct's rules on Members' interests).
- Supports the application, particularly the sloped roof design. It will provide open space for locals to use.
- Hopefully this development will bring magic to the area by generating employment, and providing security for the whole of Gloucestershire and beyond. As a county councillor this is the most important development for the county, and people with knowledge of cyber security will recognise its' importance as a national, and even international, development. The designs reflect this excitement, particularly how it fits within the environment and local ecology.
- This is a significant scheme that kickstarts Cheltenham's position at the forefront of cyber security in the UK. It will be watched as a standard for other developments across the country.

The matter then went to the vote on the officer recommendation to grant.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the officer recommendation to grant.

9 25/01567/FUL - Broadlands Lodge, 56 The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2SA

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:

- Speaking on behalf of the Civic Society and St. Philip and St. James Residence Association. He is a qualified planner (now retired) and a fellow of the Landscape Institute.
- He has lived in or near Cheltenham for 45 years, most of the time within a short walking distance of The Park. He walks in it at least once a week and, like many residents, he is grateful for the generous way in which the University has made this beautiful place available for all to enjoy.
- Council officers have worked hard with the developers to secure significant improvements in the plans for the development of this site since they were first published. So, he hesitated to maintain the initial objections, especially as they welcome the proposed conversion of Broadlands Lodge and Farmery Lodge. However, there are still issues of critical importance and the plans still do not meet the legal duty towards the conservation area.
- There are three main concerns that should encourage Members to reject these plans - failure to protect and enhance the conservation area, loss of public access, and the precedent that approval of this scheme could set.
- Any new buildings here should respect the specific guidance in the council's Park character area appraisal. They should also show how they protect and enhance the conservation area as required by law in section 72 of the 1990 Planning Act. The plans submitted do not do that, nor does the officer's report show how this new development will safeguard and enrich the character of the conservation area. The new buildings introduce alien features that respond neither to the fine regency buildings around The Park, nor to the character of the two Victorian buildings that are to be retained as part of the scheme. They are not asking for reproduction Regency or Victorian villas, but for contemporary structures that relate well to them. Flat roofs, projecting first floors and harsh rectangular shapes are not characteristic of this part of town. These highly visible buildings located in one of the most sensitive sites in Cheltenham could have been designed for anywhere. They do not do the job required by law. They do not protect and still less enhance the character of this part of the conservation area.
- Until the site was sold by the University early last year, the public could walk across it. There was no fence to the road, and many people used the gap between the Farmery and Broadlands as a way into and out of The Park. There is even a traffic island facing the opening that made it safe to cross the road there. What the sale of this site and the scheme have done is to destroy

what was a public asset. Surprised that an otherwise very thorough report by the planning officer does not refer to the loss of this de facto access.

- It is good that the view into The Park from the road will be retained in the scheme and some form of control is planned to keep it clear of obstructions like parked cars and play equipment. Though if this is to work, it must be made legally binding. It would be much better though if the land were to be returned to the University as an addition to the park area, thus restoring the position that existed until last year. Or, failing that, and at a minimum, a right of way should be created so that the public can once again access the centre of The Park this way.
- Approving the scheme in its present form, the first new residential development within the main area of The Park since it was created in the 1800s, would represent a dangerous precedent. The committee will probably be advised to dismiss this concern because each planning application should be considered on its own merits. This may be technically correct, but consent here will encourage the University, which is facing huge funding pressures, to see if there are other areas on the edge of The Park that they could sell off.
- The Park is a marvellous asset for the people of Cheltenham. While some development on this site would be acceptable, what is proposed does not fulfil the legal duty to protect and enhance the conservation area. It effectively privatises what was until recently a public asset and it creates a precedent the town may come to regret.

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

- The committee heard earlier this evening about the need and the importance of large-scale green field developments, the housing that they provide, and the benefits that can come about because of those. At the same time, planning policy still emphasises and places priority on the redevelopment of and reuse of brownfield sites within urban areas. Within that context, the applicant has had positive pre-application advice in respect of these proposals which confirm the site's suitability for redevelopment and the principle of contemporary design. These buildings will stand for the 21st century, not compete with historic neighbours.
- The pre-application advice particularly welcomed the removal of hazardous asbestos and the delivery of high-quality sustainable homes. In its current form and following extensive work in revising the scheme with the council, the proposal is supported by planning and heritage officers and all other statutory and technical consultees.
- Alongside energy efficient new build homes, the sympathetic renovation of two other rundown buildings, used as offices for around 20 years, will return them to family homes.
- Strong ecological benefits are delivered in including 13 new trees which represents an approximately 20% increase and over 100 meters of new hedge. A contribution to off-site ecology will overall provide a robust net gain

above policy requirements and the generous open space is retained to preserve views across The Park.

