

Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site Citation

GAVRAY DRIVE MEADOWS

Site Code: 52W01

Grid Reference: SP595226

Area (ha): 15.2

Local Authority: Cherwell

Last Survey Date(s): February 2014

Date Selected or Reconfirmed:

Site Description

These meadows form a mosaic of small damp fields with ponds, divided by thick hedges with old trees. Most of the fields are probably former hay meadows over medieval ridge and furrow field patterns, and have a sward mostly dominated by tufted hair-grass with some meadow foxtail and meadow barley. However, fields 5 and 6 appear to be old pasture, with ragged robin, dropwort, devil's-bit scabious and common spotted orchid. Fields 7, 11 and 12 contain devil's-bit scabious and betony. Great burnet is frequent in fields 7 and 11, and scattered in fields 12, 14 and 16. Sneezewort and pepper saxifrage were only found in field 11. Common marsh bedstraw, bugle, greater bird's-foot trefoil, common knapweed and short-fruited willowherb are occasional throughout the fields. There is a very good range of rushes and sedges across the site, with nine species of sedge: glaucous, common, carnation, brown, hairy, false fox, spiked, slender tufted and oval. Grasses include yellow oat-grass, sweet vernal grass, tall fescue, meadow fescue and red fescue. In the drier areas, slightly acid conditions are indicated by frequent tormentil, lesser stitchwort and sweet vernal grass, especially in fields 5, 6, 14 and 15.

Most of the ponds in the western half of the site are shaded and/or only damp in summer. They have a species-poor vegetation of compact rush, plicate sweet-grass and tufted water-forget-me-not. CPM surveyed the ponds on the west side of the north-south road and reported great crested newt (a priority Biodiversity Action Plan species) in 3 ponds and a channel. Smooth newts were found in all ponds and the channel, and one palmate newt was recorded in field 9. The large water-filled pond in field 14 (on the eastern side of the road) contains greater reedmace, gypsywort, marsh foxtail, tufted water-forget-me-not, sharp-flowered rush and soft rush. The brook running along the western margin of the County Wildlife Site contains reed canary-grass, redshank, water chickweed and greater water plantain.

The hedges across the entire site are mostly tall and thick, and contain hawthorn with bramble, blackthorn and elder, as well as occasional crack willow, field maple, oak, ash, crab apple, English elm, dogwood, holly, wayfaring tree, guelder rose, buckthorn, hop and honeysuckle. They are probably post-medieval, as they dissect the ridge and furrow pattern that runs through most of the fields. The hedge that separates fields 5 and 6 from

fields 7 and 12 is a double hedge, with black bryony, mature oak, ash and crack willow, including one large collapsed crack willow pollard. The hedge that runs along the eastern edge of fields 11 and 12 is also double. These double hedge lines include Midland hawthorn, wood meadow-grass, great hairy brome and three-nerved sandwort; all four are ancient woodland indicator species (characteristic of woodlands more than 400 years old). The gappy hedge line between fields 11 and 12 contains five large mature oaks. The hedges around fields 8 and 9 contain abundant English elm suckers, as well as hawthorn and bramble. The bullace plum (*Prunus domestica* ssp. *insititia*), a rare and declining species in the county, is found in the hedge between fields 8 and 9.

Numerous birds are using the proposed County Wildlife Site, including reed bunting (which was seen flying across the road between fields 14 and 4), willow warbler, garden warbler, blackcap, whitethroat, lesser whitethroat, chiffchaff, bullfinch, linnet, song thrush, yellowhammer, sedge warbler, hobby and kestrel. Common pipistrelle, noctule, *Myotis sp.* and, possibly, serotine bats were recorded foraging over the site (CPM). Butterflies include large skipper, ringlet, common blue, small heath and marbled white. Twenty-six species of ground beetles were found in fields 5, 6, 11 and 12, including the nationally scarce *Bembidion gilvipes*.

SECTION 41 HABITATS OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE: lowland meadows

SECTION 41 SPECIES OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE: Reed bunting (3 or 4 singing males), song thrush (2 or 3 singing males), bullfinch, linnet; great crested newt.

RED DATA BOOK SPECIES:

NATIONALLY SCARCE SPECIES: *Bembidion gilvipes* a ground beetle

BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN:

Red list: Bullfinch, reed bunting, song thrush, yellowhammer, linnet.

Amber list: Dunnock, willow warbler.

