

ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE COMMITTEE held in the COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2017 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillor S Barker
Councillors V Ranger and H Rolfe

Officers in attendance: B Ferguson (Democratic Services Officer) and S Pugh (Interim Head of Legal Services and Interim Monitoring Officer)

Public Speakers: Stephen Dutton and Helen Payne

ACV1 ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

Councillor Rolfe nominated Councillor Barker to be Chairman, because she was the portfolio holder for Environmental Services.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Barker as the Chairman of the Asset of Community Value Sub-Committee.

ACV2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Essex County Council.

ACV3 NOMINATION OF CHALKY MEADOW (LAND EAST OF THE MEAD), THAXTED TO BE LISTED AS AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Helen Payne and Stephen Dutton spoke in favour of the nomination of Chalky Meadows to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

Helen Payne thanked the sub-committee for letting her speak and encouraged members to approve Chalky Meadow as an Asset of Community Value. She said the land at Chalky Meadow was an unspoiled haven for wildlife, one of the few left in Uttlesford, a district where agricultural land dominated the landscape. Chalky Meadow was of benefit to the community because it improved local residents' mental wellbeing. Engagement with nature also gave an educational benefit to the community. If Chalky Meadow was to be approved, it would add even greater value to the local community.

Stephen Dutton told the sub-committee he was an avid birdwatcher and Chalky Meadows was an important habitat for local wildlife. Butterflies in particular had been recorded there, and he had presented his own findings to local groups, which demonstrated that the community was involved and interested in the land. Residents enjoyed the natural space on offer at Chalky Meadows, and it should be nominated on the basis that it had a positive impact on personal and community wellbeing.

The Interim Head of Legal Services explained the protection given by listing as an Asset of Community Value. He said that listing allowed community interest

groups the time to prepare a bid if the owner intended to dispose of the Asset of Community Value. The mechanism by which this was done was through a time window of up to six months, during which the owner was prevented from selling the asset.

Listing as an Asset of Community Value listing did not place any restriction on uses to which the land or property could be put. This would be a matter for the planning regime.

The Interim Head of Legal Services said many of the points raised in support of the nomination were aspirational. It was not enough that Chalky Meadow had the potential to be an asset to the local community in the future; to qualify as an Asset of Community Value # the current or recent use of the land needed to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, as prescribed by the Localism Act 2011.

Members discussed the nomination of Chalky Meadow as an Asset of Community Value and the criteria on which it would qualify.

Councillor Ranger said he had visited the site and did not believe it qualified as an Asset of Community Value. Whilst he agreed that it was a haven for wildlife, he said it did not meet the criteria as set out in the Localism Act 2011 He pointed out that the overgrown nature of the site made use by the local community impractical. He said that, if a planning application came forward, an environmental impact assessment would have to be undertaken before an application could be considered.

Helen Payne, who had submitted a petition regarding the nomination of Chalky Meadow as an Asset of Community Value, said she was asking the committee to deviate from the definition of 'use' as set out in the Act. Although the land was not a recreation ground or park, local people did feel the benefit of having a 'patch of wild nature' in Thaxted. This land was used by people to connect with an unspoiled natural habitat, and this in turn had a positive impact on mental well-being.

Councillor Rolfe said he was sympathetic to the nomination and the sentiments expressed by the members of the public present. However, the criteria for listing an Asset of Community Value were prescribed in law and Chalky Meadow did not meet these criteria. He added that if Essex County Council wished to develop the land, an Asset of Community Value listing would not prevent this.

Councillor Ranger said there were other means by which this land could be protected from development that might be more effective than listing it as an Asset of Community Value. He advised the community group to contact the County Councillor for Thaxted, Simon Walsh, to convey their position.

The Chairman said Councillor Walsh was the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for the Environment and he would be interested to hear their concerns. Councillor Rolfe and the Chairman said they would write to him to establish a dialogue between the community group and County Hall.

Members agreed that Chalky Meadow did not further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, within the terms of the Localism Act 2011, and so did not meet the criteria to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

RESOLVED to reject the nomination of Chalky Meadow, Thaxted to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

ACV4 **NOMINATION OF HOP POLES, GREAT HALLINGBURY TO BE LISTED AS AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE**

Members discussed the nomination of the Hop Poles, Great Hallingbury to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The Chairman said she had spoken to Great Hallingbury Parish Council and they had informed her that the Hop Poles had been put up for sale as a public house. She said as the building had been listed on the market as a public house it was therefore realistic to think that in the near future the use of the building could further the social wellbeing and interests of the community, as a social hub in the centre of the village.

Members agreed that the Hop Poles did meet the relevant criteria and should be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

RESOLVED to approve the nomination of Hop Poles, Great Hallingbury to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The meeting ended at 5.35pm