

File ref:

County: Hampshire/Dorset **Site Name:** Bouldsbury Wood SSSI

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

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, Dorset County Council, Wimborne District Council

National Grid Reference: SU 070156 **Area:** 119.88 (ha) 296.23 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 184, 195 **1:25,000:** SU 01

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

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

Other Information:

79.01 ha of the site are in Hampshire; 40.87 ha are in Dorset. 118.76 ha are the subject of a Section 15 Agreement under the Countryside Act 1968 between the owner and the Nature Conservancy Council.

Reasons for Notification:

Bouldsbury Wood *sensu lato* (consisting of Bouldsbury Wood, High Wood, Stone Hill Wood, Martin Wood and Blagdon Hill Wood) is a large varied wood lying astride the high county boundary ridge where Dorset and Hampshire meet. The wood lies across the transition between the acidic deposits of the Reading Beds and the Chalk, which give rise to a complex series of soils ranging from thin chalk, through a deep, rich, calcareous loam, to podsolised soils and dense cappings of flints.

The wood is known to support ten different identifiable stand-types (i.e. natural groupings of tree species according to environmental conditions), some of which are known to be rare in Hampshire. The most characteristic association within the woods is oak standards with hazel coppice, although other areas are predominantly beech or ash, with rarer trees such as wych elm *Ulmus glabra* or small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* in places. Associated with this wide range of stand-types and physical conditions, there is an exceptionally diverse flora, which includes many uncommon species. At least 60 'woodland vascular plants' (i.e. plants which are taken to indicate ancient woodlands in southern England) occur, setting Bouldsbury Wood aside as the single most species-rich wood in Hampshire, or indeed in the whole of NCC's South Region. The wood is also the only known Hampshire locality for two species, the meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale* and the wood vetch *Vicia sylvatica*. In addition the invertebrate fauna is extremely rich although inadequately recorded.

Records indicate that parts of the wood are extremely ancient, with reliable documentary evidence dating back to the thirteenth century.

The wood has been extensively felled and replanted with conifers and the site boundary excludes the majority of those areas which include maturing conifers. A small area of species-rich chalk grassland is included within the site boundary.