COUNTY: BERKSHIRE **SITE NAME:** ASHRIDGE WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: Newbury District Council, Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU500784

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 **1:10,000:** SU47 NE, SU57 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 **Date of Last Revision:** 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 15.58 ha 38.51 ac

Other information: Within North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Ancient coppiced woodland on chalk and clay-with-flints soils. About half of the wood was cleared for agriculture during 1954 and part of the remainder has been planted with conifers.

Ashridge Wood is a good example of the dry ash-maple woodland stand-type in association with southern calcareous hazel-ash woodland. Oak standards occur throughout. Wych elm, cherry and whitebeam occur locally with aspen mainly on the clay-with-flints.

The site is important for a number of plants which are rare or local in Berkshire. In particular there is a great abundance of spiked star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* growing with Solomon's seal *Polygonatum multiflorum*. These occur throughout in association with dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and several other plants typical of old coppiced woodland. Both spiked star-of-Bethlehem and Solomon's seal are here on the edge of the native range in Britain. The narrow-leaved everlasting pea *Lathyrus sylvestris* and autumn crocus *Colchicum autumnale* are present but both are now extremely scarce. These too are at the edge of their native range and represent an important relic woodland flora, formerly associated with coppicing.