TYPICAL SPECIES of LOWLAND MEADOW: Great burnet, greater bird's-foot trefoil, betony, cuckooflower, devil's-bit scabious, sneezewort, pepper saxifrage, brown sedge, carnation sedge, common sedge and meadow barley.

Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site Description

BICESTER AIRFIELD

Site Code: 52X10

Grid Reference: SP599240

Area (ha): 161

Local Authority: Cherwell District Council

Last Survey Date(s): July & August 2012; Aug 2014

Designation Date: 2012, 2014

Site Description

The site is an airfield and surrounding areas of grassland and scrub. It includes areas of species-rich grassland and rough grassland around the periphery of the short mown grassland used as runways. There are also several old track ways that are breaking up and have an interesting range of plants.

To the south, the mosaic of species-rich grassland, early successional vegetation and scrub fits the description for open mosaic habitat on previously developed land. This area is species-rich with 24 of the species typical of this habitat as described in the 2010 DEFRA survey methodology for this habitat type.

The northern areas of the site are similar with areas of species-rich calcareous grassland. It includes upright-brome, cowslip, burnet saxifrage and common retharrow. To the north east, there are areas of open mosaic habitat including areas of degrading hard-standing with early successional vegetation, species-rich grassland and scrub. These areas include species such as mouse-ear hawkweed, black medick, common stork's-bill and the rare basil thyme.

There is a proposed extension to this site which consists of an area west of Skimmingdish Lane which supports grassland habitat.

SECTION 41 HABITATS OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE: Lowland calcareous grassland, open mosaic habitats on previous developed land.

SECTION 41 SPECIES: Brown hare, Song Thrush, Common Starling, Dunnock, Tree Sparrow, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Common Bullfinch, Herring Gull, Yellowhammer, Skylark, Basil thyme, Small Heath, Buff Ermine, White Ermine, Cinnabar, Oak Hook-tip, Small Phoenix, Ghost Moth, Knot Grass, Large Nutmeg, Dusky Brocade, Mottle Rustic, Small Square-spot, Broom Moth, Shoulder-striped Wainscot

LEGALLY PROTECTED SPECIES: Badger, Red Kite

RED DATA BOOK SPECIES: Basil thyme, Adonis Blue, Small Heath

NATIONALLY SCARCE or NOTABLE SPECIES:

BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN:

Red list: Herring Gull, Song Thrush, Redwing, Common Starling, Tree Sparrow, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Yellowhammer, Skylark

Amber list: Green Woodpecker, Stock Pigeon, Red Kite, Common Kestrel, Common Bullfinch, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Dunnock, Willow Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Swift

TYPICAL SPECIES OF LOWLAND CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND: upright brome, greater knapweed, basil thyme, blue fleabane, burnet saxifrage, common restharrow, cowslip, hoary plantain, mouse-ear hawkweed, fairy flax, field scabious, ploughman's-spikenard, salad burnet, hairy violet, downy oat-grass, fern-grass, meadow oat-grass, musk thistle, common centaury and wild marjoram.

TYPICAL SPECIES OF OPEN MOSAIC HABITAT ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND: mugwort, black knapweed, common mouse-ear, smooth hawk's-beard, blue fleabane, perforate St. John's-wort, common toadflax, fairy flax, black medick, red bartsia, ribwort plantain, goat's-beard, hop trefoil, bladder campion, lesser trefoil, red clover, common centaury, field horsetail, eyebright, purple toadflax, tall melilot, wild mignonette, weld, lesser trefoil, yellow oat-grass and tufted vetch.

Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site Citation

STRATTON AUDLEY QUARRY

Site Code: 62C01

Grid Reference: SU600251

Area (ha): 36.95

Local Authority: Cherwell

Last Survey Date(s): 31st July 2008 and 7th April 2009

Designation Date: 2010

Site Description

Stratton Audley Quarry is a former limestone quarry site. Since the cessation of quarrying the site has developed and is thought to qualify as Section 41 habitat of principal importance 'open mosaic habitats of previously developed land'. The southern area appears to be the most diverse botanically where the site is made up of a fine mosaic of habitats with areas of bare ground, ephemeral community, stunted willows, developing calcareous and neutral grassland with an area of narrow-leaved bird's foot-trefoil (currently on the Oxfordshire rare plants register), areas of marshy grassland, stands of bulrush and a large fishing lake where stonewort species are present. There is also structural diversity across the site with a couple of large spoil mounds, a steep slope adjacent to the lake and the variation from dry to wet/marshy habitats. The northern area has been worked until quite recently and is now made up of ephemeral and tall herb with a small lake, ponds and a couple of ephemeral shallow pools around the edge which hold stonewort species. The European Protected great crested newt is present at the site. Grey club-rush (currently on the Oxfordshire rare plants register) was recorded in 2003 in the northern small ditches. A range of plant species have been recorded at the site and include southern marsh orchid, bee orchid, common centaury, greater knapweed, eyebright, blue fleabane and fairy flax. The site is used by a range of birds including little ringed plover, snipe and skylark. Nationally scarce invertebrates recorded include hymenoptera species and a rove beetle *Haploglossa picipennis*, in 2000. There are also records for 33 'local' species, including banded demoiselle damselfly and black-tailed skimmer dragonfly. The site also includes a geological SSSI.

