ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT COMMITTEE

INQUIRY: ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Submission from the Trees and Design Action Group.

THE TREES AND DESIGN ACTION GROUP

The Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG) is an open collaborative forum facilitating cross-sector and cross-disciplinary dialogue and projects promoting the role of the urban forest throughout the United Kingdom.

The group shares the collective vision that the location of trees, and all the benefits they bring, can be secured for future generations through better collaboration in the planning, design, construction and management of our urban infrastructure and spaces.

Established in 2007 as a not-for-profit and apolitical collaborative forum, TDAG incorporated as a charitable trust in 2013. Its membership, online publications and information are free. This approach enables TDAG to assimilate ideas and knowledge independently of organisational hierarchy, profit or commercial interests.
For further information visit www.tdag.org.uk

TDAG would like to draw the Committee's attention to the cost-effective role of trees in reducing the Urban Heat Island effect.

While canopy cover can help to improve local overheating, much of discussion around increasing tree canopy cover is based on the need to ensure city wide increases in cover because it is the overall density of the urban forest that achieves the best results for urban cooling. Early research in Manchester by Professor John Handley, Dr Roland Ennos et al demonstrated that a 10% increase in canopy cover in central Manchester could reduce the air temperature by up to 4 degrees centigrade.

Forest Research (FR) has undertaken a canopy cover survey of nearly 300 towns and cities in England (https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/tree-canopy-cover-leaflet/) and Dr Kieron Doick can give more detailed information about this (Kieron.doick@forestry.gsi.gov.uk). Other work by FR has shown that greenspaces in the London Borough of Camden cool 42% of the borough by 0.5-3.5^{o}C; and that for effective cooling greenspaces of 3-5ha are required at ~150m spacing. FR published a review on the role of trees and greenspaces in cooling the urban realm in 2013; an updated publication is due out later this year and we'd be happy to share a pre-publication proof to support the EAC in their work (please contact Kieron Doick for a copy).

A recent publication guides tree species selection for increased cooling (Smithers, R.J., Doick, K.J., Burton, A., Sibille, R., Steinbach, D., Harris, R., Groves, L., Blicharska, M. (2018). Comparing the relative abilities of tree species to cool the urban environment. Urban Ecosystems. 2 May 2018, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11252-018-0761)

Wycombe District Council has developed a Planning Policy in its new Local Plan, requiring 25% canopy cover in new housing developments, this is to go through an examination process over the summer and if accepted will be accompanied by an SPD explaining how it will be implemented. It is anticipated that this policy will see new developments benefiting from a reduced urban heat island effect as one of many benefits. The background supporting document can be found here: (https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/public/documents/Planning/New-local-plan/Tree-canopy-cover-assessment-report.pdf) and the draft policy (DM34 page360) can be found here:

https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/public/documents/Planning/New-local-plan/Reg-19-Publication-Local-Plan/Wycombe-District-Local-Plan-Publication-Version.pdf

TDAG is calling for a National Tree and Woodland Strategy for the UK so that all local authorities have tree strategies that address canopy cover targets for their areas as part of their climate change adaptation policy.

It is also vital that trees and green infrastructure are embedded effectively in the NPPF. At the moment it does not appear that Defra and MHCLG are working together on this approach.

Contact
Sue James, AA Dipl RIBA
Email: suejamesriba@gmail.com
T. 07906 849 674 (mob) or 01974 821 673 (office)