

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: KINGS AND BAKERS WOODS AND HEATHS

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Bedfordshire District Council
Bedfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SP 925295

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 166 **1:10,000:** SP 92 NW, SP 92 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1953 **Date of Last Revision:** 1970

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

Area: 212.8 ha 525 ac

Other information: Part of Kings Wood is a National Nature Reserve and includes areas owned by the WildlifeTrust. The site is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

Description and Reasons for Notification

The site represents the largest area of woodland in Bedfordshire as well as remnants of lowland heath and acidic grassland. It lies on the Boulder Clay passing to Lower Greensand, producing an outstanding series of soil types ranging from slightly calcareous to acid and from wet to well drained. This exceptional range is reflected in the rich variety of species and habitats.

Most of the wood is ancient and the diverse tree and shrub layer shows wide structural variety derived from centuries of coppice and high forest management.

The ground flora includes a large number of species which are uncommon or rare in the county, and the wide system of rides supports rich grassland that is an important element of the woodland. The lowland heath and acidic grassland represents a habitat that now has a very limited distribution, both in Bedfordshire and over its natural range in southern Britain.

The woodland types represented are as follows:

- Birch-sessile oak; occurring mainly on the sandy acidic soils and including areas of sessile oak *Quercus petraea* coppice, a type rare in eastern England.
- Small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* coppice found on the boundary of the clay areas and forming a mosaic with the first type-a species rare in the county and associated with ancient woodland sites.
- Mixed woodland with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, birch *Betula* spp., aspen *Populus tremula*, sallow *Salix caprea*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* both as high forest and coppice. This type shows much variation associated with differing drainage characteristics.
- Mixed woodland mostly as high forest with pedunculate oak dominating the canopy and small amounts of ash, field maple *Acer campestre* and hazel coppice.

The ground flora in the dry sandy areas and on the remnants of open heath is largely dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* which has invaded the site together with birch scrub, but species characteristic of the former heath vegetation have survived, including heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, a county rarity.

On the wetter clay the ground flora is predominantly primrose *Primula vulgaris*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* (species associated with ancient woodland sites), honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*.

Species present that are rare in the county include great woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*, wood vetch *Vicia sylvatica*, climbing corydalis *Corydalis claviculata*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*. The acidic grassland has a characteristic flora including wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, heath speedwell *Veronica officinalis* and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*.

Many other groups of plants and animals are well represented and include national and regional rarities among the fungi and insects. Additional habitats are provided by several small ponds.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed September 1998.

Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.