## SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE 24TH MAY 1988

COUNTY: NORFOLK SITE NAME: SHOTESHAM-WOODTON HORNBEAM WOODS

DISTRICT: SOUTH NORFOLK

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

Local Planning Authority: South Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 253975, TM 258948 Area: 40.9 (ha.) 101.0 (ac.)

TM 249978, TM 268944

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134 1:10,000: TM 29 NW, SE

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

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

Other Information:

A new site.

## Description:

This site consists of a group of four ancient coppice-with-standards woodlands that were probably once part of a continuous cover of primary hornbeam forest. The hornbeam woods of south Norfolk and north-east Suffolk form a very distinctive group and Shotesham Little Wood, Saxlingham Grove, Hempnall Little Wood and Winter's Grove are some of the most representative examples of this type. All four woods are situated on heavy boulder clays but in places there is an overlying layer of sandy loam. Consequently there are variations in the acidity and drainage of the soils and these differences are reflected in the range of stand-types and in the ground flora. The flora is exceptionally rich and there are several locally scarce and uncommon plants present.

The major stand-type is pedunculate oak-hornbeam woodland and both the heavy soil form and the nationally uncommon light soil variant are present. The standard trees are mostly pedunculate oak Quercus robur and ash Fraxinus excelsior and the main coppice species are hornbeam Carpinus betulus, maple Acer campestre, hazel Corylus avellana and ash. Freedraining acidic soils occur in Shotesham Little Wood and here the ground flora is dominated by bramble Rubus fruticosus, bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta or dog's mercury Mercurialis perennis with frequent honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*. A diverse ground flora is present on the wet calcareous clays in Saxlingham Grove and Hemphall Little Wood. Dog's mercury is dominant with frequent primrose *Primula vulgaris*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, enchanter's nightshade Circaea lutetiana and wood anemone Anemone nemorosa. A number of uncommon species are present including herb paris *Paris* quadrifolia, greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, early purple orchid Orchis mascula, stinking iris Iris foetidissima and ramsons Allium ursinum. In addition, Hempnall Little Wood is the only site for wild service tree Sorbus torminalis in south Norfolk.

Small areas of other stand-types occur and these include wet ash-wych elm woodland and wet ash-maple woodland.

The core of Winter's Grove is surrounded by a massive medieval woodbank and ditch and although small is a complete example of an ancient wood.