



Engaging with Planning across the Colne Valley Regional Park

9th March 2023

Iver Village Hall



Engaging with Planning across the Colne Valley Regional Park

Welcome

Stewart Pomeroy (Groundwork/CVRP)

Presentations

Darran Eggleton (BC)

Jerry Unsworth (Plg Consultant)

Quick Fire Experience

Janet Crame BEM (Horton PC)

David Brackin (Fulmer PC)

Leigh Tugwood RIBA (Iver Heath RA)

Workshops (18.15)

Workshop Feedback (18.50)

Q&A with Panel (19.00)

Close (19.15)



Explore Your Colne Valley Regional Park

43 square miles

>3M people within 10 miles

70 lakes + 200km rivers/canals

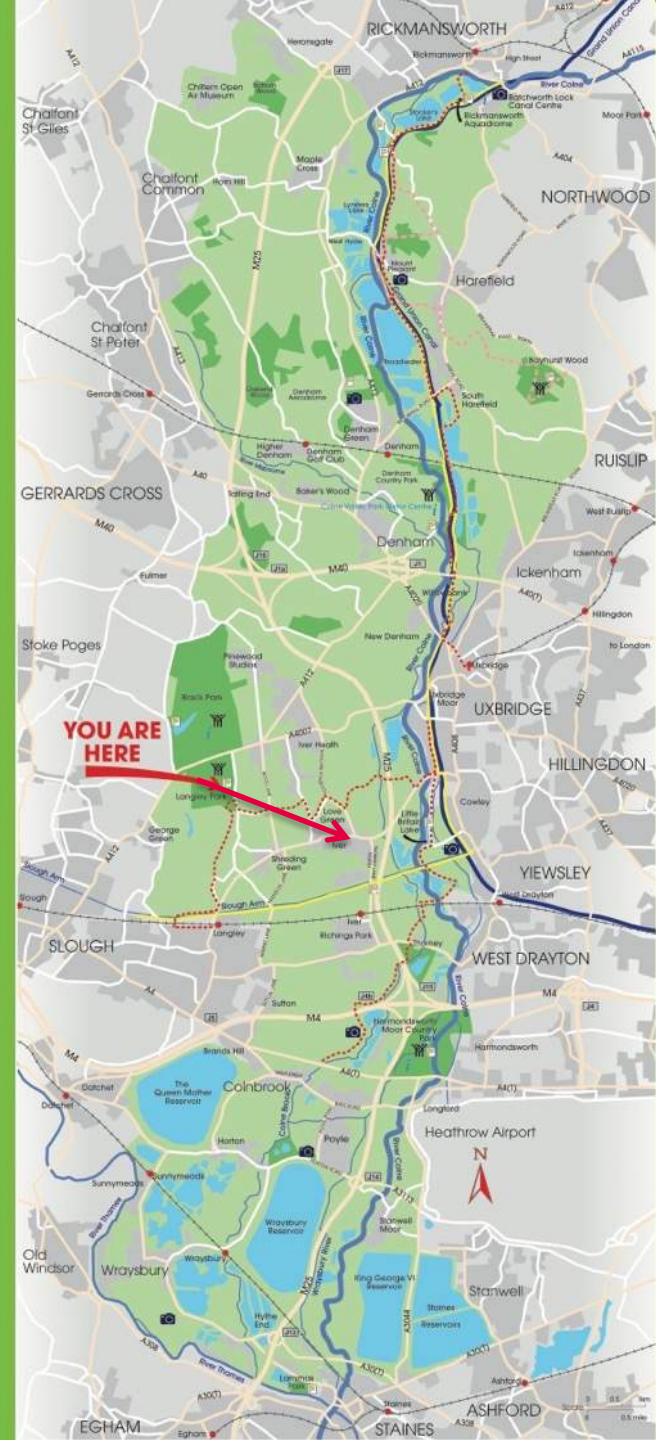
100's of green spaces, 5 country parks, 20 Nature Reserves, 13 SSSI's

