

COUNTY: WARWICKSHIRE/  
HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: ROUGH HILL & WIREHILL  
WOODS

DISTRICT: STRATFORD-UPON-AVON/REDDITCH SITE REF: 15WK9

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

Local Planning Authority: WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Stratford-upon-Avon District Council, HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Redditch Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SP 052640 Area: 50.8 (ha.) 125.5 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SP 06 SW, SP 06 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990: Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Rough Hill and Wirehill Woods are two contiguous areas of ancient woodland which straddle the county boundary in the north-west corner of Warwickshire. An ancient bank and ditch separates Rough Hill Wood in Warwickshire from Wirehill Wood in Hereford and Worcester. The woods have developed on a ridge of glacial sands and gravels overlying Keuper Marl which is exposed on the lower slopes. The varied soil conditions have given rise to six woodland types which are nationally restricted in their distribution, including four variants of lowland sessile oak *Quercus petraea* woodland.

Much of the woodland is dominated by sessile oak with downy birch *Betula pubescens* and silver birch *B. pendula*. Two forms of this woodland can be distinguished by the presence or absence of hazel *Corylus avellana* in the understorey. The ground flora is dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., bilberry *Vaccinium myrtilis* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.

On the lower slopes, areas of sessile oak over hazel are supplemented with ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and occasional holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. Here the ground flora is dominated by bramble and bluebell. On these slopes a fourth variant of sessile oak woodland is distinguished by abundant small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* in the canopy with silver birch and rowan and a small number of large-leaved lime *T. platyphyllos*. The understorey here is dominated by silver birch and rowan over a ground flora of bracken, bramble, bluebell and bilberry.

A fifth variant is found on the eastern margin of the wood and can be distinguished by the presence of wych elm *Ulmus glabra* in the understorey of the canopy which is dominated by oak and ash with patches of field maple *Acer campestre* and aspen *Populus tremula*.

The understorey here has frequent areas of calcicole (lime-loving) species such as dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, privet *Ligustrum vulgare* and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* indicating the presence of the underlying Keuper marl. Bramble and bluebell still dominate the ground flora, with male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* locally abundant.

Two small areas of alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland have developed along a small stream and in a shallow depression in Wirehill Wood.

Pools, drains and marshy areas are frequent throughout the woods, particularly on the lower slopes. These support a wetland flora including rushes *Juncus* spp., greater reedmace *Typha latifolia*, and water plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*.

Two plants with restricted distribution in Warwickshire are also found on the site, broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and violet helleborine *E. purpurata*.