Harbury Parish Council Biodiversity Policy

1. Introduction

This biodiversity policy has been prepared by Harbury Parish Council in response to the strengthened biodiversity duty introduced by the Environment Act 2021.

Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, public authorities operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Public authorities must:

1. **Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity;**
2. **Agree policies and specific objectives based on that consideration; and**
3. **Act to deliver those policies and achieve those objectives.**

The policy also supports the objectives and policies of the Harbury & Deppers Bridge Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 - 2030 and aligns with national planning policy, the Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the wider ambitions for nature recovery across Warwickshire.

The council acknowledges that biodiversity underpins healthy ecosystems and farming and food productivity; it also improves community wellbeing, supports our rural character and the environmental quality of the parish. The changing climate and other pressures on the environment are having severe negative impacts on our natural ecosystems and biodiversity. Harbury Parish has a Climate and Environmental Policy aimed at addressing some of these issues, such as climate resilience and flood management. That policy should be read in conjunction with this biodiversity policy.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure biodiversity is considered in all relevant council decisions and activities;
- Protect and enhance habitats, species and ecological networks within the parish;

- Encourage sustainable land management practices;
- Support local and national nature recovery objectives;
- Promote community awareness and participation in biodiversity conservation;
- Work collaboratively with residents, landowners, Warwickshire County Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, local wildlife organisations and neighbouring parishes.

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3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Land in Harbury and Deppers Bridge owned, managed or influenced by the parish council;
- The council's grounds maintenance and procurement practices;
- Planning consultation responses submitted by the council;
- Community projects, events and initiatives supported by the council;
- Partnerships and collaborative environmental initiatives.

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4. Local Context

Harbury and Deppers Bridge lie within the rural landscape of Warwickshire. The parish covers 3,397 acres (1,375 ha) and is bounded by the River Itchen to the east, the Fosse Way to the northwest. It contains a mixture of agricultural land, hedgerows, grassland, mature trees, watercourses, allotments, gardens and public open spaces. These habitats support a range of wildlife including birds, butterflies, pollinators, bats, other small mammals and native plant species.

The council recognises the ecological importance of designated and non-designated wildlife sites within and adjoining the parish, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Nature Sites, species-rich habitats.

Importance is attached to the River Itchen corridor along the eastern boundary of the parish, which provides an ecological network supporting wetland habitats, wildlife movement, aquatic species and riparian vegetation. The river corridor and associated habitats contribute significantly to local biodiversity, landscape character and climate resilience.

The parish lies within a limestone landscape characteristic of this part of Warwickshire, supporting some unique flora associated with calcareous and neutral grasslands, hedgerows and field margins.

The parish council recognises that biodiversity nationally and locally is under pressure from habitat loss, fragmentation, over-development, pollution, climate

change and unsustainable land management practices. The council therefore supports practical local actions that contribute to wider ecological recovery across Warwickshire to conserve and enhance these locally characteristic habitats and plant communities.

The Council will seek to align its actions, where appropriate, with:

- The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council biodiversity and climate policies;
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust initiatives;
- National Pollinator Strategy objectives;
- The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan.

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5. Policy Commitments

Harbury Parish Council commits to:

5.1 Biodiversity in Decision-Making

- Consider biodiversity implications in council decisions, policies and projects;
- Include biodiversity as a standing consideration where relevant in planning consultations and land management decisions;
- Seek opportunities to improve biodiversity through council activities.

5.2 Protection and Enhancement of Habitats

The council will, where practical and proportionate:

- Protect existing trees, hedgerows, ponds, verges, grasslands and wildlife habitats on council-managed land;
- Encourage the planting of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers appropriate to the local landscape;
- Promote the creation and maintenance of pollinator-friendly habitats;
- Support habitat connectivity through wildlife corridors and linked green spaces;
- Avoid removal of vegetation during bird nesting seasons;
- Reduce habitat disturbance where possible.

5.3 Sustainable Land Management

The council will seek to:

- Manage parish-owned land to support wildlife and ecological diversity;

- Reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides and peat-based products where feasible;
- Encourage environmentally sensitive grounds maintenance practices;
- Adopt mowing regimes where appropriate to support pollinators and wildflowers;
- Promote nature-friendly management of roadside verges and open spaces.
- Consider climate resilience and ecological value in planting schemes;
- Encourage sustainable drainage and water-sensitive approaches in council projects.

5.4 Planning and Development

When responding to planning applications, the council will:

- Encourage development that demonstrates high environmental standards to protect and enhance biodiversity;
- Support retention of mature trees, hedgerows and existing habitats, including dark corridors for bats and nocturnal wildlife;
- Support biodiversity net gain principles in development proposals;
- Promote wildlife-friendly design measures such as native planting, bird boxes, bat boxes, hedgehog highways and sustainable drainage features;
- Seek to minimise adverse impacts on local habitats and species;

5.5 Community Engagement and Education

The council will:

- Encourage community participation in biodiversity initiatives, such as wildlife recording and citizen science activities;
- Support local environmental volunteering and wildlife projects;
- Promote awareness of biodiversity and nature recovery actions and achievements through parish communications;
- Work with schools, residents, community groups and local organisations to encourage environmental stewardship.

5.6 Partnership Working

The council will work collaboratively, where appropriate, with:

- Stratford-on-Avon District Council;
- Warwickshire County Council;
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust;
- Natural England;
- Warwickshire Biological Records Centre;
- Neighbouring parish councils;

- Local landowners and farmers;
- Community and volunteer groups.

6. Objectives and Actions

The parish council will seek to undertake or support the following actions over the lifetime of this policy:

Objective	Example Actions
Protect existing biodiversity features	Map important habitats and trees where feasible; consider biodiversity impacts before maintenance works
Enhance habitats on council-managed land for wildlife and pollinators to increase biodiversity	Review mowing regimes; plant native species; identify opportunities for wildflower areas
Increase tree and hedgerow cover using native species	Plant climate-resilient native trees suitable to the local landscape.
Improve ecological connectivity	Encourage wildlife corridors through planting and habitat management
Encourage community participation in nature recovery	Share biodiversity information in newsletters and on the parish council website
Embed biodiversity considerations in local decision-making	Include biodiversity considerations in planning responses

7. Implementation

Implementation of this policy will be proportionate to the council's responsibilities, resources and landholdings.

The council will:

- Consider biodiversity implications in relevant agenda items and decisions;
- Identify achievable biodiversity improvements annually;
- Encourage contractors working on council land to follow environmentally responsible practices;
- Seek external advice and grant funding opportunities where appropriate.

8. Monitoring and Review

The parish council review the policy at least every five years, or sooner if legislation, guidance or local circumstances significantly change. The appropriate working party will monitor progress against this policy and report to the parish council periodically.

Progress may include:

- Recording biodiversity-related projects undertaken by the council;
- Reviewing land management practices;
- Monitoring community engagement and partnership activities;
- Considering future opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

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9. Conclusion

Harbury Parish Council recognises that local action can make a meaningful contribution to protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

Through this policy, the council commits to considering biodiversity in its activities and to supporting practical measures that help wildlife and natural habitats to recover and thrive for the benefit of current and future generations.

References

- Environment Act 2021
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended)
- DEFRA Guidance: Complying with the Biodiversity Duty (2023)
- Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Harbury and Deppers Bridge Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018–2031.