File ref:

**County:** **Leicestershire** **Site name: Oakley Wood**

**District:** **North-West Leicestershire**

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

**Local Planning Authority:** North-West Leicestershire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SK 485217 **Area:** 48.99 (ha) 121.05 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 129 **1: 25 000:** SK 42 SE

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1956 **Date of Last Revision:** 1981

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

**Other Information:**

**Reasons for Notification:**

The site represents a unique example in Leicestershire of the transition from mixed oakwood, developed on free-draining acid soil, to ash-hazel woodland characteristic of the heavy clays of Eastern Central England.

**Biology:**

Developed primarily from boulder clays of glacial origin, the soils of the site are more water retentive than those derived from the Keuper Marl which underlies much of Charnwood and gives rise to acidic free-draining soils characteristic of the area.

Oakley Wood is most probably of ancient origin although its former composition may have been different to that which exists today. At the northern and southern extremities, the site supports excellent examples of lowland mixed oakwood. In these areas pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* dominates a canopy which also includes sessile oak *Q. petraea*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and silver birch *Betula pendula*. The shrub layer is characterised by an abundance of hazel *Corylus avellana*, whilst bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* dominates the ground flora.

Ash-hazel woodland occurs in the wetter central areas of the site, the less shaded conditions giving rise to more diverse ground flora which includes wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, lords and ladies *Arum maculatum* and yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*.

Rides provide additional floristic diversity within the wood, supporting characteristic woodland species such as lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis* and bugle *Ajuga reptans*.