COUNTY: BERKSHIRE/HAMPSHIRE **SITE NAME:** WEST WOODHAY DOWN

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

Local Planning Authorities: Newbury District Council, Berkshire County Council
Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, Hampshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU388618

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 **1:10,000:** SU36 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 **Date of Last Revision:**

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 1.395ha 3.44 ac

Other information: This site was formerly included as part of Inkpen and Walbury Hills SSSI. It is managed under an informal agreement with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists Trust. Within North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description and Reasons for Notification

A small relict area of unimproved chalk grassland on the Upper Chalk of the Berkshire Downs, on the Hampshire border. The site comprises a steep, northwest facing roadside bank and a track leading down the county boundary.

The bank is now largely dominated by upright brome *Bromus erectus* but supports a species-rich community of typical downland herbs with several species of orchid. Species present include yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, purging flax *Linum catharticum*, crosswort *Galium cruciata*, squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*, burnet saxifrage *small scabious* Scabiosa columbaria, cowslip *Primula veris*, wild mignonette *Reseda lutea*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* sp. *minor*, fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. There is a small area of scrub, dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with whitebeam *Sorbus aria.*

Many species characteristic of chalk grassland, including abundant common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and common twayblade *Listera ovata*, occur on the track.

Musk orchid *Herminium monorchis*, which is not known anywhere else in Berkshire, has been recorded. Other notable species for Berkshire include frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea* and meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*.