

Your Countryside in Crisis – A Call for Action



- A five-point Action Plan for better protection of the 'inner Green Belt' - the urban-rural fringe
- Using the Colne Valley Regional Park (on the doorstep of west London) as a case study - so its countryside can fulfil its potential for future generations - for people & wildlife
- This is a pro-countryside campaign, not an anti-development one.

Our Mission is: Persuade decision-makers to act now to protect the special landscape of the Colne Valley Regional Park, specifically safeguarding it for future generations and enabling it to realise its full potential for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Note: Actions in Green are for the Colne Valley Regional Park & Local Authorities. Actions in salmon are for government, with relevance for all areas of the England, especially 3. Planning Reform.

The Action Plan	What does this mean?
1. Influence Local Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure policies for Colne Valley Regional Park and rivers are included in local plans – to help Local Authorities plan positively in line with NPPF para 150.
2. Restore the Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tie together Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to focus on landscape/catchments across county boundaries (as this is how nature operates). - Prepare, and implement, a Local <u>Landscape</u> Recovery Strategy that complements LNRS's and focusses on landscape restoration. - Use this to inform local plans, strategies, design codes, GI plans, development briefs etc. It will also guide project development, fundraising and inform the design of planning applications and their mitigation.
3. Reform National Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a sixth Green Belt 'purpose', to recognise the intrinsic value of countryside – as supporting green infrastructure for the quality of life of the cities/ towns that the Green Belts surround. • Require any major development in the Green Belt to be Plan Led, not via Very Special Circumstances (when it can avoid strategic mitigation & compensatory improvements). • Introduce strategic planning at a landscape-scale, beyond Local Authority boundaries, to provide a planning framework for where and how significant development need should be met, and strategic green corridors provided. • Ensure that all development in Green Belts close to urban areas leads to better connectivity with generous green corridors - for wildlife and people.
4. Establish Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government to engage with the Colne Valley Regional Park as a case study to understand why a new form of designation is needed, then to implement. - The critical multifunctional countryside role for the 'inner' Green Belt immediately adjacent to cities is often overlooked by government, local authorities and developers when considering development proposals. - Add a new third type of Protected Landscape: 1) National Park, 2) National Landscape 3) Regional Landscape.
5. Protect Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence-led landscape scale designation that recognises the landscape context of the important Colne Valley wetland resource on the edge of 5 counties as nationally important for wildlife - similar to the Somerset 'Super Nature Reserve'.

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Where is the Colne Valley Regional Park?



Why is the Colne Valley a good case study?

Location: A large area of ‘inner’ Green Belt (GB) crossing many Local Authority boundaries.

Organisational Structure: Run by a registered charity, with a small core budget but leveraging major funding for countryside improvements.

Intense Pressure: Despite being GB we are seeing multiple major development proposals come forward with no overall planning and coordination.

Vision: As well as a [2019 GI Strategy](#) the Park has 6 core [objectives](#), aligning with Government policy.

Potential: Based around the River Colne, fed by the Chilterns’ chalk streams, with fantastic wildlife, countryside, and country parks for people to enjoy. Assets that need connecting with other ‘hidden’ natural assets for it to realise its potential.

Why is existing Green Belt Policy not enough and what is the urgency?

Population in London and other centres is growing rapidly, but the intrinsic value and potential of the adjacent countryside is not central to Green Belt policy.

Our countryside can have multi-functional benefits – for physical and mental health, to address the biodiversity crisis, to combat climate change, for local food production etc.

And yet, over the last 5 years we have seen an onslaught of ‘ad-hoc’ large-scale developments across the Colne Valley, either under ‘Very Special Circumstances’ or in growth plans without strategic coordination.

Opportunities to connect city and countryside are being side-stepped and we are sleepwalking towards being left with a few isolated country parks and nature reserves. Any surviving landscape outside of managed sites will be of poor quality.

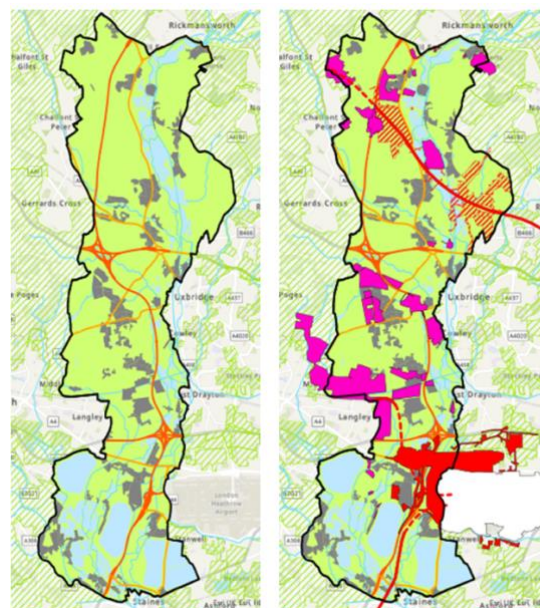
If we don’t act on the five-point plan, then it is inevitable that the uncoordinated ‘development frenzy’ will continue. Connectivity opportunities for people and wildlife on the edge of London will be lost forever.

Useful Links

www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/campaign/

www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/why-we-need-to-protect-the-colne-valley-regional-park/

Proposals Mapping 2018 to mid 2023 (see separate map for more information on proposals).



2018 Base Map

Mid 2023 Proposals Map