

Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 18 September 2025

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 6.37 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Claire Donnelly (Planning Officer), Chris Gomm (Head of Planning) and Simon Aley (Locum Senior Planning Solicitor)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Jan Foster.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Glenn Andrews and Barbara Clark declared an interest in item 6a as trustees of the Cheltenham Trust and confirmed that they would excuse themselves from the meeting during the item.

3 Declarations of independent site visits

The following Councillors attended all sites during Planning View:

- Cllr Adrian Bamford
- Cllr Garth Barnes
- Cllr Barbara Clark
- Cllr Tony Oliver
- Cllr Steve Steinhardt

4 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2025 were approved and signed as a correct record.

5 Public Questions

There were two public questions, which were taken as read along with the response.

1.

Question from Richard Lawler to Chris Gomm (Head of Planning) and Chair of Planning – Councillor Garth Barnes

One of the recurring themes raised at the Planning Committee, particularly by objectors, is concern about the scale and size of proposed developments in relation to nearby buildings. I recall one meeting where even the planning officer was unable to confirm the height of the building under consideration.

At present, many of the submitted drawings are marked “not to scale,” and often the space between buildings is not shown accurately. This makes it very difficult for residents to properly judge the impact.

Will the council consider requiring applicants to provide plans on a standardised grid (for example, 1 square = 1 metre), particularly for street scene views? This would allow residents to clearly gauge the width and height of proposed buildings as well as the distances between them.

Response from Chris Gomm (Head of Planning) and Chair of Planning – Councillor Garth Barnes

Thank you for your feedback. The plans and drawings submitted as part of a planning application must be drawn to an identified scale and must also show the direction of north (if applicable); this is a legal requirement of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Our Planning and Validation Officer ensures that this, and other mandatory validation requirements, are met before validating any application.

Plans and drawings which are labelled as ‘not to scale’ must nevertheless be drawn to scale; the applicant cannot ‘opt out’ of this legal requirement. A drawing drawn to scale can be accurately measured using a scale-rule or, if in an electronic format, can be measured using the software available on our public access website.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for clarifying that all drawings are required to be to scale. I note your point that residents can use scale rule or the measuring tools built into the council’s online planning portal. However, the fact that many drawings are also stamped with ‘Not to scale’ creates confusion and most residents are not familiar with scale rules or digital measurement tools. Will the council therefore consider requiring applicants to

provide street scene elevations with clearly labelled dimensions, or a simple meter grid so that residents can easily understand the height and spacing of proposed buildings without needing specialist knowledge or software?

Response from the Chair

Thank you for this interesting question which is clearly of concern to the public. I will ask officers to consider the suggestion and we will provide a written response.

2.

Question from Councillor David Willingham, Ward Member for St. Peters, to Chris Gomm (Head of Planning) and Chair of Planning – Councillor Garth Barnes

In January 2024, Planning Committee approved planning application 21/02832/OUT for Lansdown Industrial Estate; however, at the time of submitting this question, over 19 months after that committee meeting, the decision notice for this application has still not been issued. Given the local blight caused by uncertainty surrounding this application and the problems this is causing for local residents, could the Chair please provide a public response detailing exactly what the problems are with issuing the decision notice for this application?

Response from Chris Gomm (Head of Planning) and Chair of Planning – Councillor Garth Barnes

Thank you for your feedback.

Planning decisions cannot be issued until any associated s106 Agreement has been completed; this is because the s106 Agreement forms an integral part of the planning decision.

In the case of the redevelopment of Lansdown Industrial Estate (application ref. 21/02832/OUT) which the Planning committee resolved to approve at its January 2024 meeting, the permission has not yet been issued because negotiations regarding the content of the s106 Agreement are complex, ongoing and yet to be completed. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. The applicant has confirmed that they are unable to build a standalone new artists' studio due to financial viability issues.
2. Discussions have been ongoing regarding alternative provision for the artists including the possibility of converting an existing building to a studio.
3. The s106 Agreement relating to the redevelopment of Lansdown Industrial Estate will need to be amended to take into account the alternative scheme but those alternative arrangements do not have planning permission.
4. The developer is yet to submit a planning application for the alternative scheme and until they do so (and it is approved) the Lansdown Industrial Estate s106 Agreement cannot be completed (and nor therefore can the planning permission be issued).

