

Definitions of Favourable Condition for designated features of interest



These definitions relate to all designated features on the SSSI, whether designated as SSSI, SPA, SAC or Ramsar features.

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Name of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Highbury Wood SSSI	
Names of designated international sites	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Wye Valley Woodlands SAC
Special Protection Area (SPA)	N/A
Ramsar	N/A
Relationship between site designations	
The whole SSSI is one of the component sites of the SAC	

Version control information		
Status of this Version (Draft, Consultation Draft, Final)		Final
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Quality assurance information		
Checked by	Name Peter Holmes	Date 3 January 2014
	 Signature	

Definitions of Favourable Condition: notes for users

Definitions of Favourable Condition

The definitions comprise one or more condition definitions for the special interest features at this site. These are subject to periodic review and may be updated to reflect new information or knowledge. They will be used by Natural England to determine if a site is in a favourable condition. The standards for favourable condition have been developed and are applied throughout the UK.

Standards for favourable condition are defined with particular reference to the specific designated features listed in Table 1, and are based on a selected set of attributes for features which most effectively define favourable condition as set out in Tables 2, 2a and 3. When an SSSI's features meet these attributes, then they are said to be in 'favourable condition'.

Explanatory text for Tables 2 and 3

Tables 2, 2a and 3 set out the measures of condition which we will use to provide evidence to support our assessment of whether features are in favourable condition. They have been tailored by local staff to reflect the particular characteristics and site-specific circumstances of individual sites. Quality Assurance has ensured that such site-specific tailoring remains within a nationally consistent set of standards. The tables include an audit trail to provide a summary of the reasoning behind any site-specific targets etc. In some cases the requirements of features or designations may conflict; the detailed basis for any reconciliation of conflicts on this site may be recorded elsewhere.

Use under the Habitats Regulations

The Definitions of Favourable Condition (DFCs) are used to periodically measure and assess the condition of both notified SSSI features and designated European Site features.

Where SSSIs also form part of a European Site (such as a SAC or SPA), a separate document containing specific European Site Conservation Objectives will have been prepared. These objectives are those referred to in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the "Habitats Regulations") and the Habitats Directive 1992. They are for use when either the appropriate nature conservation body or a competent authority is required to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the likely effects of a proposed plan or project on the integrity of a European Site under the relevant parts of the respective legislation. The European Site Conservation Objectives are available at www.naturalengland.org.uk.

The concepts of 'site integrity' and 'favourable condition' are similar and the assessment of a feature's condition will measure attributes that also represent aspects of a site's ecological integrity. However, the periodic determination of a feature's condition is separate from a judgement about the effect upon a site's overall integrity. This is because the DFCs do not represent a comprehensive or definitive list of all of the elements that might contribute to site integrity, merely those that are most appropriate to monitor in order to rapidly determine the present condition of a feature. The full range of factors that are components of a site's integrity, and which may need to be considered by an appropriate assessment, will be specified in the European Site Conservation Objectives. Some of the information contained within the DFCs may however contribute to such assessments.

Table 1 Individual designated interest features

BAP Broad Habitat type / Geological Site Type	Specific designated features	Explanatory description of the feature for clarification	SSSI notified interest features	SAC qualifying interest features	SPA qualifying interest features dependency on specific habitats			Ramsar criteria applicable to specific habitats			
					Annex 1 species	Migratory species	Waterfowl assemblage	1a Wetland characteristics	2a Hosting rare species &c	3a 20000 waterfowl	3c 1% of population
Broadleaved, mixed and Yew woodland	W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> - <i>Acer campestre</i> - <i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Wye Valley woodlands are of international importance for the diversity of stand-types and flora, overlying both sandstone and limestone geology. Ranked highly in the Bolt survey of Wye Valley Woodland survey (1980), including stand-types of restricted national distribution and several rare locally.	*	*							
	W10 <i>Quercus robur</i> - <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i>		*								
	W12 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> - <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> (W12c <i>Taxus baccata</i> sub-community)		*								

NB. Features where asterisks are in brackets (*) indicate habitats which are not notified for specific habitat interest (under the relevant designation) but because they support notified species.

Table 2 Habitat extent objectives

Extent - Dynamic balance	To maintain the designated features in favourable condition, which is defined in part in relation to a balance of habitat extents (extent attribute). Favourable condition is defined at this site in terms of the following site-specific standards.
	On this site favourable condition requires the maintenance of the extent of each habitat type (either designated habitat or habitat supporting designated species). Maintenance implies restoration if evidence from condition assessment suggests a reduction in extent.

