

COUNTY: SURREY SITE NAME: CHIPSTEAD DOWNS

BOROUGH: REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

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

Local Planning Authority: REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 265579, TQ 268562 Area: 152.7 (ha.) 377.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 187

1:10,000: TQ 25 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1953

Date of last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Most of the site is owned by Surrey County Council and is managed by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council as a public open space.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Situated on the dip slope of the North Downs, the Chipstead Downs complex includes areas of steeply sloping chalk grassland with associated scrub and secondary woodland, as well as large areas of ancient woodland over clay-with-flints on the plateau.

Banstead Wood occupies an extensive area of the plateau. Sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and birch *Betula* spp. are the main canopy trees, but beech *Fagus sylvatica* is co-dominant in places. Stands containing sessile oak are rare in Surrey.

Conifers, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* and other exotic trees have been randomly planted into these stands, especially in the area known as Perrott's Wood. An understorey of hazel *Corylus avellana* is well developed in some areas whilst rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* is locally abundant, and holy *Ilex aquifolium* is common throughout. The ground flora of Banstead Wood is dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

There are several areas of well-developed secondary beech woodland on the chalk slopes. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and yew *Taxus baccata* are common and the shrub layer contains elder *Sambucus nigra*, hazel, holly, and field maple *Acer campestre*. Ivy *Hedera helix*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bramble dominate the ground flora in which twayblade *Listera ovata* and white helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* also occur.

Peripheral areas of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* scrub are widespread.

The remaining areas of chalk grassland have been largely neglected and extensive areas are dominated by tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* and false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. However, in places where mowing and rabbit grazing have maintained a richer

chalk flora dominated by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, rarer species occur and include white mullein *Verbascum lychnitis*, round-headed rampion *Phyteuma orbiculare*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, fly orchid *O. insectifera* and the greater yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus angustifolius*, a plant which has become so rare as to be attached special protection as an endangered species faced with possible extinction.

An area of grassland at Fames Rough is periodically strip-ploughed to create a favourable habitat for three very rare arable weeds: ground pine *Ajuga chamaepitys*, cut-leaved germander *Teucrium botrys* and mat-grass fescue *Vulpia unilateralis*.

The butterfly fauna of the grassland is very rich. Species include brown argus, chalk hill blue, grizzled skipper and the holly blue. There are eleven fly species (Diptera) of local distribution recorded from the site.

The bird fauna of Chipstead Downs is diverse with woodland breeding species being well represented, these include sparrowhawk, lesser-spotted woodpecker, woodcock and wood warbler.

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Chipstead Downs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This statement represents English Nature's views about the management of the SSSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the site's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. English Nature has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the SSSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the SSSI. Also, there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation. English Nature's written consent is still required before carrying out any operation likely to damage the features of special interest (see your SSSI notification papers for a list of these operations). English Nature welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the SSSI to ensure that the management of this site conserves and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

Management Principles

Broadleaved semi-natural woodland

There are many different ways in which broadleaved woodland can be managed to conserve its value for wildlife. The following gives broad views on a range of regimes that may be appropriate on your site.

A diverse woodland structure, with open space, a dense understory, and a more mature overstory is important. A range of ages and species within and between stands is desirable. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, can provide habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access. Both temporary and permanent open spaces benefit groups of invertebrates such as butterflies. They may require cutting to keep them open, and should be of sufficient size to ensure that sunny conditions prevail for most of the day.

Felling, thinning or coppicing may be used to create or maintain variations in the structure of the wood, and non-native trees and shrubs can be removed at this time. To avoid disturbance to breeding birds the work is normally best done between the beginning of August and the end of February. Work should be avoided when the ground is soft, to prevent disturbing the soil and ground flora. Normally successive

felling, thinning or coppicing operations should be spread through the wood to promote diversity, but where there is open space adjacent plots should be worked to encourage the spread of species that are only weakly mobile. Natural regeneration from seed or stump regrowth is preferred to planting because it helps maintain the local patterns of species and the inherent genetic character of the site.

