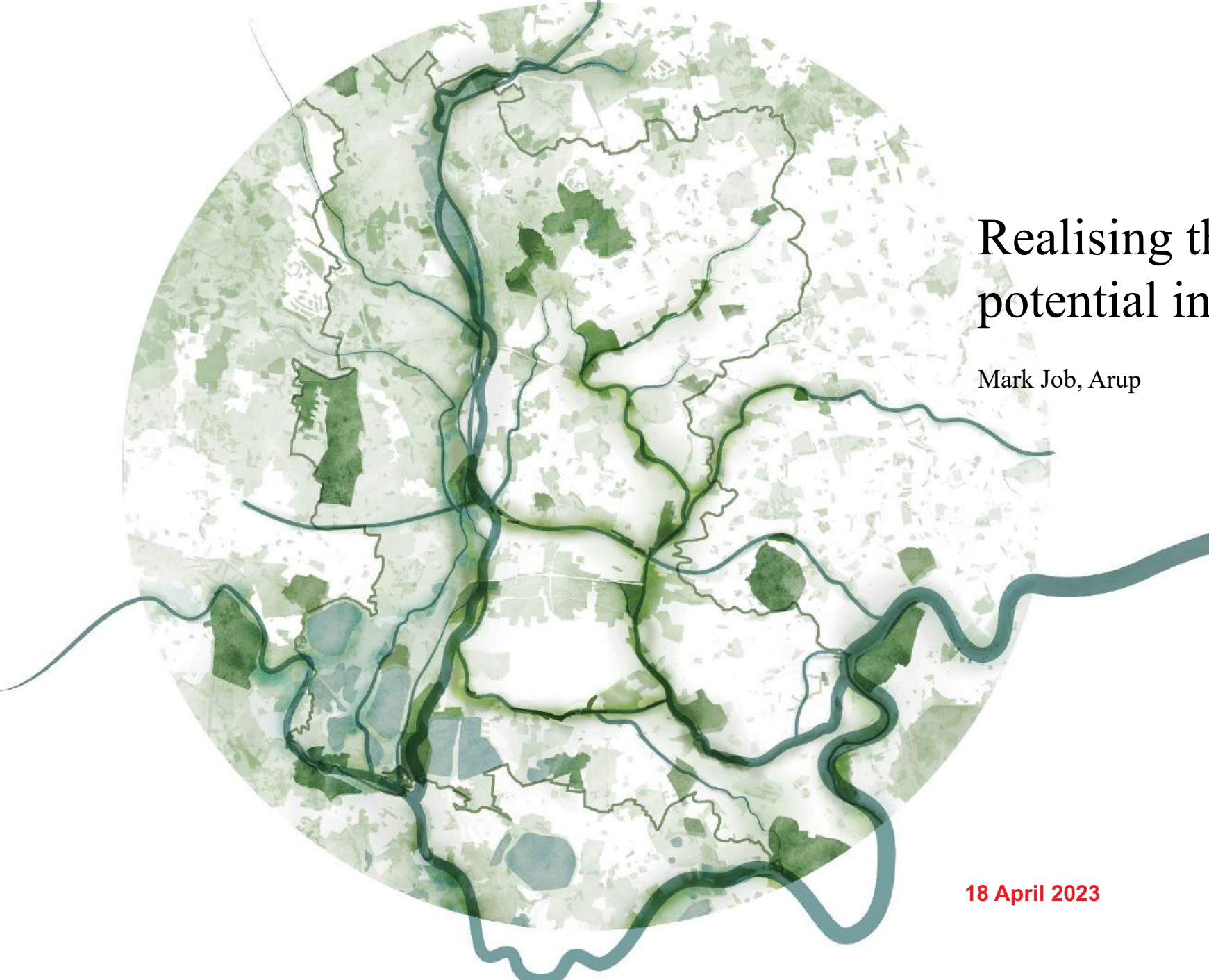


Realising the Green Belt's potential in the 21st century

Mark Job, Arup

18 April 2023

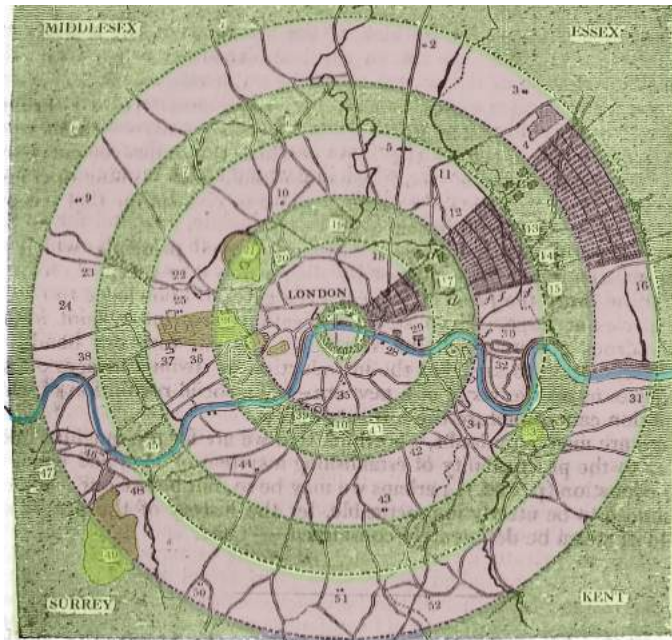


The origins of Green Belt policy

“I am convinced that, for the well-being of our people and for the preservation of the countryside, we have a clear duty to do all we can to prevent the further unrestricted sprawl of the great cities.”

Rt.Hon Duncan Sandys, Minister of Housing and Local Government

26th April, 1955,



“Inside a Green Belt, approval should not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use of existing buildings for purposes other than agriculture, sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.”

