

COUNTY: CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** AVERSLEY WOOD

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 163819

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 142 **1:10,000:** TL 18 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1958 **Date of Last Revision:** 1971

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 60 ha 148.3 ac

Other information: This is a Woodland Trust property.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Aversley Wood is of the ash-maple woodland type which occurs on the heavy clay soils of lowland England. The site is of ancient origin, much of it having been under woodland since before the Middle Ages. As such the plant and animal communities it supports are well established and much richer than in more recent woodlands. Of additional interest is the presence of ancient earthworks. Part of the site has developed over ground which was probably cultivated until around 1350. This area, which still shows ridge-and-furrow, lacks some of the ancient woodland plants found in adjacent original woodland.

The wood is structurally a coppice-with-standards dominated by oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and field maple *Acer campestre*. Elm *Ulmus* sp. is dominant over some areas. Of note is the presence of a number of wild service trees *Sorbus torminalis*, an uncommon species restricted to ancient woodlands. The ground flora is typically of the bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* - dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* type, together with ancient woodland plants such as yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and stinking iris *Iris foetidissima*. The woodland rides hold a diverse grassland flora with herbs such as meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and betony *Stachys officinalis*.

Grassland also runs along the south-eastern and south-western boundaries enhancing the value of the woodland edge to invertebrate fauna. A small stream and a number of ponds further enhance the diversity of the flora and fauna.