Community Nature Recovery Plan for Hildersham

Created by Hildersham

Produced as part of the *Nature Recovery – From the Ground Up* (NR-FGU) project

Novmber 2026

Cambridgeshire County Council

Key contact for parish:

Jean Kelly

Contact details:

Mrs. P. Harper, Parish Clerk - harper802@btinternet.com

Contents

Introduction....2
1. Who's involved?....3
2. Existing plans and policies....3
3. Our natural environment in Hildersham....5
Designated sites....5
Other areas of importance for nature in Hildersham:....9
Areas of biodiversity opportunity....12
4. Areas of Concern for Nature in Hildersham....13
5. Nature Recovery Projects....16

Introduction

Nature recovery is becoming increasingly important, and Cambridgeshire only has 8% of land dedicated to nature, which is half of the national average. Hildersham is taking action to engage with communities, conserve and protect existing habitats, create/restore habitats for nature, and address key environmental concerns in Hildersham.

The Nature Recovery – From the Ground Up project launched by Cambridgeshire County Council in 2025 includes Hildersham as part of the pilot of this project. This Community Nature Recovery Plan records Hildersham's existing natural assets, identifies concerns and opportunities for nature recovery, and sets out practical priorities for future action, taking account of available resources.

Hildersham contains three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and has a varied landscape of agricultural land, woodland, hedgerows and wet areas, with the land falling gently east towards the River Granta and rising north towards Balsham. The landscape includes important hedgerows and mature trees, wildflower-rich banks and verges, and protected village amenity areas. These natural features contribute both to the biodiversity of the parish and to its distinctive rural character.

Paramount for nature recovery in Hildersham is the protection, encouragement and improvement of existing habitats and ecological connections, particularly woodland, wet woodland, hedgerows, mature trees and wildflower-rich grassland and verges. Opportunities to strengthen connections between these habitats whilst maintaining the character of the agricultural landscape should be sought wherever possible. The parish's valued views, and its close relationship with the surrounding countryside and River Granta, are also important considerations in maintaining a landscape in which wildlife and people can continue to thrive.



Figure 1: Town Green - 20 04 24 [Image: JMK]

1. Who's involved?

A small group of residents contributed to the parish's nature surveys in 2023. Since then, some members have moved away or are no longer able to participate. The Parish Council will seek to involve interested residents and community groups as opportunities arise, rather than establishing a large formal working group at this stage.

2. Existing plans and policies

Table 2. Landscape initiatives that include Hildersham

Landscape initiative	Link to document	Date document or initiative created or updated
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) – county-wide strategy identifying priorities and opportunities for nature recovery, including mapped habitat and habitat-recovery actions within Hildersham.	https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/a1963a7dc51c4c259a8d19832b63f461	23rd December 2025
South Cambridgeshire Climate and Nature Strategy 2026–2030 – district-wide strategy for nature recovery, including the protection and enhancement of nature and water, and support for delivery of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough LNRS.	https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/srfnprxe/final-accessible-climate-nature-strategy-1.pdf	10th March 2026
Granta Catchment Resilience Programme (GCRP) – collaborative work across the River Granta catchment addressing water resources, agricultural land management and the resilience and environmental condition of the catchment.	https://www.rivercam.org.uk/our-catchment/granta-catchment/	December 2021 to March 2023

Plan or Policy Name	Score (see Table 4)	Link to document	Date document created or updated
Hildersham Biodiversity Policy	2	https://hildershamparishcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Biodiversity-Policy-Hildersham-Nov-2024.pdf	Nov 2024

