

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: SEVERN VALLEY  
GRASSLANDS, 1 HILLEND  
MEADOW AND ORCHARD

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

SITE REF: 15 P5K

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD AND WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL,  
Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 749610

Area: 0.74 (ha.) 1.83 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SO 76 SW, SO 76 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 15 March 1994

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Hillend Meadow and Orchard is situated in West Worcestershire, just over one kilometre north of Martley, and is the westernmost meadow of the Severn Valley grasslands. The meadow and orchard overlie the Lower Ludlow Shales where there is a fault line abutting against the Silurian Wenlock Shales. Thus despite the thin limestones of the Lower Ludlow Shales, the grassland is unusual in being mesotrophic (neutral). The geological fault line is probably marked by the springfed pool found at the top of the site.

The site slopes gently to the south west and has an area of pasture with a fenced off orchard to the south east. The majority of the site is cut for hay, although it is lightly grazed by donkeys all year round. Hay is cut in small areas at intervals once the flowers have set seed with natural reseeding from the cut hay.

The special interest of the site lies in the diversity of the semi-natural grassland sward. The vegetation conforms with the mesotrophic (neutral) grassland characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, and is typical of the meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* sub-community. Dominant grasses are red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, with glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*. The associated flora includes common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, cowslip *Primula veris*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, lady's-mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis* spp *vestita*, common centaury *Centaureum erythraea* and common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*. The locally uncommon adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum* is present.

The ditch flora is also of considerable interest including brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and three different mints including peppermint *Mentha x piperita*. Mature hybrid black poplar *Populus canadensis* var. *serotina* pollards, ash pollards *Fraxinus excelsior* and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* occur along the line of the ditch.

The site is bounded by species rich hedges on three sides, with hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*.

The grassland also supports the dark bush cricket *Pholidoptera griseoptera* and common blue butterfly *Polyommatus icarus*, while slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, grass snake *Natrix*

*natrix*, common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo* occur in the wetter southern area.