A.B.Valentine, Under Secretary, 3rd August, 1955



Policy today

“...prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

NPPF para 137

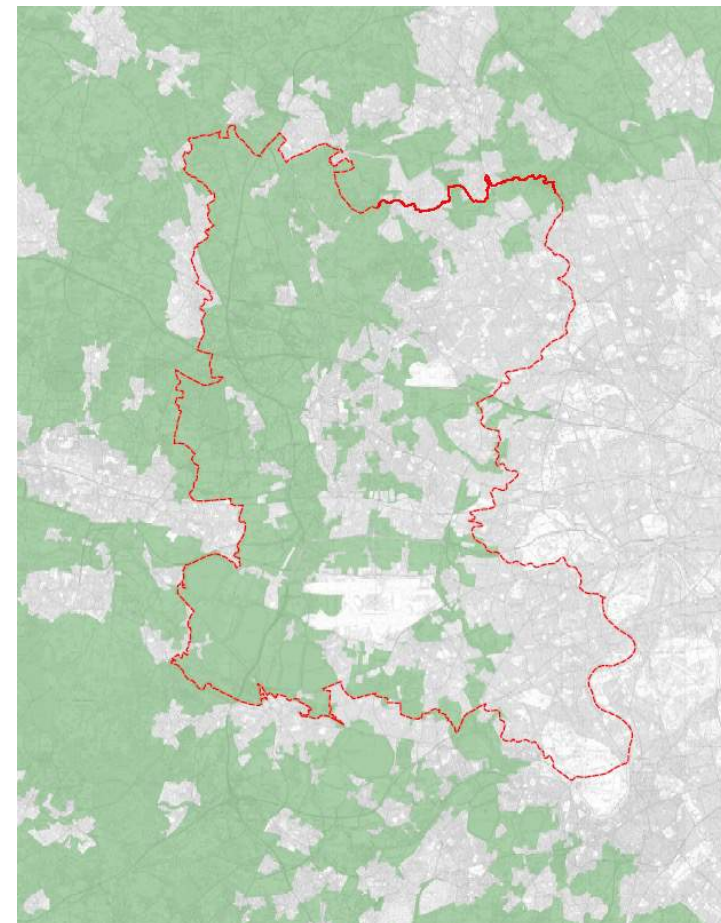
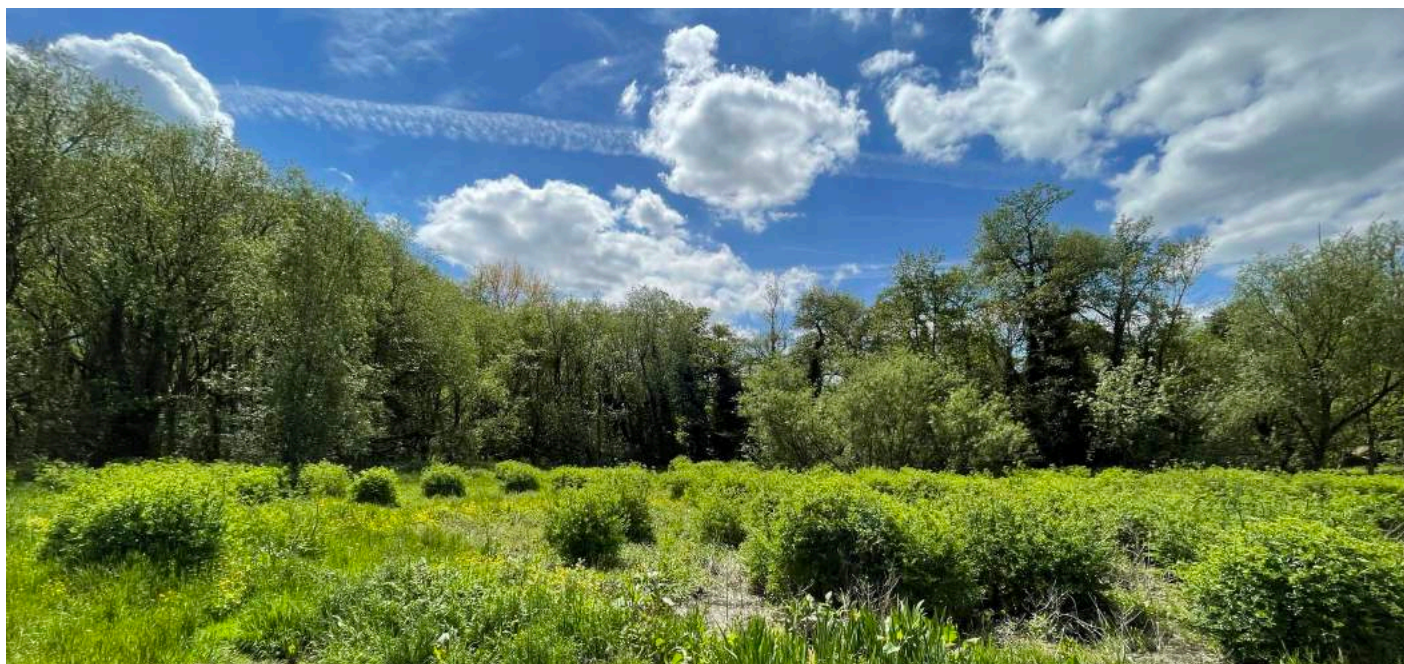
“development proposals that would harm the Green Belt should be refused except where very special circumstances exist.”

London Plan, 2021, Policy G2



The landscape of the Colne and Crane valleys

“The quality of the green infrastructure in both valleys is considerable; a great foundation for a thriving landscape ecosystem.”



A valuable resource

“It is a special place – a surprising survival of a rich and varied landscape so close to the urban fringe of London. It is a vitally important resource for people, and home to an astonishing variety of wildlife.”

John Whitby, Chairman Colne Valley Regional Park



155KM
OF REGIONAL/NATIONAL RECREATION
ROUTES



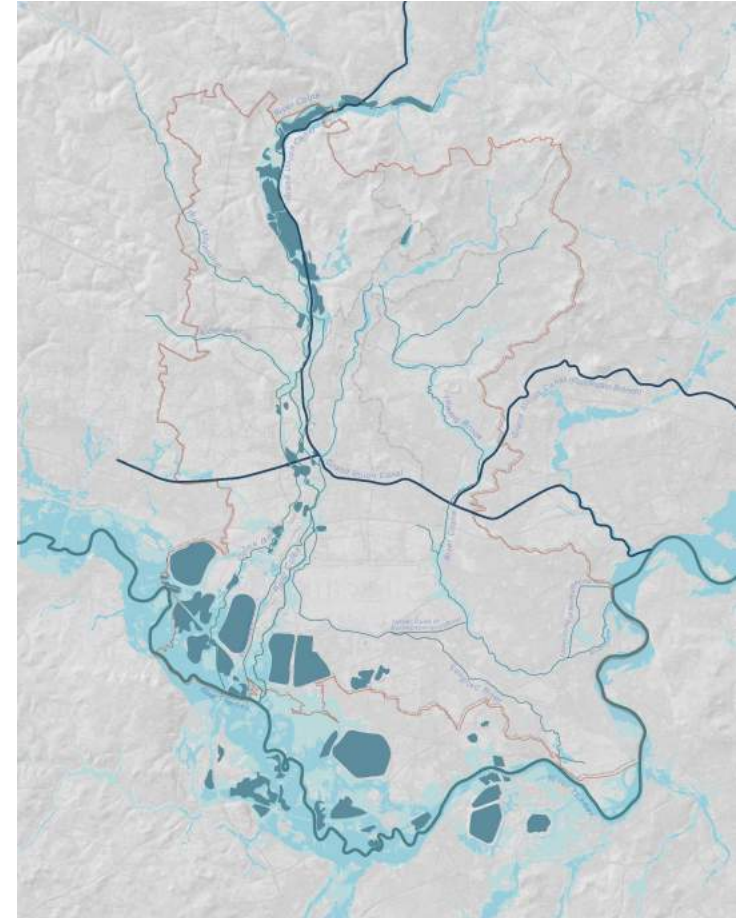
142
INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL
ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS



30%
OF THE AREA SITS WITHIN THE
FLOODPLAIN ON THE COLNE AND CRANE



946
NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE
DESIGNATIONS



A landscape of health, wellbeing and social cohesion

“...a precious commodity, providing a wide range of ecosystem services benefitting both wildlife and people.”

