

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

Planning Service
Buckinghamshire Council
King George V House
King George V Road
Amersham
HP6 5AW



1st December 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

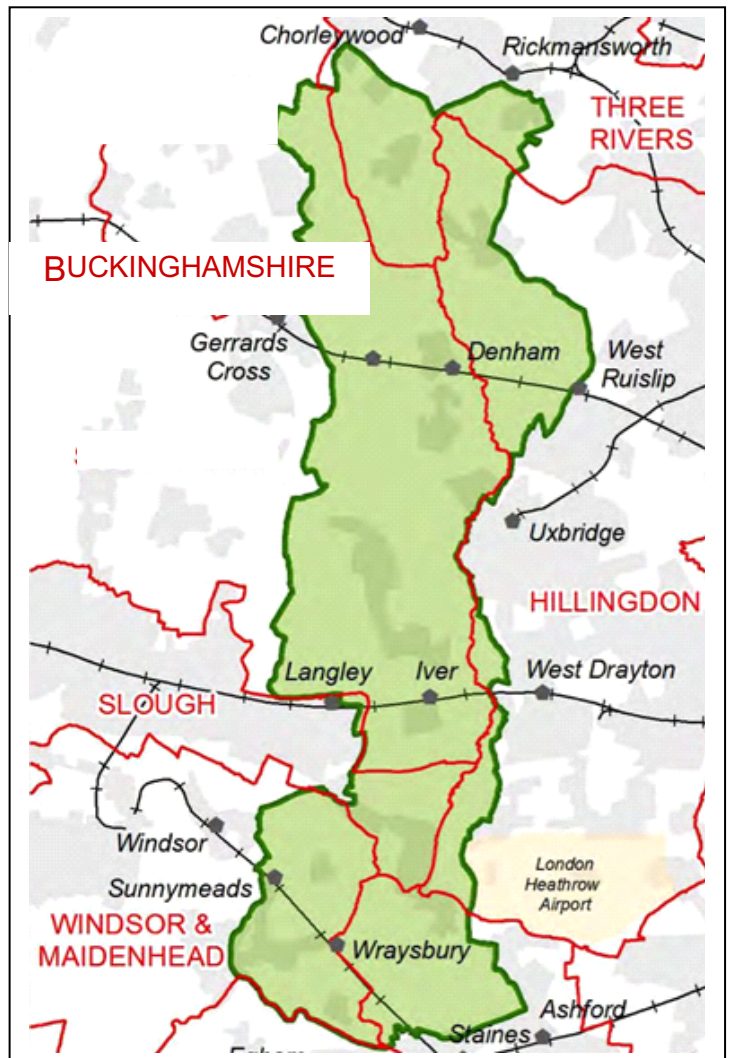
PL/22/3403/FA

Dromenagh Farm data centre, Seven Hills Road, Iver

This response is from and behalf of The Colne Valley Regional Park

The Colne Valley Regional Park was founded in 1965 when local authorities – including Bucks County Council – showed great foresight in agreeing to work together to preserve and enhance this precious area for recreation and nature conservation.

It is supported by more than 80 member organisations including local authorities, businesses, residents' associations, environmental charities and user groups. Groundwork South acts as the Park's managing agent.



Colne Valley Park Trust

Charity Registration Number: 1181303

Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company

A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England. Company No. 08131867

Registered Office: c/o Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre, Denham Court Drive, Denham,
Buckinghamshire, UB9 5PG
www.colnevalleypark.org.uk

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The Colne Valley Regional Park has six objectives:

<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/whats-special/>

Landscape

The Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) covers six local planning authorities. As a result, the valley is rarely, if ever, considered at a landscape scale.

The creation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/green-infrastructure-strategy-downloads/> for the Colne Valley Regional Park aims to bring the green and blue on the map to the forefront of planning policy and decisions, and feature the landscape of the Valley as a whole, rather than from the perspective of its various council boundaries.

These boundaries are an administrative convenience – they don't exist as real barriers to people and wildlife. The Crane Valley has been added to this strategy to provide a truly landscape-scale picture of the area.

This cross-border approach is entirely consistent with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Summary of response

This Green Belt site has been degraded and neglected since the M25 construction. The existing uses have gradually become established but still only amount to less than 6000 sqm. The proposed development amounts to nearly 65000 sq metres.

It is important to recognise that Green Belt designation is not a landscape policy. Unfortunately, many sites within the GB are less than attractive. However that does prevent them from meeting GB objectives in terms of keeping land open and separating settlements.

Undoubtedly the applicant's proposal will prettify the site and create 4.5 Ha of public open space out of a total of 16.5 Ha. However, like the proposed bridleway this will almost certainly be permissive and could be closed at any time.

The BNG is impressive at 130% but that involves firstly removing most of the existing trees and vegetation and thinning the hedgerows. New planting will take a long time to reach maturity and will require substantial maintenance.

The site although degraded at present is close to ancient woodland and protected nature conservation sites such as BNS and SSSI. It will be important to create sufficient new planting to benefit bats and other wildlife who use the land as a corridor.

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The data centre buildings will be sunk reducing their visual impact unlike in other data centre proposals, but they will still be up to 11m high having a negative impact on the openness of the site.

However, data centres by their very nature consume large amounts of electricity and produce substantial amounts of heat requiring artificial cooling and contribute to a localised heat island effect. The addition of green roofs and solar PV will go some way to ameliorate this. Green walls however must be water efficient. E.g rainwater should be collected on site to provide irrigation where necessary. The applicants have promised to only use green electricity from the National Grid but this extra demand may lead to the expansion of the substation on the Slough Road which will further harm the CVRP and impact the openness of the GB.

This site together with the Pinewood proposals will further urbanise this part of the Colne Valley Regional Park and the GB to its detriment.

In terms of rights of way the response submitted by Bucks rights of way officer captures what is needed in terms of mitigation and compensation for this aspect of the development and if approved should be part of any legal agreement.

It should be noted that this application is also contrary to the Ivers Neighbourhood Plan in that it proposes building on a strategic gap.

In terms of mitigation for the harm this development will cause to the Regional Park and the Green Belt and to reflect the requirements of CP 9 of the South Bucks Local Plan we would like to see:

- North to South paths and the road crossing are supported as they add connectivity to the Rights of Way network, these new paths should be designated Public Rights of Way. The 4.5Ha of public open space is supported but there must be a mechanism to ensure this remains open in perpetuity.
- A major omission in the path network is an attractive east to west 'green' route to link Iver Heath to the site. The obvious route is to create a link from Iver Heath Fields to the west side of the motorway bridge then a link into the site from the east side of motorway bridge that can connect to the path from the proposed crossing. Without this the green space element of the site will fail to realise its potential as a community resource. See also the response from Bucks ROW officer.
- Contribution to a Countryside Management Service project in the Colne Valley Regional Park in proximity (approx. 3km) to the site to result in improvement and maintenance of the landscape, biodiversity, access, signage, and river habitat. This can contribute to the delivery of the Colne & Crane GI strategy projects: 'Whole Area': Project X. 'North Colne' and 'Mid Colne': Projects NC206, MC101 (proposed paths could form part of this link. Planning gain to contribute to feasibility/options appraisal for Uxbridge to Iver Heath green route), MC201 and MC205..

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Buckinghamshire Council should therefore support the CVRP in delivering its six objectives by amending this application to reflect the above comments.

Jane Griffin
Director
Colne Valley Regional Park

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