

COUNTY: CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** HILDERSHAM WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Cambridgeshire District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 535457

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 154 **1:10,000:** TL 54 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1958 **Date of Last Revision:** 1971

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 7.3 ha 18.0 ac

Other information: A boundary amendment has been made.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Hildersham Wood is an ancient woodland of ash-maple type lying on the chalky Boulder Clay. Its ancient origin is reflected in the rich variety of woodland plants and associated communities which it supports. Such woodland habitat is now very localised in extent, both locally and in lowland England as a whole. In a Cambridgeshire context the wood is notable for a number of locally rare species.

Although the wood is of the ash-maple classification type these species do not dominate the tree canopy. Pendunculate oak *Quercus robur* forms the major canopy species, occurring as mature standards. The shrub layer is mainly of sparse hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* occurs as occasional coppice throughout the wood and field maple *Acer campestre* is frequent as coppice and maiden trees.

Typical shrubs include hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus* and a number of wild rose species *Rosa* sp.

The ground flora is rich and variable. Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* are locally dominant but comparatively absent in other areas. Other species include early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, remote sedge *Carex remota*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*. Of additional note is the presence of a number of locally rare species such as broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, sweet woodruff *Asperula odorata* and oval and pale sedges *Carex ovalis* and *C. pallescens*. A good number of ferns and mosses also occur reflecting the particular wetness of this woodland.

The rides, which give additional diversity to the habitat, are generally wet and dominated by sedge species *Carex* spp. and other damp loving species such as meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*.