

COUNTY: WORCESTERSHIRE SITE NAME: LOWER SALEWAY FARM MEADOWS

DISTRICT: WYCHAVON

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

Local Planning Authority: WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL,
Wychavon District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 925603 Area: 4.43 (ha.) 10.95 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 96 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): – Date of Last Revision: 9 October 1998

Other Information:
A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Lower Saleway Farm Meadows are situated in central Worcestershire, to the south east of Droitwich in the village of Saleway. The site comprises a large sloping field and a smaller parcel (the 'sling') in the floodplain of the Dean Brook. The larger field overlies Lower Lias strata of the Jurassic Period, giving rise to calcareous and neutral soils.

The site is of special interest as a large, botanically diverse, semi-natural lowland grassland. It traverses several soil type boundaries and represents an uncommon ecological transition from a strongly calcareous influenced sward through to a seasonally-wet community on alluvium. The dominant vegetation is mesotrophic (neutral) grassland characterised by common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, a type which is nationally scarce and declining. The sub-community typified by lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* occupies the major area, and grades into fen-meadow where drainage is impeded.

The site has a long history of hay cutting and aftermath grazing. The dominant grasses are yellow oat *Trisetum flavescens*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, quaking grass *Briza media* and crested dog's-tail, with upright brome *Bromus erectus* locally frequent. There is a substantial cover of herbs, particularly rosette species, including agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, smooth hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris* and hairy hawkbit *L. hispidus*. Other frequent constituents are ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, cowslip *Primula veris*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis*.

Other characteristic neutral grassland species present in the sward include common knapweed, lady's bedstraw, adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, hoary ragwort *Senecio erucifolius*, tufted vetch *Vicia cracca* and bush vetch *V. sepium*.

The sling has an especially rich plain community with abundant saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and frequent pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and betony *Stachys officinalis*. This area is transitional with the fen-meadow community characterised by rushes *Juncus spp* and common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*. Meadow-sweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, glaucous sedge

Carex flacca, hard rush *Juncus inflexus* and sharp-flowered rush *J. acutiflorus* are frequent in the sward, with lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* also present.

The hedges within and surrounding the site are old and species-rich, dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and with both bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* in the hedge bottom.