Deer management and protection from rabbits or livestock are often necessary. Whilst light or intermittent grazing may increase woodland diversity, heavy browsing can damage the ground flora and prevent successful regeneration. Invasive species, such as *Rhododendron* or Himalayan balsam, should be controlled.

Parts of a wood should be left unmanaged to benefit species that do best under low disturbance or in response to natural processes. Within these areas some trees will eventually die naturally and dead wood accumulate.

Calcareous grassland

In order to maintain a species-rich sward and its associated insects and other invertebrates, calcareous grassland requires active management. Without management it rapidly becomes dominated by stands of rank grasses, such as Tor-grass. These grasses, together with the build up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and lower the diversity of the site. Eventually, the site will scrub over. Traditionally, management is achieved by grazing. The precise timing will vary both between and within sites, according to local conditions and requirements. These may include stock type or the needs of particular plants or animals; certain invertebrates, for example, can benefit from the presence of taller vegetation. However, grazing should generally aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Light trampling can be beneficial by breaking down leaf litter and providing bare patches for seed germination and some invertebrates. In the absence of sufficient trampling, the deliberate creation of small bare patches by other means can be an important substitute providing niches for special annual plants. An element of managed scrub, both within and fringing calcareous grassland can be of great importance to certain birds and invertebrates, but excessive scrub should be controlled.

All habitats

The habitats within this site are highly sensitive to inorganic fertilisers and pesticides, applications of which should be avoided both within the site itself and in adjacent surrounding areas. Herbicides may be useful in targeting certain invasive species, but should be used with extreme care. Access to this site, and any recreational activities within, may also need to be managed.

Operations likely to damage the special interest

Site name: Chipstead Downs, Surrey

OLD1004534

Ref. No.	Type of Operation
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, and re-seeding.
2	Grazing (including changes in type of stock, intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing and cessation of grazing).
3	Stock feeding.
4	Mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
5	Application of manure, fertilisers and lime.
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weedkillers).
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
8	Burning.
9	The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal*, plant or seed.
10	The killing or removal of any wild animal*, including pest control.
11	The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, hedge, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf.
12	Tree and/or woodland management+.
13a	Drainage (including the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains).
14	The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation (including irrigation, storage and abstraction from existing water bodies and through boreholes).
15	Infilling of ponds.
20	Extraction of minerals, including topsoil, subsoil, chalk and spoil.
21	Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22	Storage of materials.
23	Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
26	Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
27	Recreational or other activities likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
28	Game and waterfowl management and hunting practices.

* 'animal' includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate.

+ including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or underwood, changes in species composition, cessation of management.

Main Habitat	Responsible Officer	Unit Number	Unit Id	Area (ha)	NNR Overlap Area (ha)	Latest Assessment Date	Assessment Description	Comment	Adverse Condition Reasons
Chipstead Downs SSSI - SURREY (REIGATE AND BANSTEAD)									
CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Lowland	JANE SEVENOAKS	001	1008266	16.7789	0.00	02/10/2008	Unfavourable - Recovering	Steeply sloping area of mainly secondary woodland with some mature Beech and yew. Areas of grassland and scrub mosaic in the Easternmost part of the unit on the lower slopes not apparently grazed yet this year.	
CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Lowland	JANE SEVENOAKS	002	1008265	5.5242	0.00	28/08/2007	Favourable	Chalk grassland type CG2 assessed using CSM. Scrub has been successfully reduced recently, but levels need watching carefully. Scrub cover recorded as under 5% on Fames Rough, and just under 10% on Coneyborough Hill =Stagbury C to the east. The target maximum for temporary scrub within CG on Chipstead Downs SSSI is set at 10% (defined as scattered, mixed species, size, and age range) in support of the breeding bird assemblage that is also a notified feature of this SSSI. The regular provision of bare ground for rare annual plants on the Fames Rough area continues to be successful (Plantlife field survey and count 2007).	
BROADLEAVED, MIXED AND YEW WOODLAND - Lowland	JANE SEVENOAKS	003	1008261	84.2356	0.00	02/10/2008	Favourable	Large area of mixed broadleaved woodland with a diverse canopy of mature natives. Oak, Ash, Beech, Field maple, Birch, Sallow, occasional Yew, Hornbeam and Aspen.Diverse scrub layer Hazel, Hawthorn, Dogwood, Spindle, Holly and Rowan.Ground flora less varied dominated by brambles, Bracken and nettles but with grasses and flowering species in the wider ride edges.Only scattered and occasional non-natives larch, sycamore, Sweet Chestnut, Rhododendron and conifers in total less than 5%.Good structure	

