



Environment & Biodiversity

In response to the legislation explained below and public concerns about a “*Climate Emergency*”, the Parish Council’s **Environmental Awareness Working Party** monitors the actions taken by WBEPC to reduce its impact on the environment and assesses the effectiveness of the actions taken and what more it can or should do.

1. Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council Environmental and Biodiversity Policy and commitment

- 1.1. The policy statement applies to the Parish Council’s activities and is not a Policy that the Local Planning Authority need to consider when determining planning applications.
- 1.2. The policy applies to the Parish Council office, barn, sports pavilions and all land we manage and to all Parish Council employees, Parish Councillors and Parish Council’s sub-contractors.
- 1.3. Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council (WBEPC) monitors all planning applications as a Statutory Consultee and will be guided by, and apply, the latest government and local policy changes that are introduced as a result of environmental and climate change issues. When the time comes to update the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) following the Buckinghamshire Local plan update, then the intent will be to approach the update from the strategic context of climate change.
- 1.4. WBEPC has established the following Policy to protect biodiversity in the Parish.

POLICY WBE/E1: ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY POLICY FOR WOOBURN AND BOURNE END PARISH

Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council is committed to identifying and complying with all legal and other relevant requirements relating to the environmental impacts of our operations and to the prevention of pollution through the adoption of appropriate controls. We will aim to:

- Continually assess our organisational activities and the impact they have and identify opportunities to minimise these negative impacts
- Monitor and minimise our carbon emissions related to energy use
- Minimise waste through careful and efficient use of materials, promoting reuse and recycling and by encouraging parishioners to reduce waste
- Procure products derived from sustainable resources where possible and favour the use of local suppliers
- Embed environmental and ethical considerations into the day-to-day operation of the Parish Council and decision making
- Educate employees and parishioners in good environmental practice
- Promote and protect biodiversity in the Parish.

2. Legal Context: Duties and Responsibilities

2.1. The Parish Council has biodiversity duties and responsibilities under the following two Acts.

- **Wildlife and Countryside Act**
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC)**
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

2.2. Section 40 of NERC requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions so that this becomes properly embedded in all relevant policies and decisions.

2.3. Another key obligation is Directive 92/43/EEC 'on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora', often referred to as the Habitats Directive¹.

¹ As of 1 January 2021, the UK is no longer bound by EEC directives; however, this directive is currently part of the planning process until such time as the Government provide new guidance.

- 2.4. Under the 'Habitats Directive 4', an assessment referred to as an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken if the plan in question is likely to have a significant effect on a European protected wildlife site i.e., if policies and proposals in the plan might impact on one or more European sites. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive requires that if a plan or programme requires 'Appropriate Assessment' under the Habitats Directive, then that plan or programme will also require an SEA.
- 2.5. Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council (WBEPC) monitors all planning applications as a Statutory Consultee and will be guided by, and apply, the latest government and local policy changes that are introduced as a result of environmental and climate change issues. When the time comes to update the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) following the Buckinghamshire Local plan update, then the intent will be to approach the update from the strategic context of climate change.

3. Considerations

3.1 Definition of Biodiversity

3.1.1. The word is a contraction of "biological diversity" and is defined as the range and types of organisms in a particular ecological community or system. It can be measured by the numbers and types of different species or the genetic variations within and between species. An organism being defined as any living thing.

The relevant guide for Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council is:

- [Biodiversity | Buckinghamshire Council \(buckscc.gov.uk\)](https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/biodiversity)

3.1.2. Parish Councils have a role in promoting awareness and encouraging local people to participate in local community initiatives with two aims...

- To help maximise biodiversity opportunities at Parish/local level,
- To maximise the biodiversity of all Parish Council owned sites whilst delivering its full range of uses by well-considered habitat management.

3.1.3. Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council (WBEPC) is a civil local authority, responsible for a largely rural Parish of approximately **1,025 hectares** and **10,500 residents**. (From Office of National Statistics [ONS] data for *Usual Resident Population*.)

