

COUNTY: Norfolk SITE NAME: FIELD BARN HEATHS, HILBOROUGH

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 819017 Area: 18.56 (ha) 45.87 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144 1:10,000: TF 80 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of an area of species-rich calcareous and mixed grassland situated close to the northern edge of the Breckland region. The soils are typical light sandy tills with flints overlying chalk and the characteristic Breck grassland communities are maintained by rabbit grazing.

The short-turf chalk grassland is dominated by Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and supports a variety of chalk-loving plants including Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule*, Meadow and Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* and *S. tridactylites* and Thyme *Thymus sp.*, along with species more characteristic of acidic grassland such as Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*. Brown Knapweed *Centaurea jacea* is also present. Bare patches of earth caused by rabbit scrapes support small annuals such as Little Mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum* and Early Forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*.

Areas of ungrazed neutral grassland occur, and these are dominated by tussocky grasses such as False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Yorkshire Fog. Associated species include Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*, Field Mouse-ear *Cerastium arvense*, Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* with scattered bracken.

Two Oak *Quercus robur* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* woodland belts are present on the site.