

COUNTY: LEICESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: BARROW GRAVEL PITS

DISTRICT: CHARNWOOD

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

Local Planning Authority: CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SK 568 166

Area: 35.9 (ha.) 88.7 (ac.)

Ordnance. Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 129

1:10,000: SK 51 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

The site comprises one of the best remaining complexes of open water, grassland, scrub and woodland in Leicestershire and possesses a rich flora and fauna representative of flood plain habitats in the English Midlands.

Biology

To the east and south of the site, bordering the River Soar, lie a series of neutral hay meadows characterised by the abundance of meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, and also by the diversity of grasses and forbs present, including great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and sorrel *Rumex acetosa*. The meadows are separated by well-grown hedges formed mainly of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* but containing fine specimens of field maple *Acer campestre* and buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus*. Scattered throughout the site, and notably in association with the disused gravel pits in the centre and north of the site, are areas of marsh. The marsh vegetation varies in character but the basic constituents are *Filipendula ulmaria*, slender tufted sedge *Carex acuta*, greater pond sedge *C. riparia*, lesser pond sedge *C. acutiformis*, common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, marsh woundwort *Stachys palustris* and reed sweet grass *Glyceria maxima*. These marshes possess a rich flora, which includes such typical wetland plants as brown sedge *Carex disticha*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*, angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*, gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus* and skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*. The shores of the disused gravel pits are steeply shelving and development of reedswamp communities, which include common reed *Phragmites australis*, *Carex riparia* and bulrush *Typha latifolia*, is patchy. In deeper water the aquatic plant community is characterised by such species as yellow water lily *Nuphar lutea*, rigid hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*, lesser pondweed *Potamogeton pusillus* and fan-leaved water crowfoot *Ranunculus circinatus*. The gravel pits are fringed with willow carr formed by various species of willows and sallows, including osier *Salix viminalis* and goat willow *S. caprea*.

The site as a whole supports a varied breeding bird community and invertebrate fauna, and includes many species characteristic of river flood plain habitats.