

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE 25TH JULY 1986

COUNTY: HERTFORDSHIRE      SITE NAME: WORMLEY/HODDESDONPARK  
WOODS NORTH

DISTRICT: EAST HERTS/BROXBOURNE

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

Local Planning Authority: East Herts District Council, Broxbourne Borough Council

National Grid Reference: TL 325075      Area: 146.3 (ha.) 361.5 (ac.)  
TL 352085

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 166      1:10,000: TL 30 NW, NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969      Date of Last Revision: 1972

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

Other Information:

This site is listed as Grade 1 in 'A Nature Conservation Review' Ed. D A Ratcliffe  
CUP. Hoddesdonpark Wood is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust  
Broxbourne Wood (part) is owned and managed by Hertfordshire County Council.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

A series of discreet woodland blocks lying mainly on acid gravel deposits over the  
London Clay, these, woods have developed from ancient wood-pasture and heaths,  
and retain many large oak and hornbeam pollards along the boundaries. More basic  
conditions arise from prevalence of boulder clays to the north of the site. This range of  
geological conditions and the variety of past management regimes has resulted in a  
varied woodland structure, wide habitat diversity and a correspondingly rich flora.  
Despite extensive clearance and replanting with conifers the remaining seminatural  
woodland is of national importance as an example of lowland south-eastern sessile  
oak/hornbeam type with the pedunculate oak/hornbeam variant also present.

Sessile and pedunculate oak *Quercus petraea* and *Q. robur* are the principal standard  
species over coppiced hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. This type is represented, in the east,  
as high forest. Hoddesdonpark Wood is particularly well structured with a wide age  
range of oak, including mature standards and regenerating saplings, over a varied shrub  
layer including coppiced hornbeam and hazel *Corylus avellana*. Elsewhere dense well-  
developed hornbeam coppice dominates. Areas of more recent secondary woodland add  
variety with silver birch *Betula pendula*, downy birch *B. pubescens* and aspen *Populus  
tremula* all widespread. A small area of failed mixed plantation is retained and is to be  
managed to encourage the heathy element present throughout.

The more acidic woods have a flora dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and  
tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* with abundant creeping soft-grass *Holcus  
mollis* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. Wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* and  
enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* characterise path edges while damper areas  
support sedges such as pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, remote sedge *C. remota* and  
wood sedge *C. sylvatica*, with hairy wood-rush *Luzula pilosa* also present.

More base-rich soils to the north are characterised by an increased presence of ash  
*Fraxinus excelsior* and the occurrence of wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis*, an  
indicator of ancient woodland. The shrub layer is well developed with dogwood  
*Cornus sanguinea*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*

widespread. A diverse ground flora is dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and grasses such as wood meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis* and wood millet *Milium effusum*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* and squarestalked St John's wort *Hypericum tetrapterum* are also present, with primrose *Primula vulgaris* more local in occurrence and common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* patchily distributed.

Small ponds and streams are important habitats for bryophyte species dependent on shady, wet and acidic conditions. An epiphytic moss community of *Dicranum montanum* and *D. flagellare* is of particular interest. The small stream banks in places retain a band of semi-natural woodland with alder *Alnus glutinosa* a frequent constituent. Typical plants here are water-pepper *Polygonum hydropiper* and water mint *Mentha aquatica*. Opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and wood club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* all occur, the last at one of its very few county localities. Associated with the ponds are early forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*, lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea* and bugle *Ajuga reptans*.

Several areas of neutral to acidic unimproved grassland provide additional interest with tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* frequent, and skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* occasional.

This wide range of habitats supports a variety of invertebrate species including the green tiger beetle *Cicindela campestris* of limited distribution in Hertfordshire, and several local species of butterfly and moth *Lepidoptera*. The woodland bird community exhibits equivalent diversity with all three woodpeckers, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* known to breed.