It is the view of officers that the matter is taking an excessive amount of time to resolve and as such a final deadline of 24 October 2025 for the submission of the aforementioned planning application (the alternative artists' studio) has been issued. If this deadline is not met officers are minded to refer the planning application back to the November meeting of the Planning Committee; the agent has been made aware of this.

Supplementary Question

I'm here as the county councillor for St. Marks and St. Peters. This application has been made by another local authority, Cheshire West and Chester, and I am flabbergasted that it has taken so long. This delay is impacting the residents of St. Marks. It would be irresponsible for the Highway Authority to spend £0.75m resurfacing Rowanfield Road, which is in a dire state, knowing that part of the road will need to be dug up for the installation of utilities for this development and may be damaged during building works. I'm glad that this application will be brought back to the Committee in November if progress is not made. I ask that the Committee's decision on this application provide assurance to residents and the Highway Authority that the developer will be required to make good any damage caused by the development by resurfacing Rowanfield Road at full width.

Response from the Chair

Thank you for your comments. I will ask officers to confirm how far the planning process is associated with the concern raised and will provide you with a written response.

6 Planning Applications

7 25/00954/LBC - Pittville Pump Room, East Approach Drive, Cheltenham, GL52 3JE

Councillors Andrew and Clark left the meeting.

The Head of Planning introduced the report as published.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- Officers understand that work will be undertaken very soon once the application is determined. They are not aware of how long the work is expected to take but will clarify with Councillor Steinhardt after the meeting.

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

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Voted UNANIMOUSLY to grant the application.

Councillors Andrew and Clark rejoined the meeting.

8 25/01210/FUL - 41 Hales Close, Cheltenham, GL52 6TE

The Planning Officer introduced the report as published.

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

The objector addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- The proposed development at 41 Hales Close will significantly and negatively impact the safety, character and quality of life for residents on the street.
- The street consists of family homes and is a close-knit community who are concerned that this development may be intended for rental use, as the new owner is understood to be a builder. There is significant concern this will disrupt the established family character and safety of the street and undermine the community spirit that is valued so highly.
- Residents have experienced anti-social and violent behaviour linked to previous short term rentals on the street which has raised fears about potential future disruption. It would be a shame to see the close-knit community undermined by a development not aligned with existing family homes.
- It will also have a crucial impact on light, privacy and the overall quality of life of neighbouring properties. Residents at 9 Fox Grove, and 39, 43 and 45 Hales Close have all expressed strong opposition due to concerns about significant loss of light and privacy. The size of the proposed double storey rear extension will create a repressive feeling of enclosure, particularly affecting 43 Hales Close which directly adjoins it. As a resident with a south facing garden and rooms benefitting from natural light the increased height of the extension and potential for overlooking windows will severely diminish enjoyment of both indoor and outdoor spaces and erode the sense of openness.
- The inclusion of at least three bathrooms upstairs, two of which will be near a thin 1960s built bedroom wall, raises severe concerns about increased noise. Music can already be heard through these walls and additional bathrooms will undoubtedly further intensify disturbance, impacting quality of life.
- Parking and safety is a critical issue and is already a significant problem on the street, exacerbated by the presence of a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) school. During peak times it is hard to get down the street with residents sometimes needing to leave houses before or after drop off times. The current situation already forces wheelchair and pram users to go onto the road due to vehicles parking on dropped kerbs. Whilst the development plans look good on paper, showing new parking spaces, there are genuine concerns that these will not be able to accommodate multiple vehicles and lead to more cars parking on an already congested street.

- The aesthetics and character of the street are at stake. Currently the semi-detached houses are built in a staggered position and share a uniform design. The proposed extension does not match the established character and will take the development out of alignment of neighbouring houses. Retaining the sympathetic design and existing character of this end of the street is important to residents and one of the primary reasons people have chosen to live there.
- The new owner has not addressed the concerns raised about the development, demonstrating a lack of neighbourly consideration and a lack of respect for the street's character. Residents are not against alterations to residential properties in general but the proposed development is not proportionate to the existing residential homes.
- The proposed development presents significant and unmitigated negative impacts to the community, parking and safety, aesthetic character of the street, and quality of life for longstanding residents. Ask that the Committee consider the concerns raised and refuse the application to preserve the wellbeing and established character of the community and the street.

