

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Duty imposed on parish and town councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, South Woodham Ferrers Town Council will take into consideration the protection and conservation of biodiversity within the town.

The World Wildlife Fund defines Biodiversity as all the different kinds of life that is found in one area - the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including food, clean water, medicine, and shelter. But as humans put increasing pressure on the planet, using and consuming more resources than ever before, we risk upsetting the balance of ecosystems and losing biodiversity.

The Environmental Improvement Plan was published in 2018 as a 25-year vision setting out Government strategies for improving the natural environment. In January 2023 the plan's first five-yearly update was undertaken placing a biodiversity duty on Parish and Town Councils.

The Town Council is required to understand what the biodiversity duty is and consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity by agreeing appropriate policies that can be delivered through an action plan. That plan must be reviewed within 5 years of its inception or previous revision, or more often if appropriate.

2. OVERVIEW OF COMPLIANCE

There are three strategies that must be considered as part of the Town Council's requirement to comply with its biodiversity duty:

Local Nature Recovery Strategies:

[Local nature recovery strategies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-nature-recovery-strategies)

Preparing local nature recovery strategies is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021. Each strategy will agree priorities for nature's recovery, map

existing areas for nature and proposals for creating and improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

Species Conservation Strategies:

These strategies will help safeguard the future of at-risk species, find the best ways to comply with existing obligations to protect species and improve their conservation status.

Protected site strategies:

These strategies involve protecting and restoring species and habitats in protected sites and provide ways to overcome off-site pressures, like nutrient pollution, in the wider catchment.

The biodiversity duty lies principally with Town and Parish Councils that own and run land and buildings. It requires them to foster opportunities for biodiversity issues to be addressed such that there is significant improvement both in existing environments and in new ones that are created by re-organisation or via planning permissions.

As the Town Council manages land and buildings, it will be required to initiate biodiversity strategies.

In addition, the Town Council will be expected, as appropriate, to influence 'biodiversity net-gain' by encouraging developers, domestic gardeners, nature conservancy organisations and other organisations and landowners to improve biodiversity.

3. SPECIFIC AREAS WHERE THE TOWN COUNCIL MAY INFLUENCE ITS BIODIVERSITY DUTY

Planning:

The Town Council, when commenting on planning applications, will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats. It will support protection of sensitive habits from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.

Town Council Buildings and Land

The Town Council will, as far as is possible, conserve the biodiversity of the land it manages. It will adopt beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work. Special care will be taken in the specification of its grounds maintenance planning to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.

Public Awareness:

The Town Council will, wherever possible, raise public awareness of biodiversity issues. It will, where possible, communicate information and raise awareness of biodiversity through its website, social media and Council publications.

Residents:

The Town Council will, where possible, encourage residents to enhance their biodiversity contribution by providing such things as nest boxes and bird feeders, holes in fences for hedgehogs and amphibians to pass, planting for butterflies and bees, wildlife ponds, corners of the garden and areas of grassland and wildflowers left to nature.

Specialist Groups:

Various areas will be protected by other legislation but the Town Council, where appropriate and welcomed, will find constructive ways of being involved in actions needed to improve site conditions in partnership with specialist groups such as the Essex Wildlife Trust and Bird Aware.

General Commitment:

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council undertakes to work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of the parish. The Town Council will, wherever possible, raise public awareness of biodiversity issues. It will, where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Adopted by Council 18 March 2025
Reviewed March 2026.