

# Great Canfield Parish Council

## Biodiversity Policy

### 1. Introduction

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils, to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must,

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

### 2. 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.

### 3. The Local Area

Great Canfield is a rural parish covering 10km<sup>2</sup> and with a population of 476 (2021 census). The parish contains a considerable number of natural areas, including arable farmland, woodlands, hedges and ditches.

The parish is served by numerous footpaths, byways and bridleways.

The River Roding passes through the parish. The river defines the parish border at the south-east, and for 1.6kms cuts through the parish before providing part of the north-east border.

The Flich Way, a designated Local Wildlife Site which stretches for 15 miles from Braintree to Bishop Stortford, defines the northern parish border. The Flich Way is owned and managed by Essex County Council and is accessible to the public.

There are two substantial areas of protected Ancient Woodland in the parish, Canfield Hart at the western boundary and Canfield Thrift at the eastern. The ancient woodland, Runnels Hey in Little Canfield parish forms part of the northern border. All are in private ownership.

St Mary the Virgin parish church sits in a large churchyard which is open for burials and interments. The churchyard is managed by Great Canfield Parochial Church Council.

### 4. Parish Council Responsibilities

The parish council largely owns the wide highway verges from Hellmans Cross, Green Street through to the ponds at the junction of Green Street and Canfield Road, land registry reference EX551365. The land

is registered common land and contains a number of trees. The parish council grants easements to residents to access properties. At Hellmans Cross the parish council land includes the Peace Oak which now serves as a memorial to those who lost their lives in WW1 and its replacement, the Jubilee Oak.

The parish council largely owns the verges along Bullocks Lane, land registry reference EX565776. The land is registered village green. The parish council grants easements to residents to access properties.

The council assumes responsibility for maintaining the two ponds at the junction of Green Street and Canfield Road.

The parish council leases the village hall which includes the adjoining car park area, from Great Canfield Parochial Church Council.

## **5. What the Parish Council will do**

The Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- 5.1 Consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
  - 5.1.1 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.
  - 5.1.2 Support protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife.
  - 5.1.3 Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
  - 5.1.4 Ensure biodiversity conditions in planning applications are completed.
- 5.2 Manage its land and the land it is responsible for using environmentally friendly practices that promote biodiversity.
  - 5.2.1 Ensure specifications for grounds maintenance contracts do not harm the natural environment, whilst balancing responsibilities to public safety.
  - 5.2.2 Trees and hedges that are the responsibility of the parish council will only be cut outside the bird nesting season.
  - 5.2.3 Source sustainable materials when procuring goods or supplies.
- 5.3 Encourage and support other authorities including Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council, and organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
  - 5.3.1 To positively engage with those who have responsibility for the public spaces in the parish to understand and support their biodiversity activities.
- 5.4 Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.
  - 5.4.1 At least annually arrange a community litter pick.
  - 5.4.2 Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues through Parish News and its website.

This policy was approved by Great Canfield Parish Council on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and will be reviewed at least annually.