

## 12 Other - Spatial Issues

### 12.1 Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt (POLICY SP1)

**12.1.1** A very small part of the District, near Ullenwood, lies within the Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt. This 1.1 km<sup>2</sup> area, which includes Crickley Hill Country Park, is situated on top of the Cotswold escarpment and is located entirely within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

#### Policy SP1

##### **GLOUCESTER AND CHELTENHAM GREEN BELT**

**Inappropriate development within the Green Belt will not be permitted, having regard to national planning policy**

**12.1.2** National Planning Policy provides clear guidance on planning positively to enhance beneficial use of green belts, while making it clear that inappropriate development is harmful and should only be approved in very special circumstances.

**12.1.3** The JCS authorities (Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury) undertook a review of the Green Belt in 2011, though it did not include the small area within Cotswold District. The review, however, concluded that the area adjacent to the Cotswolds makes a significant contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt because it “forms a critical connection between wider countryside to the east and west.”

### 12.2 Cotswold Airport (POLICY SP2)

**12.2.1** The airfield formerly known as RAF Kemble straddles the administrative boundary between Cotswold District and Wiltshire and covers an area of some 210 hectares. In 2001, the MoD sold RAF Kemble in separate lots and by August 2009, a Certificate of Lawful Use was granted for an airport. Today, the airfield is operated commercially as Cotswold Airport and is accessed from the A433 Cirencester to Tetbury road in Cotswold District.

**12.2.2** A quite separate employment area - Kemble Airfield Business Park - operates from former RAF Kemble premises off the A429 in Wiltshire to the south of the airfield in Wiltshire. Despite their close proximity on opposite sides of the airfield, Cotswold Airport and Kemble Airfield Business Park are entirely different entities separated physically and functionally by the intervening runway.

**12.2.3** The airfield lies adjacent to both the Cotswolds AONB and the Kemble-Ewen Special Landscape Area and is highly visible from the A433 and A429.

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## Policy SP2

**COTSWOLD AIRPORT**

**The change of use of existing buildings and any new development within the areas at Cotswold Airport, shown on the Policies Map (Inset 19), will be permitted provided they are for employment-related uses that are compatible with the use of the land as an airport.**

**12.2.4** The hangars and other buildings at Cotswold Airport are used primarily by aviation-related businesses. Indeed, about 30 thriving businesses are reliant on the active runway, including flying schools and aircraft salvage. These businesses employ around 300 local people, excluding the Airport's operational personnel, fire crews, and support staff. It is understood that many local businesses within a 10 mile radius support and supply commercial operations at Kemble Airfield. The Airfield's other uses include training for Wiltshire and Cirencester fire brigades and the operations hub for the Department for International Development. Should Cotswold Airport close, those businesses reliant on the functioning runways would have no alternative but to either cease trading or move to an alternative airport, with a consequent loss of local jobs.

