

COUNTY: SURREY SITE NAME: COLYERS HANGER

BOROUGH: GUILDFORD

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

Local Planning Authority: GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 035483                      Area: 25.5 (ha.) 63.0 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186                      1:10,000: TQ 04 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1973                      Date of Last Revision: 1975

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

Other Information:

This site is a Nature Conservation Review Site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Colyers Hanger is an area of ancient woodland situated on a south facing slope of the Lower Greensand ridge above the valley of the river Tillingbourne. It is of particular interest for the diversity of woodland types present, related to geological diversity in the escarpment at different levels. The coarse sands of the upper slopes support pedunculate oak/birch/hazel woodland and heathland. The middle slopes support an ash/maple woodland which has developed over light sandy soils rich in bases as a result of leaching from an exposed outcrop of Bargate Stone. The lower slopes carry a base-rich springline alderwood. These last two woodland types are nationally rare.

Much of the woodland at this site is of the ash/maple type, consisting of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and field maple *Acer campestre*, with a shrub layer of hazel *Corylus avellana*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and elder *Sambucus nigra*. In addition yew *Taxus baccata* and beech *Fagus sylvatica* are present at the eastern end of the wood, whilst wych elm *Ulmus glabra* and English elm *U. procera* occur in the shrub layer at the south-western part of the wood. The field layer is dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, with red campion *Silene dioica*, moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* and nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium* amongst the most commonly occurring species. The nationally uncommon copse-bindweed *Polygonum dumetorum* and small teasel *Dipsacus pilosus*, a plant which is rare in Surrey, are also found here.

The less well-drained woodland by the stream is dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa*, over a field layer which includes opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, hemlock water dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*. On the upper slopes the woodland consists of pedunculate oak, silver birch *Betula pendula*, hazel, holly and whitebeam *Sorbus aria*. The field layer is dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* with bramble, amongst which occurs climbing corydalis *Corydalis*

*claviculata*. On the plateau, birch-oak woodland, with occasional Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris* grades into a mosaic of dry heath and acidic grassland communities consisting of sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, silvery hair grass *Aira caryophyllea* and common bent grass *Agrostis capillaris* in association with heather *Calluna vulgaris*, gorse *Ulex europaeus* and bracken. Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and sand spurrey *Spergularia rubra* occur here, together with subterranean clover *Trifolium subterraneum* and slender trefoil *T. micranthum*, two species which have a restricted distribution in the county.

The outcrop of Bargate Stone supports a varied moss flora, including colonies of *Tortula marginata* which is rarely found on natural stone in Surrey, and *Fissidens minutulus* var. *tenuifolius*, which is more commonly found on the chalk.