

Ockham and Wisley Commons SPA :

COUNTY: SURREY SITE NAME: OCKHAM AND WISLEY COMMONS

BOROUGH: ELMBRIDGE, GUILDFORD

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

Local Planning Authorities: ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH COUNCIL, Guildford Borough Council

National Grid References: TQ 070585, TQ 082585 Area: 269.6 (ha.) 666.2 (ac.)
TQ 084592, TQ 078595

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 187 1:10,000: TQ 05 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act.): 1975 Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

The majority of Ockham & Wisley Commons SSSI is owned and managed by Surrey County Council as an Open Space. The site includes several areas of Common Land. The boundary of the site has been modified at renotification by several deletions and extensions. The lakes at Pains Hill and Silvermere are no longer part of this site.

Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of a large tract of heathland lying between the Mole and Wey Rivers near Cobham, containing areas of heath, bog, open water, secondary woodland and scrub. This variety of habitats supports a rich community of heathland plants and animals, including a large number of rare and local insects.

Lowland heaths have been a feature of the British landscape for several thousand years, but the area of heathland has been reduced steadily by land-use changes such as conversion to intensive agriculture, forestry or urban development. This loss has been particularly rapid this century, and 40% of heathland remaining in 1950 has now been destroyed. As their habitat is destroyed, the many specialised plants and animals which live on heathland have become increasingly rare. Since little heathland is still maintained by grazing, much of it is becoming overgrown with scrub and trees, a process which may be seen clearly at this site.

The site lies on Bagshot beds, which give rise to an acidic sandy soil supporting heath dominated by ling *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea*, and in grassy areas by common bent grass *Agrostis capillaris* and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*. Amongst these plants grow dwarf furze *Ulex minor*, petty whin *Genista anglica* and shepherd's cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis*. Animals found here include such local insects as the silver-studded blue butterfly *Plebejus argus* and the wood tiger beetle *Cicindela sylvatica*. In wet areas, where the sand is overlain by peat, the heath is dominated by ling, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and bog-moss *Sphagnum* spp. Also found here are royal fern

Osmunda regalis, lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and creeping willow *Salix repens*, and the largest Surrey colonies of bog hairgrass *Deschampsia setacea* which is local in Britain and rare in Europe as a whole. Among the many local insects found here are bog bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera* and a large robber fly *Asilus crabroniformis*.

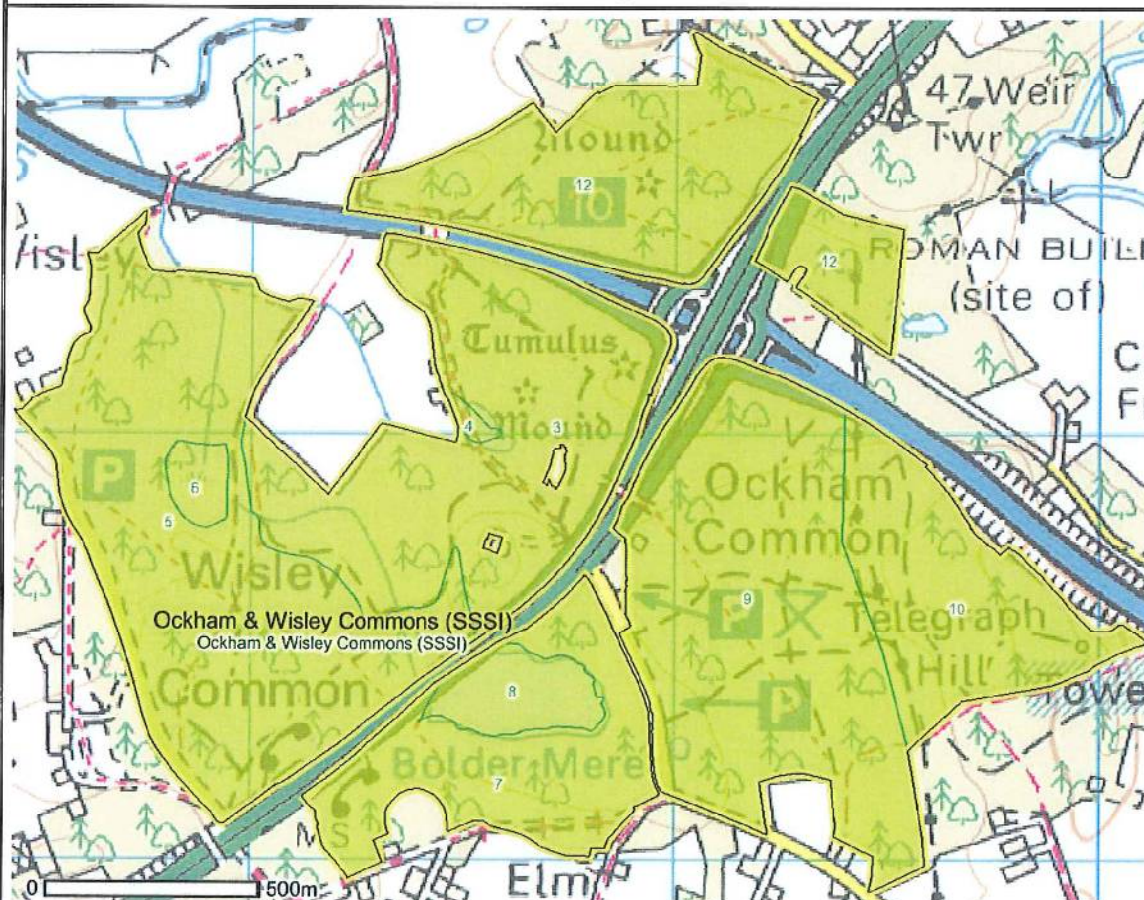
Most of the heathland is very overgrown with bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and invasive trees and shrubs; mainly silver birch *Betula pendula*, Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris* and oak *Quercus robur*. In several parts of the site there are dense pine plantations which have replaced the heathland completely.

