

File ref:

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI

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

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Hart District Council

National Grid Reference: SU 755525

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186 **1:10,000:** SU 75 SE, SW

Area: 127.8 (ha) 315.76 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 7 February 1992

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw Site of Special Scientific Interest comprises an extensive area of wood pasture, meadows and common land at the junction of the London Clay, Plateau Gravel and Lower Bagshot Beds on the edge of the Thames Basin. The core of the site is Odiham Common, an extensive wood pasture, formerly grazed by cattle and horses. Originally used as a hunting ground by Edward the Confessor, the Common was managed as oak standards with hazel underwood. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century management was neglected and by the late 1950s most of the mature oak standards and pollards had been felled. Today active coppicing and cattle grazing continue over very localised areas.

The majority of the wood consists of oak *Quercus robur* with either hazel *Corylus avellana* or birch *Betula* species as the dominant shrub layer species. The oak/hazel woodland contains abundant holly *Ilex aquifolium* and due to its historic management as wood pasture the ground flora is more typical of acid grassland, being dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* in the wetter areas and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* in the drier areas. Whilst it is botanically species-poor, the presence of dead wood supports at least nine rare flies dependent on this particular habitat including *Criorhina asilica*, *Volucella inflata* and *Xylota tarda*. In contrast the woodland becomes more varied in the south and north-west where ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and field maple *Acer campestre* enter the canopy and at Bagwell Shaw, an oak/hazel/ash woodland adjacent to Odiham Wood. Together they contain 39 ancient woodland indicator species such as woodruff *Galium odoratum*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, wood sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum multiflorum* and the local narrow-buckler fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*.

Habitat diversity is provided by a series of grasslands of varying types reflecting different soil types, drainage and management. Marshy swards dominated by tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, soft rush *Juncus effusus* and sharp-flowered rush *J. acutiflorus* support tawny sedge

Carex hostiana, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* and water avens *Geum rivale*, which are indicative of unimproved grassland and are fast declining in lowland Britain. Dry acidic heathy grassland overlies the more freely-draining areas and contains heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea* and locally, petty whin *Genista anglica*, a rare species in north Hampshire. These dry, sandy grasslands are important for solitary bees and wasps (hymenoptera) of which three nationally rare species have been recorded.

A large shallow pond occurs on Odiham Common, now overgrown but once grazed and poached. It is a characteristic common pond and still supports marsh speedwell *Veronica scutellata* var. *hirsuta* despite its neglected state. In contrast, new, deeper ponds on Bagwell Green contain clear, unpolluted water dominated by charophytes, principally *Chara delicatata* and alternate water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*. The ponds are important for their population of lesser marshwort *Apium inundatum*, a plant now rare in north Hampshire. Here dragonflies are abundant although no rare species have been recorded.

The SSSI supports a number of nationally rare flies; of these *Xylota abiens* and *Callicera aenea* are strongly associated with the dead wood habitat. In addition the notable beetle *Phyllobrotica quadrimaculata* occurs within the site. At least 28 invertebrate species of a restricted national distribution have been recorded whilst grass snakes breed on the Common and birds include woodcock and wood warbler.