

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: LOWER WOOD, ASHWELLTHORPE

DISTRICT: South Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: South Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 140 980                      Area: 36 (ha) 90 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144                      1:10,000: TM 19 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1973                      Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

### **Reasons for Notification:**

Lower Wood is a relatively large area of ancient woodland containing a nationally rare stand-type. The wood lies on a boulder clay plateau and the chalky nature of the clay is reflected in the exceptionally diverse ground flora. The structure of the wood is predominantly coppice-with-standards, and a large proportion of the wood contains semi-natural stands.

The major stand-type in the wood is plateau alderwood. A large number of tree and shrub species are associated with this stand-type, including Standard Oak *Quercus robur*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Hornbeam *Carpinus betula*, and coppiced Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Field Maple *Acer campestre* and Sallow *Salix caprea*. The ground is wet, due to the poorly drained soils and the field layer is dominated by Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. A number of uncommon species are present, including Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata*, Ransoms *Allium ursinum*, Water Avens *Geum rivale* and Woodruff *Galium odoratum*.

On the drier soils, a number of stand-types are present but ash, oak, hornbeam, field maple and hazel all occur in varied quantities. The calcareous nature of the soil is shown by the shrub species which include Spindle-Tree *Euonymus europaeus*, Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus* and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. The ground flora is dominated by Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and patches of Bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus* and Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*.

A well-developed network of rides is present in the wood and these support an interesting and diverse flora.