



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park**  
Minister of State

Catherine West MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Your ref: ZA8589  
Our ref: MC2020/23476/SH

16 October 2020

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your letter of 10 September about the England Tree Strategy.

I understand your concerns surrounding the protection of trees in built-up environments and assure you that this is being considered as we move from the consultation to the development of the England Tree Strategy.

I agree that we must find ways to better value, plant and protect trees. We also need to find ways to address the cost and funding challenges of planting and maintaining urban trees, ensuring appropriate guidance enables there to be enough space for trees. We need to see trees as a key feature in towns and cities with equal status to green and other built infrastructure; that is what we are now exploring as we develop the England Tree Strategy.

We are considering how we can amend the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to set clear expectations on trees for new developments. In addition, we are considering how the importance of trees can be included in the forthcoming National Model Design Code.

The Government's manifesto already sets out an ambition to see all new streets lined with trees and we wish to see more trees planted in urban and suburban areas overall.

With regard to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees, there are already strong protections in the planning system. The Government remains committed to their protection and in 2018 we strengthened the protections, recognising them as irreplaceable habitats in the NPPF and accompanying guidance. As part of the strategy development, we would also like to better understand the different factors which influence the size and use of buffer zones between ancient woodlands and developments, to maximise their effectiveness.

Thank you once again for your letter.

With best wishes,

**THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK**