

## Countryside and Green Belt

### ***Countryside and Green Belt Objectives of the Plan***

- a) To improve opportunities for recreation appropriate to the countryside within the Colne Valley Park and the proposed Linear Park.*
- b) To promote the enhancement, recreational use and ecological value of the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal.*
- c) To ensure that any development in the Green Belt is appropriate to the fundamental aims of the Green Belt.*
- d) To restrict development within the floodplain and within the safeguarded areas around Heathrow Airport.*

### **Introduction**

- 7.1 Slough is a largely built up area with small areas of countryside along the southern and northern flanks plus more extensive areas to the east in the Colnbrook and Poyle area. Without exception, all of these areas of countryside are designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and are therefore subject to the policies for the countryside and green belt contained within this chapter. Although the policies in this chapter are area specific, any development proposals will also be subject to the other policies contained in this Plan.

### **Countryside Recreation**

- 7.2 Countryside recreation is now the most popular form of outdoor leisure activity and covers a wide range of activities; the majority of people visit the countryside to enjoy casual or informal activities requiring few facilities.
- 7.3 Opportunities for countryside recreation within Slough are limited due to the built up nature of the Borough; however, Slough is surrounded by rural areas and major countryside parks and the Council aims to improve access to the countryside for local residents.

### **Colne Valley Park**

- 7.4 The Colne Valley Park was conceived in the 1960s as a regional park which was made up of a large area of Green Belt land west of London where countryside pursuits could take place. The eight local authorities which make up the Colne Valley Park Standing Conference have been working together over the years to provide better access to the countryside through improvements to the rights of way network, develop recreational facilities appropriate to the countryside and enhance the environment through landscape improvement schemes.

- 7.5 The Strategy for the Colne Valley Regional Park which was adopted by the constituent authorities provides a framework for future action through a programme of improvements. The key aims of the Strategy are:
- a) to maintain and enhance the landscape and waterscape of the Park in terms of their scenic and conservation value and their overall amenity;
  - b) to resist urbanisation of the Colne Valley Park and to safeguard existing areas of countryside from inappropriate development;
  - c) to conserve the nature conservation resources of the Park through the protection and management of its diverse plant and animal species, habitats, and geological features; and
  - d) to provide accessible facilities and opportunities for countryside recreation which do not compromise the above.
- 7.6 The transfer of Colnbrook and Poyle has now brought a significant area of the Colne Valley Park into the Borough. The Park is at its narrowest at this point and so the protection and enhancement of this section, which forms part of the strategic gap between Greater London and Slough, is of utmost importance.
- 7.7 There is a need to improve and extend opportunities for both local residents and visitors to enjoy the Park. The Borough Council will therefore support and encourage measures to facilitate access to the countryside for informal and passive recreation. Countryside recreation would include water-based recreation. Such measures will include negotiating access agreements with landowners and improving and promoting safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horseriders, in particular promotion of the Linear Park described in paragraph 7.10.

#### **Policy CG1 (Colne Valley Park)**

**Proposals for development within the countryside or other open areas in the Colne Valley Park will not be permitted unless they:**

- a) maintain and enhance the landscape and waterscape of the park in terms of its scenic and conservation value and its overall amenity;**
- b) resist urbanisation of existing areas of countryside;**
- c) conserve the nature conservation resources of the park; and**
- d) provide opportunities for countryside recreation which do not compromise the above.**

**Where development is permitted in these areas, measures to mitigate any visual impact and/or to enhance nature conservation and/or provision of new or improved access to the countryside will be sought by agreement and/or required by condition.**

**Where development is permitted within the built up area of the Colne Valley Park, which would have a significant visual impact on the Park, appropriate mitigation measures to realise the aims and objectives of the Colne Valley Strategy will be sought by agreement and/or required by conditions.**

- 7.8 This policy will only apply to development within the countryside or other open areas, or to proposals which would have a significant visual impact upon the Colne Valley Park. Where appropriate, improved landscaping or access to the Park will be sought from developments adjacent to open land or identified recreational routes through the Colne Valley Park.

### **Jubilee River and Linear Park**

- 7.9 The Environment Agency has constructed the Windsor, Maidenhead and Eton flood alleviation scheme from the River Thames in Maidenhead eastwards to Black Potts Bridge at Windsor. Work on the main channel began in the autumn of 1998 and was completed in the spring of 2002. Within Slough, the Jubilee River extends from the western boundary eastwards to the Myrke/Datchet Road area. The Environment Agency will be providing new public rights of way for pedestrians, horseriders, and cyclists along almost the full length of the river; in addition, the area east of Junction 6 of the M4 is subject to a legal agreement permitting public access to this area as a whole for recreational purposes.
- 7.10 Given the route of the Jubilee River, the Borough Council has identified the opportunity of creating a linear park based on the river and then extending eastwards through Upton Court Park, Ditton Park, and around the Queen Mother Reservoir to the area of the Colne Valley Park north of the Colnbrook By-Pass; here it will follow the recently upgraded right of way alongside the Colne Brook and Old Slade Lake to the M4 where it will join the rights of way network in Buckinghamshire. The Borough Council is negotiating the route with landowners and with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead through which part of the proposed route passes. The linear park will be a valuable recreational resource which will enable local residents to become regular users of the countryside without having to travel far from home. New pedestrian and cycle routes will be sought as part of any development alongside the route to link into the linear park.
- 7.11 Sustrans, the Sustainable Transport charity which is creating a National Cycle Network with Millennium grant monies, has identified the linear park from the Slough to Windsor railway line eastwards to the Colnbrook Bypass as the route for the Heathrow link which forms part of the Thames Valley route (London to Oxford) of the National Cycle Network; it will run alongside the Bypass to the Borough boundary and on to Heathrow. The linear park from the railway line to Ditton Park will also serve as the first section of the Slough to St. Albans link in the National Cycle Network; this route will extend northwards from Ditton Park over the Slough Arm at Trenches Bridge into Buckinghamshire. The Borough Council is working closely with Sustrans and adjoining local authorities to facilitate the establishment of the cycle network.

### **Policy CG2 (Linear Park)**

**The establishment of a Linear Park with shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists from the western to the eastern boundary of the borough, as shown on the Proposals Map, will be supported.**

**Development proposals which would prejudice the route or detract from users' enjoyment will not be permitted. Improved access to the Linear Park, and landscape enhancement measures, will be sought from any development proposals adjacent to the route.**

### **Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal**