



# Update

Quarterly Newsletter • January 2011

## WELCOME TO THE SECOND OF OUR PLANNED REGULAR UPDATES.

*Since November and our last update significant strides have been made in progressing some of our key sites.*

The adverse weather conditions and the challenges faced by commuters, shoppers and leisure users alike reminded us all how important a thriving town centre is to our local economy.

Details are noted below but critical to the progress of the Task Force is the continued support from Cheltenham Borough Council members as demonstrated again on the 13th December 2010 when they supported the next steps regarding the North Place and Portland Street developments.

Amid mixed signals in the broader economy and internationally we have good reason to be optimistic for Cheltenham's future. That remains the clear focus of the Task Force and its work, building on the solid foundations laid last year. We look forward to continuing excellent relations with partners and to further real progress in the months ahead.

Graham Garbutt – Independent Chair



## MEET A BOARD MEMBER Stephen Clarke – retired project manager



Stephen Clarke came to live in Cheltenham over 20 years ago to manage a programme of business systems projects as part of the reorganisation of a major construction materials business. Previously he had had a career in business systems project management in a number of large manufacturing companies in the Midlands. In the late nineties as a weekly commuter from Cheltenham he managed the technology functions in the Insurance sector in Canary Wharf and then in the City of London.

Whilst working in London Stephen studied History of Architecture at Birkbeck College part time. In 2009, having retired back to Cheltenham a couple of years earlier, Stephen became Chairman of Cheltenham Civic Society.

Stephen feels passionately that Cheltenham's future development must build on Cheltenham's proud heritage as a garden town with its high quality architecture and rich cultural life and should leave a 21st century contribution to its character that our grandchildren will be proud of.

## NORTH PLACE AND PORTLAND STREET



A range of activities have been running over the autumn 2010 period. These include:-

- The completion of a comprehensive archaeological evaluation exercise undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service. Their formal report has now been received which concludes "Modern disturbance has potentially destroyed any archaeological remains that may have been present however, where the natural was exposed no archaeological features older than post-medieval period were recorded". This conclusion effectively provides an evidence base for potential developers that will provide them comfort that the risks associated with any archaeological finds are exceptionally low
- The completion of an independent statement on historic context which records and recognises the significance of the historic structures around the site – either listed or noted on local index of significant buildings.
- The endorsement by the Council (13/12/10) of the outcomes of the public consultation to the amended planning principles and supplementary planning document.
- The appointment of property and legal advisors to help market the site. ... and critically interest from developers and consortia keen on bidding for the site once it becomes available.

The site will now be the subject of an OJEU notice (Official Journal of the European Union) as required by European legislation. This effectively starts the process for identifying a preferred developer to deliver the comprehensive solution with the key elements endorsed by the public including 300 car spaces, 100 housing units, a public square and bus node.

The timetable is determined by the OJEU regulations but the objective is to have identified a preferred developer by the end of November 2011.

Essentially interested parties will register their interest and be required to demonstrate both their financial standing and track record in complex or sensitive sites. From these expressions of interest a small number will be invited to develop outline solutions for the site and indicative values. These outline solutions will then be evaluated and the number reduced to potentially two bidders who will be invited to develop their detailed solutions and ultimately final tenders resulting in one "preferred" bidder with whom it is aimed that contractual close is reached.

## BEST PRACTICE

The Task force is keen to learn from projects and developments delivered elsewhere and recent activities have included:-

- a visit to Bath to meet the team behind the delivery of the Southgate (successful retail led scheme supported by public realm enhancements) and other developments.
- a training session for a host of disciplines - highway engineers, planners, landscape architects led by Whitelaw Turkington, responsible for some major shared surface schemes including Ashford which has generated significant national interest due to its success in reducing congestion, traffic speeds and incidents whilst maintaining the through put of traffic.

The key issue in these activities being to see how lessons can be applied for the benefit of Cheltenham.

## OTHER SITES

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

- **Tewkesbury Road/Gloucester road site.**  
Pleasing to report that demolition has taken place on this prominent site at a key gateway to the town. At the time of writing no further news to report.
- **Former Haines & strange site.**  
Sadly this site has been blighted by fly-tipping so Cheltenham Borough Council will be taking enforcement action.
- **Traffic modelling**  
An update was provided to the Task Force identifying the indicative costs of delivering the modelled changes to the road network. The next step will be for these to be considered in the light of central government funding and priorities by partners.

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