

COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE **SITE NAME:** HIGH WOOD AND MEADOW

District: Daventry

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

Local Planning Authority: Daventry District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 590548

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 152 **1:10,000:** SP 55 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 16.4 ha 40.5 ac

Other Information: This site forms part of a revised SSSI boundary, including the adjacent woodlands of Everdon Stubbs and Mantles Heath.

Description and Reasons for Notification

High Wood is one of a localised group of ancient, semi-natural woodlands lying mainly on acid soils derived from Northampton Sands and Upper Lias clay.

The woodland composition exhibits a high degree of naturalness and has a well preserved coppice-with-standards structure. The site has been unaffected by recent clearance or replanting with non-native trees - unlike many ancient woods in Northamptonshire. The vegetation is representative of two main types: on the poorly-drained heavy clay-acid-pedunculate oak-hazel-ash wood, and on medium textured soils lowland hazel-pedunculate oak wood.

The varied topography and drainage (with small streams and flushes) gives rise to a rich ground flora. Typical species include bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, primrose *Primula vulgaris*, wood millet *Milium effusum* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, and of less common occurrence, yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, hairy wood-rush *Luzula pilosa* and broadleaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*.

Wild cherry *Prunus avium* and aspen *Populus tremula* are usually abundant.

The adjacent meadow represents an excellent example of a geographically widespread acid grassland - *Agrostis-Festuca* type. This community is now uncommon and declining in the East Midlands, and in Northamptonshire is confined to a few steeply sloping sites in the west of the county. The sward is characteristically of low species diversity with a high cover of common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. The main herbs include cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*. There is a gradient of variation in the flora reflecting variation in soil base status and drainage. The presence of neutral grassland and base-rich marsh on silty peat adds significantly to the scientific interest.

The mixed tree and shrub cover and adjoining thick hedgerows extend the range of habitat for animals, especially birds and invertebrates. The large and prolific ant hills of the yellow meadow ant *Lasius flavus* are a niche for several species of annual plants and are of considerable intrinsic value. Open, sandy ground supports colonies of solitary bees and wasps.