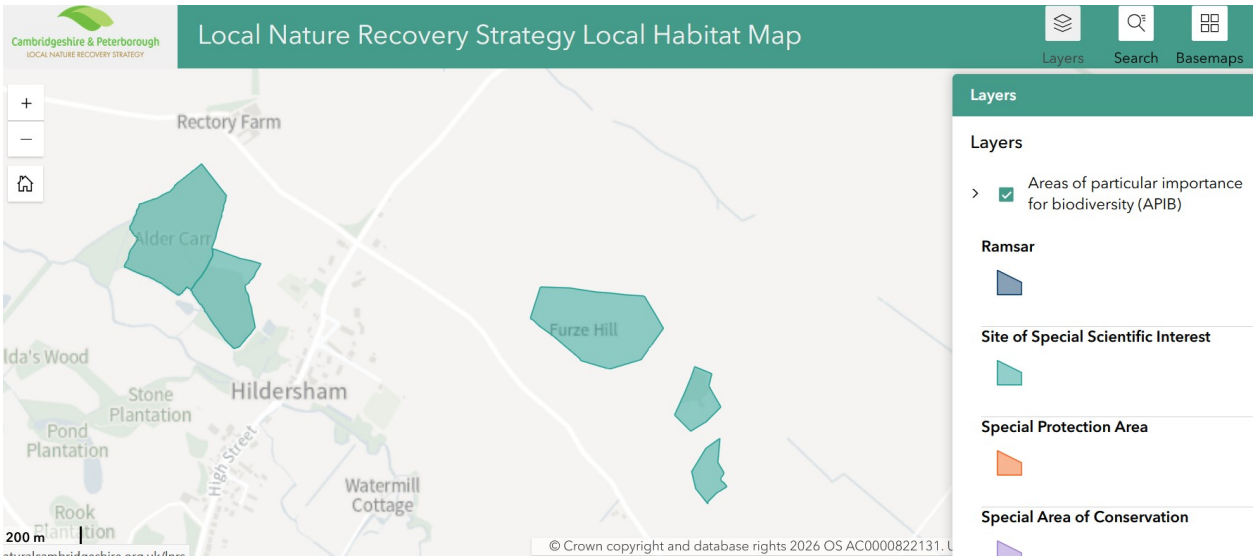
Table 3. Assessment of existing plans

Score	Description
0	No policy or plan
1	Short, descriptive policy statement
2	Parish-specific plan with broad level actions e.g. encourage an increase urban greenery through tree planting and community gardens to provide shade and lower temperatures
3	Parish-specific plan including Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound (SMART) actions e.g. plant 20 trees by the end of the year in front gardens identified through a community engagement project44
4	Parish-specific plan including SMART actions linked to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) e.g. linking to action F4C, planting 20m of new native hedgerow that connects two small historic fragmented hedgerows together to create an ecological link through connected habitats

Table 4. Assessing existing plans (from NR-FGU Guidance document)

3. Our natural environment in Hildersham

Designated sites



Map 1. Designated sites for nature in Hildersham - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

Description of the site	Name	Habitat type
SSSI	**Hildersham Wood,**	Ancient woodland of ash-maple type lying on chalky Boulder Clay
SSSI	**Alder Carr**	Wet spring-fed woodland area in the centre of the village
SSSI	**Furze Hill**	Esker ridge with steep banks of glacial deep sandy gravel with several rare plants, such as hoary cinquefoils, pasque flowers and maiden pinks.

Hildersham Wood



Figure 2: Bluebells in Hildersham Wood. Photograph: Roger Shaw. Wikimedia Commons. Licence: CC BY-SA 2.0. Unmodified.

Alder Carr



Figure 3: Alder Carr. Photograph: Dudley Miles. Wikimedia Commons. Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0, Unmodified.

Furze Hill



Figure 4: Furze Hill. Photograph: Dudley Miles. Wikimedia Commons. Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0. Unmodified

Other areas of importance for nature in Hildersham:

Arable farmland	Name	Activity
Cooks Pen Farm	**Flourish - Commercial farmer and farm shop**	**Regenerative organic farming - Focuses on regenerative and ecological agriculture, soil biodiversity improvement, crop rotation, green manures, and livestock/pony integration**

Woodlands	Name	Habitat
(See above; Table 1, p. 5)	**Hildersham Wood**	Ancient woodland of ash-maple type lying on chalky Boulder Clay
(See above; Table 1, p. 5)	**Alder Carr**	Wet spring-fed woodland area in the centre of the village
(End of Recreation Meadow)		Small plantation – newly-planted mixture of trees

Hedgerows

Various (described as “rare” and “precious” by Modicum Planning)

Ancient bank and hedge adjoining North Holding

Road verges

Verges Survey Data Report – April-May 2023

Gardens

Gardens Questionnaire Report (2022)

Allotments (see 5 below, p. 15)

Churchyards	Location	Habitat
Holy Trinity	**Graveyard surrounding church**	Managed with biodiversity in mind – (2021: **Bronze Award** from the Wildlife Trust 2025-6 – **Silver Award)**

