File ref:

County: Leicestershire Site name: Croxton Park

District: Melton

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section

28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: Melton Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SK 823279 Area: 97.5 (ha) 240.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 130 1: 10 000: SK 82 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981 Date of Last Revision:

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

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Croxton Park is of medieval origin. It is probably the best remaining example of ancient parkland in Leicestershire with largely unimproved rough pasture around the ancient trees. The lichen flora is amongst the richest in the East Midlands and the diversity of breeding birds is outstanding.

The site lies partly on the Northampton sands but the valleys cut into Upper Lias Clay. On the sands a neutral to acid grassland has developed, mostly dominated by bent grasses *Agrostis spp.*, fescues *Festuca spp.* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. Field wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, sorrel *Rumex acetosa* and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* are locally abundant. Marshy areas within these swards are dominated by rushes *Juncus spp.* Meadow grasses *Poa spp.* and cowslip *Primula veris* occur in areas which are influenced by the underlying Lincolnshire limestone.

Ancient pedunculate oaks *Quercus robur* and hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* occur sparingly in the grazed areas and amongst 200 year old oak plantations. The old oaks and ash trees in the sheltered valleys support many uncommon lichens. More than 90 species have so far been recorded including the locally rare *Chaenotheca ferruginea* and *Lecanactis abietina* on oaks, the regionally rare *Pseudevernia furfuracea* and locally rare *Mycoblastus sterilis* on ash, and the scarce *Cyphelium inquinans* on dead wood. The old limestone walls also support a good selection of lichens including the only County record of *Lecania baeomma*.

The old hollow trees, scrub filled valleys, ponds and large expanses of grassland provide excellent breeding bird habitats. Species include mallard, snipe, woodcock, curlew, woodpeckers, redstart, tree pipit, yellow wagtail and corn bunting.