Maids Moreton Parish Council

Nomination for Community Right to Bid

| **Information supporting nomination** | **Evidence** |
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| **Location and ownership** |  |
| This nomination relates to the fields either side of Scott’s Lane, Maids Moreton:   * Tin Hovel Field (north-west of Scott’s Lane), which includes a pond; * Culver Close Field (west of Scott’s Lane), which includes two ponds; * Whirly Field (east of Scott’s Lane). | **Annex 1 Field names**  **Annex 2 Footpaths map** |
| All three fields and Scott’s Lane are within Maids Moreton Conservation Area. Only Scott’s Lane is currently in public ownership; the fields are privately owned and all three fields are rented by a local tenant farmer who grazes sheep on two of the fields; the third is unused agriculturally. | **Annex 3 MM Conservation Area**  **Annex 4 Land Registry** |
| **Description** |  |
| Scott’s Lane is a single-track lane with no through vehicle access. Either side of the lane are historic grazing meadows, criss-crossed with public footpaths that connect with all quarters of the village. These three meadows along with the spinneys and ponds they contain are the subject of this nomination. | **Annex 4 Land Registry** |
| Together, the lane itself, the adjoining meadows and spinneys form a unique area of landscape which is a traffic-free, tranquil beauty spot within the village, greatly enjoyed by the community of Maids Moreton.  Tin Hovel Field includes a large seasonal pond which children and families enjoy visiting “secretly” via the footpath through the vegetation. The larger pond and spinney within Culver Close also draw visitors. | **Annex 5 Have your say**  **Annex 6 Wildlife Survey Day**  **Annex 9 Photographs**  **Annex 11 Scotts Lane surveys** |
| **Public use of the private land** |  |
| There is extensive ‘borrowed’ use of the land by people who enjoy the views of nature, wildlife and grazing livestock as they use the popular footpaths and Scott’s Lane itself that cross the area. Additionally, there is a range of established public uses of the private areas of land as follows: | **Annex 5 Have your say**  **Annex 6 Wildlife Survey Day**  **Annex 11 Scotts Lane surveys** |
| The “secret” pond within Tin Hovel Field is freely and frequently accessed from Scott’s Lane, especially by children and families. Community work parties periodically work on maintaining the pond, sometimes assisted by a local authority-led volunteer group. Residents and children have been to see newts during surveys at this pond. A leafmould pile and a newt hibernaculum have been created here by residents. There is a common misconception locally that this is public land, since generations of children, parents and grandparents share memories of having always been able to visit it. | **Annex 9 Photos, Fig 1.4–1.12**  **Annex 17 Volunteer activities**  **Annex 13 MMCG Newsletters, pp.1, 2, 3, 7** |
| The fence alongside the footpath at Tin Hovel Field has been down for several years, so people can easily access the field, which has been completely unused and unmaintained by the owner and/or the tenant farmer for at least six years. Residential neighbours regularly cut down invasive weeds growing in the field, and members of the public enter the field with dogs, let children play and trample paths in the long grass, and go exploring and bug-hunting there. | **Annex 9 Photos, Fig 1.2, 2.9** |
| Culver Close includes two large ponds, one of which is within a large spinney and is easily and frequently accessed from Towcester Road. The clearly established paths, footprints, clearings and litter demonstrate regular footfall and visitors to this area.  The second pond in Culver Close is within a dense spinney, where volunteers have installed owl and bat boxes. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.12–2.19** |
| Although maintenance of public rights of way across private land is the responsibility of the landowner, the high appreciation of their value by the community and the resultant heavy use by residents and visitors has, in practice, led to their maintenance by local resident volunteers. These volunteers stabilise boggy areas with ballast, add gravel annually (funded by the parish council), monitor accessibility, cut back vegetation and mow wide swards either side of the formal footpath line.  During the Covid-19 crisis, volunteers widened the mown path verges to create safe passing places to accommodate increased lockdown footfall.  Benches along the footpaths were installed by the parish council and by private individuals on private land.  The volunteer-created nectar border alongside the footpath is on private land.  All these footpath-related activities are public use of private land and contribute to a strong sense of long-term community involvement and stakeholder interest. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.5–2.7**  **Annex 17 Volunteer activities**  **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.20, 4.24**  **Annex 9 Photos, Fig. 3.7**  **Annex 5 Have your say**  **Annex 6 Wildlife Survey Day** |
