

Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 21 October 2025

Meeting time: 2.30 pm - 3.22 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Frank Allen (Vice-Chair), Adrian Bamford, Garth Barnes (Chair), Barbara Clark, Dr Steve Steinhardt and Simon Wheeler

Also in attendance:

Nicole Golland (DM Manager), Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning and Building Control), Chris Gomm (Head of Planning), Karen Hanchett (Gloucestershire Highways), Cheryl Lester (Legal officer), Chris White (Viability Consultant) and Ewan Wright (Senior Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Glenn Andrews, Iain Dobie, Jan Foster, Tony Oliver and Suzanne Williams.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3 Declarations of independent site visits

The following Councillors attended the site during Planning View:

- Councillor Frank Allen
- Councillor Garth Barnes
- Councillor Barbara Clark
- Councillor Dr. Steve Steinhardt
- Councillor Simon Wheeler

4 Public Questions

There were none.

5 Planning Applications

6 22/01817/OUT - Land to South of Old Gloucester Road Cheltenham

The DM Manager introduced the report and update report as published. She noted the following correction to the officer's recommendation in the report, which should read:

“B completion of a S106 obligation and/or other legal document to deliver the infrastructure and other mitigation, as set out in this Report at paragraphs 7.330-**7.331** and for alterations to s106 heads of terms as may be agreed under delegated authority given to the Head of Planning (CBC)/Director of Growth (TBC) in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee.”

The officer noted that there was also an error in the Golden Valley SPD checklist, the contents are correct, but it is mislabelled South instead of North.

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

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

- Director at Savills and the planning advisor to MLPL and Revantage for the outline application.
- The application is the culmination of seven years work through a comprehensive pre-application process and then the determination period once the application had been submitted. Through close collaborative working with officers, statutory consultees and the neighbouring developers within the West Cheltenham allocation, proposals have been developed which:
 - o Will deliver a significant proportion of the new homes anticipated in the Golden Valley supplementary planning document (SPD) through a high quality and sustainable mixed-use development;
 - o Will connect to the other land within the allocation and will help facilitate the delivery of the allocation as a whole; and
 - o Will provide the majority of the supporting community infrastructure and open space for the allocation, benefiting not only the new residents but the existing residents of the wider communities on the western side of Cheltenham.
- The application proposals include the provision of up to 1,100 homes. This will include mix of different house types, sizes and tenures to meet the diverse need for housing.
- The new homes will meet modern fabric standards for energy efficiency to reduce heating demands. Solar panels will be provided on suitable roof spaces to generate electricity on site. All homes with parking will have electric car charging points, and there will be no gas connection on site - the homes will be heated with air source heat pumps. The new market and affordable

homes provided through the development would therefore be modern, energy efficient and consequently have lower running costs for the new residents.

- Our clients, the other developers within the allocation and council officers have put in a great deal of effort to ensure a collaborative and coordinated approach to the master planning of the allocation. The allocation wide Illustrative Masterplan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will ensure that all of the necessary infrastructure is delivered in the right location regardless of landownership and in a timely fashion. You will be able to see from the IDP that MLPL and Brighton STM are making a significant contribution to the wider infrastructure needs of the allocation. The application is making a significant contribution to the M5 Junction 10 improvements work – at a cost of over £5m. This application is also absorbing the full cost of all the additional odour mitigation works required to deliver the allocation. This is not a cost that is being split between the landowners/developers and impacting their viability. It is being funded in full – to the tune of approximately £4.5m – by MLPL and Brighton STM.
- Alongside the new homes, the development will deliver the social infrastructure to provide for the day-to-day needs of the new residents and help foster a strong community spirit. There is a community hub at the heart of the site which is expected to incorporate a shop, café and other facilities. As part of the community hub the development will provide a doctors' surgery, the details of which have been coordinated with the NHS so that the surgery is sized to meet the needs of all new residents across the allocation. There is a new primary school site located adjacent to the community hub and well connected through the active travel network to the homes that it will serve.
- In relation to open space, the application proposals include a wide range of leisure and recreation provision including the majority of the land needed to deliver the new playing pitches and the changing facilities. It will incorporate new parks, destination children's play spaces, and allotments for residents with green fingers. Importantly it will provide the 21 hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) required to minimise the impact of the increased population on the Cotswold Beechwood SAC. All of this is being delivered on site and will provide a valuable recreational resource for existing and new residents.
- In summary, the application proposals will deliver an attractive and sustainable development with new homes, facilities and open spaces, whilst also delivering the infrastructure needed across the wider allocation.

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

- Here as a representative of Springbank, a neighbouring community that stands to be directly affected by this application. Springbank is a proud, tight-knit area that looks out for each other. But it is also a community that's faced long standing challenges: overstretched services, not enough accessible green space, and a lack of genuinely affordable housing. These aren't just planning issues—they are daily realities for many of the residents. This application is a rare opportunity - a chance to deliver real, lasting benefit to communities that have gone without for too long. We support this application and respectfully urge the committee to approve it.

