

Staines Upon Thames Development Framework Consultation

Response from the Colne Valley Regional Park

June 2021

General comments

- We welcome the opportunity to comment and the chance to help shape Staines Town Centre
- The Colne Valley Regional Park covers 43 square miles of countryside cutting across parts of Surrey, Berks, Bucks, Herts and London. The Park immediately borders Staines town centre to the north and west and the system of rivers (the Colne, Wraysbury, Ash, County Ditch & Sweeps Ditch) flow from the Park through Staines. This proximity to high quality green space and framing of the town centre by a network of waterways is clearly a 'Unique Selling Point' for Staines town centre and something that should be grasped by the Development Framework to take opportunities to improve and reveal this green and blue network on the edge of, and through, the town centre.
- The Colne is a beautiful river system for much of its length including at Staines Moor just a short walk away from the town centre. However, its confluence with the Thames and last few hundred metres of its life is very uninspiring, and constrained. Opportunities should be taken to 'reveal' and renaturalise the Colne and Wraysbury River including at the confluence with the Thames and at Two Rivers Shopping Area.
- The Colne & Crane Green Infrastructure Strategy should be used to inform the Staines upon Thames Development Framework. The Green Infrastructure Strategy can be found at <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/green-infrastructure-strategy-colne-and-crane-valleys/> and includes projects relating to improving pedestrian and cycling connectivity (SC111, SC225) and making use of riverside location (SC001). There is also the opportunity to enhance/promote Staines and the station as a gateway to the Colne Valley Regional Park (SC114).
- Whilst a key output may be proposals and actions that form part of the forthcoming Local Plan, as an evidence document the Staines Development Framework can and should go further than that and incorporate a vision and projects that could be gradually worked towards/ implemented as (funding) opportunities arise. These cannot all be predicted now. In line with that we suggest the title is broadened to 'Town Centre Vision and Development Framework'

Specific comments

Cover page. We welcome a very good concept for the cover that highlights the natural situation of Staines town centre. However, there are multiple rivers that flow in and around Staines town centre yet only the Thames and the County Ditch are shown in detail on the map. For the final Development Framework the covering map should also show the Colne, Wraysbury, Ash and Sweeps Ditch to give a true reflection of the watery origins of Staines and the natural framing of the town centre

Para 1.4. As per the comment on page it can and should be broader than that, whilst incorporating an 'SPD' component should also refer to a Vision for the town centre

Para 1.10. Change "but is achievable and deliverable " to "but also contains projects that are achievable and deliverable"

Page 4, Strengths map. The Colne Valley Regional Park should be marked on this map. This will help emphasise the large amount of green space to the west and north of the town centre. It must be acknowledged that one of the strengths/USP's of Staines Town Centre is the large amount of green

space right on its doorstep including the start of a 43 square mile Regional Park that is easily accessible for residents of Staines and visitors coming into the town centre via the public transport and road network.

Page 4, Weaknesses map. We agree that the River Colne should be marked on the weaknesses map - there is an opportunity for enhancement/landscaping that could be taken through the masterplan. However, the current situation for the Wraysbury River is even worse - with the shopping area having its back to the river it means that this potentially attractive river and linking footpath to the Colne Valley Regional Park and Staines Moor is hidden from view (out of sight, out of mind!), therefore the Wraysbury River should also be identified on the map. 'Two Rivers Shopping Area' does not live up to its name and its potential as something that Staines can be proud of - it has turned its back on one river and the other one is heavily constrained.

Change the cycle routes key title to "poor and absent cycling links and walking routes in need of improvement" Add to map the poor and absent cycling links from Colne Valley Regional Park/Stanwell Moor to town centre/railway station and vice versa.

Para 2.5, objectives.

The Objectives should be refined to include something along the lines of "... well connected by to its hinterland, both urban, green and blue by active travel modes" (or somesuch wording)

Map on page 7: The Colne Valley Regional Park should be marked on this map. (See comment on the 'opportunities' map above)

Para 2.11. Locations that are important and need protection. Add "Locations that offer opportunities for improved connectivity for active travel"

Para 2.14 This section should be expanded to refer to how the town centre is framed by Rivers: Thames, Colne, Wraysbury, Ash and Sweeps Ditch. This should be bought out as a key strength for the town centre and river frontages improved and protected.

Another key character of the town centre is its close proximity to green spaces and the Colne Valley Regional Park to the north and west.

Para 2.16. We support the inclusion of access to nature in this section

Para 2.17. Add a new bullet point along the following lines: "Corridors that offer opportunities for improved active travel and natural environment connections to the urban and green/ blue areas close to the town centre"

Para 2.33. Opportunities for improvement of active travel routes must also include improvement of active travel routes to/from the town centre and railway station through the Colne Valley Regional Park including connectivity to Stanwell Moor village via an attractive off-road route. There is also the opportunity for connection following (approximately) the line of the River Colne from the Two Rivers Shopping Area.

Para 2.34, bullet point 4. This should state 'rivers' not just 'river'. Opportunities should be taken along the Colne and Wraysbury particularly to, and through, the Two Rivers Shopping Area

Para 2.42. Add an additional point about improving active travel links to/from the Colne Valley Regional Park and Stanwell Moor. See comment on section 2.33 (above)

Page 21, objective 5, paras 2.43 onwards. The Thames is a key opportunity for Staines but the masterplan should also take the opportunity to un-do decades of bad planning relating to the

tributaries of the Thames that flow through the town centre. The Colne is a beautiful river for much of its length including at Staines Moor just a short walk away from the town centre. However, its confluence with the Thames and last few hundred metres of its life is very uninspiring, and constrained. Opportunities should be taken to 'reveal' and renaturalise the Colne and Wraysbury River including at the confluence with the Thames and at two rivers shopping area.

Para 2.53. Add specific option to reveal and renaturalise the Colne and Wraysbury. See comment in objective 5, above.

Para 2.55. Add reference to Colne Valley Regional Park/green space as USP for Staines into this section. Should "...in the town centre" be added to the end of this sentence?

Para 2.60. Add option for green/linear park along the Colne/Wraysbury through the town centre.

Para 3.3. As per the earlier 'general comment' we suggest the document also sets a vision that looks longer term. Viability and deliverability are, invariably, hard to pin down and it's about having a menu of projects and a vision to make the most of opportunities as they arise. That said, identifying options/ projects that are judged to be 'deliverable' and justifiable in a Development Plan context can still be a sub-set.

Contact: Stewart Pomeroy, Colne Valley Managing Agent, stewart.pomeroy@groundwork.org.uk