270km of public rights of way

CVRP - key to fulfilling the positive aspects of Green Belt policy

Key to physical and mental health, biodiversity & farming

Most pressured part of the (inner) Green Belt



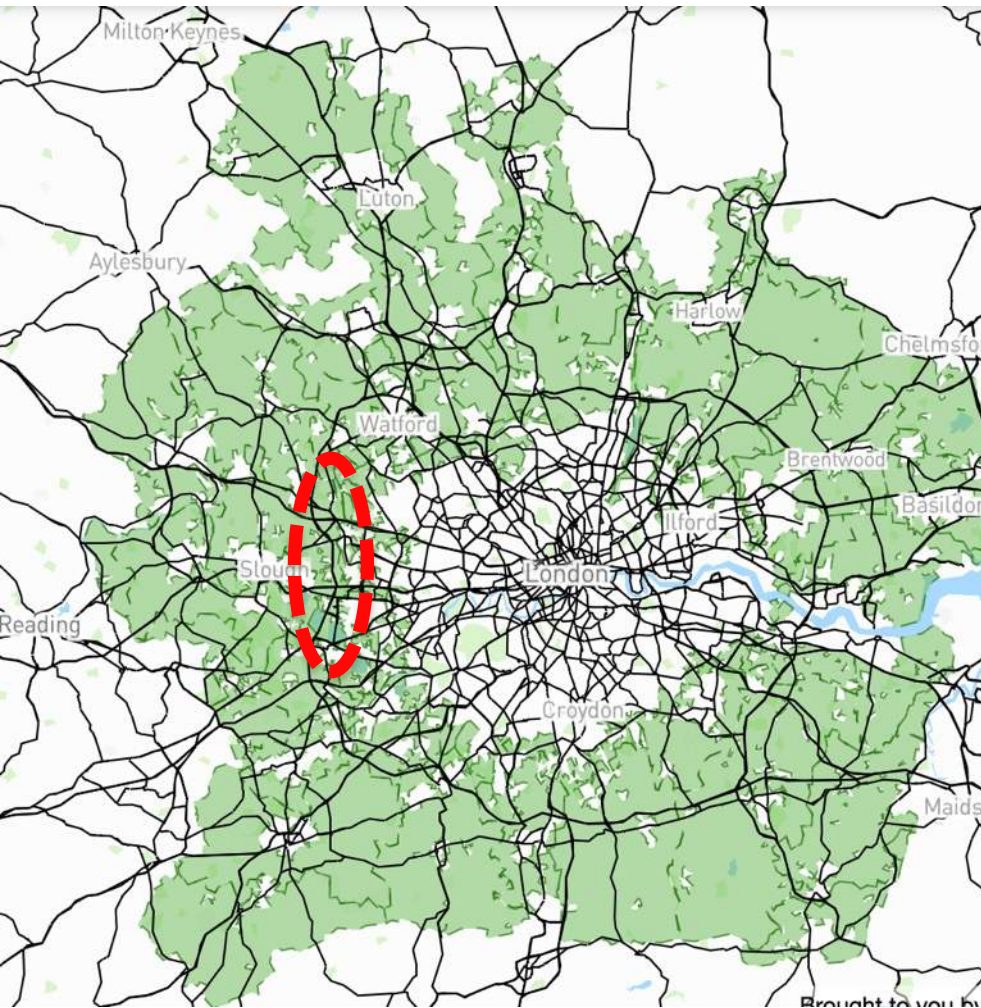
Engaging with Planning across the Colne Valley Regional Park

Jerry Unsworth

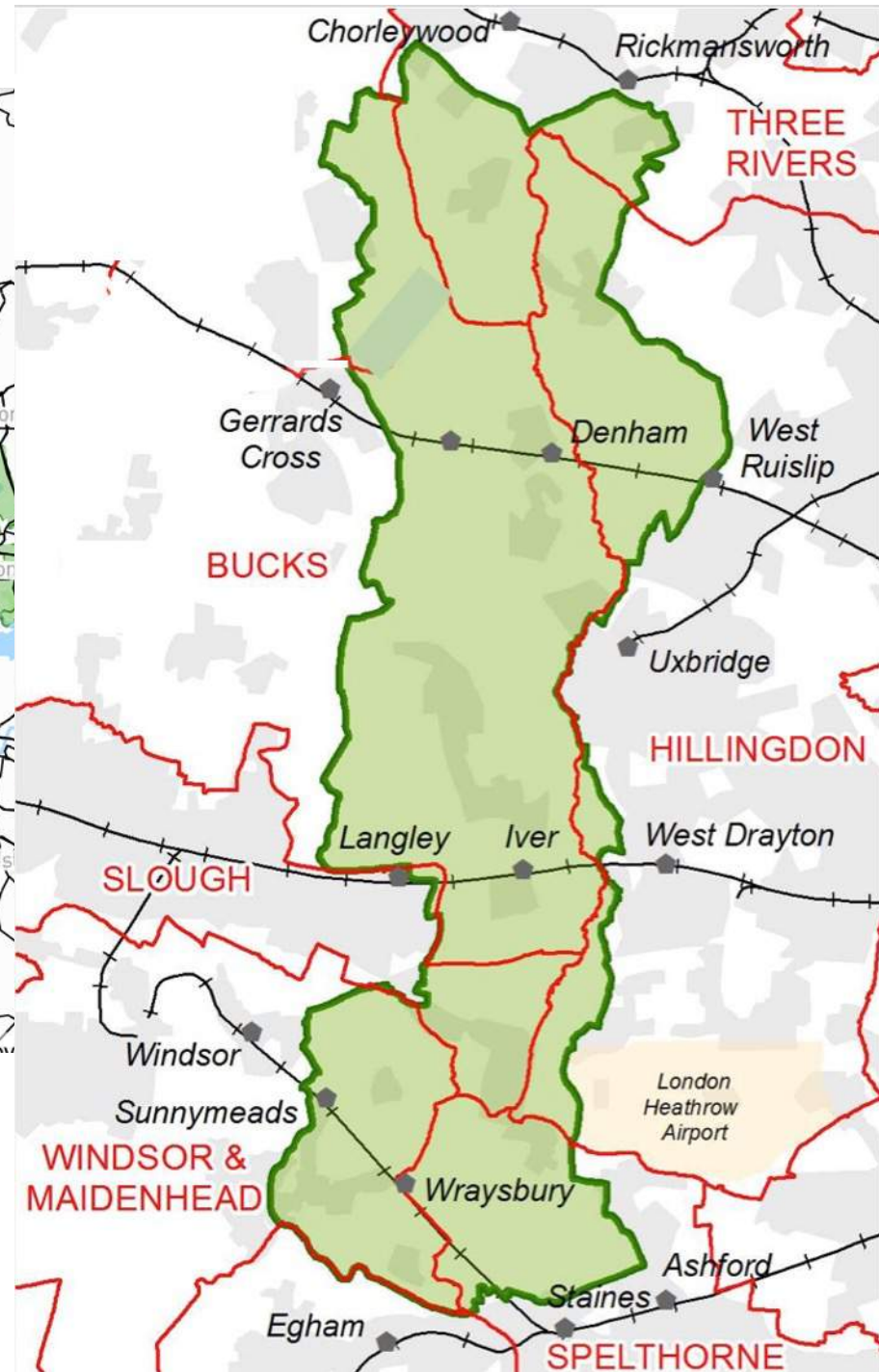
Independent Planning Consultant for CVRP

- The planning challenge in the CVRP
- Policy context
- Outline of draft Toolkit





A key part of London's Green Belt



Green Belt – the basics



Often overlooked (paragraphs in the NPPF)

142. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release GB land they should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the GB can be offset through **compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.**

145. Once GBs defined, LPAs 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.





This is why the CVRP was established to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt and its natural environment across the Colne Valley



2019 G.I. Strategy



COLNE & CRANE VALLEYS
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY
SEPTEMBER 2019
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Landscape
Institute
Awards
2019

FINALIST

Landscape Planning and
Assessment Award



ARUP

Green Belt

“Exceptional Circumstances”

(for Local Plans)

140. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where **exceptional circumstances** are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans ..

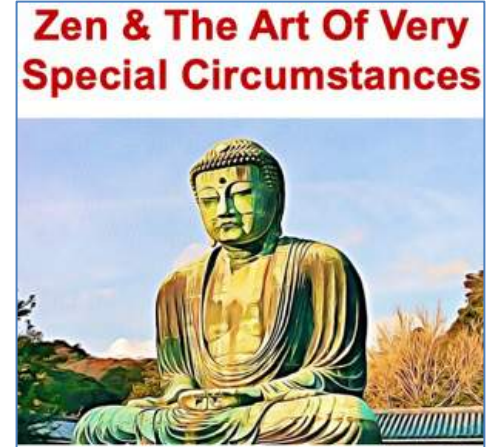
- Local need for development - Housing/ Commercial/ community etc.
- Regional and London context
- Green Belt context
 - Prevent urban sprawl
 - Openness and permanence
- Strategic cross-border planning

Green Belt “Very Special Circumstances”

(‘ad hoc’ major applications)

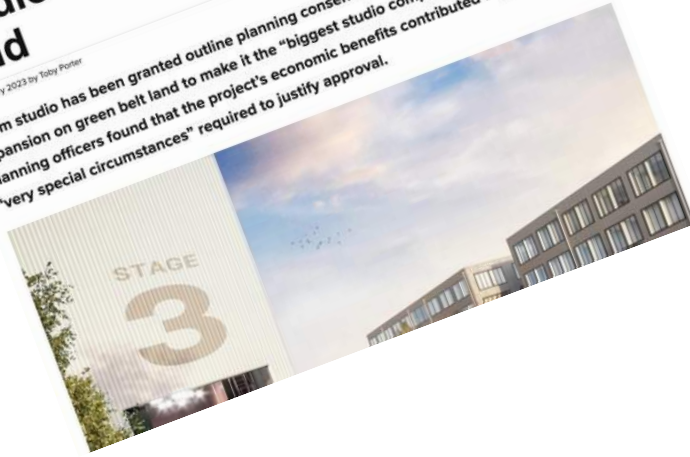
No definition – decision maker is

- Applying national policy (NPPF) and up to date local policy
- Determining whether potential harm to the GB is “*clearly outweighed by other considerations*”



Council cites economic benefits in allowing ‘world’s biggest studio complex’ on green belt land

22 February 2023 by Toby Porter
A film studio has been granted outline planning consent for a 131,170 square metre expansion on green belt land to make it the “biggest studio complex in the world”, after planning officers found that the project’s economic benefits contributed to providing the “very special circumstances” required to justify approval.



