

Site reference: Ufd323

Site name: Saffron House Lane, Swards End/Ashdon

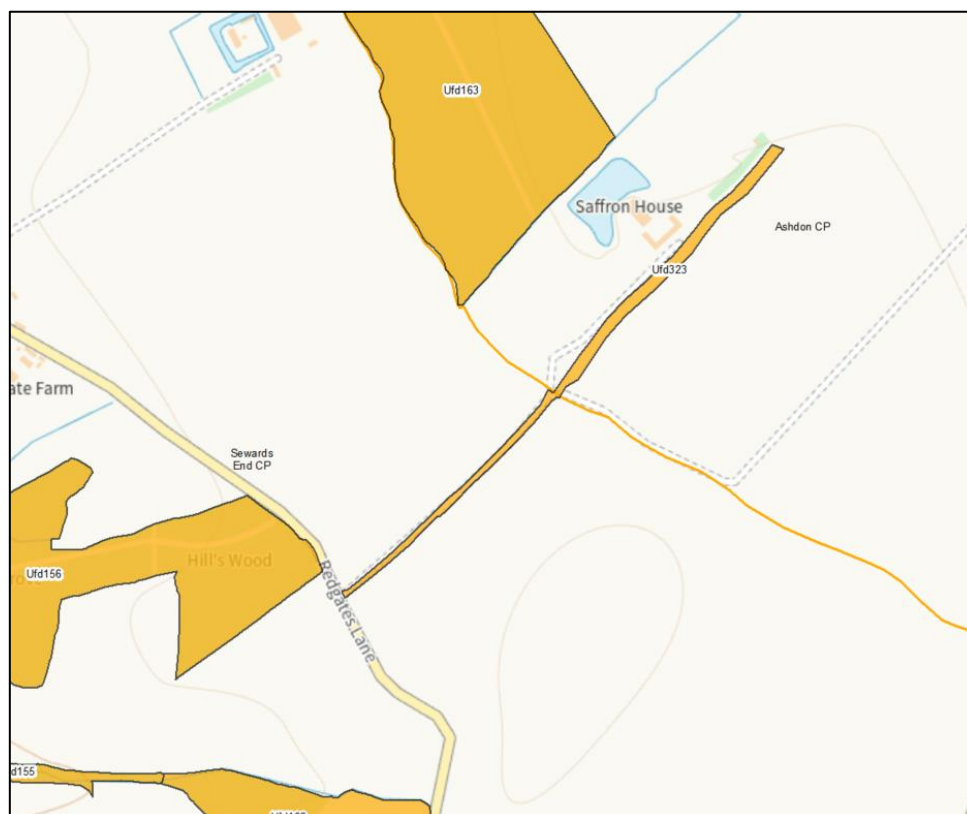
Grid ref. (approx. centre of site): TL574395

Site area: 0.9ha

LoWS Selection Criteria:

- HC8 – Hedgerows and Green Lanes
- SC1 – Vascular Plants

Boundary Map



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Site Description

This site is a section of the old green lane that connects Swards End to Water End and comprises old, diverse hedgerows and the associated ground flora, which includes the Nationally Rare and Endangered Crested Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum cristatum*), of which few populations now remain.

The hedgerows along the lane are dominated by Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) with Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and smaller quantities of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). Other woody species include Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), rose (*Rosa* agg.), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Wild Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), Midland Hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*), Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and Wayfaring-tree (*Viburnum lantana*).

The ground flora includes Bearded Couch (*Elymus canina*), Hairy-brome (*Bromopsis ramosus*), Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*), Giant Fescue (*Festuca gigantea*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Hairy St John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*), Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), Black Bryony (*Tamus communis*) and Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*). Damper areas contain Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Water Figwort (*Scrophularia aquatica*), Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*) and Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*).

The open field edge to the southeast of the northern section has a grassland strip that includes Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Smaller Cat's-tail (*Phleum bertolonii*), Meadow Brome (*Bromus racemosus*) and Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) with Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*) and Rough Chervil (*Chaerophyllum temulum*). Crested Cow-wheat is present here and beside the lane near its junction with Redgates Lane.

Site Selection Rationale

HC8 – The lane is of considerable age and supports diverse communities of woody species and ground flora, including some Ancient Woodland indicators.

SC1 – Crested Cow-wheat is a scarce and declining species and all populations should be designated.

Priority Habitats

Hedgerows

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership, but the lane is a public right of way.

Condition Statement

Moderate, stable

Management Issues

The hedgerows have spread into the field edge in the northern section of the site, which may have reduced its suitability for Crested Cow-wheat.

Review Schedule

Site selected: 2007, as PLoWS15

Site Reviewed: 2024, promoted to full LoWS