COUNTY: BERKSHIRE SITE NAME: LODGE WOOD AND SANDFORD MILL

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

1981

**Local Planning Authorities:** Wokingham District Council, Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU779729/SU787736

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 1:10,000: SU77 SE

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1953 (part) **Date of Last Revision:** 1982

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision:

**Area:** 2.3 ha 5.7 ac

**Other information:** Part of the site was included within the Loddon Valley SSSI, first notified in 1953. Lodge Wood is a nature reserve managed by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists Trust.

## **Description and Reasons for Notification**

This site consists of two small wet woodlands bordering the River Loddon, notable for large populations of the rare Loddon Lily.

The woodlands are situated on London Clay, which is largely overlain by alluvium at Sandford Mill and valley gravel at Lodge Wood. The poorly-drained and seasonally-waterlogged soils conform to the Fladbury 3 and Hurst associations, and consist of stoneless, fine, clay-like silts and loams. Both woodlands occur on relatively flat ground which is affected by groundwater and susceptible to intermittent flooding from the Loddon.

Although Lodge Wood is shown on Rocque's map of Berkshire in 1761 and may be an ancient woodland site, management has modified its original composition and structure. Both woodlands are dominated by alder and crack willow *Salix fragilis*, together with some ash. There is a relatively poorly developed understorey which includes hazel, dogwood, elder, blackthorn and red currant *Ribes sylvestre*. The southern part of Lodge Wood is drier, and dominated by pedunculate oak and ash, with some hawthorn and spindle and occasional planted exotics.

The humic soils which have high levels of nutrients following enrichment by floodwaters, support a limited ground flora, heavily dominated by stinging nettle *Urtica dioica*, goosegrass *Galium aparine* and ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea*. Less common species include primrose *Primula vulgaris*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, together with marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* on wetter ground. The drier soils in the southern part of Lodge Wood support stands of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. Twenty-two species of moss and liverwort have been recorded.

Both Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill Woods support large colonies of Loddon Lily or summer snowflake *Leucojum aestivum*. This species has a very restricted distribution in Britain, and is listed in the British Red Data Book of vascular plants. In England it is largely confined to the Thames Basin, with one centre of distribution between Reading and Windsor, and another between Goring and Abingdon. It was first recorded from near Reading in 1799, and from the confluence of the Thames and Loddon in 1809. Because of its mode of dispersal the Loddon Lily is almost wholly associated with rivers, and the majority of colonies are found on islands or in dense willow carr. After flowering in April or May, when it is pollinated by bees, the fruits develop flotation chambers. Although they remain attached to the stem, in the event of flooding the stems break and the fruits are carried downstream and stranded amongst debris in thickets or on flood-plains. The bulbs can also be transported during heavy floods and deposited on river banks.

Although 48 native sites for Loddon Lily are known in England, there are very few sizeable populations. The main strongholds are the Thames east of Reading, and near the headwaters of the River Loddon, from which its common English name derives. The two small sites at Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill are estimated to contain over 10% of the total English population.