COUNTY: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SITE NAME: MILLFIELD WOOD

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

1981

Local Planning Authorities: Wycombe District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU870954

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 165 1:10,000: SU89 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1972 Date of Last Revision:

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

Area: 9.5 ha 23.5 ac

Other information: The woodland is owned and managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists Trust. The entire site is within the Chilterns AONB.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Millfield Wood: This site is a rare example of semi-natural Chiltern beechwood on chalk containing a substantial amount of relic wych elm coppice. Despite its relatively small size the wood supports an unusually rich ground flora which includes nationally restricted species.

Situated for the most part on deep calcareous loam on Upper Chalk, the wood is open beech high forest containing much ash, wych elm and wild cherry. The shrub layer is diverse, with a number of calcicole species, and includes coppiced hazel, field maple and whitebeam, along with much holly and field rose. The ground flora is largely dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, but contains a broad range of ancient woodland species, among which are the uncommon coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera*, lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*, yellow bird's-nest *Monotropa hypopitys* and herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*. Additional interest is provided by the presence of several well-established badger setts.

Millfield Bank (included in boundary revision 1983): A steep bank adjacent to Millfield Wood providing a good example of species-rich calcareous grassland and scrub characteristic of the Upper Chalk in the Chilterns.

The sward is largely dominated by downy oat-grass *Avenula pubescens* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, locally by false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. Cowslips *Primula veris* and primroses *P. vulgaris* are abundant together with a good range of chalk grassland species including kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and an unusual feature of chalk grassland southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. There are also hybrids between the latter and common spotted orchid *D. fuchsii*.

The grassland supports a rich invertebrate fauna which includes small blue *Cupido minimus* and marbled white *Agapetes galathea* butterflies.