

COUNTY: BERKSHIRE

SITE NAME: ENBORNE COPSE

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

Local Planning Authorities: Berkshire County Council, Newbury District Council

National Grid Reference: SU433661

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 **1:10,000:** SU46 NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 11.9 ha 29.4 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

This site consists of a semi-natural broad leaved woodland characterised by the abundance of small-leaved lime, a tree species which in Britain is confined to ancient woodlands, and is very rare in Berkshire.

Enborne Copse is situated prominently on the London Clays, and has a small exposure of the Bagshot Beds at the southern end. A shallow, north-flowing stream, into which feed a spring and several damp flushes, has eroded a small valley through the clay and into the underlying Reading Beds along the western edge. Weather has produced rather acid and often poorly-drained stagnogley soils in gentle to moderate slopes.

The copse is an ancient woodland surrounded by a medieval bank and ditch system. Although the current woodland boundary is almost identical to that shown on Rocque's map of Berkshire in 1791, the majority of the site has been converted to coniferous plantation, and only the western parcel (corresponding to the area notified) retains its semi-natural broad-leaved structure.

The site is an example of acid pedunculate oak-lime woodland, a stand-type with a localised distribution nationally. Small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* is the overwhelmingly dominant species, and occurs largely as maiden trees approximately 80 years old, partly promoted from coppice. West of the stream most of the wood has been cleared, leaving scattered lime trees including some giant coppice stools of considerable antiquity. The only other stand types represented include a small area of acid pedunculate oak-hazel-ash woodland in the valley, and some scrubby alder-birch-willow bordering the stream.

In Enborne Copse small-leaved lime is notable in occurring throughout the wood up to and along, but not beyond, the ancient woodland boundary as demarcated by the medieval bank. It is a site where lime is regenerating well; the production of viable seed in this species is dependent upon high temperatures during pollination, and in many parts of Britain it rarely, if ever, produces fertile seed. In Berkshire wild small-leaved lime has been recorded from only two other sites, both within two kilometres of Enborne Copse, which is the only substantial stand.

Other tree species occurring within the canopy include pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and downy birch *Betula pubescens*. There is a limited understorey, which includes coppiced lime and hazel *Corylus avellana* together with occasional guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and crab apple *Malus sylvestris*. Heavy shading from the dense foliage has resulted in a sparse ground flora, with extensive areas of bare ground. Twenty three species of plant normally confined to ancient woodlands have been recorded. These include a large stand of lily of the valley *Convallaria majalis*, an uncommon species in Berkshire, together with primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Solomon's seal *Polygonatum multiflorum* and wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*.