John Waxman,

Development Manager Crane Valley Partnership

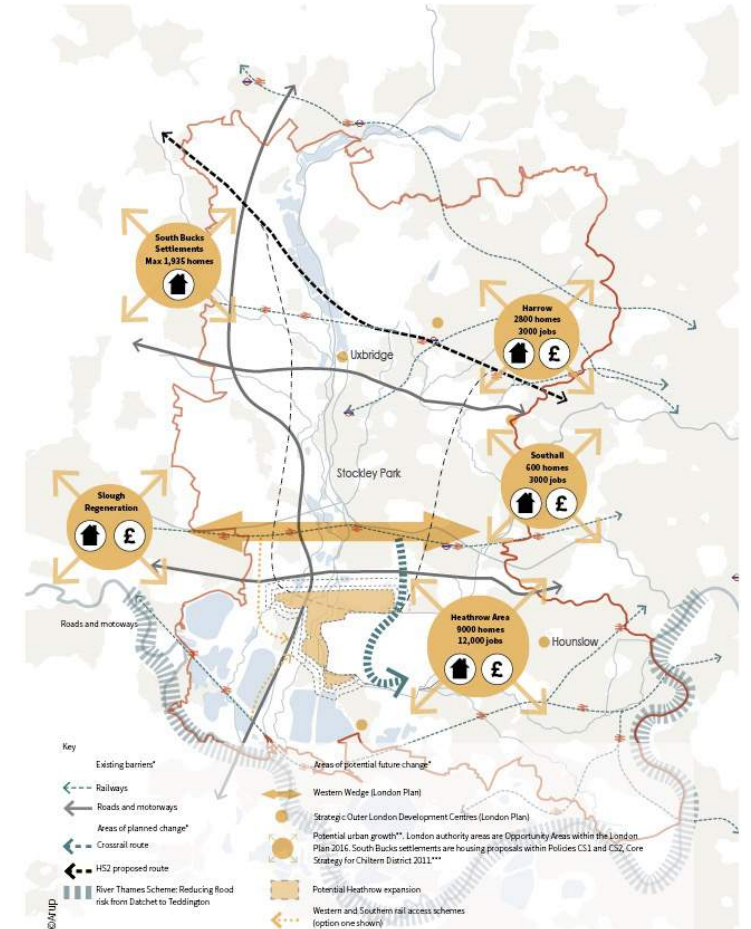


But one that is under threat

Established in 1965 to restore damaged urban fringes across five counties.

At the time was already home to the huge reservoirs, national rail lines and the M4 motorway – quickly followed by the M3 and M25, and Heathrow airport.

