

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Legal Background

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils, to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve *and enhance* biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration; and
- act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

In addition, Policies 170 to 183 of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* address conserving and enhancing the natural environment, stating that the planning system should:

- contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes;
- recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity; and
- where possible, "promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity".

Biodiversity refers to the variety and abundance of life on earth. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and the sea.

The Local Area

Haslingfield is a rural area largely covered by arable farmland. Other habitats within the parish include hedges, ditches, small pockets of woodland and the Bourn Brook and River Rhee (tributaries of the River Cam, both County Wildlife Sites (CWS)), which form boundaries of the parish and provide important wildlife corridors. There are also sections of uncultivated river floodplain. This is largely disconnected from the river, though parts of it do flood occasionally and can be expected to flood more frequently if unsettled weather conditions persist and worsen, as climate science predicts. Also present are ponds and grasslands, including rare chalk grassland.

Local spaces of note for wildlife include Haslingfield Quarry (which is designated as a County Wildlife Site, for orchids and calcareous grassland); the 60 acre Diamond

Jubilee woodland, planted in 2012 by the Trumpington Estate; the Glebe Woods (in the churchyard of All Saints Church); the moat and stream which drain through the Wisbey's Yard pond and into the River Rhee; and Clock Holt, a small naturalised wooded area next to the Rhee, owned by Haslingfield United Charities.

The village is also home to a school, two churches and a vicarage which sit within substantial green spaces.

The area historically supported large orchards, the remnants of which remain in many gardens.

The parish also includes parts of Lark Rise Farm (managed by the Countryside Regeneration Trust (CRT) for nature conservation) and Barrington Chalk Pit, (a geological SSSI), and is adjacent to both Trumpington Nature Reserve and Lords Bridge Observatory CWS (neutral grassland).

Additionally, there are multiple green amenity spaces within the village. A characteristic of Haslingfield's housing developments since the 1960's has been to build around or adjacent to green spaces, such as those on College Crescent, Trinity Close, Chestnut Close, Lilac Close, The Elms, behind the development at Watson's Yard, Badcock Road and Sidney Gardens. Most of these are accessible to the public. Some are owned or maintained by the Parish Council, and others are owned by Residents Associations, the County Council or private owners. These, as well as the Recreation Ground and Village Green, are important open spaces for villagers and are much valued.

Since many of the village's homes, whether on greens or otherwise, include gardens, many of which are large (although there has been a significant amount of gardens built on), there is good potential for these to form well-connected beneficial wildlife habitats.

Records held by CPERC¹ show a variety of species in the area, including protected species. However, many of these records are concentrated in specific locations, e.g. Lark Rise Farm. This reflects the need to better record and monitor what is seen in the village, in order to better protect the parish. Examples of locally important and protected species recorded in the parish include hedgehog, otter, water vole, great crested newt; birds include kingfisher, yellowhammer, skylark, swift and house martin. The rare chalk grasslands also support a variety of plants and invertebrates. Even some of the road verges in the village have been found to support orchids and other wildflowers when mowing frequency is reduced.

Parish Council Responsibilities

The Parish Council owns several areas of environmental interest. These include the 9,000m² Well House Meadow; the Village Green (the associated verges bordering the Green are not owned by but are managed by the PC in association with the Methodist Church); the Recreation Ground and skatepark; several small greens in The Elms development; land adjacent to the Trinity Close footpath; a former quarry

¹ Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre

adjacent to Chapel Hill; and the village allotments. The Recreation Ground is managed for recreational use such as cricket and football but is surrounded by hedgerows and a wooded area on one side.

In addition, the PC manages the County Council owned green surrounding the Lilac Close bus stop. As a riparian landowner the Parish Council manages the stream next to Parish-owned land by River Lane and supports the maintenance of adjacent land between the stream and River Lane. Whilst the PC does not own or have responsibility for footpaths or verges not on Parish Council owned land, the PC may, from time to time, decide to support those responsible where it feels the standard of management of certain aspects should be enhanced for the safety and convenience of residents using the footpath or verge. For example, this may take the form of cutting a hedge for a defined length or the removal of a bush blocking a footpath.

What the Parish Council Will Do

1. Decision Making, Communication and Influence

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, including when commenting on planning applications.
- Seek to appoint a biodiversity and environment officer within the PC who will research and be prepared to provide advice and advocacy on these decisions.
- Encourage, in planning decisions and on website:
 - the use of hedgehog friendly fencing. Hedgehogs, which continue to decline in numbers, particularly in the East of England, can travel 2km in a single night as they search for food and shelter, but garden fences and walls can limit or prevent this movement. Small 13cm square hedgehog highways² through fences allow hedgehogs to move between gardens; and
 - installation of swift bricks.

