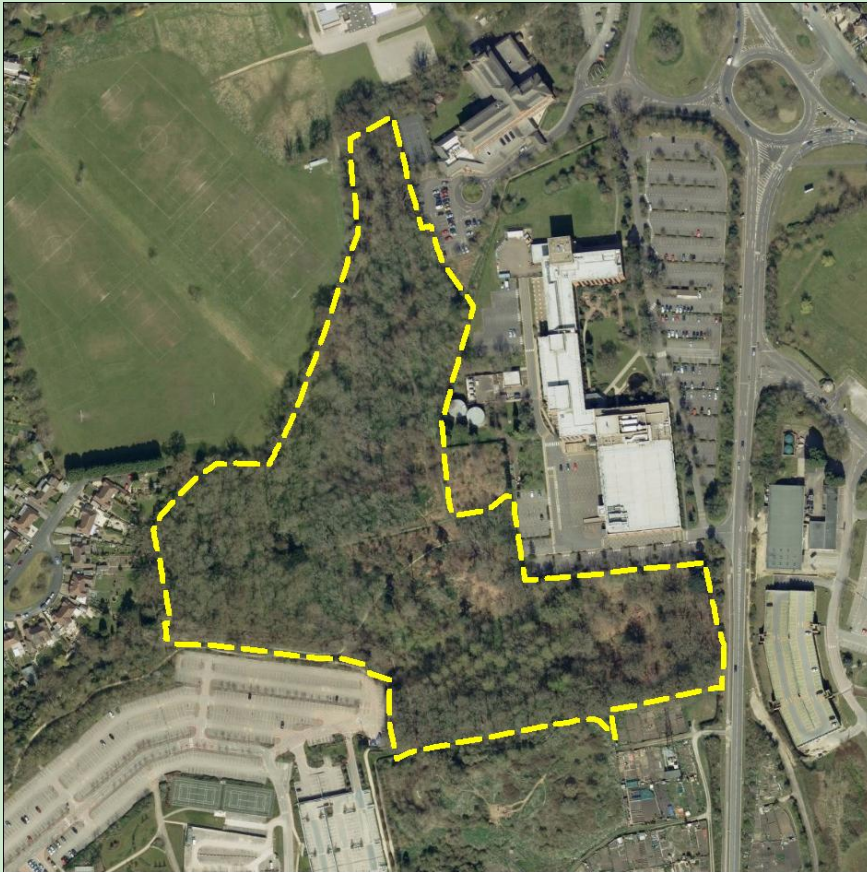


SU18.015 Great Copse Wildlife Site

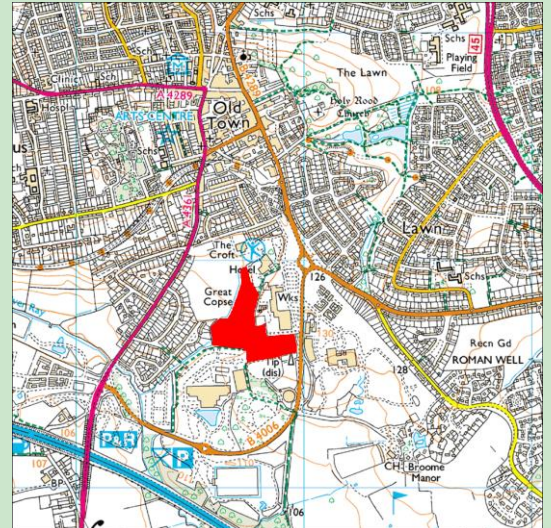


Description: A small ancient broadleaved woodland isolated between commercial and residential areas on the southern edge of Swindon

Grid ref. SU157827
Area 6.27 hectares
Visited 10/05/2012
By Rob Large



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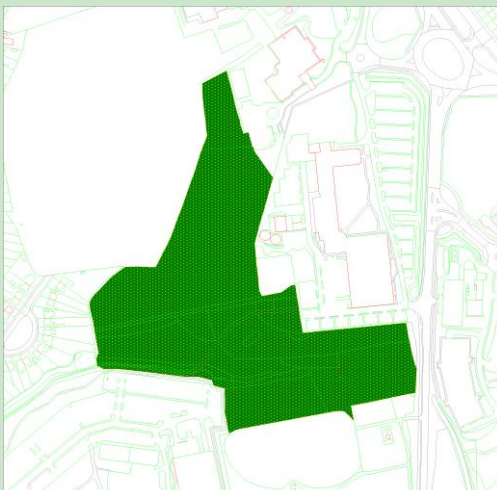
Important habitats: **Great Copse** includes 6.27 hectares of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority habitat **lowland mixed deciduous woodland**. This habitat can support very diverse plant and animal communities and has usually arisen as a result of traditional, extensive management applied

over very many years. Many such sites have been lost in recent decades through agricultural or forestry intensification or through development and the UK BAP seeks to preserve all remaining examples and where possible, to enhance them through appropriate management of surrounding land.