- Appreciate that opinion on design varies. With reference to the comments from the objector, the applicant is comfortable, and officers may confirm, that the committee's duties under the relevant act have been carefully considered and respected. The proposal significantly enhances visual amenity compared with the current dilapidated buildings and improves energy efficiency as demonstrated in the submitted materials.
- The application fully complies with local and national policy and the council's professional officers support the proposal.
- In summary, this development will deliver safe asbestos removal, site regeneration, additional well-designed and energy efficient family homes as an important contribution to overall supply, enhanced landscaping, ecology gains, protected views of The Park, and a new safer access to the University.

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

- Both Ward councillors of Park ward thought it was important to bring this application to committee because it has caused a lot of concern among residents and others.
- The application is situated in a historic and sensitive area of Cheltenham. Plans started for this area in 1833, and the area has gone through many stages of development, even being used briefly as a zoological garden, but most recently as a setting for the University of Gloucestershire. It is an area which is well loved by members of the public, containing several listed and significant buildings.
- Hopefully, Members will have had an opportunity to read the detailed and well-considered letters of objection from local residents.
- In recent times, the community has been very grateful because the University has allowed public access to The Park. It has become an important venue for sports such as the junior park run and also generally for mental health, providing a peaceful time spent watching wildlife around the lake.
- The planning officer has spent a great deal of time negotiating various changes to the application with the developer and several changes have been made for the better. Would like to thank the planning officer for all the time that she has put into this, and the developer for being open to making changes.
- The application site is situated in a privately owned area. Privately owned now because it was recently sold by the University, within the teardrop shape of the parkland which is so important to the character area of The Park. In the planning document, The Park character area appraisal and management plan of July 2008, says in TP11 that it's important to retain the openness and protect the views and Regency character of the area. Also, that development within the grounds should preserve or enhance this character and not erode any of the open space. Despite the welcome changes made to the original application, concerns still remain regarding some of the design features.

- Looking at the proposed street scene, the officer has shown the committee, would ask whether this design, particularly of the two new buildings, really preserve or enhance this area. Aware, as mentioned by the developer, that there are a lot of different opinions about what is or is not a good design. One local resident described the new buildings as concrete blocks, whereas another sees them as a modern design in keeping with other developments.
- Fears do remain around granting this application as many think it will be seen as setting a precedent for future development in the area and there are also concerns about the loss of public access.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- There will be new vehicular access to the University's car park as part of the scheme. Currently the public can walk into the university car park, but this could lead to pedestrian conflict with cars. If approved there will be no physical way of getting across the application site into the Park campus. There will be estate railings along the frontage and hedgerow with private access for the four new dwellings. It will be quite obvious that there is no public right of way through the site.
- The proposed University access is to the other side of the Farmery into the University campus. Need to bear in mind that there is no footpath on that side of the road, so people would be crossing the road without a footpath on the other side. There are many other points of access into the University around The Park, so this is not the only access point. The proposed university car park access point will be approximately 20-30 meters from the one that is being lost.
- The temporary bin storage marked on the plan is a bin collection point, offset from the road, which will be in use for bin collection day only. Each property will have on-plot bin storage areas. A condition requests details of the bin stores at a later stage. It will be partly screened from view by hedging but will need to be accessible for the bins to be collected.
- There will be a loss of 5 trees offset by the introduction of 13 new trees.
- Facing brick is proposed on the ground floor elevations of the new dwellings to match the facing brick of Farmery Lodge, so it will blend in and respond well with the existing red brick buildings on site
- Presume that the maintenance of the retained open space will be the responsibility of the owners of the four dwellings under a management agreement as the open space and remainder of the site will be privately owned and managed.

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

- This is a difficult decision, and the Member has sympathy with the concerns raised by the Ward Member and objector. There is a good argument to be made in terms of heritage, preservation, and not keeping to Regency standards. At the same time there is a very good counterargument to say that this actually does enhance the area as it could be argued that the Farmery

building as it currently exists is damaging the conservation area, given the significant alterations that have been made to it.

