

Nomination of a Community Asset – Land – Field off Malpass (Conservation Grazing Area), Leybourne Chase, ME19 5GB

1. Background

1.1 On 14 January 2025, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (“the Council”) received a nomination for a community asset from Leybourne Parish Council, in respect of the field off Malpass, named “Conservation Grazing Area” (“the Land”).

1.2 The nomination describes the Land as follows: *“The area consists of a fenced in grass area. A conservation grazing project at Leybourne Chase has been running for 2 years now. Currently home to 2 cows and some sheep, run by volunteers. Residents, walkers and school children visiting have taken joy in seeing the animals and learning about the benefits to biodiversity and conservation”*

1.3 The nomination demonstrates that the land is currently in use as an open space for recreational purposes including the community conservation grazing project. The landowner is listed as Leybourne Grange Management CIC. The Parish Council (the nominator) describes the uses of the land as follows:

“The conservation grazing area benefits:

Ecological benefits

- *helps maintain the grassland by preventing the overgrowth of invasive plants such as ragwort, which can be harmful to the local riding school.*
- *This natural land management method reduces the need for mechanical mowing or chemical treatment.*
- *Creation of wildlife habitats.*

Community engagement

- *bringing residents and the local community together, creating a sense of responsibility and ownership for a local green space.*
- *Provides educational opportunities on ecology and conservation for residents and their families, the local preschools and primary schools.*
- *Strengthens the community by providing volunteer opportunities as residents can get involved with the animal care.*
- *Strengthens local ties with communities as grazing projects can involve partnerships between landowners, conservations groups, schools and local businesses.*

Recreational value

- *this open space provides an attractive area for walking and jogging, improving community well-being and physical health.*
- *Access to green open space with grazing animals can reduce stress and improve mental health”.*

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 90 of the Localism Act 2011 (“the Act”) states:

“90 Procedure on community nominations

- (1) This section applies if a local authority receives a community nomination.*
- (2) The authority must consider the nomination.*
- (3) The authority must accept the nomination if the land nominated—
 - (a) is in the authority's area, and*
 - (b) is of community value.**
- (4) If the authority is required by subsection (3) to accept the nomination, the authority must cause the land to be included in the authority's list of assets of community value.*
- (5) The nomination is unsuccessful if subsection (3) does not require the authority to accept the nomination.*
- (6) If the nomination is unsuccessful, the authority must give, to the person who made the nomination, the authority's written reasons for its decision that the land could not be included in its list of assets of community value.”*

2.2 By s.88 of the Act, land is of “community value” if:

“in the opinion of the [Council]—

(a) an actual current use of the building or other land that is not an ancillary use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, and

(b) it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

*...
[or]*

in the opinion of the [Council]—

(a) there is a time in the recent past when an actual use of the building or other land that was not an ancillary use furthered the social wellbeing or interests of the local community, and

(b) it is realistic to think that there is a time in the next five years when there could be non-ancillary use of the building or other land that would further (whether or not in the same way as before) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.”

- 2.3 Land may only be listed in response to a community nomination (or in other prescribed circumstances which are not applicable here). A “community nomination” includes a nomination by a Parish Council.

3. Assessment of Nomination

Is it a “community nomination”?

The nomination has been made by a Parish Council in respect of land within its area, which meets the requirements of s.89(2) of the Act for a community nomination.

Is there an “actual current use” or “time in the recent past” where the land was in community use

The Land is currently in use for recreational purposes. The nomination states that “*this open space provides an attractive area for walking and jogging, improving community well-being and physical health*”. In addition, the area is used by volunteer groups and schools regarding the conservation grazing project. This use would be considered to further social interests or social wellbeing. There are general community benefits of volunteering and space outdoors which would suggest that this land is and would be *capable* of use in a manner which furthers social interests and/or social wellbeing.

Is there a realistic prospect in the next 5 years of a community use?

The Land is in current use and there appears to be no indication that such use would not or could not continue.

4. Conclusion and Decision

- 4.1 The Council has received a valid community nomination for the Land.
- 4.2 The Land was, in the recent past, in a use or uses which furthered the social wellbeing of the local community.
- 4.3 It is realistic to think that the Land could be put to such uses within the next 5 years.
- 4.4 The Land is in the Council’s area and is of community value. The Land should therefore be included in the Council’s list of assets of community value.