

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: RIDGEWAY WOOD

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

SITE REF: 15 WSQ

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 744391

Area: 32.9 (ha.) 81.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SO 73 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952

Date of last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The site lies within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Ridgeway Wood is an area of semi natural woodland developed on shallow base rich soils overlying a narrow ridge of Wenlock Limestone (Silurian) on the western flanks of the Malvern Hills.

It has been selected as one of the very few examples of a woodland with sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* where yew *Taxus baccata*, normally only a minor component, has achieved dominance over a large area. In many places it forms a closed canopy to the exclusion of most other species. In other areas where oak, ash and lime predominate a number of other native species occur including field maple *Acer campestre*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, wild rivet *Ligustrum vulgare*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis*; a characteristic species of ancient woodland. Some specimens of this tree have reached unusually large dimensions.

The ground flora of the wood is rich and varied containing many locally rare species including greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*. There are also very large stands of wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*; a species for which the woodlands of the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire borders are well known.

The fauna includes polecat *Mustela putorius* – here at the eastern limits of its distribution in Britain – and dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*.