- Share concerns about artist impressions and feel it may have caused more concerns in this case than the actual building will do, as the render approach will be in keeping with the brick of the Victorian buildings. One of the beautiful things about Park ward is it is quite idiosyncratic in terms of buildings, with both Regency and Victorian developments, so contemporary buildings that are complimentary could enhance the area.
- Do not feel that concerns about future development, for example next to the lake, would treat this as a precedent. Especially as this is a rare brownfield site in the area, and in contrast future development in The Park would be encroachment.
- Access to The Park will still be available to the public, so comfortable that this will not have a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of residents.
- Understand the fears around the rest of Park Campus. Have applied for this to be local green space within the next Joint Core Strategy and are awaiting a response. However, conversations with the University provides assurance that there is no need for concern about the green space outside of this development. The University seems committed to retaining The Park, and have spoken about introducing a sculpture trail recently. Assured that this does not set a precedent for the rest of the teardrop or within the green area. It would be a travesty to lose that space.
- The development will not make a significant difference in terms of housing needs, but this is still a consideration for all applications.
- Firmly of the belief that will not be losing a huge amount in terms of trees.
- A Member used to live nearby and would regularly use the car park entrance to access The Park, which could feel dangerous.
- Would like to see more developments introduce green roofs, especially given the preference for flat roofs nowadays.
- There has been some criticism of these designs being contemporary and not fitting the area, however there are other contemporary properties nearby. Whilst the Member loves Cheltenham's Regency design, believes it is also important to embrace contemporary design in the right contexts. On this site, the buildings being removed are for the most part not very beautiful. The new designs are not outrageously contemporary, do fit into the site, and are an improvement on the current buildings.

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

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

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

10 26/00240/FUL - Robert Harvey House, Winchombe Street, Cheltenham, GL52 2NL

The Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

There were no public speakers on the item.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- This item has come to the committee as the council owns the building.
- The defences are at a lower ground level and will be used during weather related flash flooding.
- Officers do not know whether the defences will be installed by building management or by residents.

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

- Disappointing that this needs to come to committee, feel that property owners should be able to install flood defences without permission, even in conservation areas.

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

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the officer recommendation to permit.

11 26/00257/FUL - 10 Halland Road, Cheltenham, GL53 0DJ

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:

- Lives at 9 Halland Road and as a consequence of correcting errors in the architect's original plans, they are not contesting the rear extension to the adjoining semi at 10 Halland Road.
- With regard to the roof alterations, they are contesting the proposed roof conversion from hip to gable which alters the appearance of the whole building to a detrimental, lopsided effect. Which will affect them.
- They are grateful to planners for giving the proposed dormer windows due consideration and accept their recommendations.
- The planning report itself states and acknowledges that the development will result in an imbalanced building. It will lose symmetry.
- The report describes the site sensitive position in the conservation area. Halland Road is a historic street in Cheltenham's central conservation area

and falls within the character area. Numbers 9 and 10 are currently identified as important buildings. The pair of semis are over 100 years old and have remained largely unaltered.

- Both semis together were constructed with a hip roof for considered aesthetic reasons in the 1920s. The elegance and strength of the hip roof comes from all four sides sloping forward towards the walls like a pyramid. The symmetrical shape of a hip roof gives a balanced and cohesive appearance to the whole building and elegant architectural character. For the record, hip roofs are self-racing and more stable in high winds than a gable end. Putting a gable roof on one semi will destroy the beauty of the sloping pyramid form by creating a flat vertical side at one end making the building as a whole lopsided. Not what was intended.
- The report states the works may not be considered to enhance the character of the conservation area. It describes them as neutral and says the changes will have negligible impact. The objector disputes this. How can a major change resulting in lopsidedness be neutral or negligible? It does not preserve the character of the building as it should.
- They do not agree that the resulting imbalance to the building is “unlikely to be particularly visible from the street”. This doesn't inspire confidence, it reveals uncertainty. The imbalance certainly will be visible. Indeed, this part of the report directly acknowledges losing symmetry, which is contrary to planning guidelines.
- According to the report, concerns were raised at the pre-planning stage over the change from hip to gable. These concerns were quashed because the western end of Halland Road is considered to be quite different. The objector strongly contests this subjective view. It is a very short road, so making a distinction between one end and the other is unconvincing. In fact, 9 and 10 Halland Road are part of a set of four similar buildings, all in keeping with each other on the south side of the road, each with matching box bay window frontages and hip roofs. The front street view has a consistent architectural rhythm.
- Will other similar buildings be permitted to change from hip to gable, as they know this is now being considered by other residents? Will the decision for approval provide leverage for other property developments that will result in incremental harm?
- The report says the parish council requested a conservation officer should be consulted on these plans for them to go ahead. They are concerned this part of the procedure has not been followed. There is no evidence of it.
- In summary, the proposals do not meet the requirements of or adhere to the guidelines of the 1990 Conservation Act. Key to the objection is loss of intended symmetry. The development was called into question at pre-application and should have been rejected. Conservation guidelines should be followed, not abandoned or what is the point of them?