SECTION 41 HABITAT(S) of PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE: Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land, Ponds, Lowland Calcareous Grassland

SECTION 41 SPECIES OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE: brown hare, skylark, lapwing, linnet, grey partridge, great crested newt, house sparrow, song thrush, small blue, small heath, grizzled skipper, bullfinch, dunnock, reed bunting, yellowhammer, marsh tit and starling.

RED DATA BOOK SPECIES: Great crested newt, Solitary bees - *Halictus confuses* and *Lasioglossum leucopum* ; and rove beetle - *Haploglossa picipennis*

NATIONALLY SCARCE SPECIES: ruddy darter, ground beetles *Harpalus azureus*, *Lebia chlorocephala* and bombardier beetle, a rove beetle *Haploglossa picipennis*, and; solitary bees and wasps - *Sphecodes crassus*, *Tiphia minuta*, *Lasioglossum malachurum*, *Lasioglossum pauxillum*, *Osmia bicolour* and *Andrena apicata*.

BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN:

Red list: grey partridge, skylark, linnet, lapwing, bullfinch, song thrush, yellowhammer, house sparrow, starling, marsh tit

Amber list: whitethroat, kestrel, snipe, green sandpiper, lesser black-backed gull, black-headed gull, stock dove, reed bunting, bullfinch, common tern, grey wagtail, common redshank, sand martin, swallow, swift, willow warbler, dunnoek, green woodpecker and kingfisher.

TYPICAL SPECIES OF LOWLAND CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND: Field scabious, greater knapweed, fairy flax, common centaury, quaking grass, kidney vetch, upright brome, fern grass, greater knapweed, blue fleabane, eyebright, ploughman's spikenard, bee orchid, mouse-ear-hawkweed and salad burnet.

TYPICAL SPECIES OF WETLAND: water mint, pink water-speedwell, water forget-me-not, gypsywort, common reedmace, Nuttal's pondweed, grey clubrush, great willowherb, wild angelica, common spike-rush, common club-rush, bittersweet, brooklime, reed canary-grass and marsh thistle.

Oxfordshire Proposed Local Wildlife Site Description

BICESTER AIRFIELD

Site Code: 52X10

Grid Reference: SP599240

Area (ha): 161.5

Local Authority: Cherwell

Site Description

Bicester airfield has extensive areas of grassland with extensive areas of lowland calcareous grassland at the edges along with developing species rich open mosaic communities on areas of hardstanding. The central areas appear to be short mown grassland. There are also areas with scrub habitat.

Oxfordshire Proposed Local Wildlife Site Citation

FIELD BY BEACON HILL DITCH

Site Code: 62G01

Grid Reference: SP624224

Area (ha): 9.46

Local Authority: Cherwell

Last Survey Date(s): 2008

Site Description

This field was identified by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust as supporting lowland meadow habitat during grassland inventory work. Species found here include ragged robin, sneezewort, great burnet, pepper saxifrage, tubular water-dropwort and narrow-leaved water dropwort.

SECTION 41 HABITAT(S) OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE: Lowland meadow

Island Pond Wood

Island Pond Wood is a small site of just over 4Ha located close to the village of Launton. It is a relatively new woodland planted in 1999 as part of The Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' (WOYD) scheme. The local community help plant it and continue to take an active part in its management. The site is prone to flooding and the species mix reflects the low-lying wet conditions, with a high proportion of willow, alder and ash and also a minor component of native black poplar. Oak is also present. There is a pond in the northern corner that is fished under a permit system by local people. A main circular path goes around the bulk of the wood, together with other connecting paths.

Ray CTA (Conservation Target Area)

The alluvial floodplain of the River Ray extending along a number of small tributary streams and including some areas of land between these streams. This area extends into Buckinghamshire. The area extends onto the clay to include known areas of wet grassland and the main areas of ridge and furrow.

