

**COUNTY:** NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
MEADOW

**SITE NAME:** ALDER WOOD AND

**DISTRICT:** KETTERING

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Kettering District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SP 837847

**Area:** 13.0 (ha.) 32.1 (ac.)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 141

**1:10,000:** SP 88 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** –

**Date of Last Revision:** –

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1985

**Date of Last Revision:** –

**Other Information:** This is a new site.

**Reasons for Notification:**

Alder Wood and Meadow comprises an unusual combination of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland lying adjacent to an unimproved hay meadow. Both habitats lie on Midland Boulder clay on a gentle south-facing slope.

The woodland, a remnant of the Royal Forest of Rockingham, is of the wet ash-maple variety, a habitat type which is declining nationally and has been significantly reduced in Northamptonshire in recent times. Until recently the wood has been managed as coppice with standards, but now although there are areas of young growth, much of the coppice is over-mature.

The canopy is predominantly Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with occasional English Oak (*Quercus robur*), and the coppiced shrub layer consists of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Field Maple (*Acer campestre*).

The ground flora is typical of base rich, wet soil with much Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) with other species such as Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Twayblade (*Listera ovata*) and Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) also present.

Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) and Giant Bellflower (*Campanula latifolia*), both rare in Northamptonshire, occur.

Open and shaded rides and a small pond provide valuable additional habitats for plants, birds and invertebrates.

The adjacent meadow is an agriculturally unimproved, ridge and furrow hay field lying on neutral soils. It comprises a habitat type which is rare both nationally and in Northamptonshire

Variation in soil properties and in past management has led to the development of several grassland types of which the most common is that characterised by the presence of Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*). This is a diverse type and many plant species are found such as Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Cowslip (*Primula veris*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Quaking-grass (*Briza media*) and Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*).

In damper parts of the field where in some cases the soil may be more acidic the grassland type is characterised by Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) or by Betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*).

Old hedgerows and a seasonally wet pond add to the interest of the meadow.

The juxtaposition of the traditionally managed wood and hay meadow provides a range of environmental features important to a large variety of animals and plants, and this enhances the separate value of each habitat for wildlife.