Elderly or physically disabled members of the public

1. I am pleased to have the opportunity to express my views to the Committee.

2. I would expect that a clear majority of householders would agree that an eight-foot hedge is ample to maintain privacy. They would also consider it acceptable to trim their side of a neighbour's garden hedge provided the hedge height does not exceed around eight feet. I believe an eight-foot hedge could be maintained by a householder without raising any unreasonable safety issues. However, beyond about eight feet I believe hedge maintenance becomes potentially dangerous without specialist equipment which it would be unreasonable to expect the ordinary house holder to have. The potential dangers are heightened should an elderly or physically disabled person attempt to control a neighbour's high hedge. Since it is predicted that an increasing number of elderly or disabled people can expect to continue living on in their own homes, I believe the Committee should give special thought to this aspect of the bill.

3. Generally, the bill should specify the acceptable height for hedges. The specification of this height should in part reflect safety issues and in particular issues relating to elderly or disabled people. The Bill should give powers to a Local Authority to act where a hedge owner refuses to maintain their hedge at this height. In such cases the Local Authority should notify the hedge owner giving them say 60 days to comply. If the hedge owner fails to act the Local Authority should arrange for the hedge to be cut and bill the owner accordingly together with a fixed penalty of say £100. Where a hedge owner is unable to maintain their hedge because of safety issues, such as those noted above relating to elderly or disabled people, then the Local Authority should arrange for the hedge to be cut and the hedge owner sent a perhaps modified bill without penalty.