

County: Greater London **Site Name:** Denham Lock Wood

District: Hillingdon

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

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Hillingdon

National Grid Reference: TQ 055863 **Area:** 6.3 (ha) 15.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 176 **1: 10 000:** TQ 08 NE

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

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

Other Information:

A new site; adjoins Fray's Farm Meadows SSSI. Parts are covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Reasons for Notification:

Denham Lock Wood is a diverse area of open mire and wet woodland which shows a zonation of wetland habitats occurring rarely in Greater London. The woodland herb flora is particularly varied and reflects subtle differences in topography and drainage.

The site occupies a low-lying and poorly drained area on the floor of the Colne Valley. Generally the water table is at or near the soil surface through most of the year and in parts there is periodic flooding as a result of local variations in topography. These conditions have favoured the establishment of distinctive ecological transitions from open flood plain mire, through willow carr to wet valley alderwood.

Woods of alder *Alnus glutinosa* and crack willow *Salix fragilis* dominate a major part of the site and also form a scattered understorey within a derelict plantation of poplar. On the more waterlogged ground the willow characteristically occurs as a dense tangle of fallen and leaning trees. These support assemblages of epiphytic mosses, ferns and herbs and add to the varied woodland structure. In drier parts a shrub layer is present comprising mainly hazel coppice *Corylus avellana*. Other shrubs such as grey willow *Salix cinerea* and the locally uncommon guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* also occur and in places form a transitional carr between the woodland and open mire.

The open areas of flood plain mire are characterised by plant communities typical of a rich fen habitat. A mix of greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia* and lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* is

Denham Lock Wood (cont...)

widely dominant and locally occurs in association with common reed *Phragmites australis* and reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. Other well-represented species include meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, and common comfrey *Symphytum officinale*. These communities grade into a more open sedge-dominated sward on the waterlogged soils under the carr and woodland. In places where the watertable falls there is a particularly diverse woodland herb flora which shows an interesting pattern of plant associations. Included among the range of species present are bugle *Ajuga reptans*, male-fern *Dryopteris filixmas*, herb robert *Geranium robertianum*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, red campion *Silene dioica* and shade tolerant plants of the open mire habitat. Derelict drains support other herbs such as marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, an uncommon species in Greater London due to the decline of similar wetland areas.