# CAVERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY – for review

**Introduction - Statutory Duty**

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

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

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023;
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Such steps may include:

- reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities;
- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation;
- carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area;
- gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity;
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

# CAVERSVIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## BIODIVERSITY POLICY

### BACKGROUND

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Caversfield Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

### DEFINITION

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications;
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity;
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices;

- encourage and support other organisations within the village to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind;
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

## ACTIONS

### Planning applications

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats;
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications;
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.

### Land and property management

The Council will:

- carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings;
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work;
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment;
- review the management of the land in Old School Close. This may include, but is not limited to, reviewing the grass cutting policy and leaving standing and fallen dead wood together with leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates.

### Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters;
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference;
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including, for example, tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

**Partners**

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the parish area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

This policy was adopted on 15 January 2025 (Minute reference 15/1/25 9. c. i.) and will be reviewed in a year or sooner should legislation dictate.

# ACTION PLAN

| SITE / OBJECTIVE | ACTION | OUTCOME | TARGET (Years) | REPORTING / PUBLICITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Whole council area | Raise local awareness of biodiversity. | Gain local support for action. | Ongoing | E-newsletter |
| Protect and support biodiversity | Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity. | Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species | Ongoing | Mapping |
| Common / other open spaces | Adopt a management plan. | Sustain and enhance natural habitats. | | |
| | Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. | Protecting habitats | | |
| | Work with the county council on verge management. | Protecting / enhancing habitats | | |
| | Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after. | Regular attention | | |
| The Built Landscape | Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Local Plan | Protecting / enhancing habitats | Ongoing | |
| | Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries. | Extending habitats | | |

| SITE / OBJECTIVE | ACTION | OUTCOME | TARGET (Years) | REPORTING / PUBLICITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increase community awareness of biodiversity | Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish. | Engagement / ownership of biodiversity | Ongoing | |
| | Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife. | Promote biodiversity | | |
| | Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links. | Promote biodiversity | | |
| | Encourage local farmers to contribute. | Extending habitats | | |
| | Discourage floodlighting. | Protect nocturnal animals | | |
| Support Community Projects | Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas. | Extending habitats | | |
| | Work in partnership with schools to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them. | Promote biodiversity | | |
| | Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, | Promote biodiversity | | |

| SITE / OBJECTIVE | ACTION | OUTCOME | TARGET (Years) | REPORTING / PUBLICITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | working with local organisations. | | | |