



## Colne Valley Regional Park's response to Summer 2025 consultation

### Context to this response

The Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) comes to the edge of Staines and encompasses a considerable part of the northern part of Spelthorne Borough. It is principally Green Belt (GB) and offers local residents and those further afield a natural environment resource. Our annex has basic information about the CVRP.

That natural environment resource:

- Adds character to the Borough
- Performs important strategic Green Belt (GB) functions and purposes
- Is important for wildlife and biodiversity
- Access to it by the community can enhance mental health (being amongst nature) and physical health (encouraging walking and cycling)
- Has the potential to combat climate change and boost local food production *and*
- Enhances quality of life and well-being for those living in urban areas

The CVRP Trust has engaged in the new Local Plan and welcomes the planned CVRP Policy (SP5?) which aims to ensure that the benefits of the Park for Borough are maintained and enhanced. This is very relevant to this design code and our comments reflect this approach.

This element of national policy is pertinent to the document and approach to be taken:

*"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." (Extract from NPPF para 151)*

From discussions with officers, we understand that there will be a supplementary planning document relating to the creation and improvement of the Borough's green infrastructure. We look forward to this and our comments below are designed to dovetail with an 'SPD'.

### Our overall comment

- We greatly welcome production of the Design Code
- It should help enhance the quality of future development in the Borough
- Can there be an executive summary? It is a lengthy document.
- We particularly welcome the statement (p.10) *".. focus on the importance of integrating natural areas into urban environments for residents' well-being and improved biodiversity"*
- However, the document can go further to ensure this 'integration' and 'connectivity' of new development leads to improvement of nearby countryside – for people and wildlife.
- In this way the countryside (including the CVRP) can function better in the future alongside any development that occurs within or adjacent to urban areas.
- This 'win-win' approach should permeate the design code and we make some suggestions below for improvements to the document.



### Some suggested amendments (*the P. references are to page numbers*)

P.10 Use the term 'Connectivity with Green Infrastructure' rather than 'Commitment to Green Space' to broaden and clarify the meaning. This has implications for titling/ text later in the document e.g. P.24 and P.36.

P.11 Use the heading 'Connectivity to sustainable transport' rather than just 'Connectivity' to clarify the meaning. This has implications for titling/ text later in the document e.g. P.24 and P.36.

P.15 (third column, first paragraph) – reference access to the natural environment in this paragraph

P.17 (bottom of second column) – suggest the definition of 'green infrastructure' (P.168) is flagged.

P.23 The map should reference the Colne Valley Regional Park and, in the text, Staines' nearby countryside/ natural environment

P.35 The map should reference the Colne Valley Regional Park and, in the text, the great potential for enhancing Stanwell Moor's accessibility (having regard to its proximity) to the natural environment, including the significant potential associated with restoration of the natural environment (post quarrying) to the west/ south-west.

P.50 The Design Aims should include " - take opportunities to improve connectivity of development with the nearby natural environment". NB some future town centre neighbourhoods would be very close to the natural environment in the CVRP but better connections are needed.

P.94 The Design Aims should include " - take opportunities to improve connectivity of development with the nearby natural environment"

P.116 (third column) The fourth bullet point should be broadened to read "Make the most of the river frontages and help **improve connectivity** to the Thames, Colne, **Ash** and Wraysbury **and the nearby natural environment**". This will also ensure consistency with, and bolster, the wording in the first column on P. 120 – which we very much support.

P.140 The opportunity for enhanced connectivity between this "Two Rivers" area and the CVRP/ river/ natural corridors to the north is very important to grasp when redevelopment comes forward. It should not be just about connecting to existing footpaths. Improvements must be planned for as this could be transformational. Wording enhancements needed.

P.168 Green Infrastructure - make clear that this includes land that may not presently be publicly accessible.

NOTE: Assuming these suggestions are accepted we recognise that some other consequential changes would be needed.

## Basic information about the Colne Valley Regional Park

### About the Colne Valley Regional Park

The Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) is the first substantial taste of countryside to the west of London. The Park, founded in 1965, stretches from Rickmansworth in the north to Staines and the Thames in the south, and from Uxbridge and Heathrow in the east, to Slough and Chalfont St Peter in the west.

The CVRP occupies a strategically important part of London's Green Belt and we have significant experience of how Green Belt policy has worked (or not) over recent decades.



As the first Green Belt area west of London the CVRP offers those living in urban areas access to the natural environment, with all its attendant benefits for health and well-being. Its multi-functional roles support:

- green and blue corridors rich in biodiversity and ecological connectivity
- opportunities for nature recovery and re-wilding
- local food production
- combatting climate change
- active lifestyles, physical and mental well-being
- recreational pursuits
- flood management

We believe the CVRP is unique in having an organisation established specifically to protect and improve this area of 'inner' Green Belt on the edge of the capital, working in collaboration with local authorities and other partners. Funding is, however, minimal.

The Colne Valley Park Trust oversees the park and is a registered charity. Day-to-day operations are managed and implemented through a contract with Groundwork South, a not-for-profit company operating in the environmental sector.

Everything we do in the park is guided by its six objectives. These are consistent with national planning policy for the Green Belt:

1. **Landscape:** To maintain and enhance the landscape, historic environment and waterscape of the park in terms of their scenic and conservation value, and their overall amenity.
2. **Countryside:** To safeguard the countryside of the Park from inappropriate development. Where development is permissible it will encourage the highest possible standards of design.
3. **Biodiversity:** To conserve and enhance biodiversity within the Park through the protection and management of its species, habitats and geological features. We are the home of many areas of nature importance.
4. **Recreation:** To provide opportunities for countryside recreation and ensure that facilities are accessible to all.
5. **Rural Economy:** To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside.
6. **Community Participation:** To encourage community participation including volunteering and environmental education. To promote the health and social well-being benefits that access to high quality green space brings.