COUNTY: OXFORDSHIRE   **SITE NAME:** STANTON GREAT WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SP588093

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:   164   **1:10,000:** SP50 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):   1955   **Date of Last Revision:** 1977

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):   1987   **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 57.54 ha   142.18 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

Stanton Great Wood is a traditionally managed coppice-with-standards woodland with a rich flora and a diverse insect population which includes some uncommon species of butterflies and moths.

Stanton Great Wood is situated on soils derived from river alluvium and Oxford Clay. Once part of the Shotover Royal Forest, the site is mentioned in the Domesday Book and has almost certainly remained wooded since prehistoric times.

Semi-natural areas consist of stands of pedunculate oak, ash, hazel with field maple in places. The hazel and field maple form a well-managed understorey of coppice under a canopy of mature oak standards and ash promoted from old coppice stools. Although the oaks are mostly less than 100 years old, Stanton Great Wood is considered to be a good example of ancient coppice-with-standards woodland. Other trees and shrubs include silver birch, crab apple, honeysuckle, hawthorn and a high frequency of wild service tree, which is very rare outside ancient woodland on clay parts of the Midlands and south-east England.

Parts of the wood have been cleared and replanted with mixtures of hardwoods with conifers, which have now reached semi-maturity as nurse crops. These areas include some hazel coppice and occasional wild service trees.

The woodland ground flora is quite varied, though often dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, or tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*. Other grasses include species normally associated with ancient woodlands such as hairy brome *Bromus ramosus*, giant fescue *Festuca gigantea*, wood millet *Milium effusum* and the wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos* which occurs in wetter areas. Sedges thrive in the poorly-drained conditions; wood sedge *Carex sylvatica* is frequent and pale sedge *C. pallescens*, an uncommon species, occurs locally in the wood. The coppice regime also allows many broadleaved flowering plants to flourish, including yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*. Less frequent species include common dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* and ramsons *Allium ursinum*. Most of these are characteristic of ancient woodlands and rarely occur in other types of habitats.

Insects associated with the semi-natural woodland include many species which are considered characteristic of old forests. Moths include the buff footman *Eilema sorocula*, poplar intestring *Tethea or*, blotched emerald *Comibaena bajularia*, maiden's blush *Cyclophora punctaria* and the nationally uncommon small black arches *Meganola strigula*.

Important habitats for insects include the hedge boundaries and shrubby margins of the extensive system of rides throughout the wood. Boundary hedges consist predominantly of blackthorn and hawthorn with some oak standards and other trees, whilst the generally damp rides contain abundant goat willow, which supports the uncommon purple emperor butterfly *Apatura iris*. Other ride species include the leaf roller weevil *Apoderus coryli* on hazel and moths such as the slender brindle *Apamea scolopacina*, orange moth *Angerona prunaria* and the mere wainscot *Photedes fluxa* which feeds on the wood small-reed. The hedges hold populations of the uncommon brown hairstreak butterfly *Thecla betulae*

and are believed to harbour the rare black hairstreak *Strymonidia pruni* which occurs in similar habitats nearby.