

File ref:

County: Essex **Site Name:** Belcher's & Broadfield Woods

District: Braintree

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

Local Planning Authority: Braintree District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 810267 **Area:** 14.4 (ha) 35.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 168 **1: 10 000:** TL 82 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1966 **Date of Last Revision:** -

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

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Belcher's and Broadfield Woods are ancient coppice-with-standards woods lying on a Chalky Boulder Clay plateau about 2½ miles south of Halstead. They contain several woodland types including Wet Ash-Maple, Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam, Acid Birch-Ash-Lime and Pedunculate Oak-Lime. A varied ground flora, with some species uncommon or decreasing in Essex, has been recorded.

The dominant tree in both woods is Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* which forms standards and underwood. In Greenwood Spring it is mixed with Field Maple *Acer campestre* and in the west of Broadfield with Sycamore *A. pseudoplatanus*. Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* is dominant in the south-west of this wood and there is a small area of Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata* as overgrown coppice in the north-east. An outlier of the woods to the east has Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash standards over Hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice. Where a coppice layer is clearly identified it is Hazel throughout the site. Three Wild Service-trees *Sorbus torminalis* are present in the east of Broadfield Wood.

The ground flora is mainly Bramble *Rubus* sp. and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. The woods are damp and stands of Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* occur in rides and in an open canopy area. Primrose *Primula vulgaris* is found in several areas and there are many other species of note, including Wood Small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos* and Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*. Both Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and Bird's-nest Orchid

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Belcher's & Broadfield Wood (cont....)

Neottia nidus-avis, uncommon and decreasing in Essex, have been recorded, together with damp wood or boulder clay species such as Orpine *Sedum telephium*, Thin-spiked Wood-sedge *Carex strigosa* and Herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*.

There are two small shallow ponds near the western boundary.