| **Formally acknowledged community value** |  |
| The Maids Moreton Conservation Area Appraisal explains (p.17) inclusion of the fields at Scott’s Lane within the Conservation Area as follows:   1. *Historic maps of the village show this area to have been open and undeveloped and it maintains some of its historic field boundaries.* 2. *This area of open space acts as an important buffer between Maids Moreton and Buckingham. The undeveloped nature of these fields reinforces the identity of Maids Moreton as a separate and distinct village.* 3. *The open aspect of this area of the village reinforces the rural character of the village which in other areas has been compromised by modern development.* 4. *The area is important for wildlife and appreciated and valued by local residents.* | **Annex 3 MM Conservation Area** |
| Maids Moreton Parish Plan (2004) identifies “Footpaths / space / open countryside” as the second mostly highly rated feature of the village, after the friendly community itself (p.6); one respondent commented: “I like fields in the heart of the village – not just surrounding it”. The Plan acknowledges the importance of the area as a popular walking route, refers to community activities to enhance the area, and includes the Recommendation: “Encourage the re-use of the meadows for the grazing of animals” (p.11). | **Annex 7 MM Parish Plan** |
| Residents’ love of the whole Scott’s Lane area has been repeatedly evidenced, most recently by responses to Have Your Say, the Scott’s Lane Wildlife Survey, and the two Scott’s Lane area usage surveys (2019 and 2020). People have expressed interest in gaining further access into the fields, support enhancement of the natural beauty and biodiversity, and appreciate the landscape and sheep in particular.  “Scott’s Lane and the fields either side – could these be opened up?” (Annex 5)  “Pond, swamp. Kids love it” (Annex 6)  “Like the sheep, birds, wildflowers” (Annex 6) | **Annex 5 Have Your Say**  **Annex 6 Wildlife Survey Day**  **Annex 11 Scotts Lane surveys** |
| Recognising the heavy use and special enjoyment of the Scott’s Lane meadow footpaths, the Parish Council has for many years funded gravel, laid by volunteers, to keep these footpaths in good condition. They do not fund gravel for any other footpaths in the village. | **Annex 8 PC grant for gravel & newsletters** |
| **Why the area is special to the local community** |  |
| Together the fields and the lane create a special rural setting that is:   * A tranquil and beautiful area at the heart of the village. | **Annex 9 Photos** |
| * A place to walk and sit for leisure, to enjoy picturesque views and the sounds of nature, wildlife and traditionally grazed livestock. | **Annex 5 Have your say**  **Annex 9 Photos**  **Annex 11 Scotts Lane surveys** |
| * A place that people love and are where they are motivated to join in with community volunteer activities. | **Annex 9 Photos**  **Annex 11 Scotts Lane surveys**  **Annex 17 Volunteer activities** |
| * A place to spend leisure time with children and dogs. | **Annex 5 Have your say**  **Annex 9 Photos** |
| * An oasis of calm, space and fresh air; it was especially well used for leisure and exercise during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.8–2.9, 4.20** |
| * Although much of the footfall through the area is for leisure, it is also well used as a safe, quiet pedestrian route to and from the village infant school and pre-school, away from the busy roads through the village. For example, our July 2019 footfall survey showed c.50 people and 2 vehicles using the Scott’s Lane footpaths and lane at school-run times, compared with 227 vehicles on Main Street and 219 on Avenue Road at a similar time of day. (Scott’s Lane connects those two roads on foot.) | **Annex 10 School walking map**  **Annex 11a Scotts Lane surveys**  **Annex 12 MM Traffic survey** |
| **The actual current main use** |  |
| The fields either side of Scott’s Lane are privately owned. All three fields are rented by a local tenant farmer, who grazes sheep and lambs, sometimes rare breed varieties, in Culver Close and Whirly Field. Cattle have also been grazed there in the past. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.1–2.3, 2.11, 3.1–3.2, 3.4–3.10** |
