COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE / SITE NAME: COLLYWESTON GREAT WOOD CAMBRIDGESHIRE & EASTON HORNSTOCKS

District: East Northamptonshire/City of Peterborough

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

Local Planning Authorities: East Northamptonshire District Council
City of Peterborough Council

National Grid Reference: TF 013004

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 141 1:10,000: TF 00 SW, TL 09 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959 Date of Last Revision: 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision:

Area: 149.5 ha 369.4 ac

Other Information: Collyweston Great Wood and Easton Hornstocks is a National Nature Reserve declared under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Together with the adjacent Bedford Purlieus, this site is listed in ‘A Nature Conservation Review’ (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

Description and Reasons for Notification

Collyweston Great Wood and Easton Hornstocks is the largest Northamptonshire remnant of the ancient Purlieu coppices of Rockingham Forest. The underlying rock is Jurassic Lower Lincolnshire Limestone overlain by Upper Estuarine ‘Series’ sands and Boulder Clay drift. This has given rise to a range of soils of widely differing drainage and chemistry which in turn support an outstanding range of semi-natural woodland types. Little of the site has been affected by re-afforestation so that a complex mosaic of vegetation occurs, closely correlated with soil characteristics.

The main coppice types are variants of ash-lime and oak-lime woodland with small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*, the dominant component. The latter has a restricted distribution and lime woodland is therefore nationally uncommon. Of particular interest is the combination of lime and sessile oak *Quercus petraea* - one of the very few localities in the East Midlands. Wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* occurs frequently in association and, like lime, is virtually confined to ancient woods.* Other major coppice types represented include birch-oak, ash-maple and hazel-ash.

The ground flora is extremely rich due to the combination of calcareous and acidic soils and there are many locally-rare plants, eg lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, fly orchid *Ophrys insectifera* and columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*.

Dog’s mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* are some of the more widespread plants. Several large areas of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* occur and are often associated with tree pipits, one of the less common species from a good representative breeding bird fauna.

*Sites with a continuous history of woodland cover from the Middle Ages or before.