There are several areas of open water within the site, including Bolder Mere and a number of ponds and pools in the wet heathland. Plants growing around the water include several Surrey rarities including shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*, marsh St John's wort *Hypericum elodes* and lesser water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*. Locally-distributed plants include needle spike-rush *Eleocharis acicularis* and pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*. Open water surrounded by heathland presents an ideal habitat for many dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata), and over 20 species have been recorded from the site which is thus of national importance for this group. They include the rare white-faced dragonfly *Leucorrhinia dubia*, the local hairy dragonfly *Brachytron pratense* and the ruddy darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*. The site also supports many other local and rare invertebrates. It is of national importance for true flies (Diptera); rare species include a bee fly *Thyridanthrax fenestratus* and a crane-fly *Tipula livida*, while the crane-fly *Limonia inusta* is among the many local species. A large number of local beetles (Coleoptera) are also found, including the ground beetle *Amara infima* and the weevil *Byctiscus populi*.



Nature on the Map

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- ★ Natural England Offices
- Selected Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- SSSI Live Management Agreements
- SSSI Unit condition - last updated 17 Mar 2011
- Favourable Condition
- Unfavourable Recovering
- Unfavourable no change
- Unfavourable Declining
- Part Destroyed
- Destroyed
- Not Assessed
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Natural England Regions
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EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Thames Basin Heaths

Unitary Authority/County: Bracknell Forest; Hampshire; Surrey; Windsor and Maidenhead.

Site description: The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is a composite site that is located across the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire in southern England. It encompasses all or parts of Ash to Brookwood Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Bourley and Long Valley SSSI, Bramshill SSSI, Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI, Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI, Chobham Common SSSI, Colony Bog and Bagshot Heaths SSSI, Eelmoor Marsh SSSI, Hazeley Heath SSSI, Horsell Common SSSI, Ockham and Wisley Commons SSSI, Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI and Whitmoor Common SSSI.

The open heathland habitats overlie sand and gravel sediments which give rise to sandy or peaty acidic soils, supporting dry heathy vegetation on well-drained slopes, wet heath on low-lying shallow slopes and bogs in valleys. The site consists of tracts of heathland, scrub and woodland, once almost continuous, but now fragmented into separate blocks by roads, urban development and farmland. Less open habitats of scrub, acidic woodland and conifer plantations dominate, within which are scattered areas of open heath and mire. The site supports important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heathland, especially nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and woodlark *Lullula arborea*, both of which nest on the ground, often at the woodland/heathland edge, and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, which often nests in gorse *Ulex* sp. Scattered trees and scrub are used for roosting.

Together with the nearby Ashdown Forest and Wealden Heaths SPAs, the Thames Basin Heaths form part of a complex of heathlands in southern England that support important breeding bird populations.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 8274.72 ha.

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Annex I species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	264 churring males – breeding	1998/99	7.8%
Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	149 pairs – breeding	1997	9.9%
Dartford warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>	445 pairs – breeding	1999	27.8%

Non-qualifying species of interest: Hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, merlin *Falco columbarius*, short-eared owl *Asio flammeus* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (all Annex I species) occur in non-breeding numbers of less than European importance (less than 1% of the GB population).

Status of SPA:

Thames Basin Heaths was classified as a Special Protection Area on 9 March 2005.

This citation/map relates to a site entered in the Register of European sites for Great Britain.	
Register reference number.....	UK
Date of registration.....	9 March 2005
Signed.....	
On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs	