

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Background

Biodiversity is the whole variety of life on Earth, all species of plants and animals, their genetic variation and the habitats and ecosystems they are part of. It includes not just the rare or the threatened, but also the wildlife that is familiar to us in the places where we live and work. Biodiversity is everywhere: in our gardens, fields, hedgerows, ponds, and ditches.

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils¹ to have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This duty was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021.

The Local Area

Plaistow and Ifold is a rural parish, with a small area within the South Downs National Park. It is within the zone of influence of Ebernoe Common and The Mens, both Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). It has rich biodiversity, being in the [North Western Low Weald](#), which is characterised by dense networks of woodlands, including ancient semi-natural woodland and old woodland pasture; shaws and hedges with mature hedgerow trees; mature and over-mature oak trees; farmland and rolling pasture. Parish farmsteads and cottages are constructed of local building materials of stone, brick, weatherboard and half-timber. The parish has Environment Agency designated [priority river habitat headwater areas](#) as well as part of The Wey & Arun Canal. The parish is home to rare wildlife such as the [Wood White butterfly](#), Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats.

The Council's responsibilities

The Council owns Coxes Pond, Plaistow and is the Sole Trustee of the Plaistow Playing Field.

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

- Village Green, Plaistow – grass, hedges, and trees
- Coxes Pond, Plaistow – grass, hedges, and trees
- Jubilee bench, Ifold – grass and hedge
- Verge between the noticeboards and Plaistow Stores, Plaistow - grass and hedge
- Preschool garden, Plaistow - grass
- Verge outside The Sun Inn, Plaistow – grass
- Tennis court, Plaistow - vegetation maintenance

¹ S.40(4) & (5) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Council is responsible for the provision and updating of the Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Development Plan.

How the Council's will meet its duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity?

The Council can demonstrate compliance with this duty by ensuring it considers biodiversity whenever it: -

- Develops policies and strategies and puts them into practice.
- Acts in its capacity as a statutory consultee in the planning process.
- Manages the land it owns and/or acts as Sole Trustee.
- Develops community infrastructure.
- Makes procurement decisions.
- Implements social, economic, and environmental programmes.

Aim	Objective
Decision making - consider the impact of all decisions on parish biodiversity.	Standing <i>aide memoir</i> on meeting agendas.
Conserve and enhance parish biodiversity via the planning process.	Specific consideration of biodiversity when commenting on planning applications e.g., regard for direct loss of habitats and commuting / foraging wildlife paths; light pollution; and construction/ operation noise and vibrations.
Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)	The Council will ensure that biodiversity is conserved and enhanced within the NDP.
Biodiversity budget	The Council will set an annual budget for projects which conserve and enhance parish biodiversity.
Land management	It will review how it manages land which may include, but is not limited to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides. o Leave standing and fallen dead wood as habitat. o Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as habitat. o Remove invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required. o Consider reducing the number of grass cuts.

- Hedge cutting outside of the bird nesting season.
- Consider installing bird and bat boxes in Council owned/managed trees and buildings.
- Tree planting.
- Create habitat rich, biodiverse areas where appropriate with planting schemes and expert support where necessary.

Trustee of Plaistow Playing Field

As Trustee for Plaistow Playing Field the Council will: -

- Ensure that there is a margin of uncut grass around the hedges to allow longer grasses to grow.
- Allow fallen tree branches to remain, if safe, to create habitat.
- To preserve the trees and encourage biodiversity in the area, particularly under the Sessile Oak, which will be allowed to naturalise.

Litter picking to reduce dangers to wildlife

The Council will organise a biannual [community litter pick](#), which will improve wildlife habitat condition and fewer wildlife deaths from litter.

Community infrastructure

The Council will look to purchase and install bird and bat boxes for bus shelters and other buildings that it owns.

Promote and encourage biodiversity within the community.

The Council knows that most of the parish's biodiversity is in private ownership (gardens, ponds, streams, woodland, hedges etc). The Council will educate, advise, raise awareness, and support the community to understand biodiversity and why it's important to conserve and enhance it.

The Council will: -

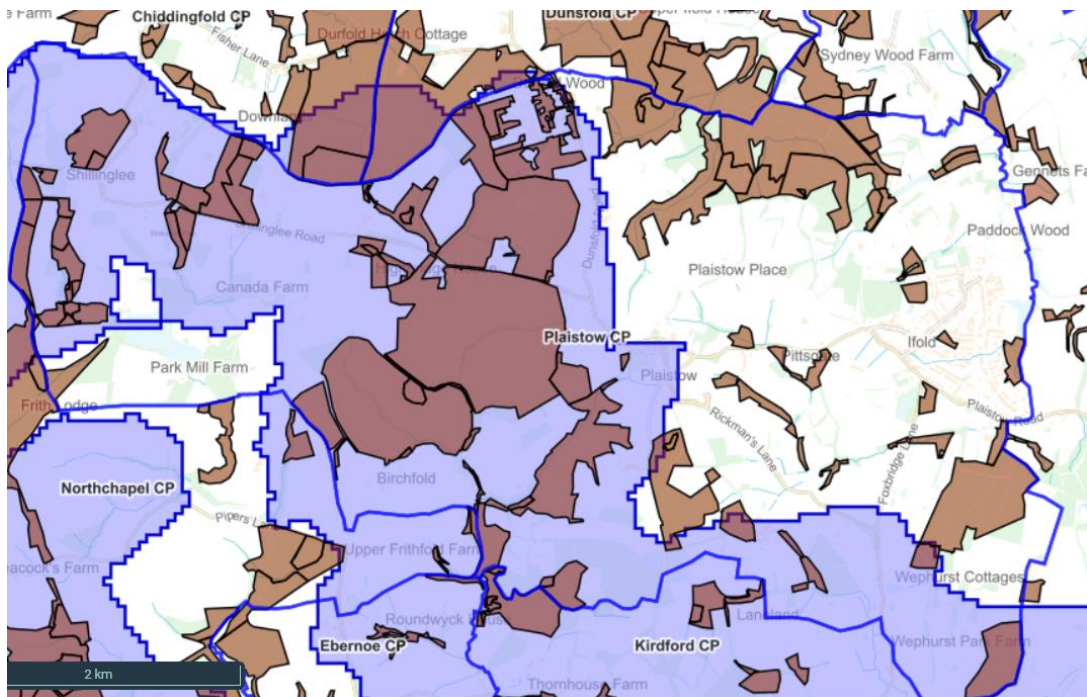
- Include the public and community partners in projects to improve biodiversity.
- Feature biodiversity in public communications.
- Put information boards in green spaces.

- Raise public awareness of how their gardens can support biodiversity.

Review policies and processes

The Council will look to make changes, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure its policies and internal processes support biodiversity, which may include, but is not limited to: -

- Procurement – buy sustainable materials and supplies to reduce the demand on natural resources.
- Water – improve water efficiency to reduce the effect water abstraction can have on sensitive habitats and species.
- Support community projects which promote biodiversity (grant support).



Parish map showing Environment Agency designated priority river habitat headwater areas (blue) and Ancient Woodland (brown)

Did you know?
The ancient Oak tree on Plaistow Village green is a Sessile Oak.