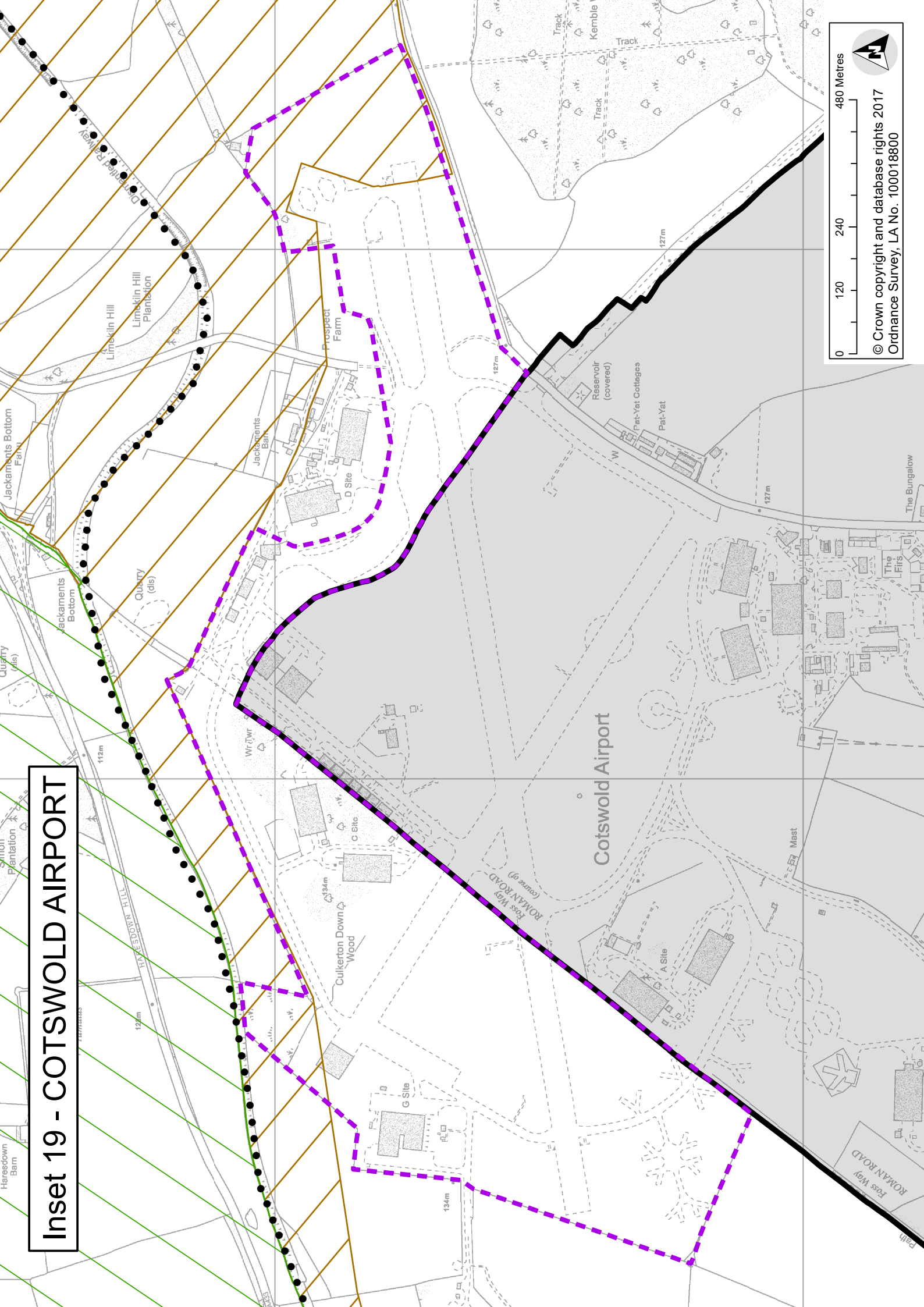
**12.2.5** In March 2015, the Department for Transport wrote to local planning authorities and local enterprise partnerships to draw their attention to the important role of aerodromes in local and regional economies. Kemble Airfield was specifically cited in paragraph 16 of the accompanying report<sup>(49)</sup> as being threatened by future potential changes of use and the consequent potential loss of the aerodrome. The Department for Transport published the General Aviation Strategy, which reiterated the importance of general aviation, in March 2015.

**12.2.6** Both Cotswold District Council and Wiltshire Council support the continued use of the former RAF Kemble runway, buildings and associated infrastructure for aviation-related economic and leisure purposes, along with the associated employment uses already based there. In seeking to retain use of the airfield as a productive asset, both Cotswold and Wiltshire councils are aware of the need to safeguard amenities in the area and the visual impact that development could have on the countryside.

**12.2.7** The rural location of Cotswold Airport also makes it necessary to be cautious about the extent of new employment development. Such development would inevitably lead to further dependence on the use of the car. This policy will allow for the growth and diversification of the airport that is in accordance with other policies of the Plan. Any proposals for small-scale employment development at Cotswold Airport outside the areas shown on the Policies Map would be subject to Policy EC3, clause 2.

49 General aviation sector-led Guidance on Planning in relation to Aerodromes for local planning authorities, aerodrome owners and aerodrome operators (The General Aviation Awareness Council, April 2015)

# Inset 19 - COTSWOLD AIRPORT



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### 12.3 Thames and Severn Canal and the River Thames (POLICY SP3 and SP4)

**12.3.1** Within Cotswold District, the Thames and Severn Canal and River Thames are valuable resources for the public to enjoy, both for active and passive recreational activity. The Thames and Severn Canal is subject to an on-going restoration project.

**12.3.2** The Canal contributes towards economic and regeneration objectives by providing attractive locations for canal-side development, which must be carefully balanced with conservation and enhancement. Canals and towpaths can achieve more sustainable patterns of movement and measures to improve access to the Canal for transportation is appropriate.

