

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

REVIEWED AND ADOPTED 3rd FEB 2026

NEXT REVIEW DUE 6th FEB 2028

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.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth (as defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA). Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and the sea.

The Local Area

Wickham Bishops is a rural village, with a considerable number of natural areas, including farmland, hedges, ditches, the River Blackwater, and ancient woodlands. There are many public footpaths throughout the village, most of which cross natural areas.

Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council owns a strip of land currently used as a permissive footpath between Great Totham Road and Maypole Road.

The Parish Council arranges for grass cutting on certain highway verges.

The Parish Council is a member of the Parish Paths Partnership and undertakes public footpath maintenance.

The Parish Council is also responsible for the provision and updating of the Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Plan.

What the Parish Council will do

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, especially when commenting on planning applications and works to protected trees.
- The Parish Council will continue to reduce the number of grass cuts on verges and open spaces, where highway visibility is not adversely affected, from May to October.

- The Parish Council will continue to encourage residents to leave unmown grass areas within, and around the edges of, their garden from May to October.
- When the Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Plan is next reviewed the working group will ensure that biodiversity and climate change continue to be essential considerations in any revised Plan.
- The Parish Council will contribute towards the national and local target of 30% coverage of green infrastructure by 2030, as set out in the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy, by continuing to promote biodiversity and encourage habitat improvement across all areas of the parish, including gardens, verges, open spaces, woodlands, rivers and ponds.

Approved and Adopted by Wickham Bishops Parish Council.

Signed:

Date: