

WESTON ON THE GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY AUDIT



Audit Areas: The Playing Field, Spinney and North Lane Ponds.

Date: November 2025

1. Introduction

Weston on the Green Parish contains several small but ecologically valuable community green spaces. This combined Biodiversity Audit provides a unified baseline assessment of three key sites:

1. **The Playing Field** – amenity grassland with hedgerows and scattered trees.
2. **The Spinney** – a semi-natural wooded area supporting birds, mammals, and invertebrates.
3. **North Lane Ponds** – freshwater ponds with adjacent marginal and terrestrial habitat.

2. Site Assessments

2.1 The Playing Field

Site Description

- Village recreational space with short-mown grass, hedges, and scattered mature trees.
- Provides open, sunny habitat but low botanical diversity due to frequent mowing.
- Important for public recreation and accessible to all age groups.
- Volunteers help support management of the area.

Current Ecological Value

- Low–moderate: primarily amenity grassland.
- Boundary hedgerows and tree lines offer moderate–high ecological value as wildlife corridors.
- Key Species – Birds (e.g. blackbird, robin, thrush, kite), mammals (hedgehog, small rodents, moles), invertebrates (bees, butterflies), flora: (ryegrass, clover, daisy, dandelion, hedges, scattered trees)

Issues Identified

- Required mowing for field use → low species richness.
- Limited nectar sources or structure.
- Few dedicated habitat features.

Suggested Enhancement Recommendations (when viable)

- Establish 1–2m wildflower margins.
- Create pollinator patches with perennial native wildflowers.
- Adjust mowing: leave selected areas uncut spring–summer.

2.2 The Spinney

Site Description

- Woodland/scrub habitat with mixed broadleaf trees (oak, ash).
- Contains deadwood, understorey vegetation, and informal footpaths.
- Provides shaded microhabitats and diverse structural layers.
- Volunteers help support management of the area.

Current Ecological Value

- High local value: supports woodland birds, small mammals, invertebrates, and fungi.
- Deadwood and understorey are especially important for biodiversity.
- New trees recently planted.
- Key Species: birds (e.g. blackbird, robin, thrush, kite), mammals (hedgehog, mice), invertebrates (beetles, spiders, woodland butterflies), flora (bramble, ivy, fern, cow parsley, holly), fungi.
- Bird boxes installed on trees.

Issues Identified

- Over-dominance of bramble and ivy in some areas (volunteers support).
- Ash dieback (being managed).
- Deadwood near paths may pose safety risks if unmanaged.

Enhancement Recommendations (when viable)

- Retain and relocate deadwood for habitat when required but ensure path safety.
- Manage bramble/ivy only where over-dominant.

2.3 North Lane Ponds

Site Description

- Small freshwater ponds (two) beside North Lane, with marginal plants, grass banks and hedgerow vegetation.
- Seasonal water levels and natural shading from surrounding shrubs/trees.
- Valuable visual and ecological features.

Current Ecological Value

- Moderate–high as a freshwater habitat supporting amphibians, aquatic insects and birds.
- Marginal vegetation provides critical transition habitat.
- Stone piles provided for amphibians and hedgehogs.
- Key Species: aquatic (frogs, water beetles, dragonfly), birds (moorhen, ducks), mammals (hedgehog, small rodents), flora (rushes, willow on edges).

Issues Identified

- Silt, reed and leaf accumulation reducing depth.
- Central North Lane pond dominated by Reed Mace (Thypha species) – a very invasive aquatic plant.
- Bank erosion, to be mindful of.

- Potential overshadowing by adjacent trees.

Ecologist visited central North Lane pond in 2024 and provided a report, detailed in Appendix 1.

Enhancement Recommendations

- Partial removal and further management of Reed Mace species at central pond. This will also desilt some areas to aid pond depths.
- Removal of self seeding shrubs on right bank of central pond.
- Regular maintenance to ensure reeds not take over the pond.
- Manage willow shading (at both ponds) on a 3–5 year cycle (tree surgeon undertaken tree audit and management plan in operation).
- Monitor banks for erosion.

3. Biodiversity Opportunities and Potential Future Projects

- Maintain wildlife-friendly roadside verges.
- Maintain and repair hedgerows where required.
- Continue to work on maintaining a mixed structure (canopy, shrub, ground flora) in the Spinney.
- Encourage the enhancement of hedgehog movement opportunities.
- Establish wildflower zones in the Playing Field and Spinney.
- Add nectar-rich planting around North Lane Ponds.

4. Summary

The Playing Field, Spinney and North Lane Ponds together provide a diverse mosaic of habitats—grassland, woodland, and freshwater—that support wildlife and enhance village wellbeing. While each site has its own challenges, they also offer powerful opportunities for improvement.

Appendix 1: Report from Ecologist, Pedro Collins (November 2024)

NORTH LANE POND: WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

A meeting with John Miller on 31/10/24 to discuss the pond at North Lane concluded with an action plan for the pond. This is required to ensure that the pond does not become completely over grown and succumb to, hydrosphere succession.

The pond is dominated by, Reed Mace (Thypha species). This is a very invasive aquatic plant and needs to be managed so as not to take over the pond. Therefore the partial removal and further management of this species is important.

The willow has been pollarded. Currently this tree is in good condition, offering an element of shade and it is recommended that it is pollarded every 3-5 years.

The tree overhanging the far bank, to the left of the willow would benefit from pollarding. It would invigorate growth and increase its longevity. It may require further pollarding but not for at least 7-8 years.

On the left bank the removal of the weed is recommended but with a small margin left at the edges. The right bank has a number of, self-seeded shrubs growing. These should be removed and will allow a more natural margin to form. Margins are important habitat for the ponds ecology.

The road side has a raised area which would benefit from trimming on a yearly basis during mid-Autumn. This would be left to grow during the spring and summer.

It should be noted that during the removal of the weeds there will be some silt disturbance and some of the silt will be removed with the weeds. This will not impact too much on the pond. The recovery period will take a few months but by next spring it will be in a much better condition.

The pond will require regular maintenance to ensure that the plants, in particular the reed mace doesn't take over the pond. The regular trimming, during the growing season may be necessary. The leading edges should be trimmed down to stop it spreading.

The pond has the potential to become a good site for a range of species. Amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, birds and invertebrates, both terrestrial and aquatic.

Another site visit is recommended in the spring/early summer to see how the pond is developing, post works and to provide any advice on future management.

Peter Collins (Ecologist)