

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)	
ASTRIDGE WOOD SSSI	
Names of designated international sites	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	WYE VALLEY WOODLAND SAC
Special Protection Area (SPA)	N/A
Ramsar	N/A
Relationship between site designations	

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 6 December 2013
	 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> woodland	Ancient semi-natural woodland originally selected on Peterken criteria and now classified using NVC types. Subsequently selected as SAC for Tilio-Acerion ravine woodland (Corine) type.	*	*							

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	19.75 ha GIS data 11/7/96	No loss of ancient semi-natural stands At least the area of ancient woodland retained.	Whole site is AW and ASNW – baseline is Bolt Survey 1980

Audit Trail
Rationale for habitat extent attribute (Include methods of estimation (measures), and the approximate degree of change which these are capable of detecting).
The interest features (Peterken types, NVC type and SAC Corine types) are all co-incident across the whole of the site (see maps of Bolt survey (1980) and NVC survey (1998) on file.
Rationale for site-specific targets (including any variations from generic guidance)
Other Notes
Area given as 19.42ha on citation which approximates to the area calculated from GIS.

Table 3 Site specific Habitat condition objectives

To maintain the Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland at Astridge 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)
See maps of 1980 Bolt report and NVC Survey 1998 on file for details of the relative coverage of stand types under the different classification systems (Peterken, NVC, Corine Types). Additional baseline information for some attributes given in 2002 Wye Valley Age Class and Dead Wood Evaluation Survey.

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	Area	Field survey and/or aerial photography, in relation to baseline map.	No loss of ancient semi-natural stands At least the area of ancient woodland retained.	Whole site is AW and ASNW – baseline is Bolt Survey 1980.	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.	At least the current level of structural diversity maintained. Understorey (2-5m) present over at least 20% of total stand area. Ground flora present over at least 50% of area. Canopy cover present	Baseline descriptions in Bolt Survey 1980. Woodland is predominantly pure coppice (relict coppice 50+ years) with few large standards. Canopy is of coppiced Ash and Lime 5-10m (85 - 90% cover) with understorey of Field Maple,	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
			over 30-90 % of stand area with exception of coppice areas where it should not exceed 30%. A minimum of 3 fallen/lying trees >20 cm diameter per ha and 4 trees per ha allowed to die standing	Hazel and Elm at 2-5 m (20-50% cover variable across the site). Spring ground flora at ca 90% cover in typical areas (less on rides, rocky outcrops and under Yew groves). Age class of coppice very uniform but with areas (ca 15%) of more recent coppice (1-10 years in age) and along rides in 2004 – see 2002 survey of baseline age class assessment. Aim to continue the rotational coppice management within this woodland. 2004 – good fallen and standing deadwood values throughout the wood (see 2002 survey of baseline deadwood values). Few veteran trees present – on boundaries.	
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> – <i>Acer campestre</i> – <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland	Regeneration potential	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects.	Signs of seedlings growing through to saplings to young trees in canopy gaps (sufficient to provide future canopy stock within 10 years	2004 – regeneration under canopy largely restricted to rides and woodland edges. Regrowth from coppice strong and successful although specifics of target could not be	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
			Unbrowsed regrowth from coppice stumps reaching 1.5 m within 2 years on 95% of cut stumps. No planting in locations where planting has not occurred in the last 15 years.	judged. (beyond 2 years regrowth). No planting is known to have occurred within the site in at least 15 years (if ever).	
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> – <i>Acer campestre</i> – <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland	Composition	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects, or as appropriate to feature.	At least the current level of site-native species maintained At least 90% of cover in any one layer of site-native Death, destruction or replacement of native woodland species, through effects of introduced fauna or other external unnatural factors, not more than 10% by number or area in a five year period.	Baseline is 1980 Bolt survey report. Sycamore to be treated as non native	Yes
W8 <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> – <i>Acer campestre</i> – <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> woodland	Quality indicators	Assess by field survey using structured walk and/or transects in spring/summer.	80% of ground flora cover referable to NVC W8 (e&f) Maintain conditions suitable for:	Baseline is NVC Survey 1998	Yes

Criteria feature	Attribute term in guidance	Measure	Site-specific Targets	Comments	Use for Condition Assessment?
			Nationally Scarce plant populations <i>Tilia platyphyllos</i> and <i>Cardamine impatiens</i>	<i>Cardamine impatiens</i> requires regularly disturbed soils with sufficient light eg along managed rides and in coppice coupes – presence should be confirmed on visits in April-July. Occasional presence of wild boar within the woodland may contribute to disturbed ground.	

Audit Trail
Rationale for limiting standards to specified parts of the site
Aim for an age-class structure which reflects the history of management (namely, a relict coppice site). Also importance of some recent coppice/ride management for the benefit of characteristic notable plant (<i>Cardamine impatiens</i>). This aim also reflects wider SAC targets which seek 10-40% of gap phase habitats within the SAC as a whole (16 sites) – Astridge is one of the most appropriate sites for restoration of open-gap phase habitats due to nature of stand type, structure and history of management. Coppice management for this woodland is an aspiration and not a reason for failure.
Rationale for site-specific targets (including any variations from generic guidance)
Location of <i>Tilia platyphyllos</i> requires search in files and on site (with possible distinction from <i>Tilia cordata</i>).
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
All attributes should be used for condition assessment on this site as they are easily observed.

Annex 1 Map of key areas for monitoring

ASTRIDGE WOOD SSSI Special Interest Features map

Scale: 1:7,500



