

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

Matthew Pennycook MP
Shadow Minister of State for Levelling Up, Housing,
Communities & Local Government
House Of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



17th October 2023

Dear Mr Pennycook,

You will recall our letter dated 19/05/23, concerning the Green Belt, the Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) and recommendations for how to update National Planning Policy Framework.

The contents of that letter are still relevant to improving how we undertake planning in the UK, but I am writing again having followed the statements and debate arising from the 2023 Labour Party Conference.

One policy initiative that we at the CVRP Trust would very much welcome is the introduction of a mechanism for strategic/regional planning at a cross-border and landscape scale. We also support the need for a review of Green Belt policy, as the current NPPF wording does not address today's community and environmental challenges.

Whilst we appreciate it's shorthand, suggesting that only 'high-quality green-belt land' may be protected and enhanced and using the term 'grey-belt', can play into hands of unscrupulous developers and landowners. In parts of the CVRP we see deliberate dereliction of land to enhance its chances of development and breaches of planning control that Local Authorities can't keep on top of.

I must stress that we are not anti-development: we recognise that some Green Belt may end up being earmarked for growth, but this must be plan-led and the potential of areas like the CVRP, offering the first taste of countryside for city dwellers immediately to the west of London, must be valued for their multi-functional green infrastructure potential:

- encouraging healthy lifestyles and contact with nature
- mitigating climate change
- enhancing biodiversity
- hosting local food production

The CVRP Trust is geared to achieve these objectives and we believe it provides a uniquely strong model for how to get the best out of our Green Belt. The old concept of Green Belt as simply a tool for urban containment is outdated and its environmental and quality of life roles need more prominence. Inner green belt areas like the CVRP need a new planning 'status', sitting alongside AONB's and National Parks.

Again, I urge you to look at the Colne Valley Regional Park as a case study and use it to help develop your thinking on the Green Belt and how planning needs to change.

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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Our experience at the 'coal face' could prove very helpful for you as you formulate the detail for policy.

You will be very welcome to visit us here at the Colne Valley Visitor Centre near Uxbridge, but we will also be happy to come to central London if that is more convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. C. Whitby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

John Whitby, Chairman.

Cc

- Angela Rayner MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing, Communities & Local Government
- Steve Reed MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

To Labour MPs whose constituencies include part of the Colne Valley Regional Park (2 of 9 constituencies touching on the Park)

- Tan Dhesi MP. Slough
- John McDonnell MP. Hayes & Harlington

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