

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: ALDERFORD COMMON

DISTRICT: Broadland

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

Local Planning Authority: Broadland District Council

National Grid Reference: TG129184                      Area: 16.8 (ha) 41.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 133                      1:10,000: TG 11 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):                      Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

The site is a registered common.

### **Reasons for Notification:**

Alderford Common is situated on gently undulating ground and supports a wide range of habitats developed in response to variations in soils and topography. A thin layer of glacial sands and gravels cover the underlying chalk which is exposed in abandoned marl workings. A diverse chalk flora has developed in the old pits and the site forms the only remaining example of species-rich chalk grassland in East Norfolk. A bat roost and an outstanding assemblage of breeding birds provide additional interest. The habitats represented include scrub, woodland, bracken heath, marshy grassland and ponds.

Chalk grassland occurs in the bottom of the marl-pits and is dominated by Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha* and False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. Many herb-species are associated with the grassland and include Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, Dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*, Larger Wild Thyme *Thymus pulegoides*, Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* and Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. Damp holloes, on low-lying ground, have a characteristic flora which includes Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and a large population of Adder's Tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

Secondary woodland dominated by Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, open Bracken heath and dense scrub surround the marl workings. Two ponds are also present and a small marshy area has developed around one with abundant Meadowseet *Filipendula ulmaria*.

The thick Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub provides suitable nesting sites for a wide range of breeding birds including the largest population of Nightingales in East Norfolk. Other notable breeding birds are Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Turtle Dove, Woodcock and Hawfinch.

The ponds are used as breeding sites by several species of amphibians including a small population of the scarce Warty Newt *Triturus cristatus*.

An old lime-kiln is used by bats both as a winter hibernating site and as a daytime roost during the summer months.