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

- The objector has eloquently detailed the substantial harm this application will inflict on immediate neighbours and the wider community.
- The application does not comply with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), SD4 of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), Policy D1 of the Cheltenham Plan, Policies SL1 and SD14.
- The lack of a dropped kerb means off-street parking in front of the property will be an offense under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980.
- A single storey rear extension, a front extension in keeping with the street scene, and a dropped kerb driveway with adequate off street parking would be acceptable and comply with policy. But this is not what the application presents.
- The two storey section of the rear extension would extend 1.5m into the garden. The additional roof section will extend approximately 2m before sloping down. This is overbearing to neighbouring properties and out of keeping with the character of the street. The privacy and amenity of the neighbouring properties will be impacted to an unacceptable degree, from loss of light to their gardens and properties, and their ability to enjoy their gardens. This contravenes policies SL1 and SD14 and conflicts with Section 12 of the NPPF.
- The proposed front extension is higher, longer, and considerably wider than the existing porch, and extends to the edge of the house on one side. It is overbearing and out of keeping with the staggered street scene and only a reduced height window can be fitted above it. The extension will be visually discordant with the street scene contravening paragraph 135 of the NPPF which requires developments to be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.
- The floorplan shows three ensuite double bedrooms with showers and no family bathroom. It suggests that future occupancy could total six adults and therefore as many as six cars requiring parking. The application shows two parking spaces being created in front of the house but no dropped kerb. There

is a separate garage with one space in front. Given the amount of people who use their garage for storage, most likely there is off street parking for only three cars.

- The officer's report states that a future application for a dropped kerb will be made, but this was not mentioned when I discussed the application with the officer on 5th September and queried its absence. An application without a dropped kerb should be refused as there is no guarantee that an additional application will be made, and bouncing a vehicle up a kerb and crossing a pavement is an offence under the Highways Act 1980.
- The impact of additional on street parking should be considered for Equality Act issues due to the impact on the Battledown Centre For Children & Families SEND school which uses Barn Field towards the top of Hales Close for pupil drop off and pick up. This requires careful co-ordination, as parking is frequently an issue due to overflow parking from businesses located on Hales Road, and vehicles displaced by Zone 15.
- An application was approved recently to deconvert a residence on Hales Road from flats totalling 5 bedrooms across 4 units back to a single residence (*application 25/00986/FUL*). Even though there was sufficient off street parking for the flats the officer's report included as a determining issue that: "Officers are of the view that a reduction in units is likely to reduce impact on neighbours in terms of noise and disturbance, as a result of a likely reduction in occupiers, visitors and traffic to and from the site". Similar issues should be dealt with consistently across applications and the likely increased level of visitors, occupiers, and traffic which would result from this application would increase the impact on neighbours to an unacceptable degree.
- All the policy conflicts detailed mean this application should be refused.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that:

- Planning permission would not be required for a house of multiple occupation (HMO) with only three bedrooms. The application presented is not for the establishment of a HMO, but is for an extension and should be determined on that basis.
- The applicant would not be required to seek planning permission if a dropped kerb with a permeable surface was being built as this would fall within permitted development (a dropped kerb without a permeable surface would require planning permission). This makes it difficult to add a condition, but an informative could be included to advise the applicant that an application should be submitted, either as a full planning application or as a certificate of permitted development (if the criteria are met). The applicant's agent has confirmed that a subsequent application will be submitted if the use of parking is to go ahead.
- Permitted development would allow a first floor side window to be included only if it is obscure glazed with a high level opening (1.7m above the internal floor level). If a clear window was proposed that would require planning permission.

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

For: 8
Against: 0
Abstain: 2

Voted to permit the application.

9 Appeal Update

The appeal updates were noted.

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

There were none.