

President: Rt.Hon. the Lord Randall of Uxbridge Kt.PC.

FAO: Jeffrey Ng MRTPI
Planning Service
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall,
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11 October 2022

Dear Jeffrey

Planning Applications – Land East of Horton Road - 22/01492/FULL & 22/01475/VAR

Further to our helpful conversation last week I am writing, as promised, to offer thoughts on the issue you raised concerning forms of mitigation and compensation/ compensatory improvements in connection with the proposals in the two applications under consideration.

We appreciate that a view has not been reached within the Council on the merits of these proposals. This exchange is without prejudice to the objections that the Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) and others have raised and is in the context of any approval that may subsequently be considered.

I have spent some time over recent years experiencing the poor quality of the environment in the vicinity of the applications' site, accessible to the public. It is most important that if development is to be allowed here we see a material change to the quality of the GI in this area. The context for this is as follows:

Context

- The objections lodged by the CVRP that you have on file – if you require any clarification on the matters we raise please let us know.
- The policy context set out in national policy/ guidance, particularly around Green Belt considerations and the overall aim of keeping the GB permanently open. Also policy in the adopted Development Plan, with appropriate weight given to the emerging Plan.
- One aspect of national policy that supports a particularly positive approach to the outcome of negotiations is at para 145:

“145. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to **enhance their beneficial use**, such as looking for opportunities to **provide access**; to provide opportunities for outdoor **sport and recreation**; to **retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity**; or to **improve damaged and derelict land.**”

- We have expressed our concern about the fragility of the GB in this area and we trust this will be evident from a thorough site visit. The CVRP is a linear, north-

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south, piece of strategic green infrastructure with a long-term role as a green lung on the edge of the capital.

- In this part of the CVRP the corridor between the subject site and the Colne Brook (river) provides the natural environment link between those 'green' parts of the Colne Valley to the north of Colnbrook and south of Horton/ Poyle e.g. the assets at the Arthur Jacobs Nature Reserve, the Lakes at Wraysbury/ Ankerwyke and Staines Moor.
- The OS map below shows the site in relation to this 'green' corridor and it is hopefully evident the linking role it performs. You can see that the Colne Valley Way currently passes adjacent to the site. As you have hopefully now seen for yourself it does not provide an attractive route and it is incumbent on the local authority to take opportunities to address this to protect and best realise the 'green' potential of the Colne Valley's green infrastructure – a key part of Metropolitan Green Belt.



- The 2019 Colne and Crane Green Infrastructure Strategy was commissioned on behalf of a consortium of authorities (including your own) to indicate the sort of opportunities that should be seized and projects that could help realise the area's potential.

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- I believe you have familiarised yourself with the 2019 Strategy and the projects we outline derive their rationale from that context and Strategy.
- One initiative previously promoted – and negotiated by the Council – concerned opening up the Colne Brook river corridor as a public access route, with a bridge connecting to the Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve. Information concerning this requirement, in connection with agreed minerals extraction in this area is included as an annex to this letter (to follow separately) and the requirement reflects an excellent project that has great relevance to the applications under consideration, as well as any others in this locality. I have been unable to ascertain why the obligations involved have not been followed through. Can you please advise?

I make no apology for setting out this context at some length, as it is all very important to the consideration of the applications within the CVRP.

Projects and Contributions

The starting point is that the outcome of any negotiations should be a high quality walking/ cycling route between Colnbrook and Horton, which delivers an enjoyable experience for the user of the natural environment and open Green Belt in the vicinity of the site you are dealing with.

The 2019 GI Strategy includes projects SC102 and SC207, which are candidate projects. As in the case of most initiatives of this sort there is considerable work to be done defining the precise nature of the project, the scope for partnership funding etc.. Having liaised with CVRP/ Groundwork colleagues I can confirm that, in principle, they will be very happy to participate and potentially lead on implementation. This is subject to costs being covered of course.

We would like to see a strategic improvement to the alignment, and quality, of the Colne Valley Way/ Trail (including landscape improvements) in this immediate area, because of what is experienced now. In the event of any application approval, we therefore favour a contribution towards project SC102 (path from Colnbrook along the west bank of the Colne Brook then bridge over the river to Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve).

Proportionate with the permanent change to, and impact on, the Green Belt in the vicinity arising from the proposals and the nature of improvements needed/ their likely cost we consider that any contribution should be in the region of £125,000. The CVRP has considerable experience of implementing such improvement projects.

Approximately 4/5^{ths} of that should be directed to the capital works and associated costs and 1/5th directed to an annual payment (over, say 15 years) towards maintenance costs.

If, after investigation, the favoured project is not capable of implementation funds should be directed to project SC207 (Bridleway/Colne Valley Trail enhancement) in the vicinity of the site and to the implementation of a 'green team' to undertake countryside management service in the area within 3km of the site, relating to the improvement and maintenance of the landscape, biodiversity, access, signage and river habitat enhancements.

It may be that the favoured project is already substantially funded (depending on the outcome of your advice on the matter of the previous obligation) and, if that is the case, funds can be redirected as referred to above.

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We suggest a mechanism that provides for a) a 10-year period after the grant of a permission to allow for all necessary investigations and identification of the specific project (in agreement with the Council). All within the remit of **improving the natural environment and access to it within 3 km of the application site** and b) that such agreed project to be then implemented within 15 years of the date of any permission.

Conclusion

I hope this assists your consideration of the applications and I would reiterate our concern that, if the Council is to view the proposals favourably that all opportunities are taken to enhance the beneficial use and condition of this part of the CVRP, in line with NPPF Para 145.

If you have any queries on the above I confirm that we will be happy to participate in further discussion or meeting, if needed.

Yours sincerely

Jerry

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For and on behalf of the Colne Valley Regional Park

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