

COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE **SITE NAME:** WAKERLEY SPINNEY

District: East Northamptonshire

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

Local Planning Authority: East Northamptonshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 966986

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 141 **1:10,000:** SP 99 NE

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

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

Area: 3.7 ha 9.2 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

A small strip of native broadleaved woodland and semi-natural grassland among extensive softwood plantations. The site is part ancient - a relic of the Royal Forest of Rockingham, and part secondary, where woodland has developed on old limestone workings.

The canopy represents a modified example of wet ash-maple woodland - the commonest stand type in the East Midlands, and is notable for the presence of wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis* - a species of very localised and southern distribution.

The woodland ground flora contains several species which, in a Northamptonshire context, are mainly restricted to the north-east of the county. The grassland is of a type which is rare and declining nationally.

The canopy is mainly dominated by pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, with downy birch *Betula pubescens* an important constituent. The shrub layer is varied with both common and Midland hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and *Crataegus oxyacanthoides*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, dogwood *Thelycrania sanguinea*, and crab apple *Malus sylvestris*. The herb layer is typically bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and grasses such as wood meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis*, and wood melick *Melica uniflora*. Locally uncommon species include woodruff *Galium odoratum*, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, fly orchid *Ophrys insectifera* and wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*.

The value of the site is enhanced by a glade and roadside verges with species-rich grassland of a Jurassic Oolitic limestone type. The sward is dominated by tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* and other grasses and includes the following herbs, salad burnet *Poterium sanguisorba*, rock rose *Helianthemum chamaecistus*, wild liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*, restharrow *Ononis repens* and marjoram *Origanum vulgare*.

These grassland areas are also attractive to butterflies and other insects.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed October 1999.

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