

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

Councillor Martin Tett
Leader
Buckinghamshire Council
The Gateway Offices
Gatehouse Road
Aylesbury
HP19 8FF



21st June 2023

Dear Cllr Tett

The latest edition of *Your Buckinghamshire* states the council is “*dedicated to create places that serve those who live work and visit our beautiful county.*”

Unfortunately, there is little evidence of that dedication being applied in the increasingly pressured Green Belt areas in the south east of Buckinghamshire. Too many applications appear to be made for purely commercial reasons, seldom having any meaningful benefit to the environment and for the communities then compelled to host these developments. The cumulative impacts on the green belt and the environment are not considered.

For example:

- Pinewood. Recent decisions where permission for outline proposals lead to final applications that bear no resemblance to the outline proposal, to the detriment of residents. The fear that more Green Belt will be sacrificed for economic advantage to the detriment of social and environmental imperatives.
- Proposed MSA at Mansfield Farm, Iver. Concerns about how the Council is acting as custodian of land secured for public benefit 85 years ago.

The article headed *A Flourishing Future for Bucks* in the same newsletter gives a clue as to what is driving these applications. It talks about a “...*clear plan for the future being driven by the Buckinghamshire Growth Board*”. There may well be a plan for growth but in our experience there is no plan for protecting and enhancing the green belt. The Growth Board and the actions of the Council invariably fail to find the balance between the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, environmental – that local residents need. If local communities in the south of the county are to host so much, then these developments need to provide funding so that the remaining areas of Green Belt locally are of the best possible quality and the best maintained in the country. A clear policy to deliver this is urgently needed.

There are many opportunities to make a difference to address accelerating landscape and ecological decline in south-east Bucks. We urge the council to:

- Urgently develop a green infrastructure policy to create the Supplementary Planning Document needed to provide the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the green belt, working at a landscape scale
- Ensure that planning case officers actively engage with local community organisations to develop a robust case for planning gain that addresses the cumulative environmental impact of development proposals.
- Ensure that funding (eg CIL, land sales receipts etc) secured by the council through sacrificing the local landscape are invested for environmental and community benefit

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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of remaining green spaces in the affected areas. In this way, local people could see some tangible benefits.

- Manage the significant land-bank owned by the council in line with the original intentions behind bringing it into public ownership. For agriculture, leisure and nature conservation etc.
- Actively lobby Government and Natural England for a specific new status and protection for the Colne Valley Regional Park to enable restoration of the landscape and biodiversity and improve public access and active travel routes through green space. This could be achieved as part of a proper national plan for the Green Belt.

Until positive and properly considered action for the natural environment and communities is taken, the council will not be able to meet its commitment to: "...*create places that serve those who live work and visit our beautiful county*".

We firmly believe that maintaining the status quo will lead to further landscape decline and loss of the rapidly dwindling beauty in this corner of Bucks. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the council views development of this remaining green space solely as a means for generating income, something that is extremely disappointing given that it is a partner of the Colne Valley Regional Park that has pledged to protect and enhance it.

We are gravely concerned with the current direction of travel and are ready and willing to work with the council to help it meet its obligations under National Planning Policy Framework to 'plan positively' to enhance the Green Beltⁱ.

Yours sincerely



Stewart Pomeroy
Colne Valley Managing Agent
For, and on behalf of, the Colne Valley Regional Park

Cc Joy Morrissey MP
Sarah Green MP
Parish Councils: Chalfont St Peter, Denham, Fulmer, Gerrards Cross, Iver, Wexham

ⁱ NPPF Paragraph 145. Our highlighting.

"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**."

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