

COUNTY: CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** ELSWORTH WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Cambridgeshire District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 313617

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** TL 36 SW

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

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

Area: 7.2 ha 17.8 ac

Other information: This is a new addition to the Cambridgeshire Schedule. The wood is a reserve of the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Naturalists' Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Elsworth Wood is located approximately 13 kilometres west of Cambridge. It is the surviving fragment of a curious ring-shaped wood unusually situated on a ridge between two valleys. This wood has probably existed since the late 13th Century. Three types of woodland are represented, all of which are nationally uncommon. It is the best example in Cambridgeshire of a wood whose canopy is dominated by field maple *Acer campestre*. This type of woodland appears not to be known on the continent and therefore has international significance. In addition there is a good population of oxlip *Primula elatior* which is restricted to ancient woodlands in parts of East Anglia and the East Midlands. The wood is also known to be of importance for its invertebrate fauna and a number of nationally uncommon beetles have been recorded.

The canopy of Elsworth Wood is mostly dominated by field maple which is present as coppice-with-standards. Some oak *Quercus robur* standards are present in the southern part of the wood but ash *Fraxinus excelsior* is largely absent, only occurring as young trees in the extreme north of the wood. A small area of invasive elm *Ulmus* sp. is present and although this has been affected by Dutch Elm Disease, young suckers are again springing up. In addition there is an area of coppiced wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, of a type widely scattered in Suffolk and Essex but rare in Cambridgeshire. In the past the woodland has been managed as a coppice-with-standards and this practice still continues.

The shrub layer is varied, with coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* being the most common species. Other species which also occur include elder *Sambucus nigra*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris* and dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*.

The ground flora is typical of a wood on calcareous boulder clay, being largely dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. More notable species which occur include oxlip *Primula elatior*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, figwort *Scrophularia nodosa*, nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, stinking iris *Iris foetidissima* and broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*.

Studies carried out on the invertebrate fauna have revealed the presence of a number of nationally uncommon species, most notable of which to date is the rove beetle *Stichoglossa semirufa*.

A pond and stream provide additional habitats which are of value to wildlife generally.