Appendix 10.1

PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL GUIDANCE CONTEXT

APPENDIX 10.1

Planning policy and local guidance context

Figure 10.A1.1	Landscape character areas	HWSFAC-COL-00-XX-DR-L-6007
Figure 10.A1.2	Landscape character types	HWSFAC-COL-00-XX-DR-L-6008

The Colne Valley Regional Park

10.1.1 Providing context to the application site's suitability of its green infrastructure and activities, the Colne Valley Regional Park was established in 1967 to preserve areas suitable for leisure, recreation and conservation to the west of London, between Rickmansworth and Staines. In January 1972, a strategic plan was published titled 'Colne Valley Park a new prospect'2 which set out the broad concept for the park to provide rural, as opposed to urban recreation, set within a broad background of countryside much of which was considered to have a beauty of its own. More recently in 2012 the Colne Valley Park governance and operations were reviewed to ensure that protection, management and enhancement could be sustainable for the next 50 years and beyond.

10.1.2 As a result, the Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company (CVPCIC) was created to deliver 6 objectives which are of great relevance :

i. 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.

ii. To safeguard the countryside of the Park from inappropriate development. Where development is permissible, it will encourage the highest possible standards of design.

iii. To conserve and enhance biodiversity within the Park through the protection and management of its species, habitats and geological features.

iv. To provide opportunities for countryside recreation and ensure that facilities are accessible to all.

v. To achieve a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, including farming and forestry, underpinning the value of the countryside.

vi. 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.

Landscape character types of the Colne Valley Landscape Character Assessment

10.1.3 In order of priority to the assessment process, the character of these landscape types is described below with areas defined on :

Figure 10.A1.2 Landscape character types

Valley Floor

10.1.4 Flat, low lying valley floors supporting a predominately pastoral land use, associated with notable watercourses/rivers. Generally unsettled, with areas of carr woodland, gravel extraction lakes, and meadows. Dense scattering of trees, scrub, poplar and willow trees resulting in a sense of enclosure and limited views. A generally unsettled landscape although there are occasional mill buildings and features associated with

canals. Some urban encroachment onto the valley floor occurs in places. The presence of water and limited settlement often creates a tranquil/rural landscape particularly where mineral extraction has ceased and landscape has been restored.

Valley Sides

10.1.5 Sloping land forming the sides of distinctive valleys. Slopes are often undulating and sometimes steep supporting areas of woodland (some ancient), pasture and arable - often on upper slopes. Small scale early enclosures defined by dense hedgerows are common but in places patterns have become lost due to rationalisation of boundaries and predominance of arable. The interlocking pattern of woods often creates a well wooded, intimate character. Historic settlements with landmark churches occur on upper slopes or close to the valley floor. Major infrastructure and urban expansion sometimes affect this landscape type. There are elevated views across the valley floors and lowlands from this landscape type.

Undulating Farmlands

10.1.6 This is a varied and textured landscape type comprising elevated undulating landform, sometimes steep with notable patches of woodland (often ancient). Minor streams drain the landscape and there are also dry valleys forming smooth undulations where underlying chalk geology is close to the surface. Field patterns are varied comprising large open fields of arable on fertile soils and more intimate irregular early enclosures on heavier soils. Settlement is dispersed and includes nucleated villages and linear development along roads. This is a relatively tranquil landscape although close to major infrastructure tranquillity is reduced. This landscape may have an enclosed character with wooded horizons but at the junctions with river valleys there are longer distant views

Tributary Valley

10.1.7 Small scale valleys within which minor streams and watercourses flow through a narrow valley floor. Shallow valley sides which are well wooded, intimate and often with limited access. On the valley floor remnant meadows and pastures dominate while the valley sides may comprise a matrix of pasture and woodland with some pony paddocks. Settlement may occurs on the valley sides and in places extend onto the valley floor. These landscape are often significantly affected by major infrastructure which tends to reduce tranquillity and fragment the valley landscape.

River Terrace

10.1.8 Elevated land above the main valley which is relatively flat or gently sloping and significantly influenced by glacial fluvial deposits from ancestral watercourses. Deposits include sand and gravel over a bedrock geology of London Clay. Ponds are a feature along with patches of former heath or common. Patches of acidic vegetation including bracken and birch as well as conifer plantations are common. Settlement is often dispersed and linear along minor lanes. Parklands and estate landscapes give rise to extensive woodland, veteran trees and designed parkland.