Now home to the Europe's largest infrastructure project, HS2, potential expansion of the airport alongside strategic development areas at the edge of London and to the west.



A fragmented landscape

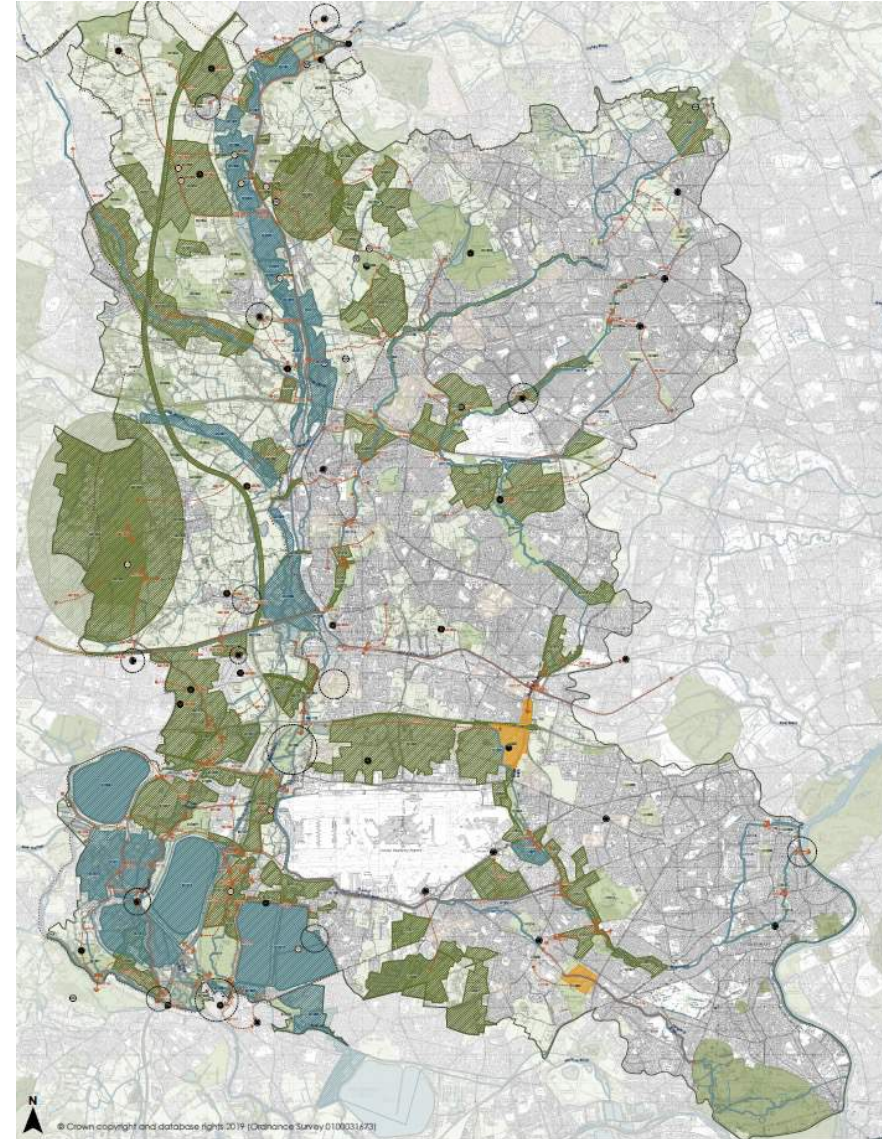
Resulting in a complex and fragmented landscape, awash with gems and potential, but under performing as a whole system.

