

COUNTY: SUFFOLK SITE NAME: WESTHALL WOOD AND MEADOW

DISTRICT: MID SUFFOLK

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

Local Planning Authority: MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TM 028730 and Area:42.3 (ha.) 104.6 (ac.)
TM 034724

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144 1:10,000: TM 07 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Westhall Wood and Meadow lies 1g miles south-west of the village of Rickinghall. Westhall Wood is an ancient coppice-with-standards Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam wood growing on heavy boulder clay overlain by sand and is one of the largest remaining intact Hornbeam dominated woodlands in Suffolk. The nearby Westhall Meadow is an unusually large unimproved species-rich meadow containing a community of meadow plants with affinities to both calcareous clay and calcareous loam grasslands.

The major stand-type in Westhall Wood is Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam, Ash-Maple variant. Standard trees are mainly Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* with a broad age structure, with occasional Ash *Fraxinus Excelsior* and Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. Hornbeam is the dominant species in a coppice layer that is well preserved and of mixed age structure, with frequent Ash and Hazel *Corylus avellana* and occasional Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Goat Willow *Salix caprea*. Shrub species present include Midland and Common Hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* and *C. monogyna*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, Crab Apple *Malus sylvestris* and Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*.

The ground flora is dominated by a large scale mosaic of Bramble *Rubus* sp. and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* is abundant and other species present include Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata* and Early-purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*.

Westhall Meadow is situated at the head of a small valley and slopes down towards the south-west.

The meadow is poorly drained, species-rich and supports a variety of plants typical of both calcareous clay and calcareous loam pastures.

The dominant species are Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Rough Meadowgrass *Poa trivialis* and Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*.

Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and White Clover *Trifolium repens* are frequent components of the community. Other, less abundant, species include Spiny and Common Restharrow *Ononis spinosa* and *O. repens*, Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, Sulphur Clover *Trifolium ochroleucon* and Pepper Saxifrage *Silaum silaus*.

The proximity of the wood and meadow habitats, which are linked by hedges and an area of semi-improved grassland, increases their conservation value.