

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: SWEET BRIAR ROAD MEADOWS,
NORWICH

DISTRICT: Norwich City

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: Norwich City Council

National Grid Reference: TG 208097 Area: 9.53 (ha) 23.55 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134 1:10,000: TG 20 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of a series of unimproved wet meadows with permanent water-logging lying in the Wensum Valley close to Norwich. It forms the best remaining example of a type of wetland habitat which at one time was more widely occurring in the river valleys of east Norfolk but which has been lost or progressively altered in post war years due to drainage and agricultural improvements. It is particularly unusual for a site of this quality and size to remain within an urban area and still be subject to regular winter flooding.

Three principal grassland communities are present. Damp neutral grassland occurs on the higher ground of the valley side. It is generally species-rich and the dominant grasses are Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Meadow Fescue *Festuca pratensis*, Tufted Hair grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and Sweet Vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Herbs present within the sward include Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Cuckoo Flower *Cardamine pratensis* and Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*.

Towards the valley floor neutral grassland grades into a form of marshy grassland irrigated by base-poor seepage water. This community is dominated by Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*. Other species of interest include Marsh Arrow grass *Triglochin palustris*, Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*.

Areas of tall fen are also present in the valley bottom. This is dominated by Reed grass *Glyceria maxima* with Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Purple Smallreed *Calamagrostis canescens*.

A number of drainage ditches are present. These are mostly overgrown, but the fringing vegetation includes Tubular Water Dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta* and Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*.

The whole site is managed on traditional lines, light pony grazing without the use of artificial fertilisers or herbicides.