2. Land Management

- Manage land for which it is responsible in ways which benefit the environment and biodiversity. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - leaving standing dead wood and leaving or placing fallen dead wood, including some hedge cuttings, as a habitat for invertebrates (Wellhouse Meadow/Margins of Recreation Ground, the land next to the Trinity Close footpath);
 - leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates;

² www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden

- removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required;
- removing grass clippings from the Wellhouse Meadow and maintaining a meadow friendly mowing regime which allows wildflowers to set seed;
- maintaining the health of existing trees and looking for funding and opportunities for additional tree planting, including in the community orchard and on the riverside, with landowners permission;
- establishing a baseline for and, where possible, reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides and herbicides on Parish Council owned land where feasible and appropriate;
- continuing to ensure that all hedges are cut outside of the bird nesting season and, if possible, later on in the winter to allow birds to feed on any berries (if present);
- ensuring that new planting on PC land is of species which contribute to biodiversity, such as flowering shrubs and trees (providing nectar for invertebrates and fruit/berries/nuts for other wildlife), plants which provide food, shelter and protection, native plants, and/or drought resistant plants; and
- supporting Adopting Plant Life recommendations for management of verges:
 - ❖ No Mow May on all verges from 2024 and consider extending to 24th June (mid-summer's day) depending upon traffic visibility or pedestrian use following a typical hay meadow regime.
 - ❖ Some verges not affecting traffic visibility or pedestrian use to be left uncut until August or September for summer flowers to set seed (poppy, cornflower) where feasible; scope to be reviewed each year
 - ❖ A total ban of pesticides, herbicides & fertilisers on verges – reducing fertility will enhance wildflowers over grasses. Cuttings to be removed wherever possible to reduce nutrient load.

3. Neighbourhood Plan

- Include this biodiversity strategy in the Neighbourhood Plan, currently in development.

4. Protecting Existing Natural Assets

- Seek to register green spaces in the village as Assets of Community Value or Local Green Spaces. Note that the PC does not need to own land to register it as such. Registration gives the village the right to be informed and bid on this land if it comes onto the market. It also formally recognizes the community's concern for its green spaces.

- View the “products” of nature, such as pruned wood, fallen or otherwise removed trees and mown grasses, as valuable assets and seek to return them to the natural circular economy or to spaces where natural processes can decompose them and other animals/plants/insects/fungi can use them.

5. Monitoring and Recording Biodiversity

- Carry out or fund and record regular ecological surveys of the Wellhouse Meadow and the Recreation Ground, as well as other sites of biodiversity such as Lilac Close, Wisbey’s Yard pond, verges and watercourses and report findings to CPERC/iRecord.
- Encourage the public to record the biodiversity in their gardens and properties using iRecord³ to help form a baseline of biodiversity in the village.
- Apply for funding to provide swift/owl/bat/house martin boxes as a village project and provide advice on installing them on homes/school/churches. Swift boxes have been installed on the Village Hall. Look to install other boxes in suitable places on Council owned land and buildings.
- Work towards enhancing natural corridors through the parish, working with local landowners, including churches and school. This could include hedge planting to fill gaps/create new hedgerows, linking up pollinator highways etc.
- Promote biodiversity via the Parish Council website and in the newsletter.
- The parish has been selected as one of the parishes to take part in Cambridgeshire County Council’s *Nature Recovery – From the Ground Up* project. The intention is to create and record a local nature recovery plan with the help of the county experts, including by mapping on Parish Online. The plan will reveal specific steps which can be taken to protect or improve various habitats within the parish.

6. Haslingfield Allotments

- Another important section of parish land, towards the boundary with Harston, is used as allotments. The management of this land is devolved to HAGA (Haslingfield Allotment Gardeners Association), who liaise with the Parish Council through a delegated member who attends their meeting, ensuring appropriate support and advice and appropriate ratification of potential changes in how the allotments are run. The PC’s Biodiversity Policy will also apply to HAGA, who already consider biodiversity and improvement of their site from an ecological standpoint as key in their management strategy.

³ <https://irecord.org.uk>

HAGA is also aware of the diversity of wildlife within the perimeter of the allotment area.

7. River

- Haslingfield pumping station and Sewage Treatment Plant have both been cited as among the worst for effluent in the region. The Parish Council will aim to make its voice heard in censuring the water authority for failing to address this issue.
- One of the problems which cause overflows, according to Anglian Water, is public ignorance about what is and is not acceptable to put into household drains, as well as increased impermeability of surfaces. PC will share information on website about what can and can't go down drains.

8. Reviewing the Plan and Future Goals

- This plan will help the PC understand and work towards recording the diversity in the parish more fully and create a baseline for improvement. This plan will be reviewed annually, and once a baseline is established, the PC will work toward meeting the targets of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Strategy, which outlines how to first establish local biodiversity and then work toward doubling it. In addition, the PC will consider the goal of becoming part of the Wildlife Trust/Cambridge Past Present and Future Nature Networks scheme, which seeks to connect nature rich sites with corridors or "steppingstones" which allow wildlife to travel between areas.

Date adopted: April 2026

Date of review: April 2027