

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

Joy Morrissey MP
House Of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

11th July 2023



Dear Ms Morrissey

Many thanks for passing on the letter we wrote to Bucks Council on June 21, to Rachel Maclean.

I'm sorry to say that the Minister's response dated July 5 is extremely disappointing. Ms Maclean gives the standard response with which we are wearily familiar: namely that Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides 'strong protection' for Green Belt land.

If this is the case, then why are so many development proposals taking huge bites out of the 'inner' green belt in areas like the Colne Valley Regional Park?

It is clear to us that the Minister has failed to grasp what is happening in the Colne Valley, arguably the most pressurised of all 'inner' Green Belt areas, and what action is urgently needed to ensure its protection and enhancement.

It is frustrating that the government has not digested our various submissions over the last few years.

In July 2021, we were due to have a visit from the then Minister, Christopher Pincher, but this was cancelled at short notice. Later in 2021, we wrote to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, outlining how NPPF can be improved relating to the Green Belt and followed this up with another letter in December 2022. We reiterated our concerns and suggestions on how the situation can be improved again in 2023 – in response to the consultation the Minister now refers to. We have seen nothing to indicate that the government pays anything other than lip service to the protection of the greenbelt.

We remain completely committed to finding solutions to the difficult challenges posed by development proposals in the urban fringe and ways in which the Green Belt can be protected and enhanced. To that end, we have suggested key improvements to national policy and one of those relates to the 'very special circumstances' clause.

You will be aware that the Colne Valley Regional Park has been subject to a plethora of major development proposals, all claiming 'very special circumstances'. One big loophole in government policy is that such proposals are not subject to the same 'improvement' requirements as when land is proposed for release in Local Plans.

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 work of the government on nature recovery that the Minister refers to is welcomed, but proposed Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) only address part of a much wider problem.

1. The Government needs to address landscape quality decline as well as biodiversity decline. Sitting alongside LNRSs there must be a Local *Landscape* Recovery Strategy for the 'inner' Green Belt.
2. Both BNG and LNRS have weaknesses in that neither is properly co-ordinated in the way that nature works on a landscape/catchment scale.

To put it baldly, it is simply not good enough for the Minister to attempt to offer general reassurances when she needs to properly engage with us to understand the incremental erosion that over three million people who live within 10 miles are seeing to their Green Belt.

Would you be able to facilitate a meeting with the Minister, or do you have another suggestion?

With thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely

S.Pomeroy

Stewart Pomeroy
Managing Agent

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