

SITE NAME: HANKLEY FARM

COUNTY: SURREY

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

Local Planning Authority: WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SU 890436                      Area: 2.4 (ha.) 5.98 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186                      1:10,000: SU 84 SE

Date notified (Under 1981 Act): 1994

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of a sandy arable field which contains one of the largest known British populations of a nationally endangered plant, red-tipped cudweed *Filago lutescens*. The plant is specially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

Red-tipped cudweed is one of a number of species of annual arable weeds which were formerly common but have drastically declined since the introduction of modern agricultural practices. It was once locally abundant on sandy arable land in southern and central England but has been in rapid decline since the 1960s. The plant is vulnerable because it requires open ground subject to some soil disturbance, but cannot tolerate too much intensive cultivation, nor competition from grasses or other dense vegetation. It is characteristically found on sandy field margins and tracks.

At Hankley Farm a large population ranging from several hundreds to thousands of plants occurs mainly along the northern and eastern edges of the site. Together with smaller colonies along the margins of nearby fields, the plants within the site may represent some 50% of the British population. The plant flourishes here because the land is farmed in a traditional, low-intensity way, with occasional soil disturbance caused by rabbit diggings. At this site red-tipped cudweed occurs in association with a number of other plants characteristic of sandy, rabbit-grazed field margins including common cudweed *Filago vulgaris*, small cudweed *Filago minima*, common stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, small flowered crane's-bill *Geranium pusillum*, corn spurrey *Spergula arvensis* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*.