COUNTY: BERKSHIRE SITE NAME: BRAY PENNYROYAL FIELD

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

1981

**Local Planning Authorities:** Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council

Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU915783

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 1:10,000: SU97 NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1991 Date of Last Revision:

**Area:** 3.43 ha 8.48 acres

## **Description and Reasons for Notification**

This site comprises a single field adjoining the River Thames to the south-east of Bray and represents the sole Berkshire locality for the nationally rare pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium*, a species included in Schedule 8 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and listed in the British Red Data Book of vascular plants.

Lying in the Thames floodplain, the site overlies an infilled gravel pit excavated in the 1960s. It is characterised by a series of shallow, seasonally inundated depressions to which the pennyroyal colonies, albeit sizeable, are confined. The pennyroyal grows in association with an impoverished flora, dominated by marsh foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and greater plantain *Plantago major*. The site is currently grazed by a small number of horses, a form of management thought to be beneficial to the pennyroyal.

Pennyroyal is a creeping perennial of pond or lake margins and damp depressions and was formerly a locally common plant in most counties in England and Wales. During the course of this century, however, it has suffered a severe decline largely as a result of the cessation of grazing over many lowland commons, and the consequent overgrowth, by tall vegetation and scrub, of the habitats upon which it is dependent. Today pennyroyal is known only from five sites in Britain outside Berkshire, its principal stronghold being the New Forest. The present site was discovered in 1987.