



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP
Minister of State for Housing

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

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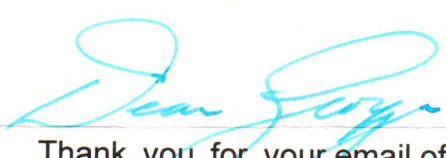
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11 January 2021



Thank you for your email of 12 December to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP on behalf of your constituent, shares the Woodland Trust's concern about changes to the planning system, and the consequences for trees and woodland. I am replying as Minister of State for Housing.

I am aware of the valuable work of the Woodland Trust to protect and enhance woodland and other countryside, including the irreplaceable habitat that is ancient woodland. This Government shares the Trust's commitment, and when we revised the National Planning Policy Framework, we strengthened the protection for ancient woodland and for ancient and veteran trees.

The planning system is there to ensure that we get the right development in the right places. Our proposals in the recent '*Planning for the Future*' White Paper support the protection of valued countryside while enabling the creation of well-designed, safe and affordable homes with appropriate green infrastructure.

Far from removing local democracy from the planning system, our reforms are intended to increase community involvement in the planning process. One of the reforms proposed is that local plans would categorise all land as areas for growth, for renewal or for protection. Under this reform, protected areas would be those where recognised constraints exist, such as a National Park or Green Belt or protected habitat, as well as other valued countryside. The proposed standard method for a binding housing requirement will take land constraints into consideration.

'*Planning for the Future*' also made clear our intention to bring forward a quicker and simpler framework for assessing environmental effects: one which does not compromise on environmental standards, and indeed encourages opportunities for environmental enhancements to be identified and pursued early in the development process. We will use the Environment Bill to make a 10 per cent biodiversity net gain mandatory when developments are given planning permission, to ensure that delivery of much-needed housing and infrastructure is not at the expense of the natural environment.

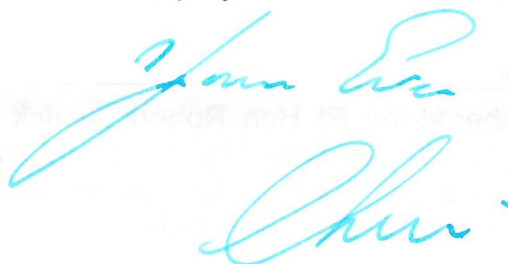
As the manifesto stated, we will expect all new streets to be lined with trees. We are also committed to planting 30,000 hectares of trees per year across the UK by 2025. Forestry Commission statistics published on 12 June 2020 show that the area of new planting of woodland in England had increased by 54 per cent since last year. Following the recent consultation, we aim to publish the England Tree Strategy in the Spring. This will set out the policy priorities for our tree-planting programme, focusing on expanding, protecting and improving our woods. It will also set

out how trees and woodland connect people to nature, support the economy, combat climate change and help biodiversity to recover.

Meanwhile, there are many opportunities for individuals to contribute: for instance, by initiating or joining tree-planting campaigns, by getting involved in the development plan process to ensure that the need to plant and protect trees is written into local policies, or by asking the local authority to make providing more trees a condition of receiving planning permission.

Consultation on '*Planning for the Future*' ended on 29 October. The department will reflect carefully on all the feedback received before publishing our official response. I appreciate how important these matters are to the Woodland Trust and its supporters.

Thank you again for your email. I hope your constituent finds this information useful.



RT HON CHRISTOPHER PINCHER MP