The Big Question

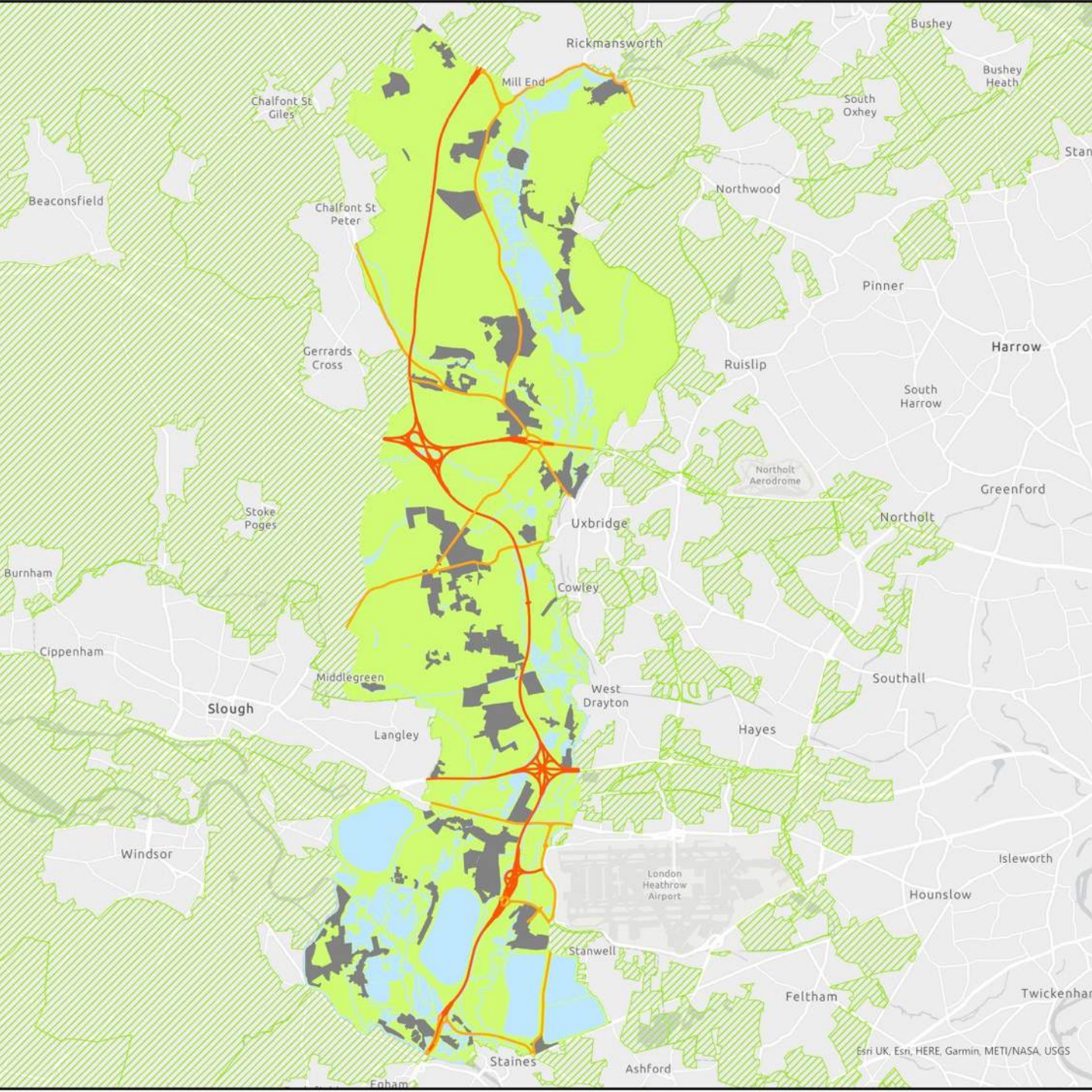
How GB ‘harm’ is assessed

Substantial weight to harm - proportionate to scale

If LPA (or SoS) sympathetic - should think strategically on mitigation/ compensation

NPPF Para 145 very relevant

Colne Valley Regional Park (2018)



