

Iver Neighbourhood Plan
Colne Valley Regional Park Comments

March 2021

Strategic context. Outlining the beneficial side of the Green Belt and the Colne Valley Regional Park's (CVRP) role in it.

In the strategic Green Belt review undertaken by Arup and published by former South Bucks and Chiltern District Councils in 2018, the zone in which Iver Parish sits was categorised as part of the coherent 'London Fringe' zone. The report highlighted the characteristics and sensitivities of the zone, referring to:

"... a strategic arc of open spaces separating the large built-up areas of Greater London and Slough, and smaller settlements such as Iver, Iver Heath"

"...a number of narrow bands of Green Belt are vitally important in preventing merging of settlements"

"...these gaps are essential in protecting the merging of the major urban settlements of Greater London and Slough (and the smaller settlements of Iver and Richings Park) ..."

" ... any change within this area could act to significantly compromise the role played by the Green Belt in maintaining separation between these two large urban settlements."

It is no coincidence that the extent of the CVRP sits within with the 'London Fringe' zone in Buckinghamshire – an area that needs particularly careful attention and planning. The Park is an important area of countryside to the west of London.

To promote that careful attention and planning, the CVRP collaborated with a number of other organisations, including the relevant local authorities, to produce the Colne and Crane Green Infrastructure Strategy during 2019. It provides useful guidance in how to best to address the many challenges threatening the area, and is intended to be used alongside – and to inform – Local Plans. It can be found here: <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/green-infrastructure-strategy-colne-and-crane-valleys/>

Comments on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan:

5.2 We support the objectives. Particularly that walking & cycling, wildlife, productive farmland and high quality landscape are all specifically mentioned within the objective relating to the CVRP.

Policy IV1: Gaps between settlements

We support this policy.

In 'corridors of significance' we request that the Neighbourhood Plan finds a way to add a positive angle to this so it doesn't just focus on what we don't want (ribbon development/suburbanisation) but also focusses on what we do want (maintain and enhance/re-create rural character). Specific wording should be added to the policy that any developments in these corridors make a contribution to enhancing and improving rural character through design on site (e.g. buildings set back from the highway and trees/green areas fronting the highway) and s106 or other means to enhance landscape character along the highway.

Policy IV5: Local Heritage Assets

We support this policy.

Add the historic fish ponds near St Peters Church to the list of heritage assets in appendix C

Policy IV6: Sustainable Travel

We support this policy.

In point C of this policy the only potential 'harm' is seen to be to 'functioning or connectivity'. This is sufficient for on road routes/commuting journeys but for off-road routes/recreational journeys the 'functioning' of the route is also about attractiveness (i.e rural character) in addition to 'connectivity'. The policy should be amended to reflect this dual purpose for why people undertake active travel, the policy must ensure that proposals that 'harm' the attractiveness/rural character of off-road/recreational routes will not be supported.

Para 5.30:

Point v. Refers to 'principle destinations' in point ii, should this mean point iii?

Add other opportunities to enhance the Active Travel Network. The following should be included in the policy and/or the map:

- Uxbridge to Iver Heath/Black Park active travel route. Options appraisal/feasibility study required, then implementation of agreed route.
- Address gaps in the connectivity of the rights of way network eg connection from path IVE/6/1 to DEN/23/1 and other opportunities for links in the vicinity of New Denham Quarry/Mansfield Farm
- Active travel crossing over the A412 to link two important recreation visitor destinations safely: Black Park and Langley Park
- retention of a north to south link at Mansion Lane-Hollow Hill Lane-Market Lane
- Policy Map: Add the following to the 'Existing Cycle Network' category: Colne Valley Trail from Trout Lane (West Drayton) through Iver Water Works to Thorney then through Thorney Park alongside the Colne Brook to Old Slade Bridge

Policy IV12: Thorney Business Park

iii) Refers to policy IV16. This should be IV15.

This policy appears to be about a green belt swap where parts of the current Business Park are designated as green belt (through this policy in the Neighbourhood Plan) and current green belt land to the east of the Business Park will be developed for housing (through a policy in the forthcoming Buckinghamshire plan).

We understand the reasoning for any new housing to be located close to the railway station and that a gap is retained between Iver and Richings Park and that a masterplan will be produced for the area at a later stage. However, we would like to see the following points specifically incorporated into the policy that can help inform production of the masterplan:

- There is a like for like swap between the two areas/two planning policies that does not result in any net loss of green belt within the area (as defined in para ii)
- In addition to the green belt to the north of the 'developable area' that Green Belt is also retained or designated (as appropriate) on the eastern and western parts of this area to ensure the rural character/sense of countryside is maintained and enhanced as seen and perceived from Thorney Lane South and footpath IVE/15A/1
- A green space corridor is retained for a new Public Right of Way running approximately South East to North West to connect Iver Station with the existing rights of way network at the footpath IVE/15/2 bridge over the Canal
- The development, or a S106, provides for reinstatement of Dog Kennel Bridge (or crossing of the railway in another location of at least equal value for connectivity and countryside setting) to reinstate an important north to south connection for active travel.
- Wording should be incorporated within the policy to ensure the long term management and maintenance of the green belt area. For example: A S106 agreement is made to include provision for the gifting of the green belt area (along with an appropriate endowment) to an appropriate community-led or charitable body to manage its future maintenance as part of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

Policy IV13: Link Park Heathrow & Thorney Mill Sidings

iv. b.: Add "and enhancement in line with Policy IV15" after "retention"

iv. add new point: "e. Provision of a new Public Right of Way or permissive path with a long term agreement to connect footpath IVE/21/3 to Maybey's Meadow Nature Reserve".

v.: Add that the S106 agreement is to include an endowment for management and maintenance in perpetuity. If this is not done then the woodland will simply become a liability for any 'community-led or charitable body' that is foolish enough to agree to accept the gifting of the land!

Policy IV15: Green Infrastructure Network

We support this policy.

We request that the title of this policy is changed to 'Colne Valley Regional Park' to more specifically reflect what it does, to make it more locally specific and to ensure greater co-ordination with the similarly titled policy in the draft Denham Neighbourhood Plan.

Green Infrastructure Network map:

- There is no need to include the Colne Valley Regional Park boundary as the whole of Iver Parish/the Neighbourhood Polan area is located within the Colne Valley Regional Park
- Add the Colne Brook east of the M25 and the Colne on the eastern boundary of the Parish to the 'Opportunity to enhance waterscape/watercourse'

Policy IV16: climate Change Mitigation

Appropriate wording to be incorporated into the policy to ensure 'the right tree in the right place' to ensure that trees are not planting on existing grasslands or wetlands with biodiversity value or on productive farmland. The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and others have done much work on this and can provide direction to appropriate guidance.

Appropriate wording to be incorporated into the policy to ensure that any tree planting areas are properly maintained and managed in perpetuity and especially in the crucial first few years when many trees dies through lack of watering or limited maintenance.