

County: Greater London **Site Name:** Old Park Wood

District: Hillingdon

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

Local Planning Authority: Hillingdon

National Grid Reference: TQ 046913 **Area:** 16.7 (ha) 41.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 176 **1: 25 000:** TQ 0491

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 **Date of Last Revision:** -

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

Other Information:

The south-east part of the site is owned and managed by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Trust for Nature Conservation. The south-west and north parts are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. There are several boundary amendments.

Reasons for Notification:

Old Park Wood comprises some of the most floristically rich ancient woods in Greater London and contains complex transitions through examples of widely differing woodland types.

The site lies on a steep west-facing slope of the Colne Valley and is deeply dissected by a network of small valleys which expose a series of geological deposits ranging from glacial sand and gravels on the highest parts, through pebbly clay and sand of the Reading Beds, to Upper Chalk in the lower valleys. The wide range of soils derived from these deposits together with variations in topography and drainage are reflected by a complex series of woodland types.

Birch-pedunculate oak woods and dense stands of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* occupy the upper strongly acidic gravels; these grade into acid pedunculate oak-ash-beech stands below, while in the damp and calcium rich valleys floristically diverse pedunculate oak-ash woods predominate. Old hazel coppice occurs throughout these areas and becomes dominant in places. Some of the plants found in the field layer have a localised distribution and are a special feature of the woods, for example coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* and thin-spiked wood-sedge *Carex strigosa*. Others, including opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and southern wood rush *Luzula forsteri* are scarce in Greater London north of the Thames. Several of the herbaceous species are indicative of long-established, ancient woodland.

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Old Park Wood (cont...)

Springlines, stream channels, wet hollows, a silted pond and an old chalk flint pit add to the diverse morphology of the site and increase the diversity of plants and animals. The flushed areas near the valley heads support examples of springline alder woods. These and the pedunculate oak-ash-woods down valley contain particularly rich communities of woodland herbs including wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. The old pit and adjoining cutting have an interesting flora and are known for colonies of nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, early dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana* and yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* are common in most areas and are abundant on the valley slopes.

The woods attract a good variety of birds, particularly in winter, and are noted for a locally important breeding community which includes nuthatch and all three species of woodpecker.