#### Policy SP3

##### THAMES AND SEVERN CANAL

Development will be permitted that:

- a. positively contributes to the restoration of the Canal and towpath;
- b. improves access to and along the Canal which encourages use for transport, sport, leisure and recreational purposes;
- c. respects, improves and enhances the Canal's character, setting, biodiversity and historic value; and
- d. does not:
  - i. prevent or impair restoration, improvement or reconstruction;
  - ii. destroy its existing or historic route as shown on the Policies Map, unless provision is made for its restoration on an acceptable alternative alignment, including the restoration or improvement of the towpath and its linkage with existing rights of way and local communities;
  - iii. result in the loss of any buildings, locks or other structures originally associated with the Canal; or
  - iv. prevent opportunities for public access.

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**12.3.3** All developments adjacent to the Canal must respect its character, setting, biodiversity and historic value as well as have regard to improving and enhancing views along and from the Canals. Environmental improvements to the Canal's appearance will include enhancement of its historic and biodiversity value and have regard to the Green Infrastructure Policy INF7.

**12.3.4** Throughout the Canal's length are various structures and engineering works that were essential to its function and are part of the canal environment. These features must be retained and, where possible, restored as and when development takes place in the vicinity. Restoration of bridges must take account of present-day requirements.

**12.3.5** For much of its course, the alignment of the Canal is intact and readily discernible. In areas where the it has been largely or wholly obliterated, the original course should be determined. Wherever possible, restoration should be on the original alignment, and future development should avoid destroying the route. However, there may be circumstances where the Canal could more readily be re-created immediately alongside its original line, for example, as part of post-extraction restoration in gravel winning areas.

### Policy SP4

#### THE RIVER THAMES

**Where there is physical and environmental capacity for increased activity, proposals to increase moorings and enhance sport and recreation development, both on and off the main channel of the River Thames will be permitted.**

**12.3.6** The Environment Agency confirmed, in August 2015, that there was no strategy for the Upper Thames although production of a new plan was a priority for the River Thames Alliance (RTA). In that regard, prospective developers are advised to discuss proposals with the Environment Agency and RTA. Proposals for development associated with the River Thames should be complementary with any future strategies for the Upper Thames. Proposals should also be considered in the context of the Environment Agency's concern that restoration of the Thames and Severn Canal should not be achieved by increasing navigation access between Inglesham lock and Cricklade.

## 12.4 Cotswold Water Park Post-Mineral Extraction After Use (POLICY SP5)

**12.4.1** The south-eastern part of Cotswold District has been subject to extensive sand and gravel extraction since the 1920s and it will continue to be so for some years to come, particularly around Down Ampney. Much of this evolving landscape comprises a complex of remnant agricultural land; more than 150 artificial lakes and other wetland habitats; as well as active mineral working. It forms an important east / west swathe of low-lying landscape, with a number of key green infrastructure assets, including:

- the River Thames and the associated Thames Path National Trail;

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- a significant length of the Thames and Severn Canal;
- a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- close proximity to two Special Areas for Conservation (within Wiltshire); and
- Sustrans national cycling route 45.

**12.4.2** In recognition of the area's distinctive characteristics, the Cotswold Water Park (CWP) was designated in the 1960s, which includes land within both Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The CWP is an important brand name for this distinct area, which has become a nationally-recognised area for nature conservation while also providing a major tourism resource, notably for water recreation.

### Policy SP5

#### **COTSWOLD WATER PARK: POST-MINERAL EXTRACTION AFTER USE**

**Proposals for sports, leisure, and/or recreational development, whether outdoor or water-based, will be permitted on former mineral extraction sites that lie within the Upper Thames Clay Vales National Character Area<sup>(50)</sup> provided the proposals:**

- protect and enhance biodiversity;**
- strengthen the landscape character and reinforce the Cotswold Water Park's sense of place;**
- enhance public accessibility and enjoyment of the lakes and countryside;**
- take account of the implementation of measures put in place as part of the approved restoration and aftercare scheme(s) associated with former mineral extraction;**
- satisfactorily mitigate potential unacceptable adverse impacts on residential amenity; and**
- maintain the character of settlements and their settings.**

**12.4.3** Previous local plan policy encouraged the development of the CWP as a resource for recreation, leisure and tourism, resulting in a variety of water sports venues, country parks, a public beach, and a number of holiday home complexes and hotels. Given the substantial amount of holiday accommodation, particularly holiday homes, that have been constructed/ granted planning permission, it is no longer considered necessary to promote this type of development through a specific policy in the Local Plan. Therefore, the same policy approach will be applied to holiday accommodation within the CWP as elsewhere in the District.