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

- Homeowner of 10 Halland Road. He and his wife have been residents of Cheltenham for many years and both work in the community as a solicitor and a police officer. They have two young children, one at the local primary school and one at the nursery. They are a family, not developers and they intend to

live in their home for many years. They purchased the property in 2024 from the previous owners who lived there for about 35 years, and bought it with the intention of modernising it to suit their growing family.

- Currently, the house has two large bedrooms and two small bedrooms. The proposal is to convert the loft space to two equal bedrooms for their children and to improve the ground floor layout to create a more practical, open plan living space. There is already a modest extension across part of the rear of the house, and the proposal simply extends this across the full width along with a narrow side extension to improve the kitchen space. Overall, the aim is to create a functional family home and not to overdevelop the property.
- From the outset, they have made every effort to be open and considerate. Nearly a year ago, they spoke to all their surrounding neighbours about their intention to submit a planning application. They always made it very clear and were happy to discuss the plans and take on feedback as they thought it was important to maintain good relationships with their neighbours.
- They engaged with an architect and specifically asked for a design that would minimize impact on the adjoining properties. The resulting plans reflect that and the rear extension roof which is pitched in the middle kept the sides either side as low as possible for the neighbours. Before submitting the application, they shared the plans with neighbours and had no objections raised.
- They sought pre-application advice and then made changes to address any concerns raised by the planning team. Following submission, there was one objection.
- It is important to understand the context of Halland Road. As you enter the road there are large Edwardian houses, ornate features, front gable projections, sash windows, and originally they would have had iron railings and gates across the front of each garden. However, further along there is a clear change in character. Their home is part of a pair of semi-detached houses built approximately 20 years or so later. These properties are distinct from the earlier Edwardian houses with a render on the top half, less ornate features, no original railings or gates across the front and, being built much later, they also have driveways. These houses are by definition not period homes as they were built after the First World War. While they mimic the earlier houses with the sash windows and gable projection to the front, they are fundamentally different. There are also on the street two pairs of semi-detached 1930's style houses. Several of these have already been significantly extended and altered. Number 13, opposite number 10, has recently undergone a substantial two-story side extension and a change from hip to gable roof similar to this proposal.
- Locally, this type of alteration is very common. On Old Bath Road, which is just a short distance away, there are a number of similar 1920's properties. Many have had the hip to gable roof conversion done. There are ten pairs of semis, and five of them have had the conversion done to at least one or both of the houses. These changes do not detract from the character of the houses. They simply make the internal space more usable. Unless you were specifically looking for it, you would be hard pushed to notice the change in roof on these properties.
- Halland Road is a private dead-end road with no through access for vehicles or people. Only residents and visitors to the houses at the bottom of the street come as far as this property. None of the neighbours who would directly see

or be affected by the proposed changes have objected. In fact, they have only received positive feedback in person from them.

- The sole objection is from the adjoining neighbour. Despite efforts to address their concerns and make multiple amendments to the plans at significant cost, they have been unable to reach an agreement. Despite their efforts, the neighbour objected on the basis of every conceivable point from the size of the extension, position of the extension, windows, roof, solar panels, symmetry, skylights, and drainage. It is now their genuine belief that the concern is not with the specific details of the proposal or with the conservation area. It is with the principle of any building work taking place whatsoever.
- Whilst he fully respects their right to object, he would ask that the application be considered on its planning merits alone. They have worked very hard to ensure that the proposal is modest in keeping with the area and designed to minimise impact on neighbours. Ultimately, they are simply trying to create a suitable long-term home for their family.

