21st June 2018

RE: ANCIENT WOODLAND AND PLANNING POLICY.

Thank you for contacting me recently about ancient woodland and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I share the sentiment of many, that our woods and forests are an invaluable national asset, and I am proud of the action that has been taken in recent years to preserve and extend British woodland.

In relation to the NPPF, revisions to the Framework will align it with the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan. The new Framework stipulates that plans should allocate land for development with the least environmental or amenity value, and take a strategic approach to maintaining and strengthening habitat networks.

Additionally, the new Framework sets out that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and that the scale and extent of developments in these areas should be severely limited.

The new Framework increases the protection given to ancient woodland, stating that “development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons”. This will ensure that these irreplaceable areas are not lost for future generations.

Furthermore, the revised Framework makes clear that where development would “involve the loss of individual aged or veteran trees that lie outside ancient woodland, it should be refused unless the need for, and benefits of, development in that location would clearly outweigh the loss”.

The Government is committed to ensuring stronger protection for our ancient woodlands and I am encouraged by the positive steps taken to do so in the revised draft NPPF. Moreover, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is also exploring opportunities for updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory. In addition to this, officials are also working closely with the Department for Transport and HS2 to address the importance of ancient woodland when determining final routes.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
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