

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: NORTHWOLD MEADOWS

DISTRICT: King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Local Planning Authority: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

National Grid Reference: TL 756954

Area: 16.3 (ha) 40.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 143

1:10,000: TL 79 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 25 March 1996

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Other Information:

New site.

Reasons for Notification:

Northwold Meadows consists of three adjacent unimproved meadows with a history of cattle and sheep grazing. They cover an extensive area on the northern side of the String Drain in a shallow valley and are mostly bordered to the south and east by conifer plantations and to the north by arable. The attractive herb-rich grassy sward is a mix of areas of moderately tall herbage and tightly grazed lawns. A mosaic of plant communities is developed on a range of soils which are mostly well drained being derived from the chalk-sand drift, though those underlying the western meadow have a higher clay content and are generally less well drained. Soil reactions range from calcareous and neutral to slightly acidic and this is reflected in the plant communities present which have a range of plants from chalk-loving to acidic-loving species. In addition to the grassland there are small areas of hazel coppice, woodland and scattered pine particularly in the south-east corner and some hawthorn scrub in the western meadow. A number of ponds and seasonally wet depressions also occur. Over 140 flowering plants have been recorded from the site. In Norfolk as a whole such meadows are rare and none are known in West Norfolk or the Breckland Natural Area.

The less well drained soils support a mesotrophic grassland which is the Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* variant of the Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*–Black Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* community. The sward includes Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Downy Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*, Quaking grass *Briza media*, and the herbs Black Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Pepper Saxifrage *Silvaum silaus*, Birds-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Adders-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgare*, Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*, Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata* and Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

The better drained soils partly support the Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* variant of this mesotrophic grassland. Species present include the grasses Meadow Oat-grass *Avenula pratensis*, Downy Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria cristata*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and the herbs, Black Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Heath Woodrush *Luzula campestris*, Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* and Hoary Plantain *Plantago media*. Creeping Willow *Salix repens* is also present in this community.