

Cheltenham

Development Task Force
making things happen



Business Plan Proposal 2016-19



Cheltenham Development Task Force

Business Plan 2016-19

April 2016

Executive Summary: This is the fourth business plan for the Cheltenham Development Task Force (CDTF). Its purpose is to set the direction for the period 2016-2019, but as with previous versions it will be necessary to revisit and update the plan as circumstances unfold. This plan takes cognisance of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), the CBC commissioned Athey Consulting report on economic development, the emerging Joint Core Strategy and the role that the Task Force has carved in connecting the private & public sectors.

Recommendation: The document has been circulated as an update to the version 2015-2017 approved late 2015 and, subject to feedback from Task Force board members is proposed for adoption.

Contents

- 1.0 Background & Evolution
- 2.0 Context and progress update
- 3.0 Vision
- 4.0 Remit
- 5.0 Core principles
- 6.0 Specific targets & associated funding
- 7.0 Delivery mechanisms
- 8.0 Recommendations

1.0 Background & Evolution

1.1 The Cheltenham Development Task Force originally came into existence on 4th January 2010 with a purpose to move forward the former Civic Pride project. This meant that a geographic boundary was established based upon that former piece of work with a town centric focus, which has since been extended to include the whole of the Borough.

1.2 The Task Force is purely advisory having no direct powers or funding, and there is no change proposed in order to ensure that there is no impact upon local democracy and accountability.

1.3 The nature of the work undertaken by the Task Force has been recognised and applauded by both a Local Government Association Peer Review exercise and a Select Committee visit to Cheltenham.

2.0 Context

2.1 The approach adopted by the Task Force in many ways reflect the words of landscape architect Thomas Mawson who in 1912 said
“City planning is not the attempt to pull down your city and rebuild it at ruinous expense. It is merely deciding what you would like to have done when you get the chance, so that when the chance does come, little by little you may make the city plan conform to your ideals”

The Task Force has pursued a mantra of *opportunities and challenges*, recognising what improvements could be achieved, and creating an environment that encourages delivery by private and public partners. Key outputs include:-

- Midwinter which has delivered 172 housing units (40% affordable)
- Honeybourne Gate – assisted by GILF funding
- The sale of North Place & Portland Street
- Brewery phase 2 – on site
- Regency Place – on site
- Beechwood shopping centre – new John Lewis store
- Working with GCC to secure the Traffic Regulation Orders to enable delivery of the Cheltenham Transport Plan
- Securing funding for Cheltenham Spa station
- Delivering public realm upgrades

2.2 In addition contributions have been made to other activities such as

- The Borough Council's office accommodation strategy
- Plans to improve St.Mary's Minster churchyard
- The salvaging of the celluloid entwined ladies from the façade of the former Odeon cinema
- Working with major investors in the town centre

2.3 Despite the length of the recession and its aftermath Cheltenham has fared well in terms of investor confidence and the previous oft quoted "developer unfriendly" handle has been eroded, with active engagement of a wide range of investors, notably housing & retail in the town centre. However, it is critical that steps are taken to foster growth by the delivery of sites for employment to maintain the recovery, particularly to satisfy endogenous growth needs and maintain local employment from successful organisations.

2.4 It is recognised that c800,000ft² of office space has been lost over the last few years; whilst much of this was poor quality and its conversion or demolition for residential is an appropriate response, there is an underlying risk of limited supply which could stifle growth. Research by "Centre for Cities" has identified a direct correlation between late 1980's employment dispersal and the collapse of the traditional High Street/retail cores, which further emphasises the need to protect town centre employment.

2.5 Conversely the town's housing market has proven relatively resilient during the recession, hence the buoyancy of the office to housing market, although much of this has been in the targeted elderly care sector; if this releases local homes then it has a beneficial impact but if it merely attracts incomers it does not assist with the local housing situation, nor long term health demands.

2.6 Permitted development rights to convert office to housing is a challenge for Cheltenham and attempts by CBC to secure Article 4 protection (eg via Devolution discussions) have proved unsuccessful. Ironically the erosion of office stock is pushing the market towards equilibrium, which in turn is driving up rental costs and taking Cheltenham close to rates that would justify speculative office development; such a situation would question whether residential conversion was financially sound.