- One of the most important elements is the large amount of green space being proposed. Open areas throughout the site, recreation grounds, and sports pitches. In Springbank we know how vital that is. When you don't have a garden or when money is tight, safe public spaces make all the difference. It supports mental health, helps families stay active, gives young people something positive to do, and builds community pride. They are not a luxury, they are essential – they are where people meet, children play and where memories are made. Especially important in places where private outdoor spaces are out of reach.
- We also welcome the provision of a new GP surgery and a community hub. Our local health services are already under huge pressure. We regularly hear from residents who can't get appointments—who travel too far or wait too long. A new GP surgery can ease that burden, not just for new residents but for the wider area too.
- The community hub is where local life happens. A place for groups, childcare, learning, advice, events. In Springbank we understand this, our own community group is at the heart of the neighbourhood. These kinds of facilities don't just support residents; they knit a community together. But they must come early, not as an afterthought.
- Support the focus on affordable housing because in Springbank this is a crisis we live with every day. Young people forced to leave, families stuck in unsuitable homes, older residents with no downsizing options. This development must deliver a real mix of homes so that Cheltenham can remain inclusive, and fair.
- This application has the potential to make a real difference, not just for future residents but for communities like Springbank. Please approve this application so those who need it most can truly benefit.
- I want to thank St. Modwen's and MLPL and their team for the years of engagement, community events, and community conversations. They haven't been able to deliver every view or wish, but they have listened and this application is better because of that. Urge the committee to approve this application. Like the recent Golden Valley decision, this is an opportunity for generational change—a development that can make a real difference.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- The public rights of way have been used as a constraint in their design access statement to align them with where the green spaces are being put. Currently those rights of way are not always accessible, in the future they will be more formal in nature but will coincide with green spaces. Important to remember that this is an outline application so the committee can only judge by what is in the illustrative masterplan and design access statement but officers envision in the reserved matters those public rights of way coming forward in alignment with those documents which currently show them as part of green space, which will be functional and usable rather than back alleys.
- Reserved matters can be called to the planning committee if there is a reason to do so. That is entirely within Members' gift in the future.
- The Golden Valley SPD is incredibly ambitious in terms of the level of employment that it seeks at this site. Mainly intended that along the main street there would be a significant amount of mixed use. However, that is not the application being considered or what the applicant proposes. When

considered by officers they were mindful that the tilted balance does apply because the council does not have a 5-year housing land supply. Therefore, the considerable amount of accommodation proposed was felt to offset that this did not comply with the SPD in terms of employment. Important to remember that this application supports the HBD Southern Parcel which does not have some of the infrastructure but has an incredible amount of space designated as employment space. It is not unrealistic to consider in the future that if you lived in this scheme, you could seek employment in the lower part of this allocation. The allocation as a whole is providing a significant amount of employment, but this application does lack what the SPD was seeking to its detriment, but on the whole officers have found it to be acceptable.

- There are three specific conditions listed in the recommendation relating to odour mitigation. These were created with the applicant supported by a local planning authority employed external odour specialist. These very specific conditions essentially stop the applicant occupying beyond a certain number of dwellings before these works are carried out. It is in their interest to complete them as soon as possible to prevent the site stagnating. Those conditions not only require the work to be carried out, but also for them to be validated to prove they work and that the elements that need to be taken out of the odour zone have been removed. Officers are satisfied that these conditions are strong enough and provide enough incentive to ensure the work is carried out swiftly. Last week the applicant also provided a supplementary letter providing Members and officers with additional assurance of their commitment to carrying out these works and bringing the site forward.
- For the infrastructure for individual applications, we can only require them to mitigate the impacts of their own scheme. However, in this case this scheme is also mitigating the impact in terms of healthcare provision for the wider allocation and providing additionality. Following conversations with the NHS, the officer does not believe that the GP surgery is considered to provide additionality for the wider area but that does not mean that in the future those living in other communities couldn't register with that GP surgery. The system does not restrict them from doing so.
- A condition on the recommendation is that reserved matters will align with their energy strategy which includes certain targets, including the provision of solar panels. Some dwellings may not lend themselves to the use of solar panels and it might be that a more fabric first approach is taken for these buildings, such as the provision of air source heat pumps. Solar panels will be included where it is suitable to achieve these energy targets. This will be scrutinised at the reserved matters stage which may lead to orientation or layouts being adjusted to provide more solar panels, if it is felt that on balance this will achieve these targets. Condition is there to ensure the reserved matters stand up to those standards.
- Each application is very different, so the decisions made on this application will not set a standard or precedent. Extensive conversations have taken place on the viability review, with push back from officers and discussions between the council and applicant's viability consultants. Due to the extent of the infrastructure that this application will provide and the considerable J10 contribution, unfortunately they cannot achieve the 35% affordable housing target. Alongside these costs there are a suite of active travel works including

quite extensive road works along Old Gloucester Road among others and large junctions and roads within the site itself. The GP surgery, primary school and sports pitches are also heavy in land consumption as is the introduction of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG), which the application provides on-site. This means that the applicant has far less deliverable land available for housing, which has resulted in lower provision of affordable housing. Assure Members that a robust assessment has occurred, and the recommendation is the best outcome that officers could achieve.

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

- This is a really critical application and an important planning opportunity for Cheltenham. It provides a significant J10 contribution and will help with the 5-year housing land supply. Whilst it is unfortunate that this will not provide the desired level of affordable housing, that is justified by the reasons outlined by the officer. The work that has gone into the application will deliver what is needed for the future.

The matter then went to the vote on the 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 (CBC)/Director of Growth (TBC) 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 at paragraphs 7.330-7.331 and for alterations to s106 heads of terms as may be agreed under delegated authority given to the Head of Planning (CBC)/Director of Growth (TBC) 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 is reviewed by the Head of Planning (CBC)/Director of Growth (TBC) 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 (CBC)/Director of Growth (TBC) to refuse the application in the absence of an agreed S106 Agreement.

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY for the Officer's recommendation.

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

There were none.