Important species: Several species have been recorded at **Great Copse** which are notable because they are rare or threatened in Wiltshire, nationally or globally. Among these, **Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)** was seen on this visit and **Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)** has been seen in the past.

In addition 13 species considered to be indicators of high-quality ancient woodland were recorded on this visit. Examples include **Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)**, **Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*)**, **Hairy-brome (*Bromopsis ramosa*)**, **Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*)**, **Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*)**, **Giant Fescue (*Festuca gigantea*)**, **Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*)**, **Common Figwort (*Scrophularia nodosa*)** and **Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*)**.

For more information about UK BAP priority habitats and species, visit: www.ukbap.org



Habitats recorded:

- Acid grassland
- Arable
- Bracken
- Broadleaved woodland
- Calcareous grassland
- Conifer woodland
- Dense scrub
- Fen, marsh & swamp
- Heathland
- Improved grassland
- Neutral grassland
- Rock exposure
- Open water
- UK BAP priority habitat

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The recognition of land as a Wildlife Site has a number of implications for landowners and managers:

Wildlife Sites may be targeted for management grant aid, for example by Higher Level Stewardship.
 Free advice is available on site management for wildlife.
 Owners and managers are informed of the importance of the site and advised on management.
 No restrictions are placed on agricultural operations, although we may advise against certain activities.
 For any substantial changes in land-use on a Wildlife Site, local authorities should take wildlife into account.
 Site details are not published, apart from the location which may appear in some local development plans.
 No rights of access are created, access is by permission only.
 Wildlife Site land may have an increased sale value.

SU18.015 Great Copse Wildlife Site



Management recommendations

In small woodlands in exposed locations it is advisable to retain scrub and understorey trees around the perimeter to maintain a sheltered environment within.

Cutting Hazel and Ash coppice will open up the ground to light and rejuvenate ground flora in shaded areas where it has become sparse. Small blocks only should be cut in any one year to provide diverse conditions at ground level. This would benefit a range of butterfly species.

Dead wood, both standing and fallen, provides a valuable habitat for invertebrates. If extracting firewood, try to leave a proportion of deadwood of all sizes. Creating brash and log piles in a particular area will help less mobile species and provides habitat for reptiles and amphibians.

Woodland regeneration, whether by replanting, coppicing or natural processes is often hampered by the presence of large populations of browsing deer. It may be necessary to consider exclusion or culling in order to ensure regrowth.

Woodlands should always be fenced to exclude grazing stock, except in areas where there is a long history of wood-pasture management. This will enhance diversity of the ground flora.

Retain Ivy on mature trees, it is an excellent nectar source and fruit provide valuable winter food for birds. It is also a primary food plant of the Holly Blue butterfly. It may be removed from large trees in exposed locations where there is a risk of wind-throw.

Minimal intervention is a valid form of woodland management, avoid the inclination to over-tidiness.

Consider installing nesting boxes for Owls and other birds as well as Dormice. In small woods such as this nesting sites may be in short supply.

Non-native species should be selectively removed. Conifers, Sycamore, Rhododendron, Laurel and Snowberry, have all been planted extensively in Wiltshire woodlands and have a tendency to dominate and stifle ground flora.

If replanting, use only native species from a local source (details of suppliers can be obtained from the Trust). Non-natives have limited value for rare native invertebrates and can in some cases interbreed with native species.

Ancient and veteran trees should be retained wherever possible. They can support important invertebrates and lichens and holes provide nesting sites for birds and roosts for bats. Understorey trees should be progressively removed from around selected trees to gradually open up trunks to sunlight, this will help lichen and moss communities. Mature native trees of no timber value because of distorted or irregular growth may be selected as 'future veterans', thin around these to allow them to develop naturally.



For more information about your Wildlife Site, detailed management advice or if you have any other questions, please contact:

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Tel: **01380 736090**, Email: robl@wiltshirewildlife.org
Or visit: www.wsbrc.org.uk

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