

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd January 2021

Jim Confront,

RE: ANCIENT WOODLANDS, AGED & VETERAN TREES - PLANNING SYSTEM REFORMS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of protection for ancient woodlands, aged and veteran trees, with specific reference to the proposed planning system reforms.

I understand and share your concerns regarding protection for our ancient woodlands and our aged and veteran trees, which are an irreplaceable aspect of our natural environment. It is encouraging to see that the proposed planning reforms will mean our green spaces and treasured countryside will continue to see strong protections and safeguards against development.

It is absolutely right that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), sets out that “*development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.*” This will ensure that these irreplaceable areas are not lost for future generations.

Local planning authorities determine planning applications that concern ancient woodland and veteran trees. In this process, Natural England are statutory consultees where an application may affect ancient woodland designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which accounts for 23 percent of ancient woodlands, or where development requires an Environmental Impact Assessment. The reformed planning system will continue to protect places of environmental value like National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, locally defined conservation areas and wildlife sites. I have been assured that the presumption for housing development will not be at the expense of these important protected areas.

It is encouraging that the planning reforms are aligned with our national commitments to tackle climate change, protect our environment and conserve our parks and green spaces. It will also look at making changes to the NPPF to ensure the reformed planning system can effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change and maximise environmental benefits.

I know the Government is committed to enhancing protections for our precious environment, as set out in the *25 Year Environment Plan*. The framework reinforces environmental protections, including by requiring local authorities to improve biodiversity and air quality. I am confident that the framework and reformed planning system will continue to protect our ancient woodlands and our aged and veteran trees for decades to come.

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.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE