COUNTY: SURREY  SITE NAME: THORPE HAY MEADOW

DISTRICT: RUNNYMEDE

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

Local Planning Authority: RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Ref: TQ 030 700  Area: 6.4 ha (15.8 acres)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 176  1:10,000: TQ 07 SW & TQ 06 NW

Date notified (under 1949 Act): -  Date of last revision: -

Date notified (under 1981 Act): 1985  Date of last revision: -

Other Information: This is a new site.

Reasons for Notification

Thorpe Hay Meadow is a small, five-sided meadow lying on the alluvial gravels of the Thames Flood Plain, surrounded by ditches and high hedges. Much of the surrounding land has been used for gravel extraction.

The site is thought to be the last remaining example of a Thames valley hay meadow in Surrey. It contains a range of lime-loving (calcicole) plants which are characteristic of this type of meadow.

The grassland is dominated by rough-stalked meadow grass *Poa trivialis*, crested dog’s-tail grass *Cynosurus cristatus*, and lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. Yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, meadow-fescue grass *Festuca pratensis*, meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*, smooth hawk’s-beard *Crepis capillaris* and common reed *Phragmites australis* are locally abundant, the last species being unusual in such dry situations. Other frequent species include meadow brome *Bromus commutatus*, a grass only recorded from one other Surrey location in recent years, meadow foxtail grass *Alopecurus pratensis*, Yorkshire-fog grass *Holcus lanatus*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus* and meadow-sweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. Associated calcicole species include meadow cranesbill *Geranium pratense*, clustered bell-flower *Campanula glomerata*, cowslip *Primula veris*, hoary plantain *Plantago media*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and lady’s bedstraw *Galium verum*.

The meadow is surrounded by old hedgerows with a variety of species such as ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, field maple *Acer campestre*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, and buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus*.

A drainage ditch along two sides of the site supports five species of willow including purple willow *Salix purpurea* and almond willow *Salix triandra*. Common comfrey *Symphytum officinale*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, cyperus sedge *Carex pseudocyperus* and the uncommon aquatic liverwort *Riccia fluitans* also occur along this ditch.