COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SITE NAME: SHORT WOOD

District: East Northamptonshire

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

Local Planning Authority: East Northamptonshire District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 015913

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

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1973 Date of Last Revision:

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision:

Area: 24.5 ha 60.4 ac

Other Information: The site is owned and managed by the Northamptonshire Trust for Nature Conservation.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Short Wood is an area of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland on calcareous clay soils and forms a relic of the Royal Forest of Rockingham. A small part of the woodland was cultivated in the Middle Ages.

Wet ash-maple woodland is the most common vegetation type present with invasive elm coppice Ulmus procera occurring locally. Despite the death of some of the elm trees, this woodland still contains the most extensive of elm coppice in the county.

The woodland structure is predominantly coppice-with-standards with small areas of high forest. The canopy consists mainly of ash Fraxinus excelsior and pedunculate oak Quercus robur with the occasional birch Betula spp., coppiced hazel Corylus avellana, field maple Acer campestre and ash dominate the shrub layer with both common and Midland hawthorn Crataegus monogyna and C. laevigata occurring frequently. Spindle Euonymus europaeus, dogwood Cornus sanguinea and guelder rose Viburnum opulus are scattered throughout the wood. The presence of wild service tree Sorbus torminalis is notable.

The ground flora is indicative of the site’s ancient woodland status and contains a good assemblage of species including bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta, dog’s mercury Mercurialis perennis and in some places wood-sorrel Oxalis acetosella, male fern Dryopteris felix-mas and bracken Pteridium aquilinum. The areas under the elm support the richest and most diverse communities.

Several county rarities have been recorded including wood speedwell Veronica montana, bird’s nest orchid Neottia nidus-avis, greater butterfly orchid Platanthera chlorantha and wood melick Melica uniflora. Violet helleborine Epipactis purpurata and herb Paris Paris quadrifolia have also been recorded on this site in the past.

Additional areas of interest include a number of small glades and ancient woodland banks.