

COUNTY: BERKSHIRE

SITE NAME: LARDON CHASE

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

Local Planning Authorities: Newbury District Council, Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU588809

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 1:10,000: SU58 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 Date of Last Revision:

Area: 14.76 ha 36.46 ac

Other information: The site is owned by the National Trust. Within North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description and Reasons for Notification

A steep south and east facing downland slope forming one of the largest remaining fragments of unimproved chalk grassland on the Berkshire Downs in Berkshire.

The grassland is mainly a coarse *Bromus erectus*-dominated sward which is cattle grazed for part of the year. A good range of typical chalk grassland herbs is present including abundant marjoram *Origanum vulgare*, yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, purging flax *Linum catharticum*, wild carrot *Daucus carota*, autumn felwort *Gentianella amarella*, clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata* and chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*.

Some of the richest flora occurs on thinner soils on the steepest part of the slope where the turf is shorter and rabbit-grazed, and includes additional species such as horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* and kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*. This part of the site includes a belt of scattered hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub which provides sheltered warm areas with abundant insect life. This site is particularly important for its butterfly fauna including characteristic chalk downland species such as the chalkhill blue *Lysandra coridon*, marbled white *Melanargia galathea* and the rare adonis blue *Lysandra bellargus* for which this appears to be the last remaining locality in Berkshire.