And a significantly
changing
development
picture

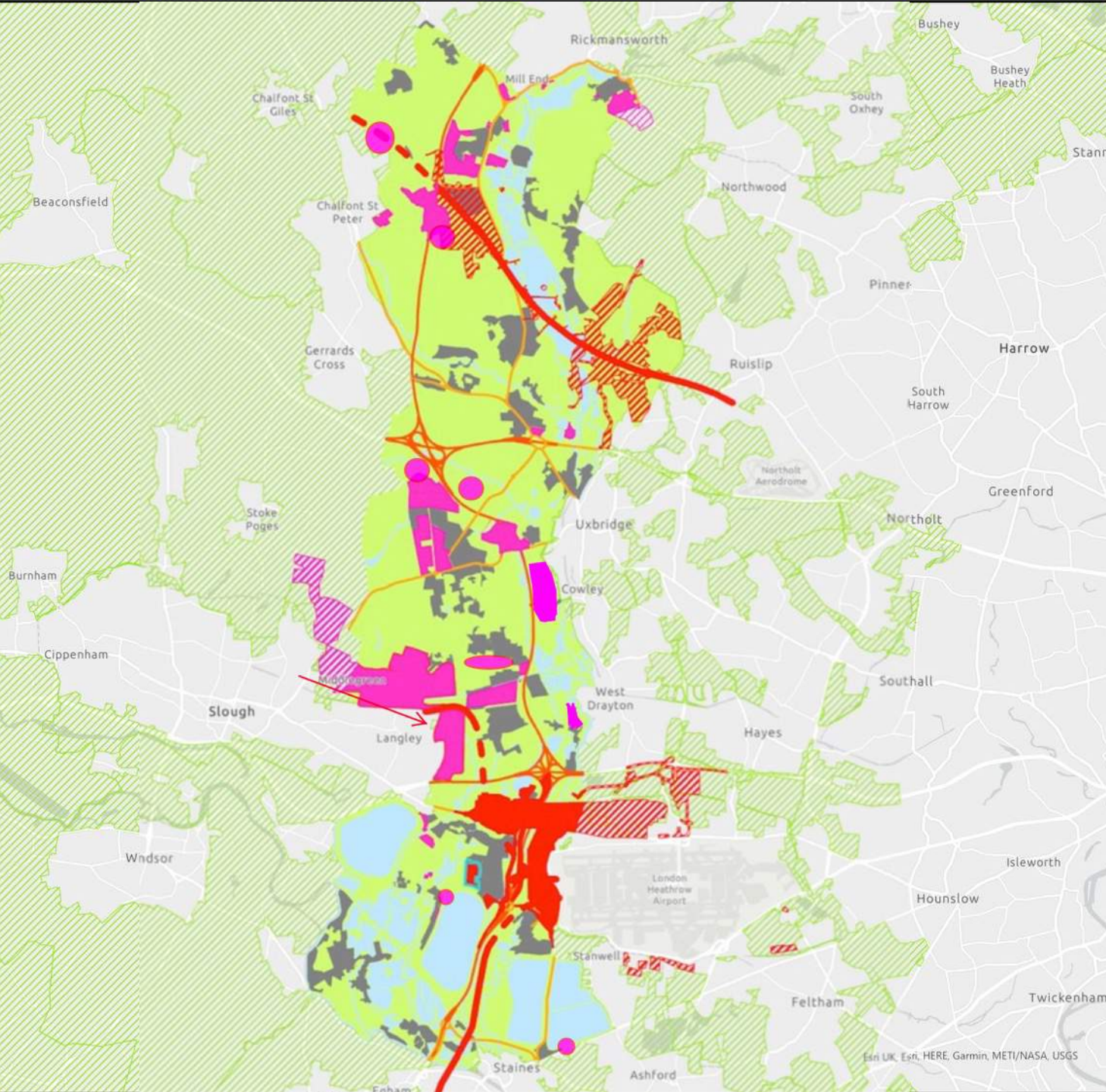


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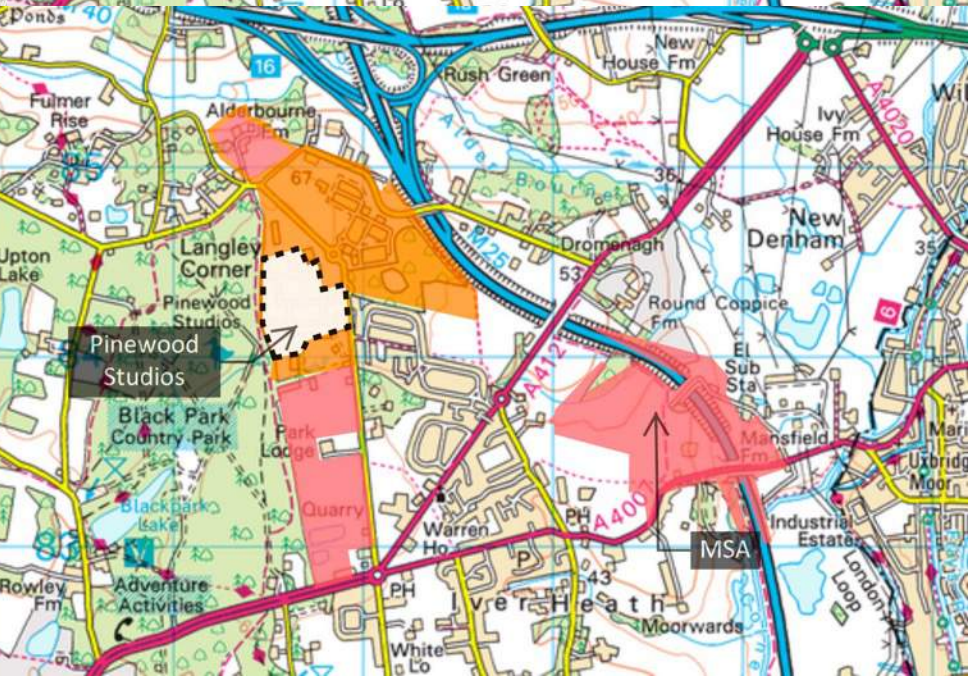
