

COUNTY: WEST SUSSEX SITE NAME: WOLSTONBURY HILL

DISTRICT: MID-SUSSEX

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

Local Planning Authority: MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 282140 Area: 58.6 (ha.) 144.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 198 1:10,000: TQ 21 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 Date of Last Revision: 1980

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The site is within the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons for Notification:

The chalk downland of Wolstonbury Hill is rich in flowering plants and includes a number of uncommon species. Woodland is established in parts of the site.

Chalk grassland has developed on thin rendzina soils on steep slopes. The grasses sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and upright brome *Bromus erectus* form a turf in which typical downland plants such as eyebright *Euphrasia nemorosa*, squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica* and marjoram *Origanum vulgare* are prominent. Rarer plants include round headed rampion *Phyteuma tenerum* and a range of orchids: bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, fly orchid *Ophrys insectifera*, pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, early purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and the only known Sussex locality for one other species. Dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria* is frequent in the grassland of the south-eastern outlier.

On the deeper soils at the foot of the escarpment woodland has become established. This comprises mature beech *Fagus sylvatica* with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* above an often dense ground flora of dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, wood false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* and bramble. There are also areas of younger, scrubbier woodland of ash and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* with typical chalk-loving shrubs such as wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.