Habitat Feature (BAP Broad Habitat level, or more detailed level if applicable)	Estimated extent (ha) and date of data source/estimate	Site Specific Target range and Measures	Comments
Broadleaved, mixed and Yew woodland	50.74ha (SSSI designation 1983)	No loss of ancient semi-natural stands. At least current area of recent semi-natural stands maintained, although their location may alter.	

Audit Trail
Rationale for habitat extent attribute (Include methods of estimation (measures), and the approximate degree of change which these are capable of detecting).
Rationale for site-specific targets (including any variations from generic guidance)
Other Notes
Citation gives area as 50.74ha and ENSIS (derived from GIS) 46.59ha.

Table 3 Site specific Habitat condition objectives

To maintain the **Broadleaved, mixed and Yew woodland** at **Highbury Wood SSSI** in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition is defined at this site in terms of the following site-specific standards:

Site-specific details of any geographical variation or limitations (where the favourable condition standards apply)

Site-specific standards defining favourable condition

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W12c <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland, <i>Taxus baccata</i> sub-community	Habitat extent	Field survey and/or aerial photography, in relation to baseline map	No loss of ancient semi-natural stands. At least current area of recent semi-natural stands maintained, although their location may alter. No loss of ancient woodland.	Stand loss due to natural processes e.g. in the minimum intervention stands may be acceptable. Stand destruction may occur if the understorey and ground flora are irretrievably damaged even if the canopy remains intact. As a guideline, loss can be defined as at least 0.5 ha or 0.5% of the stand area, whichever is the smaller. 20% canopy cover is conventionally taken as the lower limit for an area to be considered as woodland.	Yes
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> - <i>Acer campestre</i> - <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland	Structure and Natural processes	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects	Understorey (2-5m) present over at least 20% of total stand area. Canopy cover present	Both fallen and standing dead wood are likely to be less frequent in the coppiced areas of Unit 1.	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W12c <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland, <i>Taxus baccata</i> sub-community			over 30-90 % of stand area except in coppice stands where it should not exceed 30%. At least three age classes spread across the average life expectancy of the commonest trees. Unit 2 Should contain areas of relatively undisturbed mature/old growth stands or a scatter of large trees allowed to grow to over-maturity/death on site. (e.g. a minimum of 10% of the woodland or 5-10 trees per ha). A minimum of 3 fallen lying trees >20 cm diameter per ha and 4 trees per ha allowed to die standing.	The main concentration is expected within the minimum intervention areas of Unit 2. Note, however, that assessment of dead wood targets may be difficult to carry out and caution should be exercised in judging condition for this element.	
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W12c <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-	Composition	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects	At least 95% of cover in any one layer of site-native or acceptable naturalised species. At least 50% of canopy or understorey to be Yew within W12c woodland areas. Death, destruction or replacement of native woodland species through	Sycamore & Buddleia are not acceptable as naturalised species in this site.	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland, <i>Taxus baccata</i> sub-community			effects of introduced fauna or other external unnatural factors not more than 10% by number or area in a five year period.		
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>-<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland W12c <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland, <i>Taxus baccata</i> sub-community	Indicators of local distinctiveness	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects. Dormouse population to be monitored using nest-boxes.	80% of ground flora cover referable to relevant NVC community. Dormouse population present & monitored regularly Wood barley (<i>Hordelymus europaeus</i>) to be present – baseline population to be determined & locations to be mapped. Greater Butterfly Orchid <i>Platanthera chlorantha</i> to be present somewhere in the NNR – exact location and abundance will vary from year to year.	This attribute is intended to cover any site-specific aspects of this habitat feature (forming part of the reason for notification) which are not covered adequately by the previous attributes, or by separate guidance (e.g. notified species features). For notable species it is not intended to set a target for detailed species monitoring, rather to provide a rapid indication of presence/ absence and/or approximate extent, allowing for natural fluctuations in population size.	Yes
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>-<i>Acer campestre</i>-<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland W10 <i>Quercus robur</i>-	Regeneration potential	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects	Signs of seedlings growing through to saplings to young trees at sufficient density to maintain canopy density over a 20 year period for	A proportion of gaps at any one time may develop into permanent open space; equally some current permanent open space/glades may in time regenerate to closed canopy.	Yes

