

Appendix 4 DFC Note on Ancient Woodland

Tel: 01621 740876
Fax: 01621 742242

www.dfclark.co.uk



Arboriculture Ecology

Andrews Farm
Burnham Road
Althorne
Chelmsford
Essex
CM3 6DS

Summary Note on Heybridge Wood

Heybridge Wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site of County importance because of the presence of lowland mixed deciduous woodland. It is also included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). The original semi-natural vegetation of Heybridge Wood was almost wholly cleared, probably in the 1960-70's. The clearance removed almost the entire original coppice of the woodland leaving a relatively narrow band around the edge of the woodland intact. This historical land management has resulted in the woodland being classified as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). PAWS are still given the same level of consideration within national planning policy as intact Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW).

A strategic level Phase 2 botanical survey was carried out in April 2012, the aim of which was to identify and describe the key botanical features of the woodland. The Phase 2 survey identified areas of intact ASNW comprising the northern and eastern boundary banks and ditches, their associated boundary trees, and the surviving belt of semi-natural woodland just within the boundary. The remainder of the woodland contained PAWS although localised areas of old coppice stools were found within the woodland interior. This indicates that some areas were damaged less by the historical woodland clearance. In addition, there has been substantial natural regeneration in the wood.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission produced Standing Advice relating to Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees¹. This advice is to be used by local planning authorities in the determination of planning applications on or affecting ancient woodland and veteran trees. In particular the Standing Advice recommends the use of an appropriate buffer between ancient woodland and any proposed development. The Standing Advice recommends a buffer of 15 metres is usually sufficient, depending on the nature of development. A 15 metre buffer around Heybridge Wood has been incorporated within the design of the development. The function of the buffer is to protect the ancient woodland against development effects such as disturbance by lighting and noise.

It is likely there will be an increase in public interest in the woodland once new dwellings become occupied. Unmanaged public access has potential to result in damage to the woodland and disturbance of wildlife. The management of Heybridge Wood for the benefit of wildlife and people has the potential to minimise such adverse impacts, by informing future practical management of the wood so that it is appropriate to the nature conservation interest of the woodland. The Phase 2 botanical survey noted the considerable restoration potential of the woodland therefore the implementation of a site-specific, detailed environmental management plan has the potential to enhance the ecological value of the woodland in the long-term.

¹ Natural England and the Forestry Commission (7th April 2014) Standing Advice for Woodland and Veteran Trees