

COUNTY: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

SITE NAME: GRENDON AND DODDERSHALL WOODS

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

Local Planning Authorities: Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SP710210

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 165 **1:10,000:** SP62 SE, SP72 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1976 **Date of Last Revision:**

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 67.08 ha 165.77 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

Grendon and Doddershall Woods constitute an important tract of broadleaved woodland of a kind formerly far more extensive on the clays of north Buckinghamshire.

Oak predominates, mainly as standards, in both woods with ash, field maple, aspen and birch as associates in the tree canopy and an understorey of dense hazel coppice and blackthorn thickets, as well as willow, crab apple, common and Midland hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* and *C. laevigata* and their hybrids, honeysuckle, briars (including *Rosa arvensis*) and dogwood. Several of these are indicators of long continuity of woodland conditions, as are many of the herbaceous species present, including primrose *Primula vulgaris*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*, wood sedge *Carex sylvatica*, enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* and narrow-leaved everlasting pea *Lathyrus sylvestris*.

A stream runs through Grendon Wood; alongside this willow and alder, the latter uncommon in this part of the Vale of Aylesbury, are regenerating from stools cut back in the late 1970s. This and another small stream separating Grendon from Doddershall Wood provide valuable additional habitat for a range of plants and invertebrates.

An important feature of both woods is the network of wide rides, some almost permanently wet, and others with ditches. Here a further range of herbaceous species occurs, including the sedges *Carex pallescens*, *C. pendula* and *C. remota*, wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*, sweet violet *Viola odorata* and butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*. The clearings opened up during silvicultural operations have developed mixed stands of grassland and scrub, though most of these are in the process of being replanted.

Grendon and Doddershall Woods have long been known as a site of exceptional importance for butterflies of which no less than 35 species, some now very rare, have been recorded. These include the purple emperor *Apatura iris*, brown and black hairstreaks *Thecla betulae* and *Strymonidia pruni*, the latter of national importance, wood white *Leptidea sinapis*, and no less than five species of fritillary: the silver washed, high brown, marsh, pearl-bordered and small pearly-bordered *Argynnis paphia*, *A. adippe*, *Euphydryas aurina*, *Boloria euphrosyne* and *B. selene*. Not all the fritillaries have been seen since the late 1970s, but it is possible that they linger on in small numbers.

There is considerable ornithological interest in the woods, including breeding nightingales.