

COUNTY: SUFFOLK      SITE NAME: HORRINGER COURT CAVES

DISTRICT:

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

Local Planning Authority: ST EDMUNDSBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TL 837628      Area: 4 (ha.) 10 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: –      1:10,000: TL 86 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

No boundary change at re-notification.

Reasons for Notification:

This site contains a series of inter-connected chalk mines totalling over 500 metres in length. There are five grilled entrances leading off chalk pits excavated in the ground. These 'caves' are important for various species of bat which hibernate in the tunnels from September to April each winter. The bat population has been the object of detailed research into several aspects of bat ecology and has been continuously monitored since 1947. The locality is hence of exceptional scientific interest.

The bat hibernaculum is used principally by Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentoni* and Natterer's bat *M. nattereri* but Whiskered bat *M. mystacinus*, Brandt's bat *M. brandti* and Brown Long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus* occur occasionally. The very rare Barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus* has been recorded eight times in 36 years.

Grounds surrounding the quarries are densely wooded with beech, elm, oak, sycamore, sweet chestnut and scots pine. Ground cover is dominated by ivy, ground ivy and grasses. There are open glades of coarse grassland within the wood. The woods and glades influence the micro-climate within the bat caves and are hence an integral part of the interest of the site. They also provide a source of food and sheltered feeding areas especially for those bats that move into the caves early in the autumn.