								throughout with glades and wide rides/tracks, some Hazel coppice being carried out and plenty of standing and fallen deadwood.	
CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Lowland	JANE SEVENOAKS	004	1008267	19.4136	0.00	01/07/2010	Unfavourable - Recovering	Areas of diverse chalk grassland interspersed with patches of rotational and longer term scrub. Some of the area around the boundary of the unit is established secondary woodland with beech, yew, birch, oak, ash whitebeam and sycamore. The scrub component includes spindle, dogwood, privet, hawthorn and clematis. The grassland is grazed and very diverse in places with varying levels of scrub some of which is removed on a rotational basis. Indicator species include frequent dropwort and salad burnet, occasional lady's bedstraw, birds-foot-trefoil, cowslip and devils-bit scabious. Species occurring more rarely include dwarf thistle, gentians, rock rose, rough hawkbit, fairy flax, mouse-eared hawkweed and milkwort. No negative indicators except scrub up to 20%.	
CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Lowland	JANE SEVENOAKS	005	1008264	11.4662	0.00	02/10/2008	Unfavourable - Recovering	Steeply sloping unit with areas of secondary woodland and scattered very large mature Beech. Several areas of chalk grassland including some recently fenced and grazed parts with other areas managed by hand or mechanical means. Rough Hawkbit and Salad Burnett abundant (8-9 of 10), Birdsfoot trefoil Frequent (7 of 10), Cowslip and Oxeye daisy rare (1-2 of 10) Wild basil and marjoram throughout the sward. Invasive scrub is an issue although is kept down by grazing, Tor grass was throughout the sward with in excess of 50% broadleaved flowering species. Bare ground and rabbit disturbance is scattered and less than 5% no other negative indicators.	
BROADLEAVED,	JANE SEVENOAKS	006	1020368	9.948	0.00	02/10/2008	Unfavourable -	Mainly mature broadleaved woodland with areas of	

MIXED AND YEW WOODLAND - Lowland							Recovering	secondary woodland bordering on area of scrub/grassland.Beech, yew, Oak, Ash, Field Maple and Birch with Hazel, Hawthorn and Dogwood understory. Dogs mercury, male fern and Ivy ground flora. Plenty of standing and fallen deadwood. Overall the structure is varied and although there are limited glades within the area of woodland the site has plenty of edge with scrub and is adjacent to areas of grassland with scrub.Occasional Sycamore, not currently a problem.	
CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Lowland	JANE SEVENOAKS	007	1022993	10.4833	0.00	01/07/2010	Unfavourable - Recovering	Unit is predominantly established secondary woodland with areas of mown grassland and scrub. Mature and regenerating beech, oak, ash, whitebeam and sycamore scattered throughout. The scrub component includes hazel, dogwood, privet, hawthorn, ivy and brambles. Sparse ground flora due to dense canopy, wide mown rides with remnant grassland species so good wood edge habitat for birds.The grassland is not grazed and efforts to control scrub has meant cutting some areas early causing high levels of litter.Indicator species include frequent dropwort and salad burnet, occasional rock rose and more rarely birds-foot-trefoil and cowslip.Extent of grassland is a concern as it is close to only 25% of the unit.	