

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

Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook
Minister of State (Housing, Communities and Local
Government)
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF



3rd October 2024

Dear Mr Pennycook

The Colne Valley Regional Park on the western fringe of London is a network of 200km of rivers, more than 70 lakes, 270km of paths, numerous parks and nature reserves. The Park is on the doorstep of millions of people, and we firmly believe ready access to green space contributes hugely to health and well-being. Well-being boosts productivity. Productivity drives growth.

We recognise there is a need for affordable housing, data centres etc, but also for access to high quality green space. What has been missing over the last 10-15 years has been joined-up thinking and properly considered planning to balance these needs. Instead, the area has suffered from an unco-ordinated approach with multiple *ad hoc* developments coming forward outside of the local plan process.

We welcome the government's proposal to bring back strategic planning. This is particularly relevant for areas like the Colne Valley, the first taste of countryside west of London yet on the edge of five counties so it suffers from a complete lack co-ordinated cross-border thinking. However, we are concerned about grey belt and have some practical suggestions for how unintended consequences of 'planning by dereliction' can be avoided – through tightening up the definition and ensuring that this only applies to land previously developed lawfully/with consent. Our response to the recent government consultation contains more detail on this.

We invite you to visit the Colne Valley Regional Park to see the effects of national policy in the Green Belt at first hand – or alternatively we will be happy to come to Westminster if this is more convenient for you. We believe the Colne Valley is uniquely valuable as a case study that can provide examples of how unintended consequences of changes to National Planning Policy can be avoided, win-win situations created instead. We have been told by three separate developers that they have already met new government ministers, and we feel it is important the voice of the countryside and communities should also be heard.

For clarity: as an organisation we are not anti-development, we are pro-countryside. We offer our considerable experience of the challenges of the urban fringe to work with the government in the creation of the most effective policies for managing permitted development in the Green Belt.

I look forward to hearing from your team and hope you will be able to see the situation here for yourself in due course.

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

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

Yours,

S. Pomeroy

Stewart Pomeroy, Colne Valley Managing Agent

Cc:

Rt Hon Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Mary Creagh CBE MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Nature

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