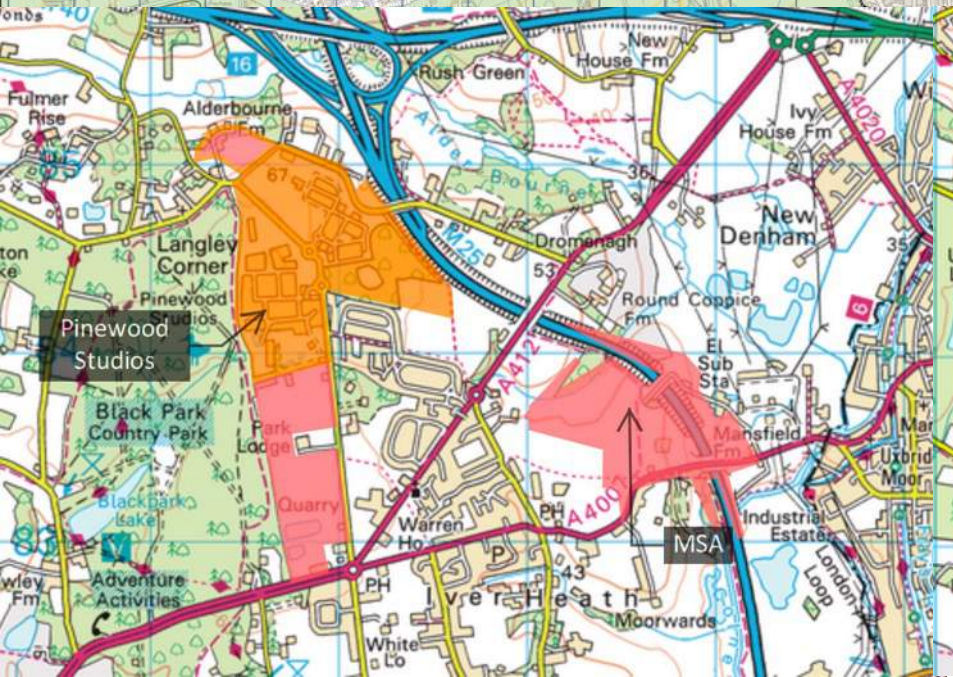
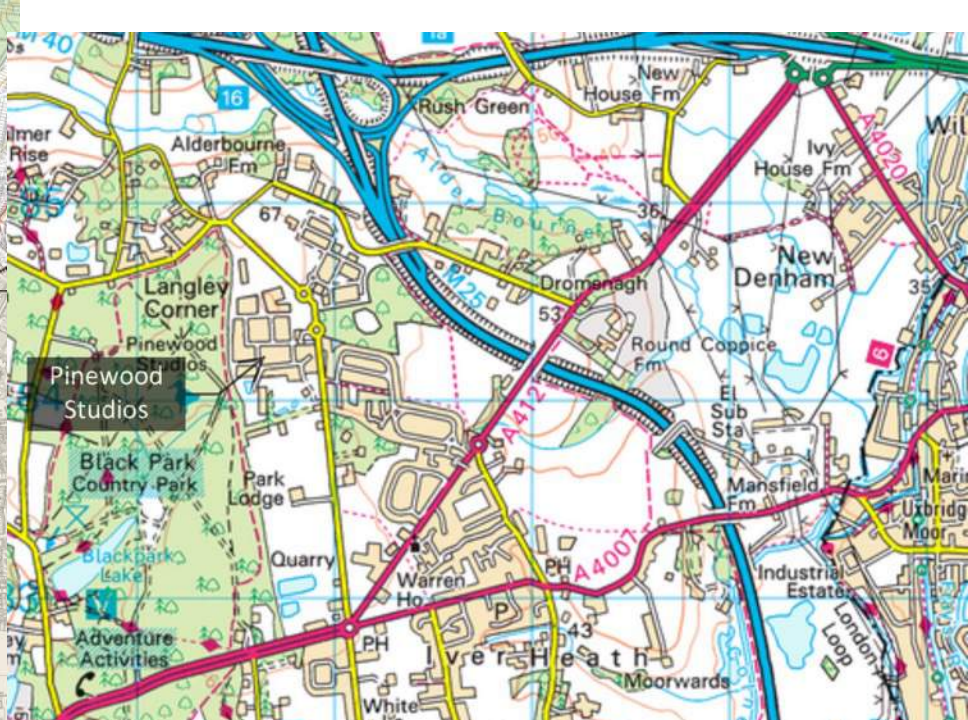
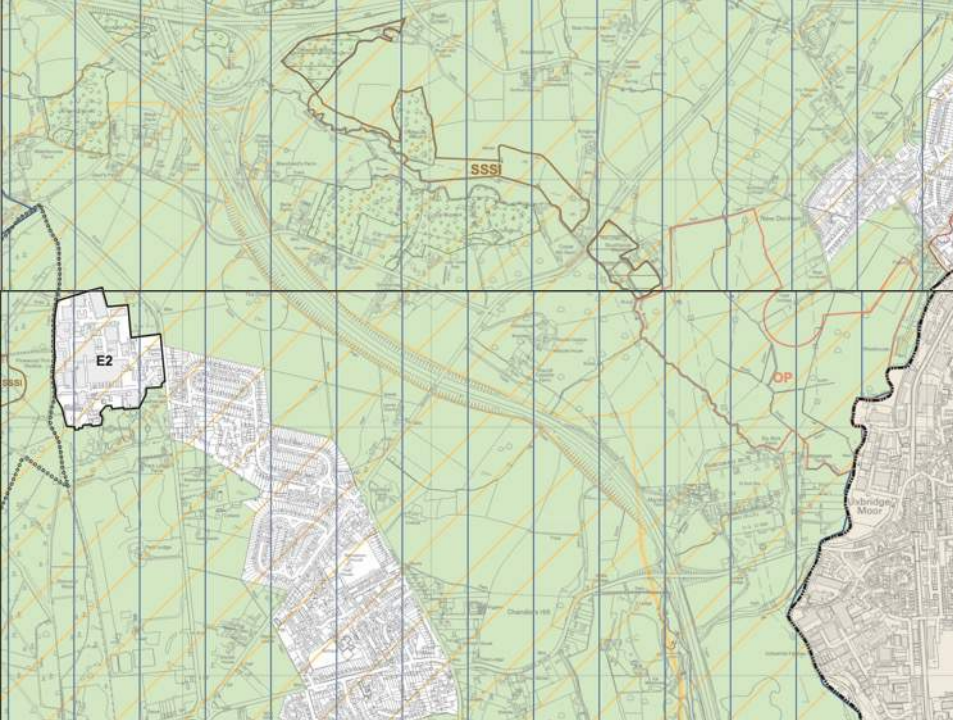
Colne Valley Regional Park (The Future?)

