

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** Sidley Wood 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, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SU 405555

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 185

1:10,000: SU 45 NW

Area: 11.94 (ha) 29.52 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 25 March 1998

Date of Last Revision: –

Confirmed: 24 November 1988

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Sidley Wood is an ancient secondary wood, developed over an ancient field system, situated on a south facing chalk promontory along the North Hampshire Downs. The wood assumes particular nature conservation importance for its stands of ancient hornbeam coppice: no comparable stands are known elsewhere in South Central England. Parts of Sidley Wood comprise pure hornbeam coppice: many of the stools are more than two metres in diameter, suggesting that the wood is of great age and of natural origin. Hornbeam is also abundant mixed with field maple, ash and hazel throughout much of the remainder of the wood, where the structure is oak standards over mixed coppice.

The hornbeam coppice generates a dense shade, suppressing the development of the field layer which is typically dominated by bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* with sparsely distributed plants of pignut *Conopodium majus*, yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, wood millet *Milium effusum*, wood avens *Geum urbanum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. In the mixed coppice areas the field layer is, by contrast, more varied with primrose *Primula vulgaris*, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, three-nerved sandwort *Moehringia trinervia*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, wood speedwell *Veronica montana* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* all abundant. Less frequently occurring species include moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum multiflorum* and giant fescue *Festuca gigantea*.

In the extreme western sector of the wood, hornbeam is absent. Oak and ash form a dense canopy over a shrub layer of hawthorn, coppiced field maple and hazel; bramble and dog's mercury dominate the field layer.