2.7 A further factor has been the potential for cyber security focussed employment given a boost by the announcement (autumn 2015) of an innovation centre linked to GCHQ, which in turn links to the role of the JCS in creating the strategic land allocations to support such growth. Utilising sites as drivers for employment enables

salaries to be generated and spent in the locale which through multiplier effect enhances the collective well-being.

2.8 So whilst there has been a range of positive site developments and wider initiatives there remain a host of challenges moving forward including

- Conclusion of various schemes including Brewery II, Regency Place and the former Beechwood shopping centre
- Delivery of transport improvements – Cheltenham Spa station and Cheltenham Transport Plan
- The non-delivery of outcomes at North Place & Portland Street
- The need to deliver additional employment land
- The need to protect the remaining office stock within the town
- The acute need for more affordable housing against a backdrop of initiatives that create challenges eg vacant building credit, permitted development rights, redefined affordability criteria
- The integration of the Lower High Street
- Funding to improve the public realm

3.0 Vision

3.1 The vision has been articulated as:-

To support the town's economic strength and sustainable development by bringing together private and public investors to support the growth agenda as articulated in the GFirst LEP strategic economic plan, for the benefit of the whole community.

The outcomes so far set out in section 2.0 accords with that wider ambition.

However as previously noted and reflected in our adopted strategy of Opportunities & Challenges, a town is a place that never stops evolving, and as such we must continue to grasp opportunities as they arise and attempt to create or influence outputs from other agencies for the benefit of the town.

4.0 Remit

4.1 The remit of the Task Force has not changed:-

- Boosting the internal capacity of the founder partner organisations through closer collaborative working, clearly demonstrated in the delivery of the public realm improvements
- Improving co-ordination and integration. The Task Force has maintained links with gFirst Local Enterprise Partnership; continues to meet regularly with key bodies such as the HCA and Historic England; provides updates for local groups such as the Civic Society.
- Facilitating and supporting development projects, as demonstrated by the projects on site and the Town Centre co-ordination group of developers and contractors.
- Providing a focus for promoting a positive image of Cheltenham as a thriving town centre to live, work, shop and relax. The generally positive response from developers/investors and the public to schemes suggest that a balance is being achieved.
- Seizing opportunities as they arise eg the railway station project

It is critical that the Task Force does not operate in a vacuum so it aims to help the integration of national, regional and sub-regional policy across the key areas of regeneration, development and planning within the Borough, to ensure that schemes are approached flexibly and creatively in line with best practice.

Such an approach also requires an understanding, but not necessarily an explicit delivery involvement with wider matters that impact upon Cheltenham eg the LEP M5 strategic corridor.

5.0 Core Principles

The core principles previously identified remain. The key has been to generate benefits for the whole community and regeneration of less prosperous areas, by utilising sites as a means to wider ends.

Transport

- Reduce central town traffic movement by closing Boot's corner to general traffic, whilst retaining public transport vehicles; essentially challenging the current hierarchy centred upon the car and thus improving the experience through minimising vehicle/pedestrian interfaces
- Review and rationalise car parking consistent with the town's commercial and environmental needs including a clarification of signage and access to car parks
- Promote sustainable travel – walking, cycling, bus (inc Park & Ride) to provide an optimum town centre environment.

Connectivity

- Promote high quality physical linkages between both existing and new development areas with both active and passive environments
- Utilise streets for passive and active enjoyment by encouraging high quality street environments and public spaces
- Develop a strategy for areas of "negative space" ie those that detract from surrounding elements and have unrealised potential e.g. St Mary's churchyard

Gateways, Landscape & Biodiversity

- Enhance the sense of arrival to the town centre on strategic entrances
- Provide clear car park routeways from the edge of town and within the centre
- Seek opportunities to strengthen the existing greenscape and biodiversity through implementing established sustainable techniques e.g. SUDS

Retail, Leisure, Culture, Heritage & Tourism

- Enhance the central specialist retail offer and connectivity between established retail areas by working with investors and end users
- Seek opportunities to revitalise non-central shopping zones and connectivity as appropriate
- Promote hotel provision as part of the wider tourism offer
- Redefine core assets such as Royal Well to provide a distinct identity
- Reuse key buildings sensitively
- Support the established festival programme by providing "street" spaces for activity and seeking other opportunities