Amenity areas (urban grassland/playing fields)

Recreation Ground adjoining Village Hall (designated village green)

Proposed as Protected Village Amenity Areas (Policy CH/6 [2013]):

Town Green

Village Hall verge

Forge Green

Protected Frontage Policy (Policy CH/7 [2013]):

Open Fields of Hall Farm opposite Village Hall

Proposed as Local Green Space

Triangle (top of Beech Row)



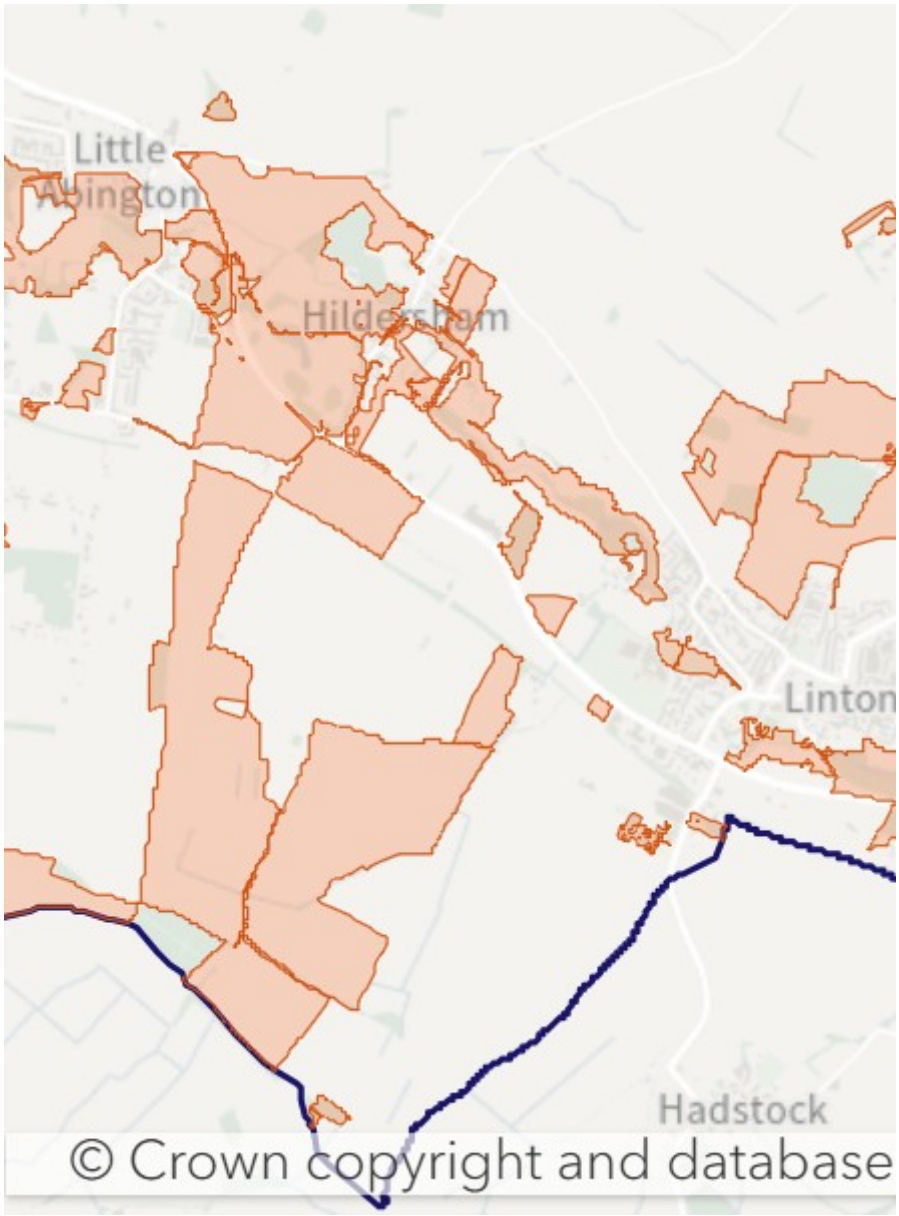
Figure 5: Cow parsley dell (private garden, centre of village) Image: JMK



Figure 6: Triangle (top of Beech Row, adjoining A1307) Image: JMK

Areas of biodiversity opportunity

Map 2. Areas of biodiversity opportunity (ACB) in Hildersham, as identified in the LNRS



ACB – layers that could become of particular importance for biodiversity

A map of engaged landowners in Hildersham with an interest in doing more for nature on their land: map has not been included, because no sufficiently reliable, consented map of landowner interest is currently available.

