

UK Forestry Standard for Planners

Woodlands, trees and the Planning System in England

Decisions made through the planning system have a significant impact on our trees and woodland in England. The Town and Country Planning Act (1990) Section 197 places a duty on local planning authorities to *'ensure, whenever it is appropriate, that in granting planning permission for any development adequate provision is made, by the imposition of conditions, for the preservation or planting of trees'*. Where woodland is created or managed through such conditions, [The UK Forestry Standard](#) can be applied to ensure sustainability.

The UKFS sets out the Government's approach to sustainable forestry. The UKFS can help inform planning decisions in the following ways:

- 1) Summarising the legislation which affects trees and woodlands (p189), The regulatory framework)
- 2) Clarifying the roles of Forestry Commission and Local Planning Authorities when dealing with woodland cases
- 3) Setting an appropriate standard for when woodland management or creation are to be covered by planning conditions or Section 106 agreements

This note highlights where planners can find this information in the UKFS.

The UKFS

The UKFS is the reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. The UKFS, supported by its series of Guidelines, outlines the context for forestry in the UK, sets out the approach of the UK governments to sustainable forest management, defines standards and requirements, and provides a basis for regulation and monitoring.



UK Forestry Standard for Planners

Summary of legislation

The UKFS summarises the Forestry Act (1967) and its role in Forest protection. It also clarifies the interaction between Town and Country Planning Acts and forestry activities, stating that these Planning Acts only apply to situations where development is proposed on a woodland site (p22-23). The UKFS requires compliance with all other relevant legislation. This relevant legislation is listed in Appendix 1 – Legislation and conventions (p196).



Summary of policy

The **National Planning Policy Framework (2019)** refers specifically to trees and woodlands in paragraph 175c (Ancient Woodland) and also the National Forest and Community Forests (paragraph 142). It includes various references to green infrastructure. Trees and woodlands are key components of green infrastructure, and urban trees bring green infrastructure to peoples' doors.

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)

Regularly refers to woods and trees as being central to protecting and enhancing the environment for the next generation. The Plan reinforces the protections for the natural environment and the green belt set out in the NPPF. The plans set sets out the aspiration that the planning system can be used positively to protect natural assets and encourage high- quality green infrastructure in urban areas. There is an emphasis on making towns and cities healthier and more attractive by committing to planting one million urban trees. Key to this commitment is recognising the need for green infrastructure and trees to be more fairly distributed and accessible across our urban areas so that everyone can benefit from them. It supports the development of approaches that enhance the built environment's resilience to climate change, in particular SUDS and natural flood management approaches. The emphasis lies on maximising the ecosystems services outputs of new tree planting and green infrastructure.

Government's Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement (2013)

This statement sets out aspirations for improving and expanding woodland coverage. *"Protection of our trees, woods and forests, especially our ancient woodland, is our top priority"* *"New and better managed woodland also has a role in making our rural and*

UK Forestry Standard for Planners

urban landscapes more resilient to the effects of climate change.” “Where appropriate the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements can fund green infrastructure, including trees and woodlands, in order to ensure development is sustainable”

Summary of roles

The UKFS notes that Local Authorities can apply Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees that are important in the landscape (p22-23). It also notes in which situations Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) determinations occur through the Forestry Commission (afforestation, deforestation, construction of forest roads and quarries)., These may be in addition to EIAs under the Planning system if development is proposed.

The Forestry Commission is a statutory consultee for major infrastructure likely to affect the protection or expansion of forests and woodlands¹ and also conditions on the after-use of minerals sites for forestry². It is also a non-statutory consultee on development affecting or within 500m of ancient woodland³.

Woodland management and creation through the planning system



Areas of woodland may be material considerations in planning decisions. Management and creation of woodlands can be promoted through the planning system. If woodland is lost to development then consideration should be given to compensatory woodland creation elsewhere. There may also be opportunities to improve the management of remaining woodland.

Where the planning authority wishes to grant planning permission subject to conditions concerning woodland management or creation (for example as part of green

¹ Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

² Paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

³ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 035 Reference ID: 8-035-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019

UK Forestry Standard for Planners

infrastructure) the conditions could, where appropriate, require design and management according to the UK Forestry Standard. This is consistent with the Forestry Commission who, when giving permission for tree felling and woodland management, check proposed activities against UKFS.

UKFS includes guidance on how woodland management and creation can contribute to:

- Requirements of forest management planning (p25-26, "Forest Management Plan")
- Management for biodiversity (p38-42, "Forests and Biodiversity")
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation (p57-66, "Forests and Climate Change")
- Protection of the historic environment (p81-85, "Forests and Historic Environment")
- Contributing positively to the landscape (p100-101, "Forests and Landscape")
- Woodlands for people, including access (p130-131, "Forests and People")
- Protecting watercourses, including the Water Framework Directive (p164, "Forests and Water")
- Ensuring appropriate species mix and structure of woodlands (p31, "Forest Structure")
- Creating Forest Roads, including consulting local authorities (p36, "Harvesting Operations")
- Use of Timber in construction (p72, "Operational carbon footprint")

Further good practice:

The [Urban Tree Manual](#) - provides advice on selecting and procuring the right tree for the right place in urban areas. It highlights threats to existing trees from pests, disease and climate change, and describes the benefits to the environment and for well-being that urban trees can provide.

[Introduction to England's Urban forests](#) - This sets out how you can value the urban forest.

[England's Urban Forests](#) – using tree canopy cover data to secure the benefits of urban forests. This sets out how you can use tree canopy cover as an indicator of the extent of urban forests.

[Trees in the Townscape](#) - This sets out best practice principles for all local decision makers to ensure that urban trees effectively contribute economically, socially and environmentally to our towns and cities.

[The Case for Trees](#) - This showcases how trees can contribute to urban developments – tackling climate change, delivering an economic dividend and providing social benefits

UK Forestry Standard for Planners

[Natural England Standing Advice on Ancient Woodlands](#) - This advice gives information on dealing with planning applications affecting ancient woodland,

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