

COUNTY: OXFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: LAMBRIDGE WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU734845

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 1:10,000: SU78 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 Date of Last Revision:

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision:

Area: 73.8 ha 182.3 ac

Other information: Within the Chilterns AONB.

Description and Reasons for Notification

The site is an interesting example of a Chiltern beechwood containing a variety of soil types from calcareous to very acid. Among a range of distinctive plant communities formed on these soils there are several rare and uncommon species.

The woodland stand types range from calcareous oak-ash-beech on Upper Chalk, through mildly acid oak-ash-beech on Clay-with-Flints, to highly acid oak-beech on Plateau Gravel. Healthy young wych elm, descended from derelict coppice, occurs in significant quantity in all but the most acid areas.

Parts of the woodland have been modified by fellings that have been replanted with beech/conifer mixtures, but these stands are enriched by vigorous regeneration of ash, wych elm, field maple and hazel, and an open broad ride lying adjacent to them in the central valley carries a ground flora rich in species absent elsewhere, including quaking grass *Briza media*, nettle-leaved bell-flower *Campanula trachelium*, pale sedge *Carex pallescens*, tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, pale St John's wort *Hypericum montanum*, common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, dark mullein *Verbascum nigrum* and vervain *Verbena officinalis*.

The semi-natural stands on the chalk slopes are mature high forest of beech containing ash, wych elm, whitebeam, yew and goat willow with a diverse shrub layer which includes traveller's-joy, field maple, dogwood, privet, wayfaring tree and occasional spurge-laurel. The ground flora is a characteristic carpet of dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* with ivy *Hedera helix*, woodruff *Galium odoratum*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum* and locally wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*.

The beechwood stands on clay-with-flints contain pedunculate oak, ash, wych elm, wild cherry and rowan, with an understorey of holly and occasional yew. The ground flora is dominated largely by bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, locally by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis* or tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, with yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, wood millet *Milium effusum*, wood meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis* and, locally, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*. Within these stands there are poorly drained areas dominated by sedges: *Carex sylvatica*, *C. remota* and locally *C. strigosa*, occurring with soft rush *Juncus effusus*, common water-starwort *Callitriche stagnalis* and bog stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*.

The drier, highly acid soils of the Plateau Gravel carry a stand type dominated by beech interspersed with occasional pedunculate (and locally sessile) oak and silver birch and has a sparse understorey of scattered holly. The moss *Leucobryum glaucum* in places forms part of a characteristic ground flora which includes pill sedge *Carex pilulifera*, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, southern wood-rush *Luzula forsteri*, slender St John's-wort *Hypericum pulchrum*, heath speedwell *Veronica officinalis*, one or two of the less common hawkweeds *Hieracium* spp. and the very local green-flowered helleborine *Epipactis phyllanthos*.

Additional interest is provided by a water-filled gravel pit containing water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*.