

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE **SITE NAME:** HANGER WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: Bedford Borough Council
Bedfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SP 995494

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** SP 94 NE, TL 04 NW
SP 95 SE, TL 05 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 24.12 ha 59.60 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

Hanger Wood is located approximately one kilometre east of the village of Stagsden in north west Bedfordshire. Situated on the poorly drained soils of the boulder clay, the wood extends along the gentle north west facing slope of a narrow ridge. It represents a habitat which is very scarce in Bedfordshire, a poorly wooded county, and which has generally declined throughout its range in lowland England.

Hanger Wood is one of the best remaining examples of wet ash-maple woodland in Bedfordshire exhibiting a flora characteristic of the heavy, slightly basic clay soils. The wood is typical of an ancient, semi-natural woodland, formerly managed as coppice-with-standards with a rich variety of shrubs and a diverse ground flora including species uncommon in the county.

Mature pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* standards dominate the canopy together with overgrown ash coppice and field maple *Acer campestre*. The diverse shrub layer is dominated by coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana* in association with hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata*, a species strongly associated with ancient woodland sites. Other species include dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*. Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* locally forms dense thickets while wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus* are mainly restricted to the wood margins.

Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* characteristically dominate the ground flora with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* locally abundant where conditions are slightly drier. Other species also characteristic of ancient woodlands include wood sedge *Carex sylvatica*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, wood melick *Melica uniflora*, wood millet *Milium effusum* and herb paris *Paris quadrifolia*, a species uncommon in the county.

Additional habitats are provided by the rides which support marshy grassland communities, often dominated by pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* with meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and false fox-sedge *Carex otrubae*.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed September 1998.

Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.