

COUNTY: WILTSHIRE SITE NAME: BURDEROP WOOD

DISTRICT: THAMESDOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Local Planning Authority: WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Thamesdown Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SU 165810 Area: 48.5 (ha.) 119.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 173 1:10,000: SU 18 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
Site boundary amended.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Burderop is an example of wet ash-maple and acid pedunculate oak-hazel-ash woodland, with a rich associated ground flora. Large numbers of mature oaks and extensive areas of permanently saturated ground add to the interest.

The wood has developed on a north facing scarp of Upper Greensand which falls away to more gentle slopes of Gault Clay, with smaller areas of Lower Greensand and Kimmeridge Clay. Numerous springs emerge at the base of the scarp and this has led to the formation of large wet flushes and small ponds.

Part of Burderop Wood has a naturally varied structure due to the effects of steep slopes and Dutch elm disease. Further structural diversity has arisen as a result of coppicing and thinning in small areas, and regular mowing of the ride system. The most widespread tree is ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, both as standards and coppice, but an unusually large number of mature oak standards also occur. Silver birch *Betula pendula*, field maple *Acer campestre* and holly *Ilex aquifolium* are of more restricted distribution. The greensand scarp supports wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, now beginning to regenerate following attacks of Dutch elm disease. On the lower slopes some disease-affected English elm *U. procera* is also regenerating. There are several areas of old sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* coppice.

Where the canopy is open a well developed and diverse shrub layer occurs, including wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana*, guelder rose *V. opulus*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. Red currant *Ribes rubrum* occurs widely while coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana* predominates towards the northern edge of the site.

Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* occurs frequently on the greensand, whereas dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. are common throughout the middle of the wood and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* is abundant on the lowest clay slopes. Great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* dominates in areas of impeded drainage at the foot of the scarp, together with opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. The latter is also widespread in other damp parts of the wood. Spiked star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*, a species of nationally restricted distribution, occurs amongst a wide range of woodland ground flora. These include herb-paris *Paris quadrifolia*, broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*.

The site supports a range of typical woodland birds and other animals. Great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, mistle thrush and sparrowhawk occur, in addition to several tit and warbler species. Invertebrate diversity is favoured because of variation in the canopy cover.