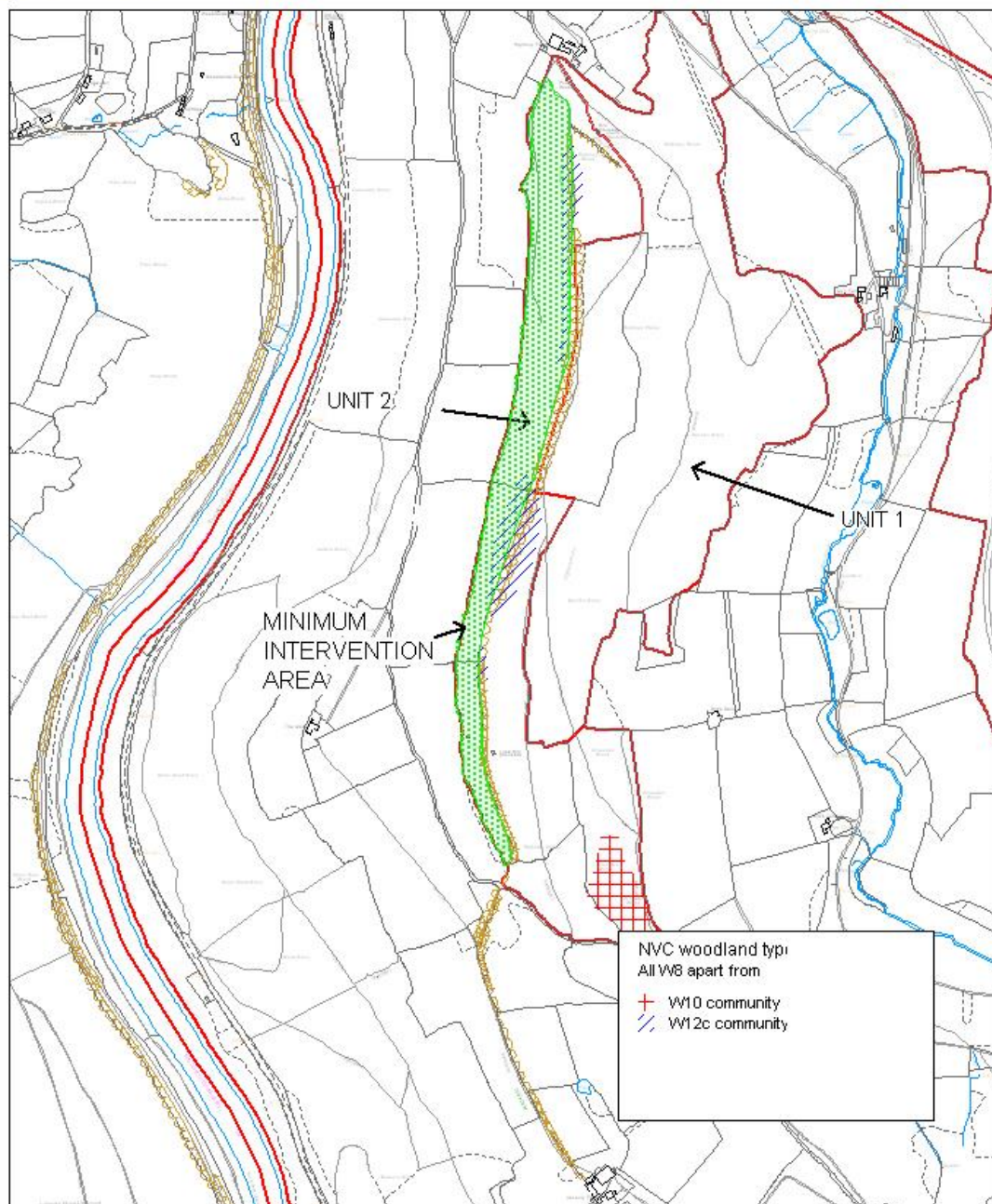
Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> woodland			W12c areas and within 10 year period for rest of woodland (or equivalent re-growth from coppice stumps).	Regeneration may often occur on the edges of woods rather than in gaps within it.	
W12c <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> - <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland, <i>Taxus baccata</i> sub-community					

Audit Trail
Rationale for limiting standards to specified parts of the site
In Yew-dominated stands, the proportion of gaps is frequently lower than for other woodland types. Given the long life-span of the tree, it means that it is difficult to give a minimum level for regeneration.
Rationale for site-specific targets (including any variations from generic guidance)
Planting has not taken place at Highbury within the last 15 years. Where deer are excluded and the canopy is not too dense, regeneration generally proceeds rapidly in the Wye Valley. Thus, there should be no need for regeneration by planting within the short to medium term.
Rationale for selection of measures of condition (features and attributes for use in condition assessment) (The selected vegetation attributes are those considered to most economically define favourable condition at this site for the broad habitat type and any dependent designated species).
Other Notes

Annex 1 Map(s) of key areas for monitoring



HIGHBURY WOODS SSSI CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES MAP



Scale 1:15000 Map 1 of 1
0 300 600 900m
0 250 500 750yd.

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Annex 2 Location of features by unit

Features	units	1	2
W8		x	x
W10			x
W12c			x