

Chapter 5

Opportunity Areas

CHAPTER 5 – OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- 5.1 This chapter sets out a number of areas in the city which have been identified as having the potential to be considered for future improvement or development over the plan period. These areas have been identified for a number of reasons: they are areas that are likely to be ready for market renewal over the 20 year period of the Plan, areas where beneficial renewal could be encouraged, or are areas which have been identified by others for consideration for change.
- 5.2 In all cases, there is the potential to identify change in these area that should be considered at this stage of preparing this plan. In addition to this high level identification of these potential areas, more specific site-related proposals may come forward during the development of the Local Plan and will be considered by the City Council for potential allocation.

Mill Road

- 5.3 Mill Road has its own character with a diverse range of shops and a real sense of a distinctive local community. The current Local Plan identifies two district centres on Mill Road. Mill Road West is that part of the road west of the railway bridge towards the City Centre, and Mill Road East is on the east side of the railway bridge.
- 5.4 Mill Road is characterised by its large number of diverse and independent retail traders, which lend the area a cosmopolitan feel. There is a wide-ranging concentration of food related uses, A3 (Restaurants and Cafés) and A5 (Hot food take-aways), particularly in Mill Road West, which add to its vitality, but can also lead to amenity problems. In particular, take-aways can cause problems of litter and illegal parking. There are also a number of antique and bric a brac shops and the market at Hope Street which add to the rich diversity and uniqueness of the street.
- 5.5 Surrounding the centre are terraced residential streets, some of which have a high population of students or shared households living in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- 5.6 Recently there has been the issue of national food retailers, wanting to locate convenience stores on the street and this has provoked opposition from local residents. The planning system is unable to restrict development on the basis of the operator and whether they are a small independent or a national retailer. In addition the Use Classes Order and General Permitted Development Order mean that some changes of use can take place without the need for planning permission, which adds to the difficulty in specifying a particular mix of uses. For example:
- The Use Classes Order allows changes within a Use Class to be permitted without the need for planning permission (ie a shop selling clothes is within Use Class A1 and a shop selling food is also within A1). In this case, there is no need for planning permission as both fall within the same Use Class, although any physical external changes to the building would probably require planning permission.

- The General Permitted Development Order allows some changes between Use Classes without planning permission. For example, a takeaway could change to a restaurant or a bank or a shop without the need for planning permission, thus making it hard to control the mix of uses.
- 5.7 There is a real sense of local community in the Mill Road area. There are a number of active residents' associations and other groups, and events such as the Winter Fair attract large numbers of people each year. Community groups can be found at the Romsey Mill Centre, the Bath House, the Salvation Army Centre, the churches and the mosque.
- 5.8 Mill Road is an extremely busy, narrow road and there are conflicts between cars and buses and cyclists. In places, the pavements are narrow and cluttered with signs, lamp posts and parked bicycles making it difficult to move along them particularly with a pram or wheelchair. There have been some improvements to the public realm, particularly in Mill Road West, adjacent to the public car park and public toilets about 10 years ago, and longer ago the sheltered accommodation at Ditchburn Place was refurbished, including a new landscaped area adjacent to Mill Road.
- 5.9 Mill Road depot is owned by the City Council and has been identified as a potential housing site in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, if this was to relocate in the future and subject to overcoming potential access constraints from Mill Road.
- 5.10 The City Council is funding the upgrade of the existing street lighting from the Railway Bridge to Perne Road to match the more decorative lighting columns that already exist on the first stretch of Mill Road from East Road to the Railway Bridge. The County Council is looking at the potential for further improvements to Mill Road, specifically to address traffic issues and the quality of the public realm. It is important to retain the character and vibrancy of the road in the long term, and so any initiatives need to support, not hamper, the essential character and strengths of Mill Road.
- 5.11 The NPPF requires that local plans promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres. It is important to maintain and build upon the individuality and vibrancy of Mill Road and therefore an option has been put forward dealing specifically with this area.
- 5.12 The Portas Review (2011) includes many recommendations that local people should become more involved in the running of their High Streets and includes innovative measures to empower the local community to have greater control over their local High Street such as community use of empty properties and development of neighbourhood plans.

Option 37 – Mill Road

We could include a policy which aims to help to protect and enhance the diversity and character of Mill Road.(including Mill Road East and Mill Road West District Centres). Any new development should add to the vitality and viability of Mill Road. It could try to control the mix of unit sizes and types

of shops, however this might be too restrictive and prevent innovative development. The proposed options on general shopping (Options 136 and 137) might be sufficient control.

