

COUNTY: GLOUCESTERSHIRE,
HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: OLD RIVER
SEVERN, UPPER LODGE

DISTRICT: TEWKESBURY, MALVERN HILLS

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

Local Planning Authority: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Hereford & Worcester County Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 880331 Area: 3.72 (ha.) 9.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 83 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Reasons for Notification:

This small site is an old meander in the River Severn cut off from the main river when the Upper Lode lock was constructed. It now forms a quiet backwater only linked to the Severn at its southern end. A variety of habitats have developed in this secluded area with a wide range of plant and animal life. The main reason for notification is the presence of six nationally rare plant species.

Habitats represented include open water – part of the old river channel – marginal mud and inland saltmarsh (where most of the rare plants occur) willow carr, neutral grassland, scrub and developing woodland. Water levels fluctuate according to levels in the main river and a tidal influence is still present even this far upstream. Aquatic plants include pondweed *Potamogeton* sp. while the muddy margins support, amongst others, abundant flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus*, water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*, water-cress *Nasturtium officinale* and water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*. At the furthest point from the main river the old channel has silted up and willow can be dominated by white willow *Salix alba*, crack willow *S. fragilis* and osier *S. viminalis* has developed. Beyond this, spoil dumped in the old channel years ago has become colonised by rough grassland, including grasses such as couch grass *Elymus repens*, timothy *Phleum pratense* and perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne* with mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, dog rose *Rosa canina* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. The nationally rare swamp meadow grass *Poa palustris* grows in this area. Above the river banks on the inside of the meander developing woodland is again dominated by willow species with occasional alder *Alnus glutinosa* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*.

Other nationally rare plants at this site include greater dodder *Cuscuta europaea* which parasitises nettle *Urtica dioica* growing on the bank. Growing on mud at the water's edge are tasteless water-pepper *Polygonum mite*, small water pepper *P. minus*, mudwort *Limosella aquatica* and needle spike rush *Eleocharis acicularis*. This site is the only location in Gloucestershire for the last three species. Other locally rare plants include narrow-leaved water plantain *Alisma lanceolatum*, keeled garlic *Allium carinatum* – an alien species – glaucous bulrush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* and sea club rush *Scirpus maritimus* which is rarely found inland.

Bird life of the site includes large numbers of duck, mainly mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, and coot *Fulica atra* on the open water. Reed warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and sedge warblers *A. schoenobaenus* breed in the willows. Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* is regularly

seen, as are waders such as redshank *Tringa totanus*, common sandpiper *T. hypoleucos* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* which feed at the water margins.

Several species of dragonflies have been recorded including the scarce hawkler *Aeshna mixta* and white-legged damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*.