Joint Character Area: Thames and Avon Vales

Landscape Types: Alluvial Lowland with some areas of Clay Vale.

Geology: Mainly alluvium along the Ray. Alluvium is also present in narrow bands along the small streams and there are Oxford Clay mudstones away from the streams and river.

Topography. Flat riverside land. **Area of CTA:** 1192 hectares

Biodiversity:

- Lowland Meadow. The key habitat in this area. It is found in a number of SSSIs and Local Wildlife Sites mainly at least partly on the alluvium. North-west of Blackthorn Hill there is a larger group of meadows which are largely on the Oxford Clay. Remnants of this habitat are found elsewhere especially between Bicester and Blackthorn Hill and in some meadows in Buckinghamshire including BBOWT's recent addition to their Upper Ray Meadows Reserve at Leaches Farm.
- Wet Grassland/Floodplain Grazing Marsh. Wet grassland is found in meadows along with lowland meadow habitat with remnants elsewhere. Parts of the BBOWT Upper Ray Reserves have been restored to floodplain grazing marsh.
- Hedgerows. Some rich and well structured hedgerows with brown and black hairstreak.
- Ponds at Leaches Farm BBOWT reserve.
- Other Species: true fox sedge is found in a number of sites in the area.

Access: Largely restricted to bridleways and footpaths. There are a number of BBOWT nature reserves. Dorothy Bolton Meadow & Leaches Meadow currently have no public access, whilst Long Herdon & Grange are accessed via a public footpath. Access routes to a further two BBOWT reserves at Cow Leys and Leaches Farm are by existing public footpaths.

Archaeology: Extensive ridge and furrow.

Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan Targets associated with this CTA:

1. Lowland meadow – management¹, restoration and creation (with a focus on MG4 hay meadows).
2. Floodplain grazing marsh - management, restoration and creation (with a focus on breeding waders).
3. Reedbed – creation.
4. Ponds – creation (particularly of pond complexes).
5. Hedgerows – management (good management of existing hedgerows on short and long-term rotation, which will benefit brown and black hairstreaks and other wildlife).
6. Rivers – management and restoration (resource protection of watercourses to maintain and improve water quality).

¹ "Management" implies both maintaining the quantity, and maintaining and improving the quality of existing BAP habitat and incorporates the following target definitions: "Maintaining extent" and "Achieving Condition".

GUIDANCE ON THE VARIOUS STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY WILDLIFE SITE DESIGNATIONS

SITE DESIGNATIONS THAT PROTECT THE UK'S NATURAL HERITAGE THROUGH STATUTE

LOCAL NATURE RESERVES (LNRS) (IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES)

Under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 LNRS may be declared by local authorities after consultation with the relevant statutory nature conservation agency. LNRS are declared and managed for nature conservation, and provide opportunities for research and education, or simply enjoying and having contact with nature.

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVES (NNRS)

NNRs contain examples of some of the most important natural and semi-natural terrestrial and coastal ecosystems in Great Britain. They are managed to conserve their habitats or to provide special opportunities for scientific study of the habitats communities and species represented within them.

NNRs are declared by the statutory country conservation agencies under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In Northern Ireland, Nature Reserves are designated under the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965.

RAMSAR SITES

Ramsar sites are designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, agreed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. Originally intended to protect sites of importance especially as waterfowl habitat, the Convention has broadened its scope over the years to cover all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognizing wetlands as ecosystems that are extremely important for biodiversity conservation in general and for the well-being of human communities. The Convention adopts a broad definition of wetland, namely "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres". Wetlands "may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands".

There is only one Ramsar site in Berkshire or Oxfordshire, South West London Waterbodies.

SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI) (ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES)

The SSSI series has developed since 1949 as the national suite of sites providing statutory protection for the best examples of the UK's flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical

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features. These sites are also used to underpin other national and international nature conservation designations. Most SSSIs are privately-owned or managed; others are owned or managed by public bodies or non-government organisations.

Originally notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, SSSIs have been renotified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Improved provisions for the protection and management of SSSIs were introduced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (in England and Wales) and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION (SAC) AND SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE (SCI)

SACs are designated under the EC Habitats Directive. SACs are areas which have been identified as best representing the range and variety within the European Union of habitats and (non-bird) species listed on Annexes I and II to the Directive. SACs in terrestrial areas and territorial marine waters out to 12 nautical miles are designated under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). New and/or amended Habitats sites which have been submitted to the European Commission by Government, but not yet formally adopted by the Commission, are referred to as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs). Sites which have been adopted by the EC, but not yet formally designated by governments of Member States are known as Sites of Community Importance (SCIs). In the UK, designation of SACs is devolved to the relevant administration within each country.

