Do you agree with the definition of a high hedge as set out in the Bill? If not, please provide details;

1. I do not agree with the definition because trees other than those defined as “evergreen or semi evergreen trees or shrubs” can have the same effect of reducing light increasing shade etc. I suggest that the definition be simplified to “any obstructive hedge or planting that exceeds 2m in height” or similar. Consideration should also be given to restricting the height to which obstructive growth is allowed to reach after cutting e.g. if a hedge is cut to less than 2m it will normally within a year exceed that height again.

Do you consider that other forms of vegetation should be covered by the provisions of the Bill? If so, please specify why?

2. Yes for the reasons given above and it would be perfectly possible to someone to plant beans or sunflowers to have the same effect as a hedge each summer.

Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to dispute resolution as set out in the Bill?

3. I think that after the legislation is enabled there will be far fewer problems and that the number of disputes requiring enforcement will be relatively small providing that the local authority makes it clear that the law will be enforced. It may be that a simple standard pro forma application with a copy to the authority and to the alleged offender by the complainer will in most situations solve the matter which in many cases will simply be a matter of poor communications between neighbours.

Do you have any comments on the enforcement procedures proposed under a high hedge notice?

4. Presumably a High Hedge Notice will remain in force for as long as growth may reasonably be expected to exceed the definition of a high hedge within a year?

Do you have any comments on the proposed fees and costs?

5. Where a High Hedge notice is issued the Authority should have the power to charge the offender for all the costs involved in their work plus a percentage and they should refund to the complainer any previous fees paid to the Authority by the complainer where the complaint is justified. I don’t think that this is however a “deal breaker”.

Are there any aspects of the systems used in other jurisdictions which should be included within this Bill?

6. Not sufficiently knowledgeable to comment.
Are there any aspects of this Bill which would impact positively or negatively on equality of opportunity?

7. Not as I understand it.

Any other issues relating to the Bill which you wish to bring to the attention of the Committee?

8. I think that the Bill is an excellent idea which will resolve many issues that adversely affect the enjoyment of properties. I hope that it is quickly enacted and well publicised with a 6 month grace period to allow those who own high hedges to take action before enforcement processes commence.

Note: Photographs of a private property were provided with the submission, but are not reproduced online.