Showing approved schemes (current Pinewood Studios expansion & HS2 works) and if planned proposals (from LAs and others) are followed through

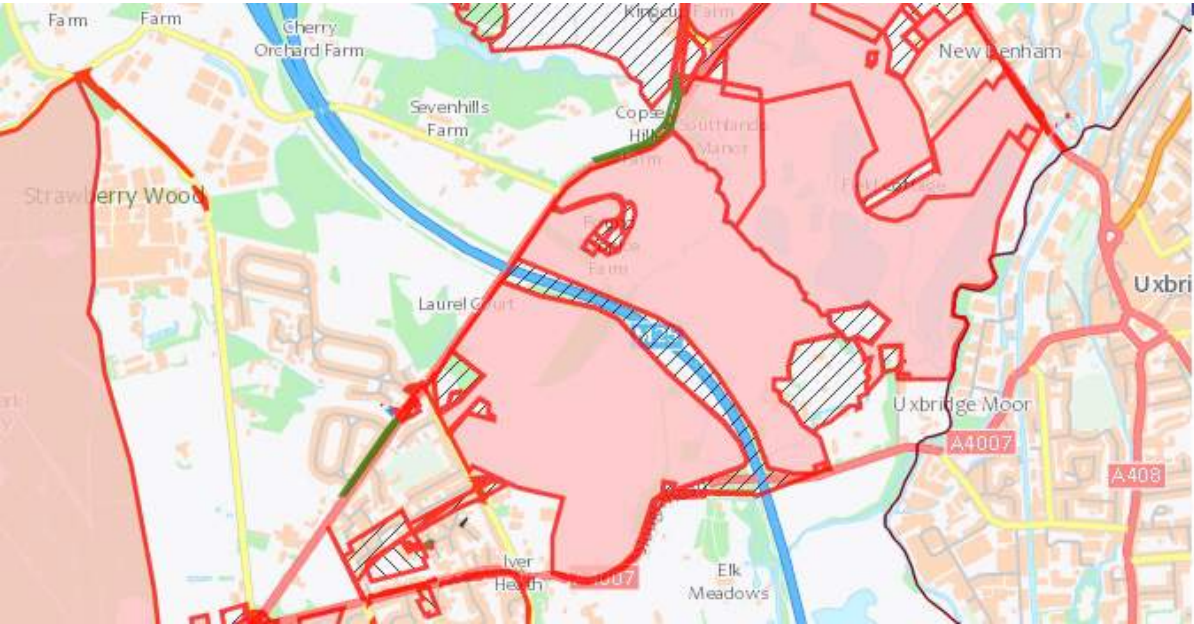


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Extract from 2019 Colne & Crane GI Strategy



Extract from Bucks Council Land Ownership 'Terrier'

Draft Toolkit

Planning matters

Concise

Collaborate

VSC

- focus on harm
- relate to NPPF policy

NPPF Extracts on 2nd page

Comments welcome, by 16 March 2023

jerryunsworthplanning@gmail.com



Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) Green Belt
DRAFT Toolkit to assist comments on proposed major development (March 2023)
 Comments welcome, by 16 March 2023 please to jerryunsworthplanning@gmail.com

Overview
 This paper is geared at major development in the Green Belt (GB), not infill or extensions. An proposal for major built development in the GB and some smaller developed areas are 'washed over'. The assessment in 'issues' of sustainable development does not apply. Where 'paras' are referred to, they refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – see over.

