

Cheltenham Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
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***please reply to:***

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For the attention of Planning Department

9 April 2018

Dear Sir or Madam

### **Cheltenham Local Plan Consultation**

I am pleased to attach Railfuture's response to the above Consultation. We support Policy TN1 and the Objectives Themes A and B. Our only criticism of the soundness of Policy TN1 is that an alternative route to connect the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway to a new junction with the main line in the Swindon Village area does not appear to have been considered. We have no objection to the legal compliance of the Plan.

If anything in the response requires clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

***Nigel Bray***

Nigel Bray  
Railfuture  
Secretary, Railfuture Severnside Branch

**Railfuture response to Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan, 2018****Policy TN1: Protecting the route of the former Honeybourne rail line**

We support the policy in principle because we consider it vital to safeguard a route which could enable the railway to be reinstated throughout from Cheltenham to Stratford, allowing the creation of long-distance train services between the West of England / South Wales and the Midlands in the long term.

We also support the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway, which is a major tourist attraction and contributor to the local economy. The heritage railway also provides a degree of public transport in the local area. The opening of Hayles Abbey Halt in 2017 and the extension of the GWSR to Broadway last month have enabled visitors from Cheltenham and beyond to reach Hailes Abbey (note spelling different from the halt), Broadway and Snowhill Manor without the need for a car, thus increasing the attractiveness of sustainable transport as advocated in paras. 15.1 and 15.2 (page 106) of the Plan.

GWSR is understood to have long term aspirations to extend from Broadway to the national rail network at Honeybourne, where land for a bay platform has been reserved. There is also a proposal to reopen Honeybourne- Stratford as part of the national rail system. Therefore the third element in the restoration of a railway from Cheltenham to Stratford would be a link from the southern limit of the GWSR at Hunting Butts tunnel to the Bristol- Birmingham main line.

It would be technically feasible to reinstate the line to the former Lansdown Junction immediately south of Cheltenham Spa station. It should be possible to accommodate the existing cycleway alongside the railway, as it was a double track formation. We are, however, conscious that this might not be the most cost-effective option for restoring the line, because the existing cycleway bridge over the River Chelt would have to be replaced by a much heavier structure.

We therefore consider that an alternative main line connection from the GWSR needs to be provided for in the plan. This route would run in a south westerly direction from Cheltenham Racecourse station to join the main line in the Swindon Village area. It would cross Green Belt land but so do much of GWSR and national rail lines.

Nigel Bray, Secretary, Railfuture Severnside.