The LNRS identifies an opportunity to enhance existing species-rich neutral grassland around the Watermill and the back of the village (G2A). The land behind the Watermill is already managed with biodiversity in mind and supports abundant wildflowers and birdlife. Maintaining this positive management over the long term is important; any future change of ownership could bring a risk that its biodiversity value might not be sustained.

The LNRS also identifies opportunities to establish natural or semi-natural buffer zones alongside the River Granta and associated watercourses (RD3A), and to enhance the biodiversity of mapped parkland and wood pasture, including protecting veteran and ancient trees and providing complementary habitats (Wo7A). No habitat mosaic action (M1A) is currently mapped within the parish.

Many of these opportunities lie on privately owned land, and their implementation would depend on landowner agreement and appropriate resources. The Parish Council will therefore focus on opportunities within its influence, including improved management of parish verges and green spaces, protecting existing wildflower areas at Field Gardens, and considering biodiversity when making decisions about parish-owned land. Opportunities to enhance other habitats will be encouraged where practicable.

Several landowners in Hildersham have expressed an interest in doing more for nature on their land. This local interest provides a basis for future cooperation and may offer opportunities to enhance habitats beyond those identified in the LNRS. Further opportunities may emerge as the Nature Recovery Plan develops, with any action on privately owned land depending on the willingness of the landowners concerned and the circumstances of each site.

4. Areas of Concern for Nature in Hildersham

Concern category	**Information**	**Monitoring (if any)**	**Management (if any)**	**Date mapped**
Himalayan Balsam	Himalayan Balsam has been spreading along the river bank between the watermill and the allotments; and also to the left of the footbridge on path 142/3 over the last few years.	Clerk registers reports from members of the public.	Parish Council (sometimes the Chairman in person) removes plants on PC land. Clerk contacts relevant landowners to request that plants be removed	Septemb er 2025

Concern category	Information	Monitoring (if any)	Management (if any)	Date mapped
			from their land.	
Flooding * (see below for Environment Agency flooding map)	Land and dwellings immediately adjoining the Granta in the centre of the village	Via Environment Agency's website		Various
Management of roadside verges for biodiversity (see below) **				

Table 5. Key concerns for nature in Hildersham

*** Flooding**

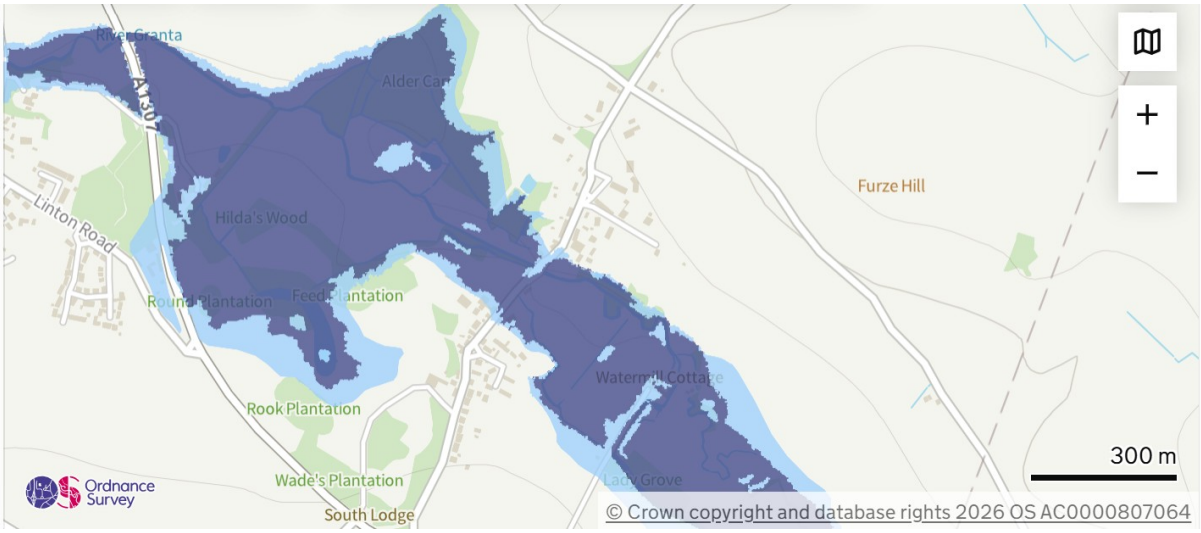


Figure 7: Environment Agency map of flooding in Hildersham (for planning purposes)

