

COUNTY: SUFFOLK

SITE NAME: EDWARDSTONE WOODS

DISTRICT: BABERGH

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

Local Planning Authority: Babergh District Council

National Grid Reference: TL (935430, 945413  
928425) Area: 27.9 (ha.) 68.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 155 1:10,000: TL 94 SW

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

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

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Edwardstone Woods SSSI are an inter-related group of ancient woods containing a diversity of stand types. These form a transition from mainly ash-maple-hazel woods of mid Suffolk to the lime of south Suffolk. Substantial areas of hornbeam are also present. The woodland structure is predominantly coppice-with-standards, with the rides and woodland margins supporting a diverse ground flora typical of Suffolk boulder-clay soils.

Park and High Woods together form the largest woodland area in the group, at least 500 years old, and regularly coppiced, at least in part, until about 70 years ago. Fine stands of small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* are present with large standards of oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* frequent within the canopy and occasional wild cherry *Prunus avium* in High Wood. Localised stands of sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* and silver birch *Betula pendula* are also found in the wood. Hazel *Corylus avellana* is scattered throughout the coppice layer with ash, field maple *Acer campestre* and wild cherry coppice present along the more base-rich wood margins. Holly *Ilex aquifolium* is common. Shrub species present along the hedgerows in High Wood include both common and Midland hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* and *C. oxyacanthoides*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*.

The ground flora is dominated by glades of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* locally abundant.

Stallington Wood is situated on a steep valley side leading down to the River Box. Hornbeam dominates the coppice throughout most of the wood, with large standard oak and sweet chestnut frequent within the canopy. The margins support a wider variety of understorey species including field maple, hazel, wild cherry, hawthorn, blackthorn, *Prunus spinosa*, alder *Alnus glutinosa*, willow *Salix* sp., small-leaved lime and crab apple. Bluebell again dominates the ground flora, with dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and male fern locally abundant. The wood is surrounded by medieval banks and ditches and is an important landscape feature.

Couper's Wood and Priory Down are small neighbouring woods. Priory Down contains an unusually wide variety of species, with wild service *Sorbus torminalis* and large small-leaved lime stools amongst oak, ash, hornbeam, field maple, wild cherry and aspen. Shrub species include hazel, spindle, holly, crab apple and both Midland

and common hawthorns. Couper's Wood has been partly planted with poplar but this has not interfered unduly with the mixed coppice understorey. This is of oak-ash-hazel, with an area of almost pure hazel in the north of the wood. Standards of oak, field maple and ash are scattered in an uneven aged distribution over the wood.

The ground flora in Couper's Wood is rich and varied. Species present include primrose *Primula vulgaris*, self heal *Prunella vulgaris*, figwort *Scrophularia nodosa*, hedge woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and cuckoo pint *Arum maculatum*. Other areas are similar to Priory Down in being dominated by dog's mercury or bluebell with primrose locally abundant. Wood millet *Milium effusum* occurs along the rides in Couper's Wood.

The western edge of Priory Down is bordered by a narrow strip of unimproved, semi-natural meadow.