

**COUNTY:** CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** BRAMPTON RACECOURSE

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

**Local Planning Authorities:** Huntingdonshire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TL 205722

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 142                      **1:10,000:** TL 27 SW

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

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1984                      **Date of Last Revision:** 1990

**Area:** 20.6 ha 50.9 ac

**Other information:** A review of original SSSI boundaries has indicated the need for part deletion and part extension of site boundaries.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

Brampton Racecourse supports an extensive area of unimproved neutral grassland located within the flood plain of Alconbury Brook. The grassland displays a strong calcareous influence and the presence of localised ridge-and-furrow ground patterning increases the diversity of the grassland sward. The community is broadly representative of the hardhead-crested dog's-tail *Centaurea nigra-Cynosurus cristatus* neutral grassland - lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* sub-community type. There is some transition in places towards the meadow foxtail-great burnet *Alopecurus pratensis-Sanguisorba officinalis* flood meadow community particularly associated with the lower lying furrows. Unimproved grasslands of this type are restricted to the lowlands of southern England and are now nationally scarce. In Cambridgeshire such examples are especially rare.

The grassland community is species-rich and characterised by sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, meadow oat-grass *Avenula pratensis* and quaking-grass *Briza media* with dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, hardhead and great burnet particularly prominent. Of additional interest is the presence of saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and the largest population of green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* in the county. Part of the site is cut for hay, the remainder being managed on a more intensive mowing regime.