**The Woodland Trust**

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**Re: Consultation on Church Fenton Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**Woodland Trust response**

**Thank you very much for consulting the Woodland Trust on your neighbourhood plan for Church Fenton we very much appreciate the opportunity. Neighbourhood planning is an important mechanism for also embedding trees into local communities, as such we are very supportive of some of the policies set out in your plan.**

**Vision and Objectives to 2027**

The Woodland Trust is pleased to see that your Neighbourhood Plan identifies the important role that trees play, and that opportunities should be taken to increase tree cover in appropriate locations in Church Fenton.

Trees are some of the most important features of the area for local people. Already, this is being acknowledged with the adopted Selby District Council Core Strategy (2013), and Policy CP15 (Protecting and Enhancing the Environment) which seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment, such as ancient woodland and trees as these are a critical component of the District, and how any proposals for development should contribute to their protection and enhancement. Therefore, this should also be taken into account with one of your Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan for Church Fenton, and include the following:

To improve our green environment, **and protect and enhance existing ancient woodland, trees and hedgerows**

**Environment and Green Spaces**

We are pleased to see that the environment section in your Neighbourhood Plan specifically acknowledges the vital contribution of trees and hedges as part of green infrastructure in Church Fenton, and how your plan can assist with safeguarding these from encroachment, whilst also seeking to protect and enhance. But this should also recognise the fact that development should not lead to loss or degradation of trees and woodland in your parish. Increasing the amount of trees in Church Fenton will provide enhanced green infrastructure for your local communities, and also mitigate against the future loss of trees to disease (eg Ash dieback), with a new generation of trees both in woods and also outside woods in streets, hedgerows and amenity sites.

Information can be found here: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.asp> and <http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/discoveries/interactivemap/>

Ancient woodland would benefit from strengthened protection building on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).  On 24th July 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the revised NPPF which states:

**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**

The Woodland Trust believe this must be given due weight in the plan making process, as it shows a clear direction of travel from central Government to strengthen the protection of irreplaceable ancient woodland and trees.  Therefore, we would recommend that Policy EGS3 (Green Corridors) acknowledges this and should include the following sentence:

Retention of hedges, trees and landscape features, ***and there should be no harm or loss of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient trees and hedges*.**

Also, the Woodland Trust would suggest that your Neighbourhood Plan is more specific about ancient tree protection. For example, the introduction and background to the consultation on the Kimbolton Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017), identified the importance of ancient woodland, and how it should be protected and enhanced. Also, we would like to see buffering distances set out. For example, for most types of development (i.e. residential), a planted buffer strip of 50m would be preferred to protect the core of the woodland. Standing Advice from Natural England and the Forestry Commission has some useful information:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

We would like to see the importance of trees and woodland recognised for providing healthy living and recreation also being taken into account with your Neighbourhood Plan for Church Fenton. In an era of ever increasing concern about the nation’s physical and mental health, the Woodland Trust strongly believes that trees and woodland can play a key role in delivering improved health & wellbeing at a local level. Whilst, at the same time, the Health & Social Care Act 2012 has passed much of the responsibility for health & wellbeing to upper-tier and unitary local authorities, and this is reinforced by the Care Act 2014. Also, each new house being built in your parish should require a new street tree, and also car parks must have trees within them as well.

**Valuing Community Facilities**

Whilst your Draft Policy AS2 (New community facilities) does identify the fact that any shortfalls in community provision is going to be acknowledged as something is taken forward, protecting natural features such as community space provision should also be taken into account. It should seek to retain and enhance recreational and local green spaces, resist the loss of open space, whilst also ensuring the provision of some more. Therefore, to what extent there is considered to be enough accessible space in your community also needs to be taken into account with new development proposals, such as housing. There are Natural England and Forestry Commission standards which can be used with developers on this:

The Woodland Access Standard aspires:

* That no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size.
* That there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round trip) of people’s homes.

The Woodland Trust also believes that trees and woodlands can deliver a major contribution to resolving a range of water management issues, particularly those resulting from climate change, like flooding and the water quality implications caused by extreme weather events. This is important in the area covered by your Neighbourhood Plan because trees offer opportunities to make positive water use change, whilst also contributing to other objectives, such as biodiversity, timber & green infrastructure - see the Woodland Trust publication ***Stemming the flow*** – the role of trees and woods in flood protection - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2014/05/stemming-the-flow/>.

**Woodland Trust Publications**

We would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the Woodland Trust’s

neighbourhood planning microsite: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning/neighbourhood-planning/> which may give you further ideas for your plan.

Also, the Woodland Trust have recently released a planners manual which is a multi-purpose document and is intended for policy planners, such as community groups preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Our guide can be found a*t:* [*https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100820409/planning-for-ancient-woodland-planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland-and-veterandtrees.pdf?cb=8298cbf2eaa34c7da329eee3bd8d48ff*](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100820409/planning-for-ancient-woodland-planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland-and-veterandtrees.pdf?cb=8298cbf2eaa34c7da329eee3bd8d48ff)

In addition other Woodland Trust research which may assist with taking your Neighbourhood Plan foreword is a policy and practice section on our website, which provides lots of more specific evidence on more specific issues such as air quality, pollution and tree disease: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/>

Our evidence base is always expanding through vigorous programme of PhDs and partnership working. So please do check back or get in touch if you have a specific query. You may also be interested in our free community tree packs, schools and community groups can claim up to 420 free trees every planting season: <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/community-tree-pack/>

If I can be of any assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch, I would be more than happy to discuss this further with you. If you require any further information or would like to discuss specific issues please do not hesitate to contact Victoria Bankes Price – Planning Advisor 0343 7705767 victoriabankesprice@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Best wishes and good luck with your plan

**Ian Lings** – Local Planning Support Volunteer

On behalf of the Woodland Trust