50 National Character Area 108 (Upper Thames Clay Vales) is indicated on the Policies Maps

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**12.4.4** The CWP is a particularly important area for outdoor and water-based recreational activities, employing a substantial number of people as well as encouraging high levels of visitors. The development of the area as a tourist destination has brought issues for some local residents, particularly where they have not been able to access the new facilities. Policy SP5, therefore, encourages appropriate outdoor and in particular, water-based activities, while ensuring that local issues and concerns, such as access and the protection of tranquillity, are addressed. New routes for sustainable transport, notably cycling and walking will be encouraged to support tourism and improve local accessibility.

**12.4.5** In 2008, the CWP Strategic Review and Implementation Plan (Masterplan) was produced by the former CWP Joint Committee and was subsequently endorsed by this Council. The overall objective of the masterplan was to ensure that the CWP becomes “a distinctive and sustainable countryside of high environmental value for the benefit of local residents and people working in and visiting the area”. Policy SP5 has been informed by and should help to deliver the vision, aims and objectives of the Masterplan.

**12.4.6** The area is an important resource for biodiversity with the lakes supporting rare aquatic species and waterfowl. There are also parcels of remnant farmland of high nature conservation value, notably the Special Areas of Conservation at North Meadow and Clattinger Farm, just south of the District boundary. It is important that developments within the area enhance this valuable biodiversity resource, both at a site level and the broader landscape scale. Wildlife is one of the main reasons why visitors are drawn to the area.

**12.4.7** In recognition of the area’s legacy of former mineral extraction sites and its increasing importance for leisure, recreation and tourism, Policy SP5 is more permissive towards those types of uses than is the case elsewhere in the District. To ensure that maximum benefits are achieved from these developments for local communities and the environment, a high level of biodiversity gain, public accessibility and environmental improvements will be sought when implementing the policy.

**12.4.8** Proposals for sports, leisure, and/or recreational development does not include tourist accommodation. This is covered by Policy EC11, which applies across the whole District.

**12.4.9** When considering landscape matters, regard will be had to extant landscape character assessment(s) that apply directly to areas of the CWP within Gloucestershire.

**12.4.10** Over time, the CWP boundary defined in previous local plans has become out-of-date and no longer reflects the area within which mineral extraction has, and will continue, to occur. To ensure that this policy includes all potential mineral extraction sites, the policy now relates to the Upper Thames Clay Vales National Character Area (as designated by Natural England), part of which falls within Cotswold District. This designation covers the entire CWP within Gloucestershire.

### 12.5 Former Cheltenham to Stratford-upon-Avon Railway Line (POLICY SP6)

**12.5.1** The Cheltenham to Stratford-upon-Avon railway line - the 'Honeybourne Line' - is a former double-track main line route, which once linked directly to Birmingham. A disused section of the line passes through the parishes of Willersey and Saintbury. The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway,

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a volunteer-run heritage railway, has reopened a 14 mile section from Cheltenham to Broadway. The railway is a significant regional tourist destination and a contributor to the local economy. The heritage railway plans to extend four miles northwards to the national main line network at Honeybourne, which includes a two mile section through Cotswold District.

**12.5.2** The Honeybourne Line also has national strategic importance. Passenger and freight use on the national rail network are rising. More and more dismantled railway lines across the country are being reopened to alleviate increasing congestion on the national transport network.

**12.5.3** Many locations along this route, including Willersey and Weston-sub-Edge, lost their railway stations when services were withdrawn before the line's closure in the 1970s. Protecting this route therefore also provides an opportunity to reopen these stations and increase accessibility in the District.

### Policy SP6

#### FORMER CHELTENHAM TO STRATFORD-UPON-AVON RAILWAY LINE

1. Development will be permitted that:
  - a. positively contributes to the restoration of the former railway line;
  - b. does not impair restoration, improvement or reconstruction of the former railway line and retains existing embankments, cuttings, bridges and other associated features; and
  - c. respects, improves and enhances its character, setting, biodiversity and historic value.
2. Development that would harm the route, function, character, or implementation of the proposed or existing transport network and related services and facilities will not be permitted.