“Our vision is for the Colne and Crane valleys to be a valued, connected network of open spaces for nature, recreation and wellbeing by 2050.”



A strategy led approach

- Unite stakeholders behind a common vision
- Identify the high value assets
- Connect and programme the opportunities regardless of boundaries
- Link funding, land, expertise and passion
- Deliver a resilient green infrastructure network



Designing in context


The special qualities of the valleys have developed over millennia of natural processes combined with human intervention.


“Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics.”

NPPF para 127





To a series of principles

1  Celebrate landscape, character & heritage








2  Protect & enhance the nature of environment









3  Improve pedestrian & cycle connectivity






4  Provide for communities








5  Be adaptable & resilient to change








6  Promote health & wellbeing

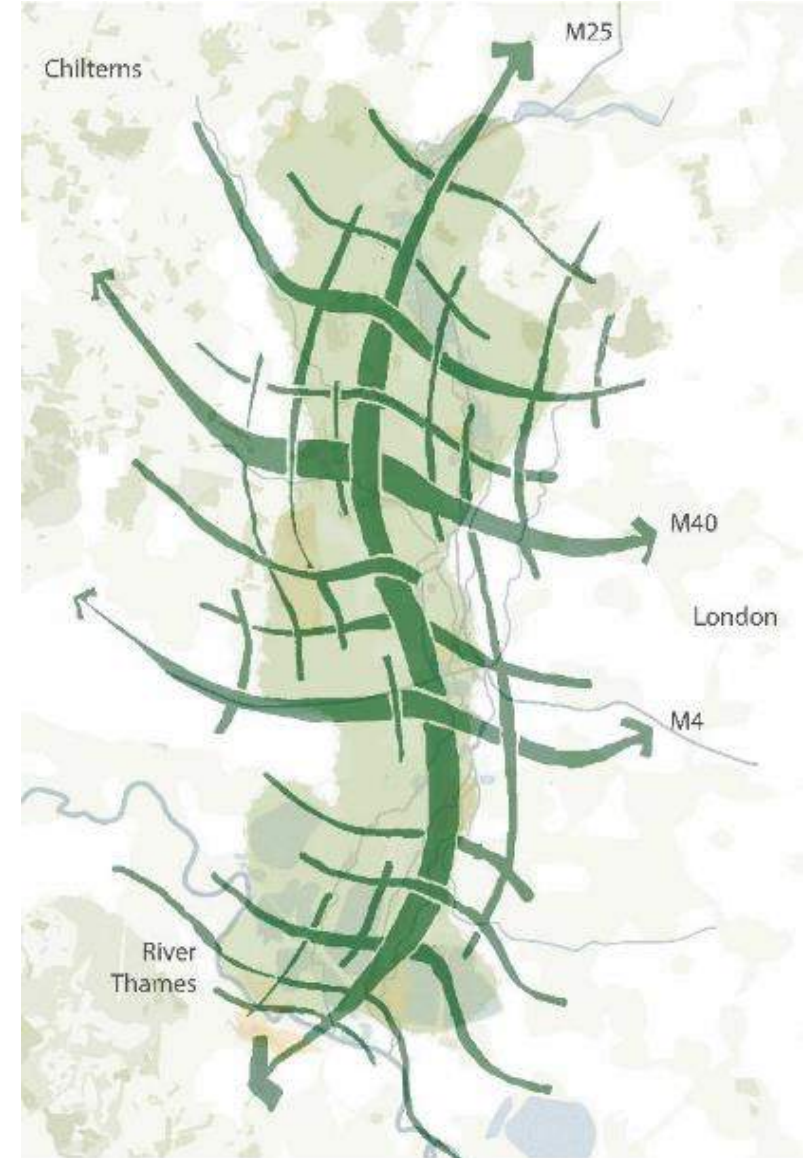




Delivering a functional green belt

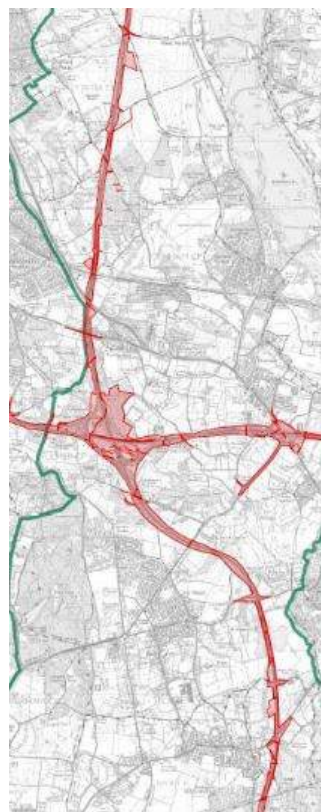
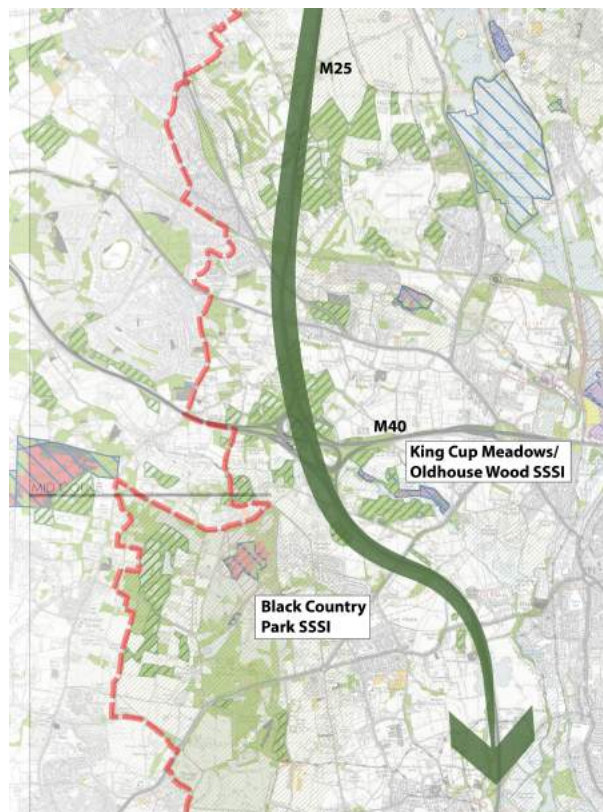
“...plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.”

NPPF para 145



M25 Habitat Corridor

Improving the M25 into a 25km north-south habitat corridor for wildlife; reconnecting ancient woodlands of the Colne valley.



Misbourne Valley Greenway

A enhanced 10km green corridor for both people and wildlife away from the SRN, linking the CVRP and the Chilterns AONB.



Next steps

1. Prioritise projects and opportunities for delivery
2. Build support and embed key messages into future local planning policy
3. Scope delivery mechanisms, funding models and options
4. Form partnerships to deliver projects on the ground
5. Monitoring and review