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

- For complete transparency, wish to declare a coincidental and non-material connection to one of the objectors as they are both voluntary directors of the Daisy Bank Community Interest Company, which is also declared as a non-pecuniary interest on the public register.
- Wish to thank the applicants for modifications which mean that the rear extension is now uncontroversial. The issue that remains controversial is the attic enlargement which dramatically changes the profile of the top of the house from the angled hip at the side to a much larger square gable end. Different to all the other buildings in this group of 1920s houses, not symmetrical and clearly visible from the street. They are surprised that the architects in their rather skimpy design and access statement offer no defence of this change at all. This is particularly surprising because it is in the Leckhampton zone of the conservation area which is known as an area of special architectural historic interest and has special protection under planning law and guidance.
- One of the specific issues in the conservation area management plan for Leckhampton is the risk of loss of traditional architectural features on historic buildings. Page 12, figure 1 of that plan clearly marks number 10 Halland Road as what is called a positive building, which the plan explains are those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of each character area. They often have a collective group value, and are not to be treated in isolation, but for their role as part of the historic street scene. Groups of buildings exactly like those in Halland Road. The plan waxes poetic about the importance of these grand historic houses. It talks about large Victorian and Edwardian villas which have a striking visual impact upon the street scene. Their presence enhances Leckhampton's historic character and creates a sense of atmosphere and architectural splendour.
- Joint Core Strategy (JCS) policy SD8 talks about the built natural and cultural heritage of Cheltenham which must continue to be valued and promoted for its important contribution to local identity, quality of life and the economy. It specifically says that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced and explains that designated heritage assets

include conservation areas. The Cheltenham Plan 2020 reinforces that JCS policy in numerous places and says that we must conserve and enhance Cheltenham's architectural townscape and landscape heritage within the town's conservation areas. Chapter nine on the historic environment which includes architectural heritage protected by conservation area designations and says these need to be carefully managed, including to protect buildings and the essential character of each street or place. Chapter five and policy D1 on design says that extensions or alterations of existing buildings are required to avoid causing harm to the architectural integrity of the building or group of buildings. Chapter 7 on landscape, which again includes architectural heritage, warns against small incremental alterations and says these need to be carefully managed to protect buildings.

- In summary, 10 Halland Road is specifically marked as a positive building within the Leckhampton zone of the conservation area which places particular value on these grand Edwardian houses and is itself one of the key heritage assets protected by policy SD8 of the JCS and must not be damaged but must be conserved and enhanced. It is not clear how this change does that. Secondly, positive buildings like this are not to be treated in isolation. The character area management plan is clear that they often have a collective value as a group of buildings, and this is clearly the case in the dramatic sequence of Edwardian villas in Halland Road. And Cheltenham policy D1 is clear that the architectural integrity of buildings should be considered when looking at extensions. Whilst chapter seven is clear that you should be wary of incremental change. Even if that change in itself does not seem to be earth shatteringly important, there does seem to be a real risk of this setting a precedent that could be repeated again and again on dozens more of these Edwardian and Victorian houses, eventually undermining that precious architectural integrity and heritage.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The pair of semi-detached houses on Halland Road are not exactly the same as the properties further down the street. They have similar design features and if you were not looking closely, you would assume they were the same. They are from a slightly later period, and properties further down the road are from a different time period again.
- Details of the finish material used for the dormer windows will need to be detailed later as part of a condition; however the size, shape and form of the windows will be as indicated in the application. This will enable officers to ensure that materials are appropriate.
- The property on the street that has already completed a hip to gable alteration is a different style and age of property to the one in the current application. It was formerly a hipped roof, but it has been extended with a two-story extension to the side, so it is not just the roof form that has been changed. The property styles and designs are not comparable to the application.

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

- Sympathise with the views that have been expressed about these four houses being built as a group. But personally feels that a group of houses can still be coherent even with minor changes to them. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder to a certain extent and thinks there is an element of subjectivity here.

- Does feel that a hipped roof for these very large buildings do make them less imposing. Whereas a gable does the opposite and starts to make the building both imposing and off-balance. However, does not know whether that is a strong enough reason to reject the application.

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

For: 7

Against: 1

Abstain: 1

Voted for the officer recommendation to permit.

12 Appeal Update

The appeal updates were noted.

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

There were none.