SACs, together with SPAs, form the Natura 2000 network.

SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPA)

SPAs are classified by the UK Government under the EC Birds Directive. SPAs are areas of the most important habitat for rare (listed on Annex I to the Directive) and migratory birds within the European Union. SPAs in terrestrial areas and territorial marine waters out to 12 nautical miles are classified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

SPAs, together with SACs, form the Natura 2000 network.

NON-STATUTORY NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DESIGNATIONS

LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES

Local authorities for any given area may designate certain areas as being of local conservation interest. The criteria for inclusion, and the level of protection provided, if any, may vary between areas. Most individual counties have a similar scheme, although they do vary.

Most Local Wildlife Sites systems involve a panel of ecologists and others in the development of local criteria and the selection of the sites. Panels usually include a local government ecologist, an Natural England representative, the Local Wildlife Trust, the Local Environmental Record Centre and sometimes include a representative of local landowners and local naturalists.

These sites, which may be given various titles such as 'County Wildlife Sites' (CWS), 'Local Wildlife Sites' (LWS), 'Local Nature Conservation Sites' (LNCS), 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINCs), or Sites of Nature Conservation Importance' (SNICIs), together with statutory designations, are defined in local plans under the Town and Country Planning system and the National Planning Policy Framework and are a material consideration when planning applications are being determined.

As part of a national standardisation process these sites have recently been renamed as Local Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Previously they were known as County Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire and Wildlife Heritage Sites in Berkshire. Although the use of these names, especially in citations and descriptions, is being edited and replaced with Local Wildlife Sites or LWS it is likely that some references will remain to these former names until this is complete.

PROPOSED LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES AND EXTENSIONS

These are also included on designated sites maps. They are areas thought to include important areas of UKBAP habitat or priority or protected species populations. Extensions are likely to have similar habitats to the adjacent Local Wildlife Sites. Local Authorities are made aware of these sites. They will not have been fully surveyed and taken to the selection panel as yet.

NGO PROPERTIES / NATURE RESERVES

A variety of non-governmental organisations such as the John Muir Trust, Plantlife, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wildlife Trusts and Woodland Trust own or manage nature reserves or other areas of land that are important for biodiversity. These sites may be intended primarily for nature conservation, or for other purposes such as protection of landscape features or the provision public access to the countryside. These areas of themselves have no statutory basis, but a large number are also designated SSSIs / NNRs / SPAs / SACs / Ramsar sites, etc.

In Berkshire and Oxfordshire, BBOWT (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust), Woodland Trust and RSPB sites fall into this category.

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES (LGS)

Local Geological Sites formerly known as Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). As part of a national

standardisation process these sites have recently been renamed as Local Geological Sites in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Sites are selected under locally-developed criteria, according to their value for education, scientific study, historical significance or aesthetic qualities. Whilst not benefiting from statutory protection, LGS are equivalent to Local Wildlife Sites, and "*...consideration of their importance becomes integral to the planning process*".

OTHER SITES

Occasionally other sites might be shown on maps. These are likely to be sites with some wildlife interest, usually managed by local groups, local authorities or town councils but which do not have a specific statutory or non-statutory designation.

Some local authorities within Oxfordshire and Berkshire have identified other sites which are protected through policies in their local plans, including Oxford Local Wildlife Sites in Oxford City and district wildlife sites in Cherwell.

CONSERVATION TARGET AREAS/ BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

These landscape scale areas have been identified as supporting high concentrations of UKBAP habitats and species populations and the potential to restore habitats at a landscape scale. These areas act as a focus for targeting resources into habitat management and restoration.

ANCIENT WOODLAND

Ancient woodland areas within Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough are from an updated layer of ancient woodland produced by TVERC for Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council in 2015-16. This data has been provided to Natural England but has not yet been made available and thus differs from that shown on the Magic Map Interactive Map. For information of the methodology for selecting ancient woodland areas please contact TVERC.

APPENDIX 2

Information obtained from Magic



Legend

-  Local Nature Reserves (England)
-  National Nature Reserves (England)
-  Ramsar Sites (England)
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
-  Special Areas of Conservation (England)
-  Special Protection Areas (England)

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 455100
 ymin = 222200
 xmax = 463300
 ymax = 227600



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