| Minimal wire fencing and open views across Culver Close and Whirly Field mean that footpath users are in close proximity to the sheep. They enjoy seeing the animals and often interact with them. The tenant farmer has said that this socialises the sheep, which makes them easier to handle. The open meadow views are greatly enjoyed by residents. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.1–2.4, 2.8–2.11, 3.1–3.13** |
| Tin Hovel Field is understood to have been unsuitable for grazing since large piles of residues toxic to livestock were left there after the landowner had conifers removed in 2014. It has been unmanaged and unused agriculturally since then. In effect, it has been a wild, natural unmown meadow and a haven for wildlife for at least six years, with no effective block to public access. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.1–1.2**  **Annex 15 i-Record heat map** |
| The large pond in Tin Hovel Field is an important habitat for wildlife, including Great Crested Newts. Access into the pond area, through a hedgerow gap, is clearly visible and well used. Children explore there, and volunteers have long maintained the pond for wildlife, with advice and practical support from the Vale Countryside Volunteers and an AVDC ecology officer. | **Annex 16 GCN surveys**  **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.3–1.12**  **Annex 17 Volunteer activities** |
| **How the area benefits social wellbeing and social interests of the local community** | |
| The activities and uses of the area benefit families, individuals, schoolchildren and social groups by providing leisure activities, volunteer activities and enjoyment of interests. The whole setting of the meadows, ponds, footpaths and lane together make this a well visited, popular and special environment where people like to go, choose to walk, enjoy the environment and views and actively engage in conservation and environmental activities on both public and private land. As a comment on the Wildlife Day survey put it, “It’s the nicest place in the village”. | **Annex 11 Scotts Lane surveys**  **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.7–1.8, 2.8, 2.10, 3.10–3.14, 4.1–4.17, 4.29–4.35**  **Annex 6 Wildlife Survey Day** |
| People use the area regularly for a range of activities:   * Informal walking for exercise and pleasure. | **Annex 5 Have your say**  **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.5–1.6, 2.2, 2.8, 2.10, 2.14, 2.16, 3.10–3.13, 4.5, 4.9–4.10, 4.24–4.28, 4.32–4.35** |
| * Using the footpath benches and enjoying the views. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.8–2.9, 4.10, 4.12, 4.20–4.24** |
| * Exploring the “secret” pond in Tin Hovel Field. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.4–1.6, 1.9** |
| * Regular work parties clear leaves and debris, remove invasive species, keep views clear through hedgerow ‘windows’, plant wildflowers, build biodiversity and develop the nectar border at Whirly Field. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.8, 1.12, 3.3, 3.7–3.8, 4.1–4.4, 4.6–4.7, 4.12, 4.18–4.19, 4.29–4.31** |
| * Volunteer work parties, joined by the Vale Countryside Volunteers periodically, clear and maintain Tin Hovel Pond for wildlife, especially the resident Great Crested Newts, mallard and moorhens. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.7–1.8, 1.12**  **Annex 17 Volunteer activities** |
| * Volunteers maintain the footpaths for clear access across the area, by laying gravel, funded by the Parish Council. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.5–2.7**  **Annex 8 PC grant for gravel & newsletters**  **Annex 17 Volunteer activities** |
| * Children from the nearby pre-school and infant school go on nature walks to look at the sheep, spot wildlife and wildflowers, take brass rubbings, observe nature, hear birdsong and care for the environment. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.6–4.7, 4.13, 4.28** |
| * Maids Moreton Conservation Group installed an Interpretation Board (2019) to help people understand the sights and wildlife area; it has been much appreciated by residents. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.13–4.16**  **Annex 14 PC interpretation board grant**  **Annex 18 Interpretation board feedback** |
| * Volunteers have created artwork and information for display, explaining what to see in the lane and fields month by month. In 2020, a temporary tree trail was created using chalked tree names. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.14–4.16, 4.26–4.28, 4.33** |