Planning Applications – the Basics
 Address 'material planning considerations' and 'local non-planning matters'. Be concise and include a summary of key points.

National Green Belt Policy – the basics
 Major Development is fundamentally inappropriate. GB is a strategic (cross-border) policy "to prevent urban sprawl & keep land permanently open". Openness has both visual & spatial qualities. GB serves 5 purposes (Para 138) – all important!

Emerging Development Plans and exceptional Circumstances (Local Plans)
 Release of GB land in Local Plans must be supported by exceptional circumstances (Para 140). As a strategic cross-border policy, LAs should be held to account if proposed development results in encroachment and sprawl in the GB, & Waste Plans.

Change ahead with Planning Reform?
 Be alert to permanent facilities proposed in Minerals & Waste Plans. Changes have housing focus. LAs to be not required to review GB to meet housing needs. Note: the CVRP expanded highlighting how GB policy needs updating.

Recent consultation, but GB fundamentals remain
 CVRP expanded highlighting how GB policy needs updating.

Collaborate
 Brief Councilors (Parks/VIAL MP & CVRP early on). Consider a petition.

Cumulative impact of major development
 If a difficult one but so important! If other proposals are not yet approved (and not allocated in a Plan) the Council is unlikely to consider the cumulative impact. But – the NPPF only envisages GB alterations only in Plans – would the scale of development prompt a later GB change?

Other material considerations (harm)
 Reference other harms as appropriate e.g. heritage, landscape & visual, area as appropriate e.g. ecology, development and parts of the NPPF (see over). BUT don't ignore the issues of local planning development in the GB. Be aware that challenging 'technical' things like traffic impact invariably require technical evidence.

Very Special Circumstances (VSC)
 Not defined – a judgment for the decision maker (Council/Inspector). But a very high bar (para 140). Inappropriate development in the GB, and any other identified harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to give VSC. key thing is to always identify the GB harm clearly.

Green Belt policy – often overlooked
 Harm to the GB should be assessed broadly against the 5 purposes (para 138) and more... Para 140 says GB boundary change only in Plans. Para 145 says LAs should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the GB – releases if a LA is minded accepting VSC opportunities (not). Whilst a Local Plan may be old, recent evidence can still be relevant (e.g. S. Buckley/Chiltern GB review).

Green Belt/ other planning policies, transport, area character, ecology, agriculture, landscape impact
 e.g. loss of property value or a 'private' view, covenants, commercial competition

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nppf>

137. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

138. Green Belt serves five purposes:
 a) to check the unrestricted spread of large built-up areas;
 b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 d) to assist in the setting of the special character of historic towns;
 e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

139. Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their benefits to provide such as looking for opportunities for outdoor sports and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

140. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.

141. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by the proposed development, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations.

142. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it. This includes mineral extraction and local transport infrastructure.

143. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions include recreation, agriculture, limited extensions, infilling, affordable housing, replacement buildings...

144. Promoting sustainable transport. Section 12 of the NPPF includes policy that may be relevant to a particular case e.g. Section 9 'Promoting sustainable transport', Section 13 'Enhancing self-designed paths', Section 14 'Meeting the needs of climate change, flooding and coastal change', Section 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.

Remember – other parts of the NPPF include policy that may be relevant to a particular case e.g. Section 9 'Promoting sustainable transport', Section 12 'Enhancing self-designed paths', Section 13 'Enhancing the natural environment', Section 14 'Meeting the needs of climate change, flooding and coastal change', Section 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.

Local Planning Policy
 Check your local Council's website. Even when Local Plans are old GB designations will remain in force as they are consistent with national policy. We encourage you to reference the 2019 Colne & Crane Green Infrastructure Strategy. The CVRP is working with the local LAs to give this strategy greater 'planning status' and to develop it.

Remember – other parts of the NPPF include policy that may be relevant to a particular case e.g. Section 9 'Promoting sustainable transport', Section 12 'Enhancing self-designed paths', Section 13 'Enhancing the natural environment', Section 14 'Meeting the needs of climate change, flooding and coastal change', Section 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.

Workshops



Workshops

Half an hour

Quick intros

Prompts

- What **significant learning points** from experience?
- Useful **tips and techniques**

Outputs

- **Note down top 3 ideas** on being more effective when making comments
- Nominated person to **feedback the best one**



Improving how the Green Belt functions on London's Fringe

Policy and practice, using the Colne Valley Regional Park as a case study

Conference – Tuesday 18th April

18 April
12:30-17:15
Venue:
Brunel University,
Uxbridge
Admission £45
Concessions £20

An inspiring conference for practitioners and politicians to discuss and raise awareness of the challenges facing the 'inner' Green Belt and promote ideas and discussion on how the planning system can be improved for the future.

**Improve the
countryside on
your doorstep**



Engaging with Planning across the Colne Valley Regional Park

Thank You

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