

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: HORSE WOOD, MILEHAM

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 922186

Area: 7.1 (ha) 17.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132

1:10,000: TF 91 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: -

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

Horse Wood is an ancient woodland site on a boulder clay plateau. The wood is probably of primary origin with a structure of coppice-with-standards. The stand types are mainly wet ash-maple wood and the nationally infrequent plateau alder wood. The ground flora is exceptionally diverse and includes a number of rare and uncommon species in great abundance.

Although the southern half of the original wood has been re-planted with conifers and is excluded from the SSSI, the remaining semi-natural stands have been little disturbed. Standard trees are of Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Areas of coppice are still cut, though at a reduced rate, and the main species involved are Ash, Maple *Acer campestre*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Oak. There are several large coppice stools in the wood and the rare Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis* is present.

The lightest soils at the northern end of the wood have a ground flora dominated by Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and Bramble with Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Lily of the Valley *Convallaria majalis* and Bracken. The heaviest soils have a rich flora and are dominated by Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* with Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Twayblade *Listera ovata*, Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Hairy Woodrush *Luzula pilosa* and Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*. Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* is plentiful throughout the wood.

The rides are mostly wide and very wet and have a diverse flora including Herb Paris, Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* present; with Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Water Avens *Geum rivale*.