| * People enjoy trying to spot the wildlife featured in the displays. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.15–4.16**  **Annex 18 Interpretation board feedback** |
| * A guided walk led by North Bucks Bat Protection Group in 2019 attracted a large group. Bats frequent the area because of the combined habitat of open fields, mature trees and ponds. People enjoyed learning to use bat-detecting devices and identifying species. | **Annex 9 Photos, Fig. 4.16** |
| * A Wildlife Survey Day in 2019 set up a HQ by the gate of Culver Close, shared and collected information about local wildlife, and launched a photography competition focusing on local wildlife. | **Annex 9 Photos, Fig. 4.17** |
| * A village youngster has recently researched and built two newt hibernacula as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.18–4.19** |
| * Photography – people enjoy photographing the picturesque scenery and nature. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 4.25** |
| * Maids Moreton Conservation Group members produce newsletters that regularly feature articles about the wildlife and grazing animals in Scott’s Lane and the fields and ponds. | **Annex 13 MMCG newsletters** |
| * A circular walk around the village starts and ends at the bench near Tin Hovel field gate. The Village Scarecrow Day route includes part of the circular walk, and scarecrows are displayed in the Scott’s Lane area. | **Annex 19 MM Circular walk guide**  **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 4.5, 4.8–4.11** |
| * The National Lottery Breathing Spaces fund awarded a grant to Maids Moreton Conservation Group to plant wildflowers and bulbs, create the circular walk guide, mount bird boxes and install brass rubbing posts of wildlife images. | **Annex 20 MM circular walk grant**  **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 2.12, 4.5–4.7** |
| * Foraging – for sloes, hazelnuts and blackberries at Tin Hovel and Culver Close fields, as well as elderflowers in early summer and conkers in autumn from Scott’s Lane itself. | **Annex 9 Photos, Figs 1.3, 4.25** |
| * Residents who are unable to visit the area themselves receive updates on the seasonal sights and wildlife from regular newsletters produced by Maids Moreton Conservation Group with support from the Parish Council. | **Annex 13 MMCG newsletters**  **Annex 8 PC grant for gravel & newsletters** |
| **Realistic possibility of continued use** |  |
| Maids Moreton Parish Council sees no reason why the current main use of two of the meadows as agricultural land and one of the meadows as a wildlife area could not be viable and continue indefinitely.  Continuation of the present agricultural use of Culver Close and Whirly Field with intermittent public use, and continuation and development of the natural biodiversity of Tin Hovel Field, again with public access, would mean residents can continue to benefit from the beauty, interest, tranquillity, and special character of the whole Scott’s Lane area. This mix of public access, agricultural and wildlife uses would keep this unique rural setting at the heart of Maids Moreton’s social community biodiversity activities, bringing benefits of health, exercise, emotional wellbeing, enjoyment and an ongoing sense of community to residents.  Maids Moreton Parish Council and the community have for some time been exploring opportunities for biodiversity initiatives such as Bee Lines, Save our Magnificent Meadows, and the national Nature Recovery Network. We see potential especially in Tin Hovel Field to enhance and develop biodiversity as a community rewilding project. |  |

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| **Annex no** | **Annex file name** |
| Annex 1 | Field names |
| Annex 2 | Map of public footpaths |
| Annex 3a | Maids Moreton Conservation Area |
| Annex 3b | Maids Moreton Conservation Area map |
| Annex 4 | Land registry Scotts Lane fields |
| Annex 5 | Have your say |
| Annex 6 | Wildlife Survey Day |
| Annex 7 | Maids Moreton Parish Plan |
| Annex 8 | PC gravel and newsletters grant |
| Annex 9 | Photos |
| Annex 10 | Maids Moreton CE School Walking map |
| Annex 11 | Scotts Lane surveys 2019 and 2020 |
| Annex 12 | Maids Moreton Traffic Survey 2018 |
| Annex 13 | Maids Moreton Conservation Group newsletters |
| Annex 14 | PC grant for Interpretation board |
| Annex 15 | i-Record heat map |
| Annex 16 | Great Crested Newt surveys 2010 and 2020 |
| Annex 17 | Volunteer activities |
| Annex 18 | Interpretation board feedback |
| Annex 19 | Maids Moreton circular walk guide |
| Annex 20 | Maids Moreton circular walk grant |

*Maids Moreton Parish Council, September 2020*