The policy would also aim to improve the environmental quality of Mill Road, through measures such as traffic calming measures which remove road markings, removal of signage and other clutter, improvements to the quality of the pavements and road surfaces giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists, and enhancements to lighting, landscape and signage.

Questions

- 5.1 Is there a need for a policy addressing this issue?
- 5.2 What do you think is important about Mill Road and how do you think it could be addressed by this policy?
- 5.3 Do you think the policy should try to control the mix of unit sizes or types of uses?
- 5.4 Are there any points which have been missed and you feel should be added (perhaps even an entirely new option)?
- 5.5 Are there any other reasonable alternatives that should be considered at this stage?

Eastern Gate

- 5.13 The area of the city, known as Eastern Gate, stretching from the Crown Court and Elizabeth Way Roundabout to the beginning of the Newmarket Road Retail Park is currently undergoing significant change. The large-scale highway interventions of the 1970s, the application of standard highway solutions and the introduction of unsympathetic bulky buildings that have little relationship with the public realm have eroded the qualities of place and severed neighbouring communities. For some time now, there has been widespread recognition for the need to improve the environment within the Eastern Gate study area. Over the years, many sites within the area have been subject to a number of planning applications, some of which are still extant.
- 5.14 In 2011, the Council adopted a Supplementary Planning Document for the Eastern Gate area known as the Eastern Gate Development Framework SPD. The aim of the SPD is to begin regenerating and transforming this key approach to the city through high quality development coupled with key projects that will connect people and places.
- 5.15 The SPD is currently tied to a policy in the Local Plan 2006. Once the new Local Plan is adopted, the SPD will fall away as the policy it is tied to will no longer exist. While it is still capable of being a material consideration it is important that the work from stakeholders and communities in inputting to this document is not lost. The Local Plan Review will therefore be exploring the projects developed from this document.

5.16 The SPD sets out five key projects for improving the highway network, the public realm, and the overall environmental quality of the Eastern Gate. The projects are rolled forward into the Local Plan review below. In theory, each project could be progressed independently of the others as each will require significant funding, planning and design work in their own right. However, given the interdependent nature of the projects, any one project needs to ensure impacts on the local highway network are co-ordinated and managed together.

5.17 Figure 5.1 indicates the broad locations of these options in Eastern Gate.

Option 38 – Eastern Gate

This option identifies opportunities to improve the public realm for people living, working or travelling through the area by carrying forward the five key projects identified in the Eastern Gate Development Framework SPD. These involve changes to the highway and streetscape at five key parts of the area:

- Remodelling Elizabeth Way Roundabout;
- Place and movement strategy for Newmarket Road and East Road;
- Remodelling East Road / St Matthew’s Street junction;
- Remodelling Newmarket Road / Coldham’s Lane junction; and
- Improving New Street and Harvest Way.

These roads and junctions are congested, separate local communities, and are often of poor quality; improving them is a key opportunity in this area.

