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Response to Hertsmere BC Draft SADM

About the Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity and aims to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future. We do this by restoring and improving woodland biodiversity and increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland. We own over 1,276 sites across UK (including several in Hertfordshire) covering over 23,580ha (from 0.06 to 4,875 ha), including 200 SSSIs, and we have 500,000 members and supporters.

Housing, and general comments on the cross-cutting benefits of woodland, access to woodland and a high canopy cover outside woodland.

There is now a wealth of evidence on the many benefits of accessible woodland and high canopy cover, including improving: physical and mental health; air quality; water quality; water management (reducing flooding); shading; cooling through evapotranspiration; as well as the more obvious benefit of improving biodiversity.

Most of these issues are summarised, along with the appropriate references for the background research and evidence, in the Trust's publication *Residential Development and Trees* <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2015/07/residential-developments-and-trees/>

I suggest that the above document is used to inform the design principles of new housing development within any future Development Plan Documents

I have expanded on some of the topics in *Residential Development and Trees* below.

Woodland Access Standard

The Woodland Trust believes that proximity and access to woodland is an important contributor to creating healthy communities and 'placemaking'. As highlighted in Government policy by the **Public Health White Paper** (Healthy Lives, Healthy People; Nov 2010), there are currently tremendous opportunities for native woodland to contribute positively towards delivering improved mental and physical health.

The **White Paper** states that: "Access to green spaces is associated with better mental and physical health across socioeconomic groups." and that "Defra will lead a national campaign to increase tree planting throughout England, particularly in areas where tree cover would help to improve residents' quality of life and reduce the negative effects of deprivation, including health inequalities."

Recognising these policy linkages, the Woodland Trust has researched and developed the Woodland Access Standard (WAS^t) for local authorities to aim for, encapsulated in our *Space for People* publication. We believe that the WAS^t can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards used in delivering green infrastructure for health benefits. The WAS^t is complimentary to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard and is endorsed by the Forestry Commission.

The full report can be found at <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/key-publications/space-for-people/Pages/space-for-people.aspx> but the Trust updates the data periodically. The latest data can be supplied free of charge by the Woodland Trust both in map and in numerical/GIS form.

The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard recommends:

- 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.

Applying this standard in Hertsmere, gives the following figures (see table below).

Accessibility to Woodland in Hertsmere using the Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard

		Hertsmere
Accessible woods	% population with access to 2ha+ wood within 500m	15.2%
	% population with access to 20ha+ wood within 4km	90.9%

The full report can be found at <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/key-publications/space-for-people/Pages/space-for-people.aspx> but the Trust updates the data periodically. The latest data can be supplied free of charge by the Woodland Trust both in map and in numerical/GIS form.

I suggest that *Space for People* and the WAS^t is used to inform the development of the SADM and your other development plan documents.

Flood risk

Trees can reduce the likelihood of surface water flooding in urban situations, when rain water overwhelms the local drainage system, by regulating the rate at which rainfall reaches the ground and contributes to run off. There is a positive role here for the use of trees with SUDS initiatives. Slowing the flow increases the possibility of infiltration and the ability of engineered drains to take away any excess water. This is particularly the case with large crowned trees. Research by the University of Manchester has shown that increasing tree cover in urban areas by 10 % reduces surface water run-off by almost 6%. (*Using green infrastructure to alleviate flood risk, Sustainable*

Cities - www.sustainablecities.org.uk/water/surface-water/using-gi/). The Woodland Trust has also produced a policy paper illustrating the benefits of trees for urban flooding – *Trees in Our Towns – the role of trees and woods in managing urban water quality and quantity* (<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100083915/Trees-in-our-towns.pdf>).

The Woodland Trust believes that trees and woodlands can also 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. They offer opportunities to make positive water use change whilst also contributing to other objectives, such as biodiversity, timber & green infrastructure - see the Woodland Trust publications *Stemming the flow – the role of trees and woods in flood protection* -

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2014/05/stepping-the-flow/> and *Woodland actions for biodiversity and their role in water management* -

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100263208/rr-wt-71014-woodland-actions-for-biodiversity-and-their-role-in-water-management.pdf?cb=001108c3a78944299140a996b2cd7ee8>.

In addition, a joint Environment Agency/Forestry Commission publication *Woodland for Water: Woodland measures for meeting Water Framework objectives* states clearly that: ‘*There is strong evidence to support woodland creation in appropriate locations to achieve water management and water quality objectives*’ (Environment Agency, July 2011- <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/woodlandforwater>).

The Government’s **Independent Panel on Forestry** (Defra, Final Report, July 2012) has emphasised these benefits by stating that:

‘One of the many benefits of woods and trees is their ability to help us respond to a changing climate, better enabling us to adapt to future temperature increases. We know that trees, in the right places, help us to adapt to climate change by reducing surface water flooding; reducing ambient temperature through direct shade and evapo-transpiration; and by reducing building heating and air-conditioning demands. A landscape with more trees will also help increase the resilience of our rural areas, by reducing soil erosion and soil moisture loss. Improving the condition of existing woodlands, and the creation of a more resilient ecological network of associated habitats, will help wildlife adapt to climate change and other pressures’.

The Woodland Trust has produced a further paper – *Planting Trees to Protect Water – The role of trees and woods on farms in managing water quality and quantity* – that shows how trees and woodland can help mitigate peak flood flows. The report is available at -

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100083903/Planting-trees-to-protect-water-RBC-Bluewater-farming-report-evidence.pdf>.

Therefore, the Woodland Trust would like to see trees and woodland, which have been proven to have a significant effect on flood amelioration, acknowledged accordingly in the SADM and other new development plan documents.

Practical guidance and potential SPD

The Woodland Trust is a member of, the **Trees and Design Action Group** (TDAG) - a unique multi-disciplinary group of professionals and organisations from both the private and public sectors that is seeking to promote the benefits of trees within the built environment. TDAG published ***Trees in the Townscape*** (TDAG, June 2012) <http://www.tdag.org.uk/trees-in-the-townscape.html> . This contains 12 principles of best practice aimed at designers, developers and planners to encourage integrated, joined up thinking, strategies, policies and implementation relating to trees in the urban realm.

TDAG have also recently published a practical guide for the retention and planting of trees in urban situations, including new development - *Trees in the Hard Landscape* (TDAG, September 2014). (<http://www.tdag.org.uk/trees-in-hard-landscapes.html>)

TDAG publications are referenced in the London Plan, and *Trees in the Townscape* is endorsed by a number of local authorities; therefore, **I recommend that Hertsmere Council considers TDAG guidance in developing its SADM and other Local Plan documents.**

Please get back to me if you have any queries on this, or require further clarification.

Yours sincerely,

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