

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1	21/10/2026	117/2026/01	October 2027

1. Background

1.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, places a duty on public authorities in England, including parish councils, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when exercising their functions.

1.2 Conserving biodiversity includes protecting, restoring and enhancing species, habitats and ecological networks.

1.3 Noak Bridge Parish Council recognises the importance of biodiversity to the character, environment and quality of life of the parish.

1.4 The Council's Made Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan 2023–2042 provides an established local planning framework for protecting and enhancing biodiversity within the Parish. The Plan includes Environment and Green Space Objective EGS6, which seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity, wildlife habitats and ecological corridors and to ensure that development results in biodiversity net gain.

1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan contains specific policies relating to biodiversity and the natural environment, including:

NB5 – Landscape Character

NB6 – Biodiversity

NB7 – Noak Bridge Nature Reserve

NB8 – Green and Blue Infrastructure, Landscaping and Planting

NB9 – Local Green Spaces

NB11 – Flooding and Drainage

NB12 – Sustainable Development

1.6 The Parish Council does not own or directly manage land or buildings. Consequently, its contribution to biodiversity will principally be through its statutory functions, planning consultation role, community leadership, partnership working, communication and support for appropriate local initiatives.

2. Aim

2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that Noak Bridge Parish Council has regard to biodiversity when exercising its functions and supports the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity within the Parish.

2.2 The Council will seek to ensure that its actions are proportionate to its responsibilities and resources and do not duplicate the statutory responsibilities of Basildon Borough Council, Essex County Council or other organisations.

3. Objectives

The Council will seek to:

- conserve and enhance biodiversity within the Parish;
- protect and enhance wildlife habitats, ecological corridors, trees, hedgerows, watercourses and other features of biodiversity value;
- support the objectives and policies of the Made Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan;
- encourage biodiversity enhancements associated with appropriate development;
- raise awareness of biodiversity within the local community;
- support partnership working with landowners, local authorities, community organisations, environmental organisations and other relevant bodies; and
- encourage appropriate community-led biodiversity initiatives.

4. Planning

4.1 When considering planning consultations, the Council will have regard to the biodiversity policies and objectives contained within the Made Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan, particularly Policies NB5, NB6, NB7 and NB8.

4.2 Where appropriate, the Council will consider whether a planning proposal appears to be consistent with the relevant policies of the Neighbourhood Plan relating to biodiversity, wildlife habitats, ecological corridors, green and blue infrastructure, landscaping, trees, hedgerows and the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve.

4.3 The Council will support, where appropriate, development proposals that protect and enhance biodiversity and provide biodiversity net gain in accordance with the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan and relevant national and local planning policy.

4.4 The Council will not undertake ecological surveys, ecological assessments or other specialist technical assessments itself.

4.5 Where a planning matter raises specialist biodiversity or ecological issues that cannot reasonably be assessed by the Council from the information provided with the planning application and the Neighbourhood Plan, the Council may seek or refer to appropriate advice from Basildon Borough Council, relevant statutory bodies, suitably qualified ecological professionals or recognised local environmental organisations.

4.6 The Council's planning consultation responses will remain proportionate to the information available to it and will focus on whether proposals appear to accord with the adopted development plan and the interests of the local community.

5. Nature Reserve and Green and Blue Infrastructure

5.1 The Council recognises the importance of the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve, the Village Green, trees, woodland, hedgerows, ponds, watercourses and other green and blue infrastructure to the biodiversity and character of the Parish.

5.2 The Council will support the objectives of the Made Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the protection and enhancement of the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve and the maintenance and creation of wildlife corridors.

5.3 Where appropriate, the Council will work with Basildon Borough Council, landowners, the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society and other relevant organisations to support biodiversity improvements.

6. Community Engagement and Awareness

- The Council will, where appropriate:
- promote awareness of biodiversity through its website, newsletter and social media;
- encourage residents to consider wildlife-friendly planting and gardening;
- promote measures that can provide habitat for birds, insects, hedgehogs, bats and other wildlife;
- encourage the use of native and pollinator-friendly planting;
- support community initiatives that improve biodiversity; and
- encourage residents and community organisations to share information and good practice.

7. Partnership Working

7.1 The Council will seek to work constructively with relevant organisations to support biodiversity within the Parish.

7.2 This may include Basildon Borough Council, Essex County Council, local landowners, the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society, local schools, community organisations, environmental organisations and other appropriate bodies.

7.3 The Council may seek specialist advice where appropriate and available, recognising that responsibility for land management, ecological assessment and statutory planning decisions rests with the relevant authority or landowner.

8. Funding and Community Projects

8.1 Where appropriate and subject to the Council's financial regulations, grant funding policy and available resources, the Council may consider supporting community projects that have a clear biodiversity benefit.

8.2 The Council may support or promote appropriate initiatives such as tree and hedge planting, pollinator-friendly planting, habitat creation, environmental education and community volunteering.

9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 The Council will maintain an accompanying Biodiversity Action Plan setting out practical actions that are proportionate to its role and responsibilities.

9.2 The Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the Council, or earlier where significant changes in legislation, national policy, local planning policy or the Neighbourhood Plan make this appropriate.

9.3 Any review will consider progress against the Action Plan and identify whether further actions can reasonably be undertaken by the Council.

Noak Bridge Parish Council Biodiversity Action Plan

Objective	Action	Responsibility/Partner	Timescale
Planning	Refer to relevant Made Neighbourhood Plan policies when considering planning consultations involving biodiversity.	Parish Council / Basildon Borough Council	Ongoing
Specialist Advice	Where specialist ecological matters arise, seek appropriate advice rather than undertaking ecological assessment itself.	Parish Council / Relevant Experts	As Required
Nature Reserve	Support appropriate initiatives to protect and enhance the Nature Reserve.	Basildon BC / NB Nature Reserve Society	Ongoing
Green and Blue Infrastructure	Encourage protection and enhancement of wildlife corridors, trees, hedgerows, watercourses and other habitats through planning responses and partnership working.	Parish Council / landowners / authorities	Ongoing
Community	Promote practical biodiversity advice to residents through Council communications.	Parish Council	At least annually
Community Projects	Consider supporting appropriate community biodiversity projects through existing grant arrangements, subject to budget and policy.	Parish Council / community groups	As opportunities arise
Local Initiatives	Encourage appropriate planting and habitat initiatives consistent with the Neighbourhood Plan.	Parish Council / residents / partners	Ongoing
Review	Review the Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan and report progress.	Parish Council	Annually