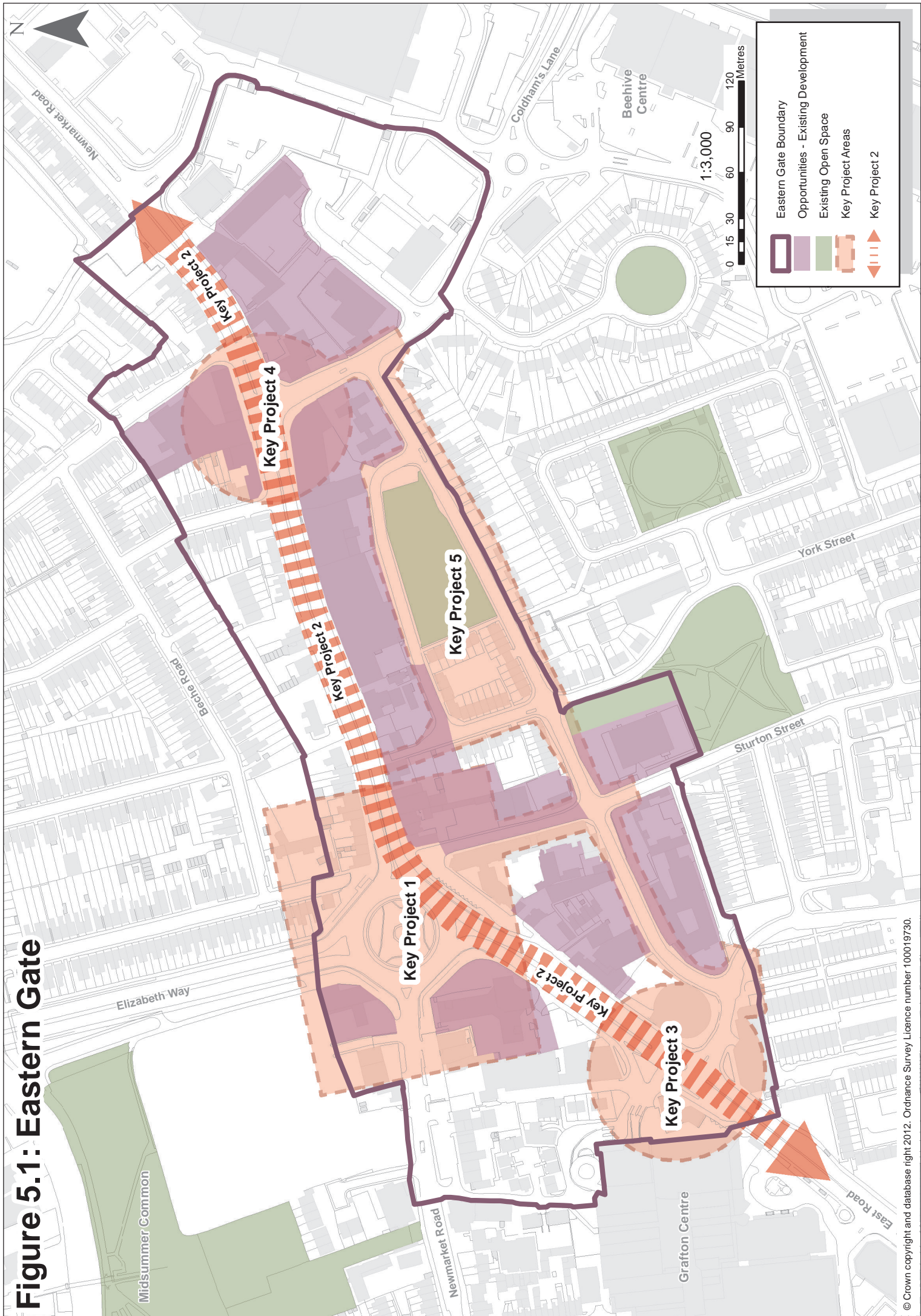
In addition to the key projects, there are a number of sites where there are opportunities for redevelopment. Development of these sites would assist in improving the environmental quality of the whole area. The sites have been further examined and referenced in the Eastern Gate Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document.

The identified development sites also represent opportunities for realising improvements to the public realm in the immediate area. It is expected that planning contributions from the development of these sites will be required in order to help fund the key projects above.

Questions

- 5.6 Is there a need for a policy addressing this issue?
- 5.7 Are there any points which have been missed and you feel should be added (perhaps even an entirely new option)?
- 5.8 Are there any other reasonable alternatives that should be considered at this stage?

Figure 5.1: Eastern Gate



Cambridge Railway Station to the City Centre and Hills Road Corridor

- 5.18 Hills Road acts as a key link between the Cambridge Railway Station and the City Centre. It is also a key artery from the south east part of the city and acts as a cross road to many key east-west routes, including Station Road and Lensfield Road, and it continues north as Regent Street (then St. Andrew’s Street) to the historic core of the city.
- 5.19 Stepping out of the station, the first impression of the city can be one of disorientation and confusion. For the visitor, it is simply not clear where the City Centre actually is, nor how far. Poor quality public realm combined with a fragmented and frustrated pedestrian and cyclist experience currently characterises this route into the centre and makes the distance feel further.
- 5.20 The CB1 redevelopment around the Station and creation of the new transport interchange will dramatically improve the first impression of Cambridge. There are opportunities to complete the integration of this area into the wider city through improvements to the streetscape and infrastructure between the Station and the City Centre.
- 5.21 As well as the opportunities to improve the streetscape and infrastructure along Hills Road, there may also be opportunities for redevelopment of land and buildings that could become available in the area before 2031, these include City House, Clifton Road and the Cambridge Leisure Park. The following option is based on the Council’s aspirational document “Project Cambridge: Connecting the Station to the City Centre”¹.
- 5.22 Figure 5.2 indicates the broad locations along Hills Road of these options.