Colne Valley: Rickmansworth to Uxbridge LCA LCA

10.1.9 The site also lies within the Denham Valley Floor LCA (2017), which sets out its own landscape strategy and summary of landscape character, with key features below :

The LCA is primarily low lying, with slopes gently rising on either side of the flat floodplain. It is characterised by the extensive succession of large waterbodies and watercourses which stretch from Uxbridge northwards to Rickmansworth. The character of the LCA is therefore determined to be principally rural, with the combination of open vistas across the large reservoirs and enclosed routes through woodland giving the area a sense of natural contrast and variation. Further to the waterbodies and watercourses, other land uses include large scale arable fields, residential settlements, industrial and utility facilities, mixed use (commercial/education/community), public amenity/parkland and transport infrastructure.

Despite the rural feel of the LCA, The River Colne is the only natural hydrological feature of note in the area, meandering its way through the network of artificial lakes and contrasting with the more rigid form of the Grand Union Canal. It is met by one of its tributaries, the River Misbourne, just south of the historic Denham Lock, and an anabranch known as Frays River diverts off the Colne a little further north, however both of these only make a brief appearance in the LCA. Collectively these natural hydrological features have a wider impact on the habitats of the valley, with areas of wetland meadow, wet woodlands, reedbeds and remnant alluvial grasslands giving the area a distant ecological character, whilst also providing valuable wildlife habitats. Dense tree cover surrounds the various natural and artificial water features, creating a sense of enclosure in many parts of the LCA. A few notable areas of woodland include Northmoor Hill Woods north of Denham Green, and Maple Lodge Nature Reserve immediately to the east of Maple Cross village.

Transport infrastructure is present throughout the area, though because of extensive tree cover it is often hidden from view. The dominant road is the single carriageway A412 which runs along the west side of the lake network, with the M25 motorway and A40 dual carriageway also making very brief appearances to the edges of the LCA. Lots of smaller local roads crisscross through the landscape as well, but their presence is softened due to the tree cover and in some instances are also sunken into the landform. A short section of the Chiltern Railways line between West Ruislip and Denham stations is also present. Whilst there are no towns in the LCA, the village settlements of Maple Cross, South Harefield, Denham Green and Willowbank all give a semi-urban feel to small pockets of the landscape. A number of historic farm buildings still stand within the LCA, including The Savay near Denham Green, which is a Grade I listed house originally dating from the 14th century. The LCA has a high recreational value, with a substantial number of footpaths and bridleways allowing for exploration on foot or horseback through the area. Of these the long distance routes take precedence: the Colne Valley Trail, Hillingdon Trail, Grand Union Canal Walk, South Bucks Way and the London Loop. Additionally, National Cycle Route 6 follows the path of the Grand Union Canal through the LCA encouraging use of the Colne Valley Park by cyclists too.