Housing & Community

- Promote sustainable residential & community provision against identified need.
- Enhance public spaces and the public realm generally, recognising that the more space and the higher the quality, the longer that people occupy and take a sense of ownership

Economy & Employment

- Retain and protect the existing centre employment levels and seek opportunities for further growth
- Promote employment opportunities on key sites
- Ensure that any developments maximise local employment and training opportunities

Historical Context

- Recognise the importance of the town's history in shaping current layout and form
- Pursue high quality designs that respond positively to historic context

Other

- Encourage renovation of private property

6.0 Specific Projects, Targets & Activities

6.1 The analysis identifies both specific projects and outputs and more generic economic outputs. Where previous projects have been implemented or completed they have been removed – examples include Honeybourne Gate; pedestrian wayfinding phase 1; Promenade public realm; electric vehicle charging points

No	Targets/Actions	Timescale	Responsible body	Funding	Update / Comment
1	Maintain liaison & co-ordination with developers & active sites	Ongoing	Task Force	None required	Brewery II, Regency Place and Beechwood all engaged
1a	Conclude Brewery II (Martin Commercial & Kier)	July 17	Task Force	None	Target Dec 16 to open formal link and Mar 17 for commercial units
1b	Regency Place (Crest Nicholson)	Dec 17	Task Force	None	On target
1c	Beechwood Shopping Centre conversion to JLP store (Blackrock, JLP, Midas)	Sep 17	Task Force	None	Links to 9e & 9f
2	Deliver a revised solution for North Place & Portland Street				
2a	Identify alternative viable solutions as large foodstore scheme unviable and re-open car park on interim basis	Spring 2016	Task Force	None	Proposals emerging
2b	Secure amended planning as necessary	Late 2016	Developer		
2c	Conclude financial transaction and start on site	Early 2017	Developer		
2d	Include Warwick Place in wider scheme.	Summer 2015	CBC	Part of wider deal.	Warwick Place land transfer actioned. Chapel Spa pending

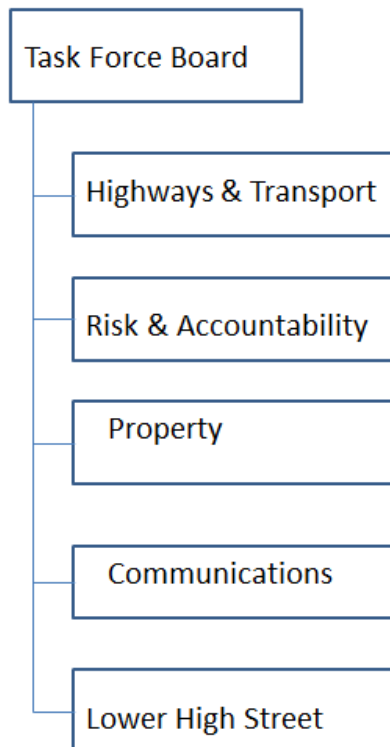
3	Royal Well / Municipal Offices				
3a	Consider alternative sites for CBC, if Delta Place unavailable until lease end, as part of accommodation strategy	On-going	CBC	tbc	Explore options with partners
3b	Complete market disposal pack & strategy for MO – subject to 5a		CBC	Staff time	Agree with cabinet
3c	Maintain market interest for existing Municipal Office building	On-going	CBC	Staff time	On-going
3d	Identify preferred bidder or partner	tbd	CBC	£30k not yet agreed	Potential agency support required for marketing plus legals
3e	Develop agreed scheme	tbd	CBC	Staff time	Liaison with planning team, HE etc
3f	CBC relocation		CBC	£tbc	CBC internal project
3g	Municipal Office scheme implementation		Development Partner	£tbc	
4	Chapel Walk & Synagogue Lane				
4a	Secure planning and create temporary additional car park	Planning secured	CBC	In property budget	Demolition targeted for April 2016
4b	Link to car park strategy. Determine best option for this office area – likely to be a mix of car park and office space if office market sustains	Summer 2016	CBC / Task Force	tbc	Potential link to 3a
5	Lower High Street Seek to utilise delivery of Brewery phase 2 as an opportunity to revitalise High Street West		CBC with GCC input	£30k from CBC approved High St budget	Sub-group established, funding secured for pocket parks. Small scale interventions agreed
5a	Small scale interventions eg barrier removal	Summer 2016	GCC	tbc	Safety audit has supported removal
6	St. Mary's Aim to improve setting and use of churchyard.				
6a	Alleyways project	Summer 2016	CBC	CBC £45k funding allocated	Artist appointed
6b	Churchyard project		CBC	tbc	This will require fund raising with other bodies.
7	Bath Square transformation	Autumn	Task Force	Funding	Working with

