

# Aston Clinton Parish Council

## Biodiversity Policy

Adopted: February 2024 Next Review: February 2026

### 1. Introduction

1.1 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. 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

2.1 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA says '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 human survival depends upon it.

### 3. The Local Area

- 3.1 The parish of Aston Clinton covers 3,809 acres (1,541 ha) and is about 4 miles (6.4 km) east of Aylesbury. The village is at the foot of the chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills. More than half of the total parish area is within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The parish itself is comprised of rolling countryside interspersed with patches of woodland, including ancient semi-natural woodlands, meadows and agricultural fields.
- 3.2 A tributary to Aylesbury's Bear Brook flows through the parish and the parish is crossed both at the northern end and in the centre by the Grand Union Canal.
- 3.3 Included within the AONB are Wendover Woods, and two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Dancers End Nature Reserve and Aston Clinton Rag Pits.

### 4. Parish Council Responsibilities

The Council is responsible for the following land management within the parish: -

- Aston Clinton Park
- Aston Clinton Burial Ground
- St Michael & All Angels Church Closed Churchyard
- The Lady Louisa Rothschild Drinking Fountain
- Aston Clinton War Memorial
- Devolved highways verges

The Council is responsible for the provision and updating of the Aston Clinton Neighbourhood Plan.

## **5. Aims & Objectives**

- 3.1 The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's parish.
- 3.2 The Council and its committees will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.
- 3.3 The Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the parish in the following ways:
  - Considering the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
  - Managing its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
  - Supporting local businesses and Council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature
  - Positive practices.
  - Encouraging and supporting other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
  - Supporting residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

## **6. Actions**

### **6.1 Planning Applications**

- 6.1.1 When commenting on planning applications support site and building design which benefit biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- 6.1.2 Support protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- 6.1.3 Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- 6.1.4 Include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

### **6.2 Land & Property Management**

- 6.2.1 Carry out a biodiversity audit of Council landholdings.
- 6.2.2 Consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regard to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.
- 6.2.3 Take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- 6.2.4 Source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use.
- 6.2.5 Consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing Council buildings.

### **6.3 Local Community**

6.3.1 Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues.

6.3.2 Engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.

6.3.3 Where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on Council land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

### **6.4 Partners**

6.4.1 Work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the Council area.

6.4.2 Review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how Council can become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

## **7. Monitoring & Review**

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and adjustments made as necessary to ensure its continued relevance and success.