

WELCOME TO THE FIFTH OF OUR REGULAR UPDATES.

Against a backdrop of continuing economic challenges it is good to note that Cheltenham is making positive strides to bolster activity.

In July the planning committee approved two developments that will assist any long term recovery. The first was Midwinters; a site that will create 176 homes of which 40% will be affordable thus providing much needed housing. The second was Honeybourne Place which is a mixed use scheme with elements of commercial activity on the ground floor, office space above that and residential on the upper floor. This scheme is important as critically it is understood to have a pre-let to an occupier which will bring c150 new jobs into the town.

In addition to these the refurbishment of Ellenborough House, occupied by Rickerbys, and of Festival House which offers managed office space, have set a new standard for office space in the town. I understand that both are receiving positive market response which perhaps suggests that if the quality is right then there will be demand.

I mention these investments as they reflect what we are trying to deliver on North Place and Portland Street; a high quality development that will help stimulate economic activity within the town.

Momentum building is key if we are to tackle the underlying economic challenges and to deliver schemes that will improve the perception of the town as somewhere that is both open and keen to do business.



Graham Garbutt – independent chair

HONEYBOURNE PLACE

This is a high quality 6 storey mixed-use development mainly for offices but with commercial elements (gym, crèche and café) on the ground floor and 7 residential apartments on the top floor. The bulk of the space has been pre-let to a major international company relocating their European headquarters from outside of the UK.

This will be a major boost for the town and buck the recessionary trend of companies closing their head offices and leaving Cheltenham.

Construction costs for the scheme are of the order of £10m which will provide a major investment hopefully for local contractors.

As the site is in flood zone 2 appropriate attenuation measures are being taken such that future run-off will be less than the existing surface car park. In addition there is a significant green roof section which again reduces run-off as well as providing a new ecological habitat.



MEET A BOARD MEMBER Bernice Thomson



Bernice Thomson has lived in Cheltenham for over forty years and for twenty five of these she has worked in various community development roles in the borough. Although born and raised in Herefordshire she considers herself a fully fledged Cheltonian and has a great love for the town.

Bernice currently works as the manager of Cheltenham West End Partnership which involves her in community engagement and development in the town centre, St Peters and St Pauls. In addition to working full time she is a research student at the University of Gloucestershire working towards a Social Science PhD.

She represents the borough's Voluntary and Community Sector on the Development Task Force.

NORTH PLACE & PORTLAND STREET



In late July it was announced that two schemes had been selected to go forward to the next stage of the selection process. Unfortunately one of those schemes (promoted by Salmon Harvester) withdrew in early August.

It was decided that dialogue with the remaining scheme promoted by Augur Buchler should continue as the scheme had already shown its credentials at Outline Solution stage.

As a result the scheme went public on 20/08/11 with front page coverage in the Gloucestershire Echo. This was followed by static displays at key locations around the town eg Municipal Offices, Neighbourhood Resource centres and an exhibition with a trailer on the High Street outside M&S from 3rd to the 10th September with thanks to members of the Task Force who helped to fill the rota. In addition there was a targeted presentation to near neighbours invited via a leaflet drop.

168 formal written comments were received on the scheme which split 52% in favour, 45% against and 35 undetermined. Whilst this was not a planning consultation it was interesting to note that there were more comments in favour which at this stage of a large development is unusual. All of the comments received were fed back not only to the developers but also into papers prepared for the Council and Task Force to help understand the key issues at this stage.

Cheltenham Borough Council considered the proposals on 10th October and the Cheltenham Development Task Force on the 14th October. The outcomes from these deliberations were then fed into the cabinet decision on 18th October. At that meeting Cabinet decided to confer preferred bidder status on Augur Buchler.

Subject to issuing an award notice in line with European regulations, it is hoped to progress to exchange of contracts, hopefully by the end of November 2011, with a formal planning application submitted early in 2012. Importantly there will then be a further period of public consultation.

MIDWINTERS

A housing scheme led by Bloor Homes on a former CBC owned site. This scheme will deliver 176 housing units of which 40% (70 units) will be affordable on a site close to the Prince of Wales Stadium. All homes will reach code 3 of the code for sustainable homes and it is anticipated that a significant number will reach code 4 It is



anticipated that this scheme will be on site within the next few weeks.

LOCAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FUND BID

The bid to the Department for Transport was not supported in the first round but equally not rejected and GCC have been invited to resubmit a bid in February 2012.

Having now received feedback from the Dept for Transport GCC with their partners at Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City are preparing a revised document.

In Cheltenham a request for support has gone out to retailers who have confirmed their support for the proposals to remove through traffic from Boots Corner.

