

COUNTY: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE **SITE NAME:** HOLLOWHILL & PULLINGSHILL WOODS

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

Local Planning Authorities: Wycombe District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU822862

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 **1:10,000:** SU88 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981 **Date of Last Revision:**

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

Area: 23.0 ha 56.8 ac

Other information: Hollowhill Wood is owned by Bucks County Council and managed by the Forestry Commission; Pullingshill Wood is subject to an access agreement between the owner and Wycombe District Council. Both are within the Chilterns AONB.

Description and Reasons for Notification

A woodland site in the mid-Chilterns where contrasts between the acid gravelly soils of the plateau and both shallow and deeper chalky soils of the slopes are reflected in the presence of different types of beechwood. The ground flora includes some uncommon species, of which one is a national rarity.

Much of the woodland consists of mature to over-mature, closely grown, even-aged beech, resulting from neglected coppice, though some parts of Pullingshill Wood have recently been thinned to encourage natural regeneration. Pedunculate and sessile oaks, together with their hybrids and *Quercus cerris*, occur on the plateau, as do birch and rowan, the last two particularly evident in Pullingshill Wood. On the slopes holly is most abundant where the soil is shallow, whereas a greater variety of species (and age classes) occurs on the deeper soils of the lower slopes. Ash, wild cherry, crab apple, whitebeam, field maple, elder, spindle, hawthorn and yew have been recorded.

Among the more open stands of the plateau the ground flora contains heather *Calluna vulgaris* as well as wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, the sedge *Carex pilulifera* and the rushes *Juncus tenuis* and *J. bufonius*. Towards the bottom of the slopes there is a typical range of chalk woodland species such as wood melick *Melica uniflora*, giant fescue *Fescue gigantea* and the local wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*, as well as wood sedge *Carex sylvatica*, goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* and yellow-archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*.

Much of the woodland floor on the shallow soils is largely bereft of herbaceous plants and exhibits either bare ground or deep accumulations of leaves; yet here some of the more uncommon plants occur, including lesser wintergreen *Pyrola minor*, broadleaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and a national rarity, the ghost orchid *Epipogium aphyllum*.