Option 39 – Cambridge Railway Station to the City Centre & Hills Road Corridor

This option identifies opportunities to improve the public realm for people living, working or travelling through the area by carrying forward the five key projects identified in the Project Cambridge document². These involve changes to the highway and streetscape at seven key parts of the area:

- Regent Street;
- Hyde Park Corner;
- Hills Road Local Centre;
- Station Approach;
- Cambridge Leisure;

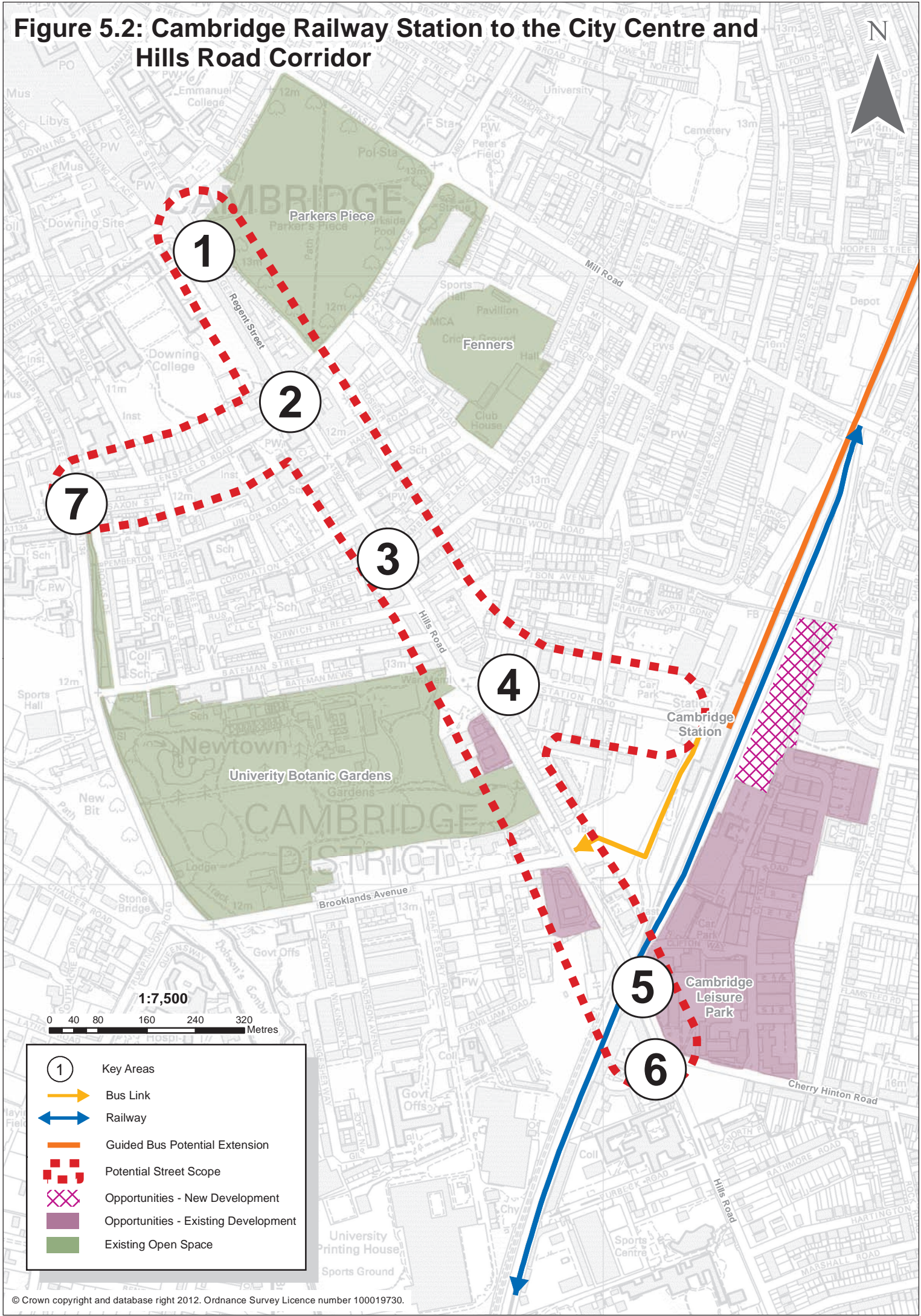
¹ Project Cambridge in 2009 looked at improvements to the highway and street along Hills Road, the document can be found here:

http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/agenda/2009/1006enviro/07_1.pdf

² Project Cambridge in 2009 looked at improvements to the highway and street along Hills Road, the document can be found here:

http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/agenda/2009/1006enviro/07_1.pdf

Figure 5.2: Cambridge Railway Station to the City Centre and Hills Road Corridor



- Cherry Hinton Road Junction; and
- Lensfield Road junction.

