



Ipswich Borough Council Biodiversity Report 2024-2025

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BOROUGH COUNCIL

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the ‘biodiversity duty’ imposed on public authorities, requiring not only that they conserve biodiversity, but that they also enhance it.
- 1.2 To fulfil the biodiversity duty, Ipswich Borough Council must:
 - Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
 - Agree policies and specific objectives based on consideration;
 - Act to deliver our policies and objectives.
- 1.3 The Environment Act also introduced biodiversity net gain (BNG) to the planning system, requiring all development, with some exemptions, to deliver a minimum of 10 per cent increase in biodiversity. This means that on top of compensating for any loss of habitat, development must provide a 10 per cent gain in habitat to be maintained for at least 30 years.
- 1.4 Ipswich Borough Council is a borough council and Local Planning Authority responsible for planning decisions, management of parks and open spaces, and delivery of environmental services. Through these functions the Council has a significant influence on biodiversity within the Borough, both through land management and through the regulation of development.
- 1.5 Ipswich benefits from a rich and varied natural environment despite its urban character. The Borough includes an internationally designated site, 3 nationally designated sites, twenty County Wildlife Sites, nine Local Nature Reserves, and over five hundred hectares of green space and wildlife habitat. Together, these assets support a wide range of habitats and species and underline the significant ecological value of Ipswich at both a local and wider scale.
- 1.6 This report fulfils Ipswich Borough Council’s reporting requirements under the biodiversity duty set out in section 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by the Environment Act 2021. The report covers the period from 12 February 2024 to 31 December 2025.
- 1.7 The report sets out how the Council has met the biodiversity duty over the monitoring period and how it plans to meet the duty in the next monitoring period. As a Local Planning Authority, the Council must also report on actions taken to meet Biodiversity Net Gain obligations, details of Biodiversity Net Gain resulting, or expected to result, from approved biodiversity gain plans, and how Biodiversity Net Gain obligations may be met in the next reporting period.

2. Policies, Objectives and Actions

- 2.1 This section sets out the policies through which Ipswich Borough Council has considered and delivered its biodiversity duty during the reporting period. It summarises the strategic framework guiding biodiversity protection and enhancement.
- 2.2 The Council's Corporate Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, Local Plan and supporting supplementary planning documents collectively establish the policy foundations through which biodiversity is protected, enhanced and integrated into decision-making. These strategies influence how the Council manages its own land and assets, how development is planned and delivered, and how green infrastructure is designed to support both wildlife and communities.
- 2.3 Together, these documents show that Ipswich Borough Council is taking a coordinated, long-term approach to biodiversity, linking environmental objectives with social, economic and planning priorities. The following sections summarise the key strategies, policies and initiatives that underpin this work and demonstrate how biodiversity is being embedded across the Council's functions.

Ipswich Borough Council Corporate Strategy (2023)

- 2.4 The Ipswich Borough Council Corporate Strategy Proud of Ipswich: Championing our community and revitalising our town, adopted in July 2023, sets out the Council's strategic priorities for the Borough.
- 2.5 The Strategy supports environmental protection and nature recovery through commitments to climate action, sustainable place-making and ensuring residents have access to high-quality parks and green spaces. These priorities provide an important corporate framework for actions that conserve and enhance biodiversity across the Council's land, services and planning functions.



Image 1 – Mabel, Christchurch Park

Ipswich Open Space and Biodiversity Policy/Strategy 2013-2023 (2013)

- 2.6 The Council's Open Space and Biodiversity Policy/Strategy¹ sets out the guiding principles for the provision, protection and management of green space within the Borough. It establishes the Council's approach to safeguarding and enhancing open spaces, habitats and ecological assets, ensuring they continue to support biodiversity, environmental resilience and community wellbeing for current and future generations.
- 2.7 The Strategy identifies the following vision: "To safeguard, protect and enhance biodiversity and the environment and improve everyone's quality of life by working in partnership with others to ensure that our parks and open spaces are well designed, well managed, safe and freely accessible, encouraging use and benefiting the whole community".
- 2.8 To deliver this vision, the Strategy identifies a series of strategic outcomes for the management, protection and enhancement of the Borough's open spaces, natural environment and green infrastructure:
- Ensure the provision and management of public open space meets customer needs, now and over the next 10 years;
 - Ensure the natural environment, trees and wildlife is afforded appropriate protection;
 - Ensure the Council operates within the law and where possible adheres to best practice;
 - To raise awareness of the benefits and value of good quality, accessible, biodiversity rich public open space;
 - Identify priorities for future investment and thus ensure best use of available resources;
 - Provide appropriate guidance through the planning process to ensure new public open space is appropriately located, of a high quality and meets local needs;
 - Plan for and mitigate the effects of climate change;
 - Improve the quality of the public realm, natural environment and local heritage;
 - Build social cohesion and encourage healthy lifestyles through a well-planned and managed 'green space' infrastructure;
 - Create a delivery plan for green infrastructure provision;
 - Ensure any cross boundary provision is properly coordinated and managed; and
 - Ensure heritage parks and heritage features within our parks are afforded appropriate protection.

¹ <https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/2024-10/Open%20Space%20%26%20Biodiversity%20Policy%20whole.pdf>



Image 2 – Bourne Park

Ipswich Borough Council 2020 – 2030 Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2019)

- 2.9 The 2020-2030 Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan² sets out the Council's strategic approach to addressing climate change and reducing emissions from its land, buildings, fleet and wider operations. The Strategy provides an overarching framework for environmental action and recognises that climate mitigation and nature recovery are closely linked, with healthy ecosystems playing an important role in resilience and carbon management.
- 2.10 The Action Plan includes a specific objective to 'conserve biodiversity in the Council's parks and public open spaces'. To support this objective, the Council is implementing a range of ongoing actions, including:
- a) Conserve the range and ecological variability of habitats and species
 - b) Maintain existing ecological network
 - c) Create buffer zones around high quality habitat
 - d) Take prompt action to control spread of invasive species

Ipswich Local Plan 2018-2036 (2022)

- 2.11 The Ipswich Local Plan Review 2018–2036, adopted in March 2022, embeds the protection and enhancement of nature and biodiversity throughout its policies and objectives. The Plan establishes a framework to ensure that development contributes positively to the natural environment, including supporting habitat protection, ecological enhancement and the strengthening of green infrastructure. Progress against these objectives is monitored through the Council's Authority Monitoring Report.

² https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/m-files/climate_change_strategy_and_action_plan_final.pdf

- 2.12 Policy DM8 (The Natural Environment) of the Ipswich Local Plan Review 2018–2036 requires development to deliver net gains for biodiversity and to avoid harm to designated ecological sites, including those of international importance. While the national requirement for a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain has since been introduced through the Environment Act, Policy DM8 demonstrates that the Council had already embedded the principle of securing biodiversity improvements through development prior to the introduction of the statutory framework. The policy therefore reflects the Council's early commitment to protecting and enhancing habitats, supporting species recovery and strengthening the Borough's ecological network through the planning process.
- 2.13 Policy DM9 (Protection of Trees and Hedgerows) provides protection for trees and hedgerows, recognising their importance for biodiversity, landscape character and climate resilience. The policy requires that where the removal of a mature or semi-mature tree is justified, replacement planting should be secured on at least a two-for-one basis, or greater where appropriate, ensuring that the Borough's tree stock and associated ecological value are maintained and enhanced over time.
- 2.14 Policy DM10 (Green and Blue Corridors) supports the creation and enhancement of green and blue corridors across the Borough. The policy promotes the delivery of attractive, connected green links that support biodiversity, sustainable movement and public amenity, as shown in Figure 2. It requires development proposals to protect and enhance the function of these corridors and, where located near watercourses, to incorporate measures such as tree planting and the provision of appropriate ecological buffers to safeguard riverine habitats and strengthen ecological connectivity