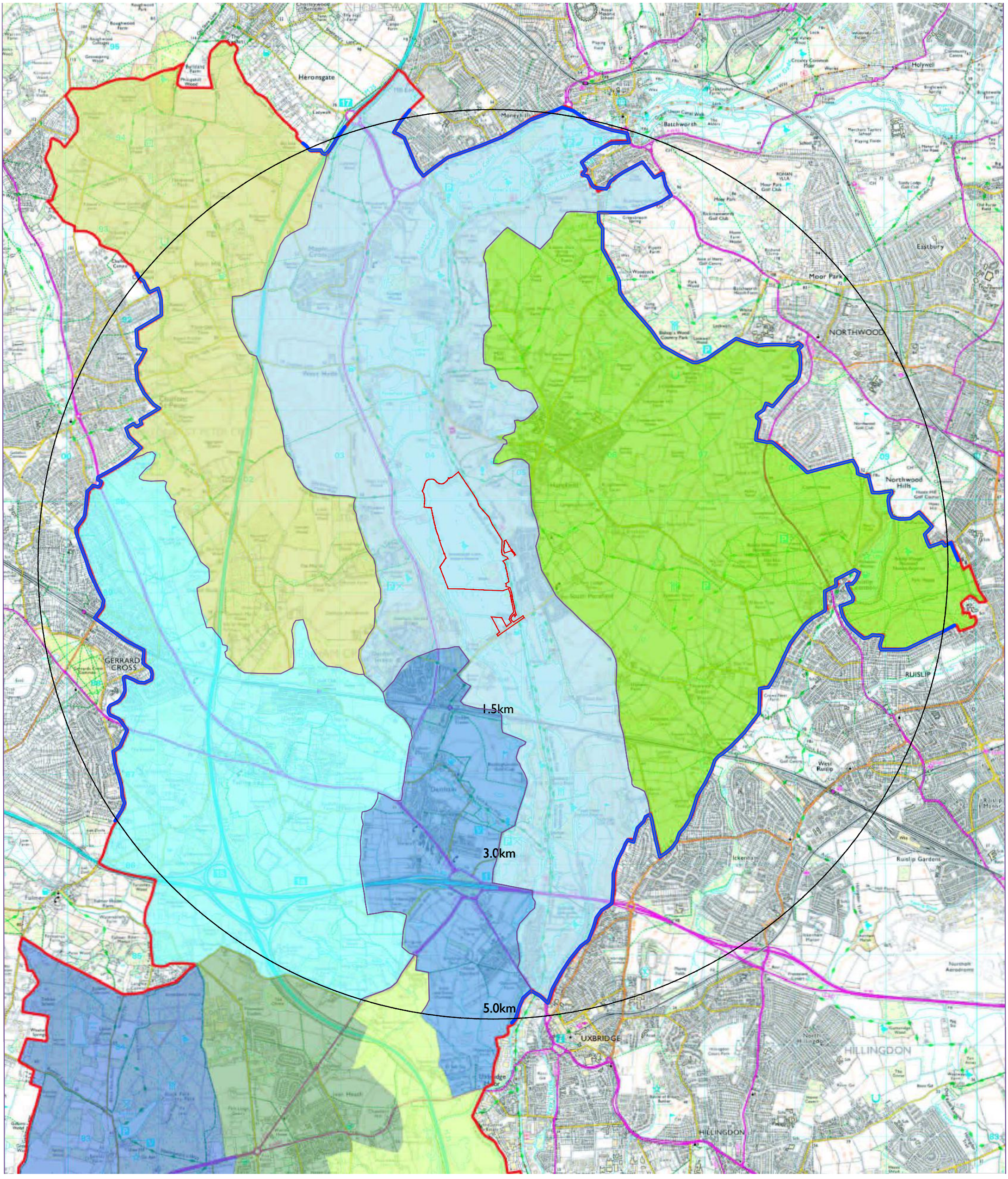
Whilst the LCA now has a rural, natural character, it must be noted that the presence of the large waterbodies is a direct result of the extensive sand and gravel extraction

that occurred in this area over the last century. As such, the area cannot be considered natural in the typical sense, despite the high presence of wildlife and visitors seeking an escape to the countryside. Pylons and associated overhead power cables are visible to the south of the LCA, however they are much less dominant here than in neighbouring areas adjacent to the application site.

The proposed strategy for this LCA is as follows:

- *PROTECT the quiet, rural character of lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, widening, lighting or the introduction of roundabouts, all of which undermine the essential 'back-water' qualities of the area.*
- *PROTECT scenic views across and down the valley where its scale and combination of water, vegetation and valley sides can be appreciated.*
- *PROTECT and restore historic features within the valley, particularly those relating to the watercourses e.g. mills, bridges and locks.*
- *PROTECT the valley landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area.*
- *PROTECT important habitats and bird populations from disturbance through careful management of recreation, access and development.*
- *PROTECT water quality particularly downstream of Maple Lodge sewage works.*
- *PROTECT tranquil qualities from encroachment of built development, especially onto the valley floor and on visually sensitive valley sides.*
- *PROTECT unspoilt rural valley character from solar park development where it may undermine the pattern of land use and be visually prominent.*
- *MANAGE areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, including veteran oaks, through appropriate woodland management regimes.*
- *MANAGE the distinction between vegetation on the valley floor and valley sides e.g. poplar/alder/willow and beech/oak respectively.*
- *MANAGE grassland, especially calcareous grasslands on the valley slopes and seek opportunities to connect sites.*
- *MANAGE woodland and scrub areas fringing open water bodies.*
- *MANAGE the string of former gravel pits running through the valley for biodiversity and recreation.*
- *MANAGE recreation in this landscape and ensure the development of any new associated infrastructure is in keeping with the local rural character.*
- *PLAN for the planting of additional woodland on the upper slopes of the Colne Valley especially areas where the landscape lacks visual structure following land fill and where it may be affected by HS2.*
- *PLAN for the reversion of arable farmland to pasture on the valley sides where it extends down to the edge of the valley floor.*
- *PLAN for the improved interpretation of the historic character of this valley landscape and its changing face through time.*
- *PLAN for the opening up of views across the valley through woodland and scrub management.*

