

Document to support the nomination of 'Chalky Meadow' to become an asset of community value.

13/11/2017.

About the Author: Helen Payne is a lay person, resident of Thaxted, and is supporting this application as part of a wider ambition to look after nature and the wild spaces within the parish. Helen is working with other residents and Thaxted Parish Council with the aim that "Chalky Meadow" becomes an asset of community value. (Contact details are listed at the end of the document.)

Purpose of this document: To provide additional detail to the original nomination; in particular section 3 – demonstrating the community value of 'Chalky Meadow'.

Introduction: 'Chalky Meadow' is a temporary name; it refers to the idea that this site has the potential to become a good example of a species rich calcareous grassland meadow.

Calcareous grasslands occur on the chalky boulder clays of Uttlesford District in North West Essex, although sadly, most of the stands are now confined to road verges and the edges of chalk quarries. Typical flowers include field scabious, pyramidal orchid, common spotted orchid and greater knapweed. They also support some of the county's rarest species such as crested cow-wheat and sulphur clover.

<http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/species-and-habitats/grasslands>

If successful in achieving the status of asset of community value the author would involve the residents of Thaxted to come up with a better name.

Historical Note:

The site has been left to its own devices for about twenty five years, before that it was agricultural land. Up until recently ,(approximately 5 years ago when the Mill View development on the end of Wedow Rd began), the site was frequently used by walkers, children and nature enthusiasts. The building development effectively cut off the through way that was being used and rendered it relatively inaccessible.

We propose that the protection and development of this 'wild space' will be of enormous community benefit. This is supported by widely held views that access to and involvement in nature is inherently good for us as individuals in terms of our physical and mental wellbeing. It will bring people together by promoting community involvement and provide wonderful education opportunities for our children in addition to protecting the wildlife.

With reference to Section 3: Demonstrating the community value of the asset.

Q5a Why do you feel the property is an asset of community value?

Wildlife and nature are very important to our community. We live in a wonderful rural town; however we are becoming increasingly aware that within our parish boundaries we have very few 'wild' or natural areas that are important for wildlife and biodiversity. This concerns us.

The BBC news article (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41901294_13/11/2017) shows that only 2% of the land in Uttlesford is natural; this is despite the fact we are very rural – (93% of Uttlesford land is farmland). The 2% figure is low compared to the national figure of 35% of land being 'natural' too.

The following is an extract from Thaxted's Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Nov 2017). (Author's highlight)

5.5 WILDLIFE HABITATS

5.5.1 Thaxted's unspoilt and varied landscape is rich in wildlife. The following specific sites were identified in the questionnaire responses as being important as wildlife habitats and deserving of protection:

- Cophall Lane (stream and meadows)
- West Wood
- **Essex County Council owned site next to The Mead (Chalky Meadow)**
- Piggot's Hill
- Chelmer Valley/fields adjacent to Watling Lane
- The Churchyard
- Cutler's Green

5.5.2 The questionnaire also revealed that 95% of the respondents thought that it was important to manage/protect local wildlife sites. It is therefore essential that any potential development within an area of wildlife habitat value should be considered in the context of its importance for local wildlife.

We have also collected a petition that shows support for "Chalky Meadow" being an asset of community value.

There is a wealth of evidence to show there is a strong connection between wellbeing and our relationship with nature. To avoid a long list of papers I put forward the green paper from the Wildlife Trusts and RSPB as a good reference point.

https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/green_paper_nature_and_wellbeing_act_full_final.pdf

"This Green Paper makes the case for a Nature and Wellbeing Act for England to halt the decline in nature and speed its recovery, for the benefit of people and our environment."

"Our wealth as a nation and our individual wellbeing depend critically upon the environment. It provides us with the food, water and air that are essential for life and with the minerals and raw materials for our industry and consumption. Less obviously, it provides the processes that purify the air and water, and which sequester or break down wastes. It is also in our environment where we find recreation, health and solace, and in which our culture finds its roots and sense of place."

(UK National Ecosystem Assessment: Understanding Nature's Value to Society. UNEP-WCMC (2011) quoted in the above document.)

The community of Thaxted would like to protect and value our wild spaces as shown by the supporting petition and Neighbourhood Plan.

Q5b How could the building or land be acquired and used in future?

The future is the exciting part of this story. If successful at achieving "Chalky Meadow" to become an asset of community value we propose the following:

- Partnership working between Essex County Council (landowners), Thaxted Parish Council, Essex Biodiversity Project / Essex Wildlife Trust (Uttlesford branch) and a community group.
- The community group will work in consultation with residents, the school and other local groups to establish a working group that has clearly defined constitution and purpose to aid in the following:
- The production of a clear plan, by the partnership, for the site that will enhance the development and character of a species rich calcareous grassland meadow and;
- Work with residents, the school and other groups to encourage access and use.
- The seeking of access grants where necessary.

Contact details:

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References:

<http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/species-and-habitats/grasslands> accessed 13/11/2017

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41901294> accessed 13/11/2017

https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/green_paper_nature_and_wellbeing_act_full_final.pdf
accessed 13/11/2017