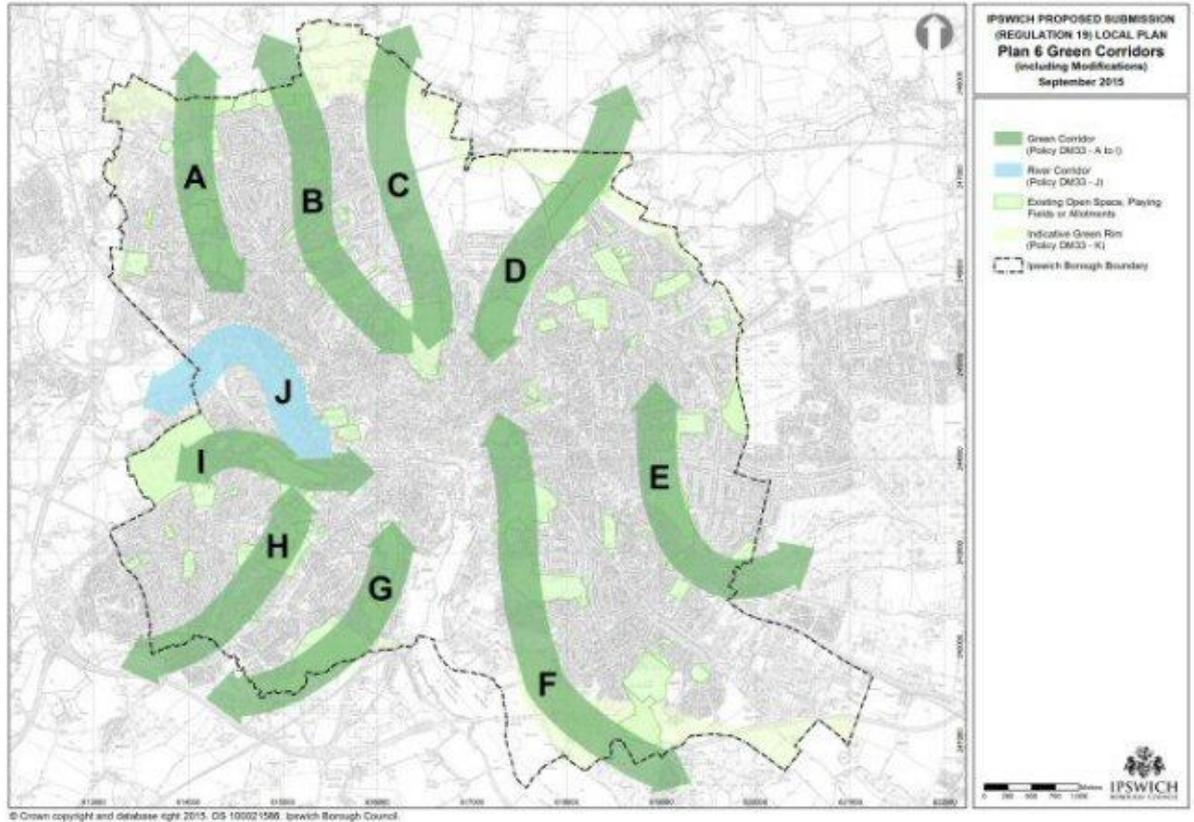


Figure 1 - Green and Blue Corridors Map

2.15 The Local Plan also incorporates biodiversity enhancement requirements within its site allocation policies, establishing a clear expectation that new development should deliver environmental benefits. These requirements are informed by the Ipswich Wildlife Audit (2019), which assessed the ecological value of allocated sites and identified opportunities to protect, enhance and restore habitats as part of the development process.



Image 3 – Bourne Park Flowers and Bee

Reptile Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (2021)

- 2.16 The Ipswich Borough Council Reptile Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)³, adopted in 2021, provides guidance to ensure that biodiversity considerations are considered where development may affect reptile habitats. It promotes the use of ecological surveys and appropriate mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts on species and habitats, supporting the Council’s wider approach to conserving biodiversity through the planning process.

Suffolk Coast Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Supplementary Planning Document (2020)

- 2.17 The Suffolk Coast Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)⁴, adopted in 2020, sets out a coordinated cross-boundary approach to managing the recreational impacts of new residential development on internationally designated wildlife sites.
- 2.18 The SPD supports the protection of sensitive habitats and species by identifying avoidance and mitigation measures, which are secured through developer contributions as part of the planning process. This collaborative approach helps to ensure that growth in the Borough does not adversely affect protected ecological sites.

³ https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/m-files/reptile_strategy.pdf

⁴ https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/m-files/suffolk_coast_rams.pdf

Public Open Space Supplementary Planning Document (2017)

- 2.19 The Ipswich Borough Council Public Open Space Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)⁵, adopted in 2017, provides guidance to support the protection, provision and long-term management of public open space within the Borough. It seeks to safeguard existing green spaces from inappropriate development, ensure that new development contributes to the delivery of accessible and well-maintained open space, and promote the enhancement of the Borough's tree canopy. Collectively, these measures support the Council's wider objectives for green infrastructure, habitat quality and biodiversity.

Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025)

- 2.20 The Council contributed to the preparation of the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)⁶, published in 2025. The LNRS identifies priorities and opportunities for habitat creation, restoration and improved ecological connectivity across Suffolk, setting out a strategic framework for nature recovery at a landscape scale.
- 2.21 The LNRS is closely linked to the delivery of biodiversity net gain, as it helps to guide where habitat enhancement and creation associated with development should be directed to achieve the greatest ecological benefit. By aligning biodiversity net gain delivery with LNRS priorities, the Council can support a more coordinated approach to nature recovery, ensuring that biodiversity gains contribute to wider ecological networks rather than being delivered in isolation.

⁵ https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/m-files/public_open_space.pdf

⁶ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/suffolk-local-nature-recovery-strategy-20mb.pdf>

3. Biodiversity Delivery in Ipswich

- 3.1 The policies and objectives set out above are delivered through a range of operational actions undertaken by the Council and its partners. The following section summarises key habitat management, biodiversity enhancement and partnership activities completed during the reporting period.

Habitat Management

- 3.2 Ipswich Borough Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service undertakes a wide range of activities to manage habitats and enhance biodiversity across Council-owned land. The Council employs a dedicated team of wildlife professionals who work to maintain and improve habitat provision, green space quality and ecological resilience across the Borough.
- 3.3 Grassland across parks and cemeteries is managed using a mix of short-mown amenity grass, longer meadow areas and tree-planted zones. This varied management approach increases structural diversity and improves habitat value compared with uniformly short-mown grass.
- 3.4 During winter 2025, a renewed programme of duckweed clearance and prevention was implemented at Holywells Park. This work aims to improve pond condition by increasing light penetration and oxygen levels, supporting aquatic biodiversity.



Image 4 - Duckweed clearance

Tree Planting

- 3.5 Tree planting forms a key part of the Council's biodiversity and climate programme, supported by a dedicated role responsible for planting and maintaining new trees. During the monitoring period, twelve new orchards were established across the Borough alongside additional individual tree planting.
- 3.6 Tree species selection considers both carbon sequestration and ecological value, with planting methods also chosen to support long-term environmental benefits. Where appropriate, dense planting techniques such as Miyawaki methods are used.
- 3.7 Ipswich has been recognised as a Tree City of the World for four consecutive years, reflecting its commitment to tree management, funding and planting. The Borough also has an ambitious canopy cover target of 22%, exceeding national expectations.
- 3.8 Work is ongoing to improve the ecological value of ancient woodland by diversifying former estate areas and replacing single species with a broader range of native trees.



Image 5 - Ipswich Tree Planting Event

Partnerships and Wider Initiatives

- 3.9 The Council is a partner in the Greenways Countryside Project, which supports the protection and enhancement of landscapes and open spaces through community volunteering and practical conservation work.

- 3.10 Bourne Park, Christchurch Park and Holywells Park have each received Green Flag Award status for 2025–2026, recognising the quality of their management, accessibility and environmental standards.
- 3.11 Through partnership working with Greener Ipswich, additional planting has been introduced within the town centre to enhance urban biodiversity while supporting air quality and wellbeing.
- 3.12 The Council contributes to the Wilder Communities Partnership alongside other Suffolk authorities and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, helping sustain and expand the countywide wildlife advice service.
- 3.13 These actions contribute to maintaining and enhancing habitats across the Borough and support the long-term condition of Ipswich’s green infrastructure network.



Image 6 – Holywells Park Green Flag Award 2025/26



Image 7 - Greener Ipswich Planters

4. Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.1 Between 12 February 2024 and 31 December 2025, Ipswich Borough Council granted planning permission for 27 developments that were subject to the statutory biodiversity net gain requirement. Of these, Biodiversity Gain Plans have been submitted for two schemes, as shown in Table 1. As these plans have not yet been approved, the anticipated biodiversity gains have not been formally agreed and cannot yet be reported. Information on the number, type and location of biodiversity units secured will be included in the next reporting period, using the format set out in Table 2.

