

**COUNTY:** NORTHAMPTONSHIRE                      **SITE NAME:** OLD SULEHAY FOREST

**District:** East Northamptonshire

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

**Local Planning Authority:** East Northamptonshire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TL 063984

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 142                      **1:10,000:** TL 09 NE

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1973                      **Date of Last Revision:** 1973

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1983                      **Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 29.9 ha 73.9 ac

**Other Information:** The area of the site has been reduced since the last revision. The wood is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

One of an important group of ancient woodlands on calcareous strata in the north-eastern part of Rockingham Forest. Such woods have been significantly reduced by quarrying and re-forestation over the last 40 years.

The varied soil conditions give rise to several coppice types, notably the nationally restricted acid birch-ash-lime and acid pedunculate oak-lime stand types. A diverse ground flora includes a number of species of rare occurrence in Northamptonshire.

The canopy is almost entirely semi-natural and typically consists of overstood coppice and standards, with patches of younger self-grown trees. On heavy, poorly-drained clay field maple *Acer campestre*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and Midland hawthorn *Crataegus oxycanthoides* are the main underwood species with standards of oak, ash and occasionally wych elm *Ulmus glabra*.

Outcrops of acidic sands are associated with a mixture of birch and oak over hazel, and stands of small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*. The composition of the shrub layer exhibits subtle changes with a difference in soil depth and drainage.

A few herbs are widespread or locally abundant, eg dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, ramsons *Allium ursinum*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. A majority are more localised and some confined to open areas. Among the less common species are: nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, narrow buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, wood meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis* and deadly nightshade *Atropa belladonna*.

The rides and clearings add to the floristic interest of the site and provide habitat for butterflies and other insects. The wood has a long documented history and contains archaeological features.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed August 1999.