

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: KINGS WOOD AND GLEBE MEADOWS, HOUGHTON CONQUEST

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

Local Planning Authorities: Mid Bedfordshire District Council
Bedfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: TL 045403

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** TL 03 NW, TL 03 SW

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

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

Area: 36.10 ha 89.20 ac

Other information: Part of the site is a Local Nature Reserve owned and managed by the County Council.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Kings Wood is an example of ash/maple woodland, characteristic of the heavy Oxford and Boulder Clays. It represents a habitat which has become increasingly scarce in Bedfordshire and over its natural range in lowland England. The wood demonstrates the structural and biological diversity of an ancient, semi-natural woodland, and the rich flora includes several species which are uncommon within the county.

The dominant tree species are pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* standards over a diverse shrub community and a rich field layer, dominated by the characteristic dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*. There are a variety of plants which are associated with ancient woodland sites including wood melick *Melica uniflora*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, wood millet *Milium effusum* and the county rarities, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata* and thin-spiked wood-sedge *Carex strigosa*.

Additional habitats are provided by woodland rides and a small stream.

Glebe meadows are adjacent to the northern boundary of Kings Wood. They exhibit the species richness typical of unimproved neutral grassland, traditionally managed for hay and grazing. Such grasslands are confined to the south of the country where they are now rare, especially in the east.

Parts of the meadows exhibit ridge and furrow with abundant cowslips *Primula veris* and throughout, characteristic species include pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, spiny restharrow *Ononis spinosa*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and two species, uncommon within the county, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*.

Additional interest is provided by the large mature hedges enclosing the fields and small ponds with good marginal vegetation, one supporting a large frog colony.

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

Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.