

County: Essex **Site Name:** Weeleyhall Wood

District: Tendring

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

Local Planning Authority: Tendring District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 159210 **Area:** 31.0 (ha) 76.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 168 **1: 10 000** TM 12 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1974 **Date of Last Revision** -

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision** -

Other Information:

This site is part of the former SSSI known as Tendring Woods. It is a nature reserve owned and managed by the Essex Naturalists' Trust.

Reasons for Notification:

Weeleyhall Wood is one of the largest ancient woods in the Tendring peninsula. It contains one of the best examples in Essex of base-poor springline alder woodland, a type of woodland which is rare in the county, as well as good examples of lowland hazel-pedunculate oak and some wet ash-maple woodland, and chestnut coppice-with-standards derived from these last two.

The diversity of woodland types reflects the varied soils: sandy loams and gravels overlying London Clay, and soils derived from loess which are moderately to strongly acidic. Two streams arise from springs and flushes at the intersection of the sand and gravel with the underlying clay.

The woodland consists mainly of Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* standards over a coppice layer of Hazel *Corylus avellana* with some Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa* originating from nineteenth century plantings. Mature Alder *Alnus glutinosa* coppice occurs in the damper areas along the stream valleys, together with some Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Birch *Betula spp.* is locally abundant in the western part of the wood, where Field Maple *Acer campestre* also occurs in small numbers.

The predominant ground flora consists of a mosaic of Bramble *Rubus spp.*, Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* covering large areas, with smaller

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Weeleyhall Wood (cont...)

quantities of Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis*. The alder valleys support a rich ground flora which includes Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* and Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysopenium oppositifolium*, the former in exceptional abundance.

The wood also contains the largest Essex population of Climbing Corydalis *Corydalis claviculata*. Four species of fern are present, including the uncommon Scaly Male-fern *Dryopteris pseudomas* and Narrow Buckler-fern *D. carthusiana*.

Additional interest is provided by two ponds and damp, grassy rides whose rich flora includes Water-purslane *Peplis portula*. There are also two small mixed plantations.