



Since its formation in January 2010 the Task Force has been exploring ways to bring forward some key sites within the town that have been challenges for many years and additionally look for opportunities. The central area was mapped out in the leaflet circulated in the summer – further copies can be downloaded from www.cheltenham.gov.uk/developmenttaskforce or for collection from the Municipal Offices, Town Hall or community partners.

Task Force Members

Back Row L-R: Councillor John Morris (sadly deceased and replaced by Councillor John Rawson - CBC); Chris Foley (SWRDA deputising for Tony Bray); Michael Ratcliffe (MD of MRatcliffe (insurance) consultants); Sarah Irvine (MD Gloucestershire media); Robert Duncan (retired property specialist); Chris Smith (territory director English Heritage); Stephen Clarke (retired project manager); Simon Excel (GCC deputising for Nigel Riglar - Director, Planning & Economic Development); Bernice Thomson (Cheltenham West End partnership); Daniella Tilbury (professor of Sustainability - Uni of Gloucestershire); Councillor Antonia Noble (GCC)

Front Row L-R: David Oldham (retired commercial lawyer); Graham Garbutt (independent chair); Andrew North (chief executive CBC); Jeremy Williamson (MD Task Force); Richard Hardy (Area director HSBC); Councillor Tim Cooper (CBC)

Absent from picture: Diane Savory (chief operating officer - Supergroup) Councillor Chas Fellows (GCC)

WELCOME TO THE FIRST OF OUR PLANNED REGULAR UPDATES.

The purpose of these newsletters is to provide some background on work being undertaken through the Development Task Force.

The Task Force was set up in January by the County and Borough Councils and their partners from public, private and voluntary sectors. We assembled a strong group of volunteers for the Task Force board and I am very grateful for their commitment and contribution and to our managing director, Jeremy Williamson, who has energetically led much of this work.

In April 2010 we agreed an ambitious work programme that has continued on schedule. Key projects have included thorough site appraisals, archaeological and historical studies, review of flood risks, clarification of land ownership and boundaries, and market appraisals. Important recent work includes public consultation on the planning policy guidance for North Place, and the creation of a computerised traffic model to help us consider changes in and around the town centre.

A further key aspect has been engaging the investor and developer sector in our plans and demonstrating that Cheltenham is very much open for business. Cheltenham is well placed to face the challenges in the wider economy and we are confident that we can continue to build on the good progress made so far.



Graham Garbutt – Independent Chair

GOOD NEWS!

Despite the challenges created by the recession one area of Cheltenham has continued to trade very well. The area, is of course the Promenade and perhaps reflects how important a contribution is made by positive public space – in terms of the trees, greenspace, surfaces and public art – and helps reinforce the need to deliver the same quality across a wider area of the town.

MEET A BOARD MEMBER



Tim Cooper, who has recently joined the Board, noted: *"I am pleased to represent Cheltenham Borough Council on the Taskforce, and look forward to an exciting period in the evolution of the town"*

NORTH PLACE AND PORTLAND STREET



The Task Force concluded that the aspirations for these car parks were unlikely to be delivered in the current economic climate due to their lack of financial viability. The Borough clearly wishes to release capital from these sites to invest in wider schemes and as consequence the Task Force recommended to cabinet that the schemes be reconsidered and this resulted in a decision by CBC to publicly re-consult. The objective being to offer greater flexibility to potential investors without losing the key principles such as sustainability and high quality design.

The following actions have been undertaken:

- A public consultation exercise, resulting in 34 responses to the supplementary planning document and 69 to the development brief with many comments in support of the changes.
- An archaeological evaluation to establish the true potential for any significant historic finds. This large site is seen as a key trigger for the town because *'it will give confidence to investors considering Cheltenham and by carrying out detailed studies to reduce development risk demonstrate that we are serious in our ambitions.'*
- The development of a statement on the historic context and setting of the sites which abut several listed structures. This piece of work will help inform and direct any responses from investors.



If the Task Force can maintain the timetable then it is hoped that a preferred developer will have been identified by late Autumn 2011.

OTHER SITES

The Task Force has been having productive discussions with owners and interested parties on a range of other sites including:

- **The Tewkesbury Road/Gloucester Road** site which has permission for student accommodation but has currently stalled. It is hoped that this scheme can be resurrected with the developers.
- The former **Haines & Strange** site.
- **The Brewery** and long held ambitions to improve connectivity to the High Street.

TRAFFIC MODELLING

The development of a "Paramics" traffic model by Gloucestershire highways is a key step in taking forward the ambitions of both Borough and County Council who have common objectives of improving the local economy, enhancing the town centre environment, improving air quality, reducing traffic congestion and providing a safe environment within the town.

The process is complex as it aims to predict traffic movements as a result of traffic growth up to the year 2026, the impact of proposed network changes such as removing through traffic from Boots Corner and the impact of developing sites such as North Place.

The report confirmed that the proposed changes to the road network will substantially enhance the town centre, e.g. reducing congestion and improving air quality, but at this stage it is not without impacts arising from increased congestion and delays elsewhere on the system. However, experience from other towns suggests that individuals change their behaviour in response to changes in the road network with more people walking, cycling or using public transport.

The Task Force has been encouraged by both the thoroughness of the analysis and the positive impact in the town centre, however given funding pressures on both Councils, the Task Force has asked for a fully costed comprehensive package of measures to be drawn up that would provide the right balance between managing traffic flows in the town and achieving the economic and environmental improvements that are sought. This could include junction improvements, e.g. changing the timing of lights, changing priorities at junctions and actively encouraging more local trips to be made by walking, cycling or bus. Government announcements on the amount of money available for local transport in Gloucestershire are expected in December, and therefore the package will need to be affordable, cost effective, and capable of delivery.

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