These streets and junctions are congested with traffic, pedestrians and with a poor quality public realm; improving them is a key opportunity in this area.

In addition to the key projects, there are a number of sites where there could be opportunities for redevelopment. Redevelopment of these sites would assist in improving the environmental quality of the whole area.

The potential development sites also represent opportunities for realising improvements to the public realm in the immediate area. It is expected that planning obligations from the development of these sites will be required in order to help fund the key projects above.

Questions

- 5.9 Is there a need for a policy addressing this issue?
- 5.10 Are there any points which have been missed and you feel should be added (perhaps even an entirely new option)?
- 5.11 Are there any other reasonable alternatives that should be considered at this stage?

Land South of Coldham's Lane

- 5.23 The land to the south of Coldham's Lane has played a key role in the city's industrial history as a source of materials and for waste disposal. That past includes use by Blue Circle Industries to quarry and manufacture cement. When the plant closed the two quarry sites were turned into landfills. The eastern most quarry was filled in with waste until the mid-1970s, the western most quarry was filled in with waste until the mid-1980s, when landfill activities ceased and both quarries were capped. There is up to 19 metres of landfill in these sites. Land between these two sites, known as Norman Way Business Park, has since been developed for various uses including car showrooms, a hotel, a gym and warehouses. The two old quarries have since become large open grassy areas of scrub, with an unkempt and relatively unattractive appearance. Nevertheless, the eastern most site has been designated as a City Wildlife Site due to the wildlife value on this site and both are Protected Open Spaces, given their environmental value. A further constraint on the site will be the height restriction associated with the ongoing use of the airport.
- 5.24 The Inspector's Report for the 2006 Cambridge Local Plan concluded that Phase 2 of the former Blue Circle site, Coldham's Lane, should not be allocated for housing because of the over-riding risk arising from the contaminated land.

- 5.25 To the south of these sites are three lakes, these are very deep and currently there is no public access to them. From the junction of Brooks Road and Perne Road, two footpaths / cycle paths run through the sites: Snakey Path runs to the south of the lakes towards Cherry Hinton Hall, the Tins runs over the railway to Norman Way Business Park and Cherry Hinton beyond.

Opportunities

- 5.26 Whilst these sites have been examined a number of times previously, it is important that opportunities to secure appropriate re-use and redevelopment of these sites, as well as opportunities for potential public and recreational access to the areas is not lost for another 20 years.
- 5.27 Figure 5.3 indicates the broad locations of these options south of Coldham’s Lane.

Option 40 – South of Coldham’s Lane

This option identifies opportunities to improve the area through the introduction of new uses, the development of some key sites and the improvement of links through the area.

There is a potential “green and blue corridor” that runs from Coldham’s Common through the two closed landfill sites and the lakes into Cherry Hinton Hall and out through the Spinney Nature Reserve. There may be an opportunity to open up one or more of the old quarries and the area around one or more of the lakes for active and passive recreation uses. Opportunities to explore include:

- Walking;
- Cycling;
- Five a side football pitches; and
- Cycle BMX track.

Any potential uses would need to take into account the nature conservation value of these sites.

Opening up these sites for recreation uses will benefit local people by providing them with a new, accessible leisure resource.

