

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE **SITE NAME:** POTTON WOOD

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 252502

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** TL 24 NE/NW
TL 25 SE/SW

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

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

Area: 85.51 ha 211.29 ac

Other Information: This site is owned by the Forestry Commission

Description and Reasons for Notification

Potton Wood is a large ancient woodland of the wet ash-maple type which is largely restricted in its national distribution to the heavy soils of lowland Britain. Situated close to the county boundary, the wood has a structure and rich flora characteristic of the West Cambs Boulder Clay woodland group. Most of the wood is primary with some very old secondary woodland on ridge and furrow. Some of the rides are a particularly valuable element of the wood, supporting a rich neutral grassland flora including species uncommon in the county.

Parts of the wood have been modified by forestry activities, but elsewhere the woodland structure is well-preserved with large areas of coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and field maple *Acer campestre* with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash standards.

The shrub layer is very varied and the ground flora is rich in species composition characteristic of the bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, dogs mercury *Mercurialis perennis* type. Species associated with ancient woodland sites include yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, wood millet *Milium effusum*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and a colony of oxlip *Primula elatior*, a national rarity which occurs here on the extreme edge of its range in Europe, in association with primrose *Primula vulgaris* and primrose-oxlip hybrids.

Other species uncommon in the county include herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, birds-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*.

Some of the rides are very species-rich, the composition varying with degree of waterlogging which at its extreme supports stands of sedges *Carex* spp. Notable ride species include great butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, lesser butterfly orchid *Platanthera bifolia*, common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, lesser centaury *Centaureum pulchellum* and narrow-leaved everlasting pea *Lathyrus sylvestris*.

Additional habitats are provided by several small ponds. The wood has a large variety of breeding

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

Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.

birds.