

Representator: Michael Brockington (*Reps 404 and 405*)

*represented by Mark Sullivan MRTPI CMILT*

## CHELTENHAM LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION 2019

### **Matter 8: Transport**

Is the safeguarding of the former Honeybourne rail line (Policy TN1) justified?

*Michael Brockington is a retired Financial Director who lives at Welford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. He has been active in representing rail users and in working for the protection and development of the railway network in Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire for more than 50 years. At the time of the Beeching closures in the 1960s, he took on the role of Secretary of the Stratford-upon-Avon Transport Action Committee, which was set up by the Stratford-upon-Avon Chamber of Trade, in conjunction with the Stratford Borough Council (renamed Stratford-upon-Avon and District TAC after 1974). The Chairman was the Mayor in office. In this post, he took a major part in the successful efforts to prevent the closure of the Birmingham-Stratford North Warwickshire Line in 1969.*

*In the 1970s Michael Brockington worked to prevent the complete closure of the Stratford-Cheltenham Line, which was not proposed for closure in the Beeching Report but lost its passenger services in 1968/69. The line appeared to have been retained for the future, until a derailment at Winchcombe, Glos in 1976 led to its closure and track-lifting by British Rail. Since the closure of the line he has continued to press for its protection through the planning system and its eventual reopening. Most of the line is now restored, but the parts of it now in use are discontinuous and are not open to regular public passenger services. (See attached Doc.3, Extracts from 'Disconnected' by Lord Faulkner of Worcester and Chris Austin – pages 39-43.)*

*Michael Brockington is a member of the Stratford Rail Transport Group which is today's successor to the Stratford-upon-Avon and District Transport Action Committee.*

### **POLICY TN1: PROTECTING THE ROUTE OF THE FORMER HONEYBOURNE RAIL LINE**

**The route of the former Honeybourne Rail Line is delineated on the Cheltenham Plan Proposals Map. Development proposals which would prejudice the future use of the route as continuous sustainable transport corridor will not be permitted.**

**Development proposals on the Honeybourne Line will also be subject to policy GI1.**

The supporting text to Policy TN1 at para 15.7-15.8 states

“The Plan will protect the route of the former Honeybourne rail line where it falls within the Borough boundary.

“It has long been recognised that the route has potential for future use as a continuous sustainable transport corridor, linking the population centres of Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucester, and

Quedgley. The aim of the following policy will therefore be to safeguard that part of the route that lies within the Cheltenham Borough boundary from development which might prejudice this potential.”

The current Local Plan policy has preserved the trackbed of the Stratford-Cheltenham Line. This is almost continuous, the exception being in the St James area where it has been replaced by a lightweight bridge for cycle and foot use to the west of the large Waitrose supermarket and related development on the sites of the former St James station and its goods yard.

Policy TN1 is fully justified, by the need to protect the trackbed for future reopening of the line as well as for the reasons given in the Plan.

Document 3 attached is extracts from *'Disconnected'- Broken Links in Britain's Rail Policy* by Lord Faulkner of Worcester and former British Railways Board Director of Public Affairs Chris Austin (published 2015). These give full details of the loss of the railway through Cheltenham, and explain why the present rail provision at Cheltenham is so deficient.

Policy TN1, Policy GL1 (Local Green Space) and the continued Green Belt status of the open countryside north of Swindon Lane and east of the Bristol-Birmingham main line (Policy GB1) protect for future transport use the former railway alignment, and preserve the scope to restructure Cheltenham's railways to create a new central station, and the connection of the GWSR section of the former Stratford-Cheltenham Line to the main national (Network Rail) line.

This potential future railway network for Cheltenham is shown on the annotated extract from the Proposals Map (Doc 2).

The Local Plan shows under Policy GB1 Green Belt status of the land north of Swindon Lane, east of the existing Bristol-Birmingham railway, and west of the A435 to Bishop's Cleeve. It is essential that this land remains open and with Green Belt status so that the options for a rail link shown on Doc 2 remain available.

The forthcoming Joint Core Strategy will enable transport infrastructure of the form shown on Doc 2 to be proposed and policies formulated to assist its delivery. The Cheltenham Local Plan should ensure that the JCS can in the future bring this forward, by retaining and if possible strengthening Policy TN1.

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