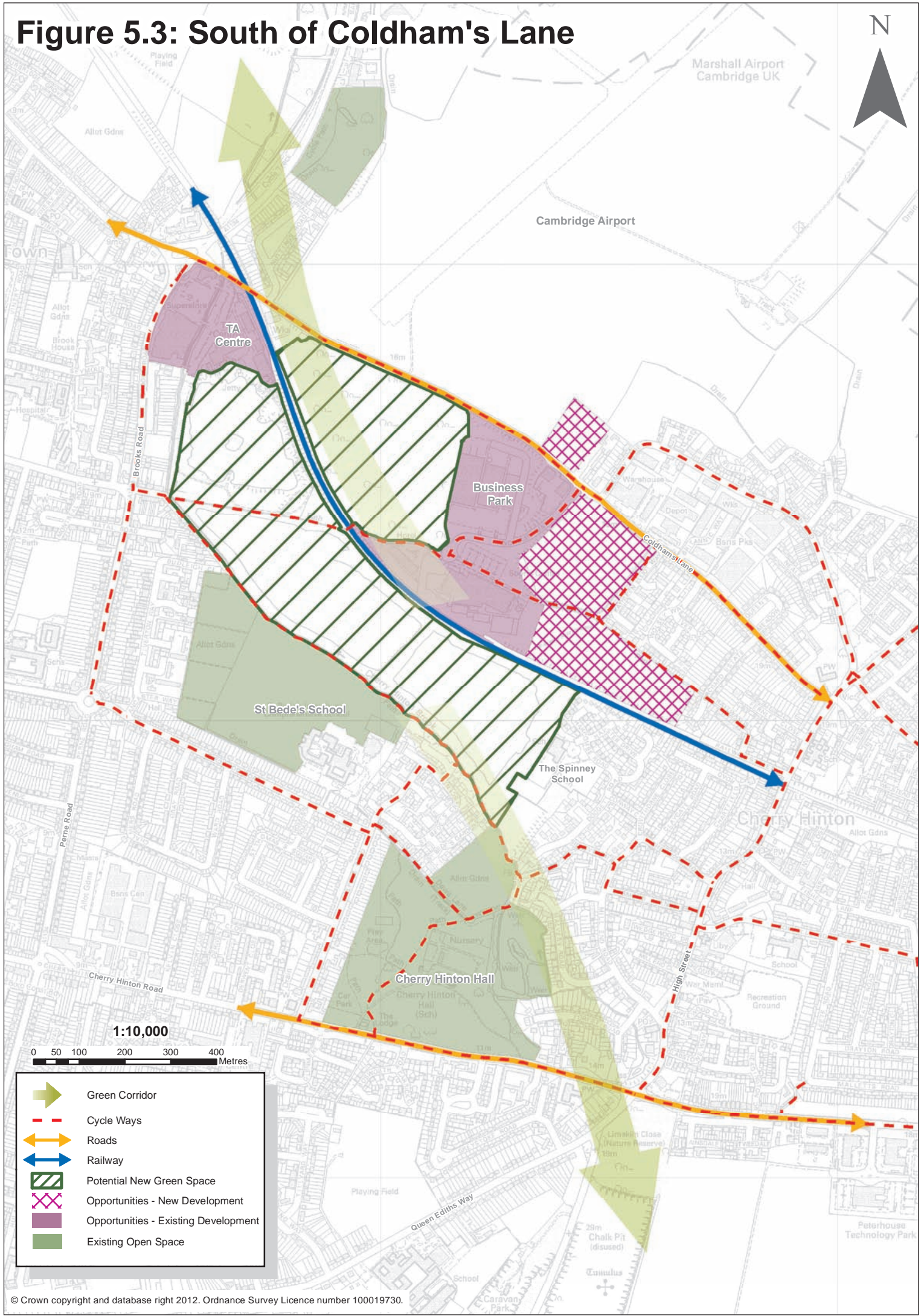
Improving existing routes through the area and looking at introducing new paths to provide access to (and through) the area around the lakes could help with journeys through the site. Opening up access to the lakes area could also facilitate enhanced recreation uses of this resource for the benefit of residents of this side of the city.

There are a number of sites in the area and its vicinity which in combination could deliver viable new development opportunities, which could deliver regeneration and wider public benefits. These include:

- Land east of Norman Way Business Park (unclear how much of this would be developable; likely to be only suitable for commercial uses);









Figure 5.3: South of Coldham's Lane

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0 50 100 200 300 400 Metres

-  Green Corridor
-  Cycle Ways
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Potential New Green Space
-  Opportunities - New Development
-  Opportunities - Existing Development
-  Existing Open Space

- Land West of Rosemary Lane (the very southern corner of the Airport site);
- Norman Way Business Park
- Sainsbury's and the Territorial Army (TA) Centre

Question

5.12 Is there a need for a policy addressing this issue?

5.13 Are there any points which have been missed and you feel should be added (perhaps even an entirely new option)?

5.14 Are there any other reasonable alternatives that should be considered at this stage?

Question

5.15 Are there any other opportunity areas that should be considered at this stage?