	project	2016		provided via CBC & LSTF	Connect Regen
8	Transport changes Cheltenham Transport Plan and Cheltenham Spa station upgrade				Working with GCC and GWR/NR on delivery
8a	Walking Pedestrian Wayfinding scheme phase 2 design & implementation	Summer 2016	CBC	CBC £80k inc S106	Phase 1 implemented
8b	Car / highway				
8b (i)	Implement Cheltenham Transport Plan. Monitor and where necessary amend changes with mitigation strategy funds	Spring 2016 onwards	GCC GCC with CBC CBC	GCC funded £150k Mitigation £100k	A phased introduction as approved by GCC 22/07/15. CBC released additional £100k for phasing Feb 2016
8b (ii)	Car park electronic signage	2018	CBC	£300k – not currently funded	Unable to implement until CTP settles
8c	Cheltenham Spa station	2017 onwards	FGW and NR	5 funding streams secured. CBC & GCC staff time	CBC/GCC working with rail industry and other partners to deliver scheme
9	Public Realm works Maintain and enhance the town centre environment to improve retail & leisure destination attractiveness				
9a	West Promenade – phase 3 in front of Neptune Fountain	tbd	GCC	GCC - CBC	CBC funding already provided for materials
9b	West Promenade – phase 4	Subject to budget	GCC	£tbc	GCC
9c	Upgrade to pedestrianised part of Promenade	tbd	GCC maintenance CBC	£tbc	CBC top up budget. Phone box refurbishment concluding
9d	Bath Road safety scheme	tbc	GCC	£tbc	Trialled Jan 15
9e	High St – Winchcombe St to Rodney Rd	Early 2017	GCC	GCC and CBC £380k from High St	Links to JLP / Beechwood 1c

				budget	
9f	High St – Rodney Rd to Cambray Place	Early 2017	GCC	GCC and CBC £380k from High St budget	Links to JLP / Beechwood 1c
9g	High St – Cambray Place to Bath Road	tbd	GCC	GCC	
9h	Boots Corner and Imperial Circus	tbc	CBC	£2m	Funding reserved subject to successful trial
10	Take a pro-active role with employers in the locality including cyber/innovation hub potential	Ongoing	Task Force	None required	Respond to Athey report esp on cyber security
10a	To assist in the delivery of high GVA jobs growth and links to GCHQ	Summer 15 onwards	Task Force / CBC	Linked to and costed via JCS	On-going dialogue
11	Future Ambitions				
12a	Tewkesbury Road Improve this gateway from the M5 motorway.		CBC/GCC	£tbc	Links with JCS and J10
11b	Quadrangle Seek improvement of this landmark site given its prominence on the Promenade		CBC	Staff time	Liaise with Standard Chartered as new owners

7.0 Delivery Mechanisms/governance

7.1 The following sub-group structure identifies how the Task Force will continue to deliver its outputs. The fluidity of the governance arrangements allows for any new groups to be set up or abandoned as necessary. This has allowed for the recently established Lower High Street sub-group and equally allows the co-ordination group currently focusing upon the delivery impact of the major schemes to cease once the schemes come to fruition.



7.2 The Task Force continues to retain high calibre individuals and a stable membership, with many members taking active roles within the sub-groups, helping to shape projects and strategy.

7.3 Many members also have other roles within the community & business which helps to bring a wider perspective to the Task Force debates. These include the West End Partnership, LEP, Chamber of Commerce, Civic Society and at Cabinet level at CBC & GCC.

7.4 The sub-groups have also created opportunities for wider engagement and for example

- the Communications group includes the editor of the Gloucestershire Echo and representation from the Chamber of Commerce
- the Risk & Accountability group has representation from Endsleigh Insurance and HCR solicitors

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 To recognise progress over the last period and the contribution of members and partners

8.3 To adopt the targets as set out in Section 6

8.4 To revisit this plan on a regular basis