Table 1 - Submitted Biodiversity Gain Plans

Application	Address
24/00582/FPI3	3 St Helens Street
25/00189/FUL	Rear of 65-69 Constable Road

Table 2 - Approved Biodiversity Gain Plans

Application	Address	Habitat Net Gain		Hedgerow Net Gain		River Net Gain		Total Net Gain	
		Unit	%	Unit	%	Unit	%	Unit	%
None	None	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

- 4.2 A Biodiversity Gain Plan is a document submitted by a developer to demonstrate how a development will deliver the required biodiversity improvements. It sets out the existing habitat baseline for the site, the proposed habitat creation or enhancement measures, and how these will be secured and managed over time. The plan is reviewed by the Council before development can proceed to ensure that biodiversity gains are properly designed and capable of delivery.
- 4.3 At the time of reporting, no approved Biodiversity Gain Plans have progressed to the implementation stage. As no Biodiversity Gain Plans have yet been approved or implemented, monitoring of biodiversity gains has not commenced. Monitoring outcomes will be reported once delivery begins.
- 4.4 No land within the Borough has yet been brought forward for use as off-site biodiversity net gain provision. The availability of off-site opportunities will continue to be monitored and reported in subsequent reporting periods. The Council will continue to monitor opportunities for off-site Biodiversity Net Gain provision and support the development of local delivery options where feasible.

5. Future Actions



Image 8 – Holywells Park Blossom

- 5.1 This section sets out how Ipswich Borough Council plans to fulfil its biodiversity duty over the next reporting period, covering 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2030. These actions build on existing work and identify how biodiversity considerations will continue to be embedded across Council services, planning decisions and land management activities.
- 5.2 Ipswich Borough Council will continue to promote biodiversity through both corporate strategies and service-specific policies.
- 5.3 The Council is reviewing its Open Space and Biodiversity Policy. This policy provides the overarching framework for how public open spaces and biodiversity initiatives are planned, delivered and managed across the Borough. It sets out the Council's approach to maintaining and enhancing parks, habitats and green spaces so that they support both community needs

and ecological resilience, and provides the strategic justification for investment in green infrastructure.

- 5.4 The updated policy will replace the existing 2013 document and will strengthen the Council's approach to managing open space in a way that supports biodiversity, environmental sustainability and long-term public benefit.
- 5.5 In its role as Local Planning Authority, the Council will continue to apply Policy DM8 (The Natural Environment) and the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement introduced through the Environment Act. The Council is also progressing a review of the Local Plan, which will ensure that future policies further emphasise and strengthen the approach to biodiversity protection and enhancement.
- 5.6 The Council will continue to secure and monitor biodiversity net gain through planning conditions, prioritising on-site delivery wherever feasible. Opportunities for off-site delivery within the Borough will also be considered, and the Council will support the identification of suitable locations where possible.
- 5.7 Priorities and opportunities identified within the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy will continue to inform planning decisions and future plan-making, helping to ensure that biodiversity enhancements associated with development contribute to strategic habitat creation, ecological connectivity and nature recovery across the wider area.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps



Image 9 – Christchurch Park

- 6.1 This report has provided an overview of the actions Ipswich Borough Council is undertaking to conserve and enhance biodiversity, alongside an update on biodiversity net gain secured through the planning process between 12 February 2024 and 31 December 2025.
- 6.2 The relatively small number of planning permissions granted that triggered the statutory biodiversity net gain requirement during this period means that only limited analysis of delivery can be undertaken at this stage. A greater number of applicable developments are expected to come forward in future years, and their implementation and outcomes will be monitored and reported in subsequent biodiversity reports.
- 6.3 Wider biodiversity initiatives being delivered across the Borough, both directly by the Council and in partnership with others, indicate a positive direction of travel for nature recovery and environmental improvement.
- 6.4 The forthcoming Ipswich Open Space and Biodiversity Policy Strategy, expected in 2026, will update the existing 2013 strategy and provide an enhanced strategic framework for the protection, management and improvement of biodiversity within the Borough.
- 6.5 Ipswich Borough Council's compliance with the Biodiversity Duty will be reviewed and reported again at the end of the next monitoring period, proposed to run from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2030.

Ipswich Borough Council
Planning Policy
Grafton House
15-17 Russell Road
Ipswich
IP1 2DE

planningpolicy@ipswich.gov.uk