**** Management of roadside verges for biodiversity.**

Information

Several Hildersham roadside verges support wildflowers and pollinators. Cutting frequency and timing affect flowering and seed-setting, while road safety and access must also be maintained. In 2026, cuts in early spring and late June were followed by further cutting that removed vegetation of botanical or wildlife value, including a small clump of white violets at Forge Green. Weather-related variations in growth and flowering favour a flexible approach.

Monitoring

Ground surveys have recorded botanical interest. Further observations, where practicable, could help identify notable species, flowering periods and the effects of cutting regimes.

Management

The Parish Council has sought to reduce cutting frequency, partly to control costs. A site-specific regime could help reconcile financial constraints with biodiversity objectives by identifying valuable sections, agreeing appropriate cutting periods and checking conditions before additional cuts are commissioned.

In implementing the Neighbourhood Plan's Nature Recovery Plan policy, the Council should, where practicable, incorporate clear biodiversity requirements into maintenance specifications and contractor instructions. These should balance habitat recovery, including the retention of leaf litter and dead vegetation where appropriate, with road safety, access and maintenance needs. Management arrangements should be reviewed as necessary to reflect changing conditions, including those associated with climate change, and remain proportionate to available resources.

5. Nature Recovery Projects

Hildersham has relatively few discrete projects specifically dedicated to nature recovery. Existing activities with potential biodiversity benefits include a small tree plantation established approximately four to five years ago. A proportion of the trees failed to survive subsequent dry conditions, but the Parish Council continues to arrange periodic grass cutting in the area.

The village's field gardens and allotments provide cultivated land in which wildflowers may also occur, depending on local conditions and cultivation practices. The allotments' primary purpose remains food production, and any biodiversity benefits should be recognised in a way that respects this purpose. A proposal to establish a wildflower area was previously considered but was not pursued because of the anticipated cost and practical difficulties.

No projects have yet been entered into Parish Online. The information in this section therefore records the position currently known, rather than a complete register of mapped projects. Any future projects should be recorded when they are agreed and the necessary arrangements are in place.

Project title	Stage of development	Start date	Monitoring/evaluation	Habitat type(s)	Aims of the project	Project ID
Small tree plantation	Continuing	2022 (no end date assigned)	Established approximately 4–5 years ago; some trees lost during dry conditions. Periodic grass cutting continues.	Grassland adjoining drain	To maintain the existing plantation and support the survival of the trees.	Not assigned

Species	Locations of sightings	Dates of sightings
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	(In the vicinity of Town Green, and the bridge)	See Garden Wildlife Questionnaire (2022) pg 9
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/standards.finest.obeyed	1 5 2024
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/standards.finest.obeyed	25 5 2025
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/resembles.spurted.quieter	27 5 2026
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/resembles.spurted.quieter	28 5 2026
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/resembles.spurted.quieter	30 5 2026
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/resembles.spurted.quieter	31 5 2026
Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)	https://what3words.com/resembles.spurted.quieter	24 6 2026
Swift (Apus apus)	Hildersham	See Garden Wildlife Questionnaire (2022) pg 9)

Table 8. Records of selected bird species in Hildersham

Date of CNRP publication for Hildersham:	November 2026		
Dates to review CNRP	**Scope of review**	**Purpose**	**Reviewed Y/N**
Every three years (next review: 2029)	The review should consider any changes to the parish's biodiversity, progress on identified management priorities, and opportunities for practical improvements in the light of available resources. It may take account of the Parish Council's annual reports on biodiversity, where these are produced.	To keep the Nature Recovery Plan proportionate, relevant and achievable, and to identify any changes or additional actions that the Parish Council considers appropriate.	

Table 9. Publication and review information