



CATHERINE WEST MP

Member of Parliament for Hornsey and Wood Green

The Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith
Minister of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

10 September 2020
Our Ref: ZA8589

Dear Zac,

Re: England Tree Strategy

I am writing to you with regards to the England Tree Strategy, which I understand is now subject of an open consultation by Defra. I firmly believe we need an ambitious green recovery and the conservation of woodland and planting of trees is vital to this, particularly in our efforts to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

I am pleased that the Government is putting measures in place to increase the rate of tree planting across the UK. However, I have been contacted by constituents in Hornsey and Wood Green who are concerned that there is not enough emphasis on the importance of protecting trees in urban spaces in the England Tree Strategy. In particular, constituents have noted that the England Tree Strategy does not reference trees in its consideration of construction and buildings.

I have been contacted frequently by constituents expressing concern over plans to remove mature trees from roadsides or in some cases ancient woodlands, often because there has been a link to subsidence discovered between a tree and a nearby property. The pandemic has highlighted the vital importance of green spaces and woodlands to urban environments, and the aesthetic, social and ecological benefits they bring are now widely recognised.

I share my constituents' concerns that in many cases, residential and commercial property comes at the expense of maintaining and protecting trees, even where tree felling is avoidable. Moreover, the Royal Horticultural Society has commented on the very worrying loss of street and garden trees in towns and cities due to an overly cautious approach by insurers and councils, even though they are unlikely to cause damage in most cases. The London Tree Officer's Association has also explained that insurance companies will often request that a tree is removed as a precautionary measure where there is little evidence that it is causing damage to the property.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the issues I have outlined, and clarify whether in addition to its promotion of community forests, Defra will include the protection of trees in built-up environments in the England Tree Strategy.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine West
Member of Parliament for Hornsey & Wood Green