

**County:** Essex **Site Name: Riddles Wood**

**District:** Tendring

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Tendring District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TM 129180 **Area:** 37.3 (ha) 92.2 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 168 **1: 10 000:** TM 11 NW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1974 **Date of Last Revision:** -

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

**Other Information:**

The site is part of the former SSSI known as Tendring Woods.

**Reasons for Notification:**

Riddles Wood contains some of the best examples in Essex of chestnut coppice, derived from ancient pedunculate oak-hazel and pedunculate oak-hornbeam woodland. The soils are varied, being derived from glacial sands and gravels in the west and London Clay in the east. This results in a diversity of woodland types and a rich and varied ground flora, including several uncommon Essex species.

The canopy consists mainly of Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, over a coppice layer of Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa* with a scattering of Hazel *Corylus avellana* and a small area of Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* along the eastern edge. There is a small amount of Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, mainly confined to the damper London Clay soils, while Birch *Betula spp.* and Aspen *Populus tremula* occur as invasive species of the young coppice. Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Wild Service *Sorbus torminalis* occur locally, mainly along the boundary of the wood.

The ground flora is dominated by Bramble *Rubus sp.*, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, or in places by Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*. In an area of poor, gravelly soil in the north-west, Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia* is co-dominant with Bracken, Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis* and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. Other herb species include Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*. Species of special note are Wood Small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*, Butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* and Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum* and the rare Orpine *Sedum telephium*. The plant communities have benefited from recent coppice management. Additional habitats are provided by a system of rides and a small pond.