

Planning for the future

We welcome the government's aspirations to focus on high quality design and sustainability in streamlining the planning process. The multiple benefits of trees are increasingly well recognised in the wider policy world and must be harnessed in these proposals. We know that our trees, woodlands and green spaces have a vital role to play in promoting healthy communities, including improved air quality, climate mitigation, flood alleviation and better physical health and wellbeing. We need to maximise these benefits with trees in our landscapes if we want to build sustainable places that support flourishing businesses and communities.

Here we have distilled the key messages from our response, informed by experts in planning, arboriculture and urban forestry.

1. Ensure proposals across government are strategically aligned

There must be explicit read-across between planning reforms and other policy developments such as Biodiversity Net Gain, England Tree Strategy, National Nature Recovery Networks, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and planting targets. Such developments will have impact across industries, and different departments and professions will need to work together in their design and delivery.

2. Consider trees early in the planning process

It is essential that consideration of trees through the appropriate provision of data, obtained and submitted by a qualified professional, is used to inform the land categorisation stage of local plan making (paying particular regard to growth areas). This information must be kept up to date throughout the subsequent planning process.

3. Include trees and green spaces in the new infrastructure levy

We welcome the proposal for a new infrastructure levy and we would urge the specific inclusion of trees on the list of new infrastructure (as green infrastructure). Crucially this must include funds for successful establishment and ongoing maintenance to ensure a thriving urban forest which effectively delivers all the ecosystem service benefits we know it can.

4. Include existing trees in aims for tree-lined streets

The aspiration for all new streets to be lined with trees is admirable and we fully endorse it. This should include not just planting new trees but also the successful integration of existing trees. For new trees it must allow space for their growth and again plan for establishment and ongoing maintenance.

5. Protect existing trees in new zoning approach

Proposals on zones are ambitious. The right protections must be afforded to protect existing trees and woodland in the design and construction of developments, including ancient and veteran trees. These trees will deliver government's aims across departments, including biodiversity, flood alleviation, pollution reduction, improving property value and climate change mitigation.

6. Invest in the right people with the right skills and standards

In order to achieve government's ambitions for planning reform as well as the environmental agenda, we need the right people with the right skills within the planning system. This requires adequate resourcing, particularly for local authorities. The new approach needs to

recognise and integrate the importance of the arboriculture profession, as well as interrelated professions also critical in the process such as landscape and ecology.

In forming our response we have worked with a number of prominent organisations working across arboriculture, forestry, conservation, planning and design, and we have found significant alignment across our key points. We welcome further engagement with MHCLG and would be happy to convene a group for that purpose. Working together we can build beautiful and sustainable homes and communities that deliver for climate, nature, people and the economy.

The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) is the Royal Chartered body for foresters and arboriculturists in the UK. The Institute regulates standards of entry to the profession, doing so by the provision of services and support to its members; guidance to professionals in other sectors; information to the general public; and educational advice and training to students and tree professionals seeking to develop their careers in the forestry and arboriculture industry. The Institute works to foster a greater public awareness and understanding of the tree professions in order to serve a variety of commercial, recreational, environmental and scientific interests.