- *PLAN for the retention of valley floor pastures through appropriate management and grazing levels.*
- *PLAN for the increased informal recreational use of the area and ensure sufficient provision of low key parking and facilities, which reflect local vernacular and character.*
- *PLAN for improved water quality testing and riverfly monitoring to provide greater clarity on pollution issues and to inform future management.*


Heronsgate
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Holywell
Eastbury
Moor Park
NORTHWOOD
Northwood Hills
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UXBRIDGE
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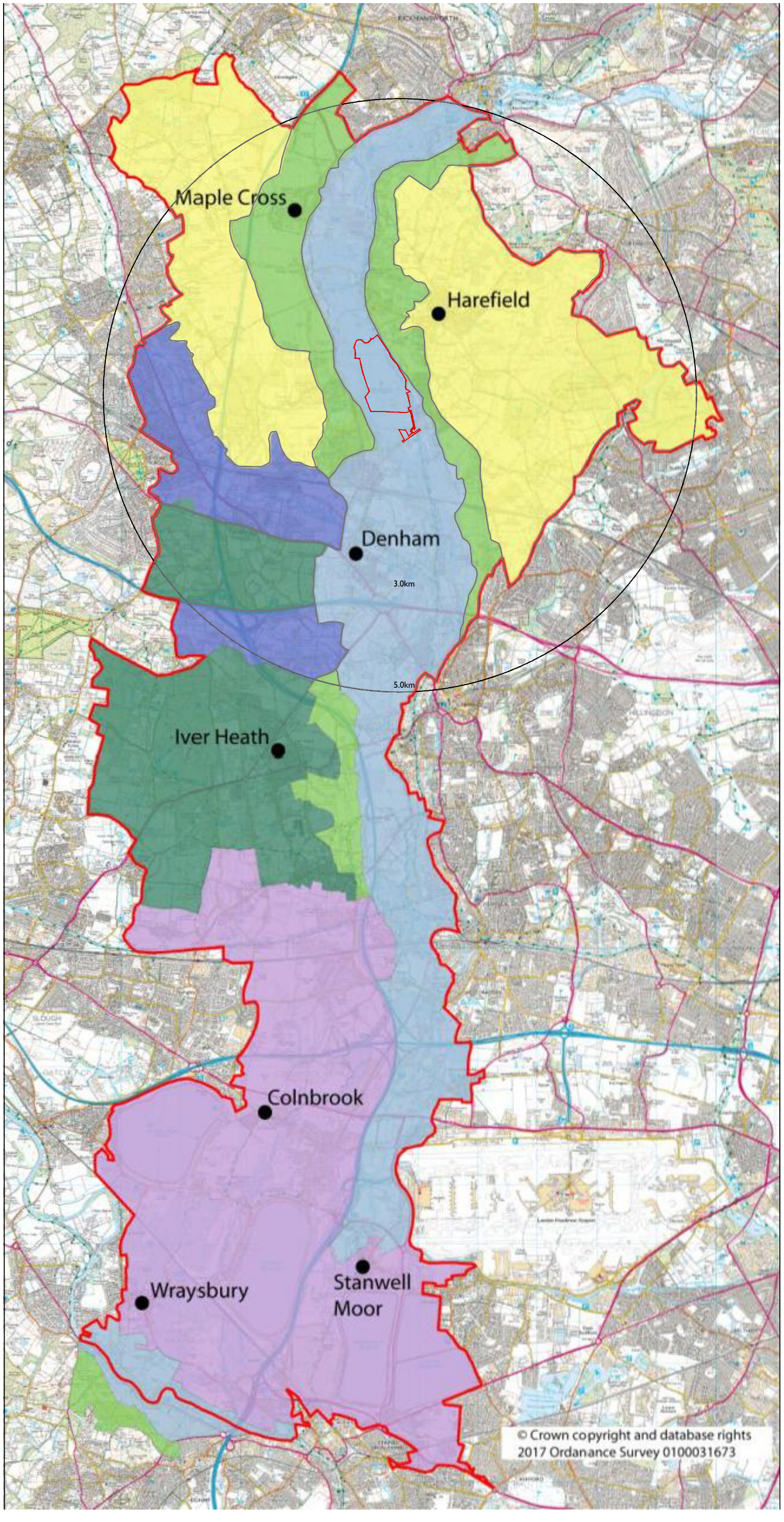
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