

File ref:

County: Leicestershire **Site name:** Eye Brook Valley
Woods

District: **Harborough**

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

Local Planning Authority: Harborough District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 826977 **Area:** 67.68 (ha) 167.25 (ac)
SP 826969
SP 836934

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 141 **1: 10 000:** SP 89 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981 **Date of Last Revision:**

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

Other Information:

Great Merrible Wood is managed as a nature reserve by the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation.

Reasons for Notification:

The site includes some of the best remaining examples of ash-elm and ash-maple woodlands in Leicestershire, and is representative of semi-natural woodland on clay soils in central and eastern England.

Biology:

A fine complex of small woodlands comprising fragments of the ancient Leighfield Forest which formerly covered extensive areas in east Leicestershire. Park Wood is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, and is developed on soils derived from Upper Lias Clays, while on similar, poorly-drained soils of the same strata Bolt Wood lacks the strong elm component and is characterised by ash and field maple *Acer campestre*. Great Merrible Wood is also an ash-maple wood and is developed for the most part on soils derived from Glacial Boulder Clays. These woods possess a varied shrub flora which includes hazel *Corylus avellana*, dogwood *Swida sanguinea*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, midland hawthorn *C. oxycanthoides*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* and goat willow *Salix caprea*. The ground vegetation is dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and, locally, by bluebell *Endymion non-scripta* and contains species typical of ancient clay woods including ramsons *Allium ursinum*, early purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum*, early dog-violet *Viola*

reinchenbachiana, herb paris *Paris quadrifolia* and giant bellflower *Campanula latifolia*. A number of small watercourses flow through the woods and several pools and small marshes also occur. Additional interest is provided by the characteristic flora of the woodland rides and by the variety of the breeding bird community.