There is significant evidence that towns with improved public realm continue to enjoy an enhanced trading position through greater footfall. Boots Corner has long been recognised as a barrier to improving the public realm so it is hoped that this bid along with funding potentially released from other developments such as North Place will see a significant investment in the public realm.

This is however only part of the story as the real success will be encouraging individuals not to use their vehicles for short journeys. It is estimated that 14% of all car journeys around the town centre are less than one mile in length. Encouraging these individuals to walk, cycle or use public transport would take a significant load off the road infrastructure. Evidence from towns such as Worcester demonstrate that such travel modal shifts can be achieved with significant benefits to the whole town in terms of an improved environment, reduced pollution, higher footfall and ultimately greater prosperity.

UPDATES

A presentation was made by J. Williamson & the bidders for North Place to the Civic Society in response to the High Street exhibition.

gfirst LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE:

Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership has made swift progress since the announcement by the Government Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) of 'LEP' status for Gloucestershire on May 18th.

As with any new organisation, the first job has been to look inward and organise.

With a new Board, led by Diane Savory, the process of developing a structure and making appointments has been finished. We now draw on a structure that links us to 85% of Gloucestershire's businesses as well as the main consortia and industry groups. Our Board appointments have introduced a wealth of business expertise and commercial experience.

The appointments to the new Board are:

Chair: Diane Savory (former COO, Supergroup)

Vice Chair: Michael Tripp (Group CEO, Ecclesiastical)

Roman Cooper (CEO, Allcooper)

Chas Fellows (Gloucestershire County Council)

Edward Gillespie (Managing Director, Cheltenham Racecourse)

Steve Hawkins (Site Director, MOOG Controls)

Steve Jordan (Cheltenham Borough Council)

Stephen Marston (Vice Chancellor, University of Gloucestershire)

David Owen (CEO, GFirst)

Greg Smith (Principal, Gloucestershire College)

Adam Starkey (CEO, Green Gourmet)

The gfirst LEP Board has been busy designing a structure that will keep it connected with the fast changing local economy. Capitalising on enthusiasm generated at a 'sell out' launch event held at GE Aviation, we can announce that the first businesspeople to chair a new wave of sector groups will be:

Advanced Engineering (Steve Hawkins, MOOG)

Business & Professional Services (Anne Compton, Rickerbys)

Construction & Infrastructure Development (Robin Butler, Kier Moss)

Retail (Nigel Jobson, SuperGroup)

Envirotech (Colin Hygate, Green Fuels Ltd)

Tourism (Edward Gillespie, Cheltenham Racecourse)

In phase two, groups for the Logistics, Creative Industries and ICT will be formed.

In addition to sector groups, Terry Morgan of the Federation of Small Businesses - the largest membership group in Gloucestershire with 4,500 business members - has agreed to Chair a Business Membership Group. For the first time the group brings together the various (over 50) business membership organisations in the county to work more efficiently with the LEP.

Finally, Michael Tripp (Ecclesiastical Insurance Group and gfirst LEP board member) will bring all of that together by chairing a Business Advisory Group composed of the above individuals.

NEXT STEPS AND PRIORITIES

1. Superfast Broadband

The program for rollout of superfast broadband is on schedule and now entering the final tendering stage. Seven suppliers have tendered and we expect to announce shortly the successful applicant. In addition, a roll-out program to stimulate demand for the service will be launched shortly across the county supported by funding from the county council. A key component of the program is to demonstrate support from communities for higher speed broadband. This is essentially a self help program with GFirst working had to bring together a Broadband supplier with local people and businesses.

2. GL Ambassadors

The business 'Ambassadors' scheme has been re-launched and the first group of 70 names have been approved by the Board. The relaunched scheme sees a move away from the former Ambassadors scheme, which was something of an honorary title. GL Ambassadors have been asked to make a formal commitment to their support to the image of Gloucestershire and its importance as an economic destination. Our objective is quality of Ambassadors, not necessarily quantity. The LEP has already created new resources, such as a short online video for websites.

Applications are welcome. Details and responsibilities are given at: www.gl-am.com

3. Apprenticeships and Schools meet Business Activity

Both areas are growing significant momentum and are likely to provide early wins for the LEP as they are launched during the Autumn Term. The Schools Business Project has selected its 6 schools to participate, starting about now.

4. LEP National Network

Diane Savory and David Owen met Ministers at the first LEP national network event in mid September. Meetings are also set up with local MPs and we are planning a briefing session for MPs, officials, and Ministers in Westminster later in the year.

5. Tourism

Promotional work, which is based on print, online and PR continue. Our priorities are media opportunities from the Olympics and marketing in Asia, USA and Northern Europe.

6. Grant for Business Investment

The LEP is promoting the new opportunity for SMEs.



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