



Great Denham Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

Introduction - Statutory Duty

In accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, public authorities in England, including Parish Councils, are obligated to consider the conservation of biodiversity as an integral component of their policy and decision-making processes. The Environment Act 2021 has subsequently reinforced this obligation, necessitating public authorities to assess and implement measures to conserve and improve biodiversity in England.

Government guidance published on 17th 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.

Definition

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020¹), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

The significance of biodiversity extends beyond its intrinsic value, as numerous studies have revealed. Biodiversity serves as the foundational element of our 'ecosystems,' delivering a diverse array of goods and services crucial to sustaining our economic and social welfare. These services encompass not only essential resources like food, fresh water, and clean air but also less apparent benefits such as safeguarding against natural disasters, climate regulation, and the purification of water, along with the pollination of crops. Additionally, biodiversity plays a pivotal role in providing cultural services, enriching and enhancing our lives.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is to strive for the enhancement and safeguarding of biodiversity in Great Denham. All committees affiliated with Great Denham Parish Council will take into account sustainability, environmental impact, and biodiversity in their decision-making processes. They will formulate and execute policies and strategies as necessary.

Specifically, Great Denham Parish Council will endeavour to improve the area's biodiversity through the following measures:

- Assessing the potential impact on biodiversity presented by planning applications.
- Managing its land and property through environmentally friendly practices to foster biodiversity.
- Encouraging local businesses and council operations to adopt low-impact practices.
- Supporting residents and activities of local organisations in endeavours that enhance and promote biodiversity.

Planning Applications

In the context of planning applications, the council is dedicated to endorsing site and building designs that contribute positively to biodiversity. This involves conserving and integrating existing habitats or creating new habitats. The council will advocate for the safeguarding of sensitive habitats from development, carefully assessing the potential loss of crucial wildlife habitats for all applications. Additionally, the council will evaluate each proposed development's potential contribution to biodiversity consistent with the biodiversity policies in the neighbourhood plan as outlined below:

¹ As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA

Policy D2: Maintaining separation

The undeveloped gap between Great Denham and Biddenham as shown by arrows on the Policies Map will be retained. New development which would functionally, visually or fundamentally merge the two settlements will be refused. Any development proposals will be required to ensure that the biodiversity, recreation, and landscape values of the gap are preserved and enhanced.

Policy G3: Great Denham Country Park

All development proposals which could affect the function and appearance of Great Denham Country Park will be required to ensure that the biodiversity, recreational, flood alleviation and landscape values of the Park are preserved and enhanced.

Policy G4: Nature Conservation

New development will be required to protect and enhance existing natural features of sites and provide at least 10% net gain in biodiversity. Where relevant, new development will be required to protect and enhance existing natural features of sites such as trees, hedgerows, ditches and ponds. Provision of appropriate species-related measures will be required, including, for example, swift bricks, bat and owl boxes and the incorporation of native species into landscaping schemes. Any new development using SuDS must ensure that the design of the system supports green infrastructure planning and the preservation and promotion of biodiverse habitats.

Land and Property Management

Regarding land and property management, the council commits to conducting a comprehensive biodiversity audit of its landholdings. Emphasis will be placed on the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity in open spaces, adopting environmentally friendly practices in vegetation cutting, chemical applications, and maintenance scheduling. Special attention will be given to grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that work aligns with acceptable standards without harming the natural environment. Biodiversity considerations will also be integrated into building management practices.

Local Community

In engaging with the local community, the council will actively raise awareness of biodiversity issues through various channels, including its website and newsletters. Collaborative efforts will be undertaken with local businesses and residents to discuss biodiversity in the community and ways individuals can contribute positively. The council aims to involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land, such as tree planting, wildflower meadows, and bird box construction, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and active participation in enhancing local biodiversity.

Partners

Great Denham is endowed with significant green spaces, both to the south, within a floodplain, and to the north, encompassing the former Golf Course. Despite not owning these areas outright, Great Denham Parish Council is steadfast in ensuring that those responsible for maintaining these diverse green spaces prioritise biodiversity conservation. Recognising the pivotal role these spaces play in preserving the natural environment, the council is committed to active collaboration with the stewards of these areas. This collaborative effort emphasizes the integration of biodiversity conservation practices into maintenance activities. The council's dedication to ecological well-being extends to various notable recreation and green spaces within the parish, including Great Denham Country Park, the land behind the Park and Ride, the Village Green/Community Garden, and The Meeting Place on Anglia Way. This inclusive approach underscores the council's commitment to promoting biodiversity and environmental health throughout the community, even in spaces owned by other entities.

This policy will be reviewed each year at the Annual Meeting, together with a summary of how the policy has been implemented in the previous twelve months.

¹ As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA