

File ref:

County: Hampshire

Site Name: Noar Hill SSSI

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SU 744317

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186 **1:25,000:** SU 73

Area: 70.15 (ha) 173.34 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1951 **Date of Last Revision:** 1978

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

12.14ha of chalk grassland (High Common) in the Site of Special Scientific Interest is a Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust nature reserve by arrangement with the owner.

Reasons for Notification:

Situated on the Wealden edge chalk escarpment, Noar Hill exhibits a range of chalk vegetation seral stages from open short-sward chalk grassland overlying ancient quarries, through invasive mixed scrub of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, juniper *Juniperus communis*, and sweetbriar and southern downy roses *Rosa micrantha* and *R. tomentosa* to mature beech *Fagus* 'hanger' woodland. In addition, hazel *Corylus* coppice is found on the top of the steep scarp slopes.

The old chalk quarries have been colonised by a diverse flora typical of thin chalk soils including locally distributed species such as early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, hairy rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta*, adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, and yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*. Eleven species of orchid are present including pyramidal *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, frog *Coeloglossum viride*, bee *Ophrys apifera*, fly *Ophrys insectifera*, musk *Herminium monorchis*, autumn lady's tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* and common spotted *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. Lack of grazing over the past 50 years has, however, led to the spread of coarse grasses and developing scrub at the expense of much of the short-sward flower-rich downland turf.

The beech hanger is a fine example of a mature *Fagus* wood which has been permitted to develop with minimal interference. Beech-bark disease is breaking up the canopy, and a scrub phase is commencing, in which there is widespread ash *Fraxinus* regeneration.

The site is of national importance for both butterflies and grasshoppers (Orthoptera), and also supports a variety of other long grass and scrub edge invertebrate species. Forty species of butterfly have been recorded since 1975. There are important colonies of the nationally declining Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* and brown hairstreak *Theca betulae* (in each case probably the strongest remaining colonies in Hampshire), small blue *Cupido minimus*, green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, and dingy skipper *Erynnis tages*. Eleven species of Orthoptera (1980) is also exceptionally high, including the rare rufous grasshopper *Gamphocerris rufus* and *Stenobothrus lineatus*.