Our responsibilities include:

- managing six recreational areas including playgrounds, sports pitches and two sports pavilions and, additionally, large areas of woodland.
- managing two allotment sites.
- managing two cemeteries (one is closed).
- providing and emptying litter bins and dog waste bins in public areas.
- maintaining approximately 208 km of footpaths and some grass verges.
- maintaining streetlights on side roads.

3.1.3. The Parish Council's activities are delivered from our office and groundsman's barn at Wooburn Cemetery and via mobile works in the Parish. Policy WBE/E1 applies to our office, barn, sports pavilions and all land we manage and to all Parish Council employees, Parish Councillors and sub-contractors.

3.1.4. In addition, to the responsibilities above, WBEPC is in the process of creating a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). To be 'made', a Neighbourhood Plan must meet certain Basic Conditions. These include that the making of the plan "does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations." Latest government guidance in respect of Neighbourhood Planning continues to reference these obligations.

3.1.5. One of these obligations is Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. The SEA Directive "seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes."

3.1.6. The SEA Directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (the 'SEA Regulations') and it is these regulations with which the plan will need to be compatible. **A key stage in the neighbourhood planning process is determining whether or not SEA is required.**

3.2. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

3.2.1. During the production of its Neighbourhood Development Plan, WBEPC, the Local Planning Authority, the former Wycombe District Council (prior to the change to the Unitary Authority) completed the screening process

to determine if an SEA was necessary for the Neighbourhood Area/NDP and **concluded that it was not required.**

3.2.2. The screening document can be viewed on link on the WBEPC's webpage under the tab "Environment"

3.3 Wycombe District Council Local Plan (WDLP)

3.3.1. The WDLP was adopted in August 2019 and covers the period 1013 to 2033 or until the successor unitary authority, Buckinghamshire Council adopts a new Local Plan. The WDLP contains various strategic environmental policies which apply to planning applications. The following is a list of WDLP Environmental Policies that as a statutory consultee for planning applications that we take into consideration:

WDLP Policy number	Subject
CP1	Sustainable Development
CP10	Green infrastructure and the Natural Environment
CP12	Climate Change
DM11	Green networks and infrastructure
DM12	Green Spaces
DM13	Conservation and Enhancement of Sites, Habitats and Species of Biodiversity and Geodiversity importance
DM14	Biodiversity in developments
DM15	Protection and Enhancement of River and Stream corridors
DM16	Open Spaces in new developments
DM18	Carbon reduction and water efficiency
DM33	Managing Carbon emissions: transport & energy generation
DM34	Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in development
DM38	Water Quality and Supply
DM39	Managing Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems

4. Habitats of principal importance in Wooburn and Bourne End Parish (The Neighbourhood Area)

- 4.1 The Parish contains habitats that are of principal importance for their biodiversity. These are set out in a separate Parish Council document “Heritage Assets and Community Facilities” which records all Parish amenities in one place. They include Ancient Trees, Ancient Woodlands, Allotments, Cemeteries, a Nature Reserve, and Parks. The WDLP contains Policies and Policy maps which have identified these habitats and the policies that apply.

5. Air Quality

- 5.1. The current road systems, such as A4094 and A4155 through the settlements that make up the Parish of Wooburn and Bourne End are busy cut throughs, linking the A404, M40 and M4, Maidenhead and Marlow.
- This road system is single carriageway and has various constrictions which cause traffic congestion at critical pinch points, at Cookham Bridge, the Station, Penny’s Corner, junction with Blind Lane, Cores End roundabout, the Green. Congestion is greatly exacerbated when there is an incident on the A404, M4 or M40, affecting the whole system.
- 5.2. The WDLP allocates 800 houses to the Parish in the Plan period. It is obvious that more housing means more traffic on our roads, with all the attendant issues of congestion which will impact air quality. The Parish Council believes that we need to create a base line prior to the development of the strategic sites and to develop a data base of evidence that can be used in the future to determine and support future emissions policies if required and commenced a long-term Air Quality monitoring project in 2019. The latest figures can be viewed on the WBEPC webpage under the tab “Environment”.

6. Report on Environmental and Biodiversity Projects

WBEPC will prepare a report on its projects and performance for 2022 at the end of the year.