

COUNTY: CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** WARESLEY WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: Huntingdonshire District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 262548

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** TL 25 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 **Date of Last Revision:** 1972

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

Area: 62.0 ha 153.3 ac

Other information: A boundary modification has been made to exclude some 30 acres of the original site which was grubbed and arabilised in the early 1970s. Part of the woodland is a reserve of the Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Naturalists' Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification

This woodland is of ancient origin and of the ash-maple community type which has a national distribution restricted to lowland England. Since 1945 such woodlands have declined in extent, particularly in the more intensively farmed regions and the fraction which remain relatively unmodified are therefore of high nature conservation value. The diverse flora typical of such woodland is here further enriched by the underlying geology, the Lower Greensand being evident along with the more typical extensive Boulder Clay.

The woodland tree and shrub communities are predominantly of the ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, field maple *Acer campestre* and hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice type. Other areas are dominated by invasive elm *Ulmus procera*, *U. carpinifolius* and *U. glabra*, birch *Betula pendula* and aspen *Populus tremula* together with scattered oaks *Quercus robur*. Shrubs include woodland hawthorn *Crataegus oxyacanthoides*, privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana* and dog rose *Rosa canina*.

Parts of the wood were replanted earlier this century with oak, beech and sycamore, but the ground flora of these areas still retains its value and with appropriate management the spread of indigenous tree and shrub species will be enhanced and a more natural structure obtained.

The ground flora is essentially of dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus* with distinct areas of primrose *Primula vulgaris* on the drier Greensand areas and a notable population of oxlip *Primula elatior* on the wetter Boulder Clay areas. The early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and early and common dog violet *Viola reichenbachiana* and *V. riviniana* are also frequent.

The rides hold their own diverse flora which includes herbs such as bush vetch *Vicia sepium*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, greater burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella major* and self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*.

A small stream flows through the site, adding further diversity.