

# New riverside park plan for Cheltenham town centre

Civic Society wants to stop the River Chelt from being hidden away

[Robin Jenkins](#) Chief Cheltenham Reporter, 6 March 2022



***An artist's impression of how a revamped riverside area at the back of Cambray Court in Cheltenham might look (Image: Submitted)***

Cheltenham Civic Society wants to create a new riverside park in the town centre. It wants to stop the River Chelt from being hidden away next to Cambray Court.

The court is a large block of flats, the back of which is separated from the river by garages and an old wall. On the other side of the wall is the borough council-run car park in Rodney Road.

The civic society says it will soon be looking for planning approval for its preferred scheme for the repair of the river wall between the court and the car park. This would create a new riverside park in the centre of [Cheltenham](#), it says.

The 100-year-old brick retaining wall on the court's side of the river needs to be repaired and the flats' owner, Cromwell Business Centre Management Company Limited, has already been granted planning consent for a like-for-like replacement of both the wall and the adjacent residents' garages.

But the civic society thinks that it is a poor plan that will merely replicate the existing hard fabric and keep the river hidden away for perhaps another 100 years. So it has drawn up an alternative scheme that it says will open up the riverside on both sides and create a public footpath on the car park side and a private garden for Cambray Court residents on their side.

The garages would be replaced with green-roofed garages, parking bays with solar canopies, storage units, a bin store and EV charging points. According to the civic society, its scheme would be much more environmentally friendly.

It says it should also be cheaper than the owner's proposals because it would not involve flood prevention shuttering, excavations down to below river level, the pouring of large quantities of concrete and the compacting of large amounts of backfill. In contrast, the minimal disturbance of the watercourse would enhance the rich wildlife habitat to the benefit of species such as trout and kingfishers, the civic society says.



***The River Chelt, in between the back of Cambray Court and Rodney Road Car Park in Cheltenham (Image: Submitted)***

It says that the borough council likes its scheme as it fits with its net-zero and biodiversity policies. The civic society also said that the Environment Agency said that its scheme would not increase the risk of flooding and would fit with its wish to see more green and blue infrastructure in Cheltenham.

Andrew Booton, chairman of the civic society, said: "We have consulted the residents of Cambray Court, who have been very positive about our proposals. We will be taking their feedback into account in our preparation of a full planning application for submission later this spring.

"If we are successful with this scheme, our long term aim would be to use this as a catalyst to open up further stretches of the river, create more public access and extend the riverside footpath both eastwards and westwards to improve walking and cycle routes across the town.

"Rather than just commenting on developers' schemes and calling out poor design, this proposal also demonstrates the society's wish to be a much more proactive, campaigning organisation that

is prepared to show developers and both Cheltenham and Gloucestershire councils that there are often better ways to enhance our shared urban environment. You can expect to see much more of this in future.”

If the planning application receives consent, the civic society says it will work closely with the landowner, borough council and the Environment Agency to deliver the scheme.

A spokesman for Cromwell Business Centre Management Company Limited said: “We have a green agenda in our wider business and are therefore supportive of the principle of the civic society’s proposal and have indeed communicated this previously to them. However, as a freeholder we are merely a custodian of the land used by the homeowners who would ultimately all have to agree to such proposals, and then there may be legal considerations in respect of the existing long leases of the apartments and garages.

“There is a need to secure the land under the garages and the river wall beyond it, which has received planning permission and Environment Agency consent. The situation is therefore too complex for any immediate decision, but we remain available for any further engagement on the matter.”