



# Wilton Town Council

## Biodiversity

### Policy

Adopted by Wilton Town Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

Minute reference; 010/23 (vi)

Review date; May 2024

## Background

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.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth<sup>1</sup>. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and the sea.

## Aims and Objectives

The object of this Policy is to continue Wilton Town Council's work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

## The Local Area

Wilton is a semi rural area, with a considerable number of natural areas, including hedges, ditches, farmland, and the Rivers Nadder and Wylde. It is the Gateway to the Cranbourne Chase Natural Landscape which covers 380 sq miles of countryside overlapping the boundaries of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset.

## Town Council responsibilities

The Town Council is responsible for the following land:

- Minster Street Recreation Ground
- Castle Meadow
- Bulbridge Play Area
- Wishford Road Play Area
- South Street Car Park
- Shaftesbury Road Cemetery

The Town Council is responsible for the grass cutting, hedge cutting and tree maintenance of these areas, as appropriate, plus the closed churchyards of St Mary and St Nicholas Church, West Street and Old St Mary's in the Market Square.

## What the Town Council will do

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Town Council, especially when commenting on planning applications.
- It will reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used on Town Council owned land in accordance with its Pesticide Policy.

- It will review how it manages the land at the Shaftesbury Road Cemetery, and two closed churchyards, this *may* include, but is not limited to.
  - Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
  - Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
  - Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required.
- The development of the Wilton Neighbourhood Plan is currently on hold and when it resumes the working group will ensure that biodiversity is discussed and added to the plan as necessary.
- As owner / tenant of the recreational areas the Town 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 allow invertebrates to habitat.
- Hedge cutting takes place annually at the Shaftesbury Road Cemetery, all hedges are cut outside of the bird nesting season.
- The hedges around the Recreation Grounds are also routinely cut, and will be cut outside the bird nesting season, and some of the cut hedging may be placed on the ground to encourage use by respective animals and invertebrates.
- The Town Council will look to purchase and install bird boxes in the Town Council owned trees.
- The Town Council will look to promote biodiversity to parishioners via the Town Council website.