

COUNTY: SURREY SITE NAME: PAPER COURT

BOROUGH: GUILDFORD

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

Local Planning Authority: GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid References: TQ 035563, TQ 035569, Area: 69.4 (ha.) 171.4 (ac.)
TQ 042565

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186 1:10,000: TQ 05 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 Date of Last Revision: 1975

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

Other Information:

1. Papercourt SSSI was formerly known as Newark Priory Marshes and Paper Court SSSI
2. The boundary has been modified at renotification by an extension and several deletions.
3. The site includes Common Land.

Reasons for Notification:

Wetland habitats, which were once widespread in the low-lying river valleys of south-east England are now very restricted in area. Much unimproved grassland and marshland has been drained and converted to arable or reseeded farmland, or developed for housing or industry. That which remains is often threatened by water pollution and further development. This site consists of a complex of wetland habitats including unimproved meadows, marshes, streams and flooded gravel pits. These support a number of local plants and a wide variety of breeding and wintering birds.

Thames gravels, exposed where the gravel has been excavated, are overlain by other alluvial deposits in the grassland areas of the site. The large meadow to the west of Papercourt Lock is the only one of its type in Surrey. The central part is dominated by slender tufted sedge *Carex acuta* which forms a dense canopy about 150 cm (4 ft) high. Under this canopy plants such as marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*, marsh bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, water dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* can be found. Surrounding this area is grassland dominated by meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* with meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. On the eastern side of Papercourt Lock is a meadow with a short sward dominated by rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and hairy sedge *Carex hirta*. Strawberry clover *Trifolium fragiferum* is rare in Surrey and also grows here. A stream flows through this meadow, supporting a rich emergent and aquatic flora including greater sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, and the locally-distributed plants red pondweed *Potamogeton*

alpinus and extended sedge *Carex extensa*. Small woodlands composed of grey willow *Salix cinerea*, crack willow *Salix fragilis* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* are distributed throughout the site.

There are three areas of open water within the site where former gravel workings have become artificial lakes. The north-eastern and western ones are used for sailing and settling silt respectively, and they support a limited water flora dominated by the naturalised pondweed *Elodea nuttallii*. The southern lake, which is used for fishing has a more continuous vegetation cover made up of *E. nuttallii*, the local pondweeds *Potamogeton trichoides* and *P. acutifolius* and yellow waterlily *Nuphar lutea*.

The variety of habitats represented support large numbers of a great variety of birds. Over 70 species breed within the site. Woodland birds include great-spotted woodpecker, woodcock and nuthatch, while redshank and lapwing breed on the open grasslands which are one of only three breeding sites left for snipe in Surrey. The lakes and streams support breeding kingfisher, great-crested and little grebes and sand martin. The site is also important for wintering birds with over 90 species being observed here regularly. These include cormorant, black-necked grebe, slawonian grebe, marsh harrier, and many wildfowl such as tufted duck, mallard, shoveller, goosander and large numbers of pochard.