

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER    SITE NAME: AILESHURST COPPICE

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS                      SITE REF: 15WNH

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 774502                      Area: 1.97 (ha.) 4.88 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150                      1:10,000: SO 75 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971                      Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Part of the site is owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is an area of relict stream-side coppice woodland lying to the north of Malvern. It is situated on base-rich soils overlying Keuper Marl.

It is an example of a type of woodland which is now nationally restricted. The canopy is dominated by pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, with a diverse understorey including coppiced wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. Along the stream alder *Alnus glutinosa* occurs as mature trees and coppice stools.

The ground flora contains spurge-laurel *Daphne laureola*, which is scarce in the county, as well as dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. The grasses include such typical woodland species as false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, wood millet *Milium effusum* and wood meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis*. In the damp areas close to the stream marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris* occur.

The site also supports a population of the rare yellow star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea*; the only known site in the county.