COUNTY: SHROPSHIRE SITE NAME: HENCOTT POOL

DISTRICT: Shrewsbury & Atcham

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

Local Planning Authority: SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SJ 490160 Area: 11.5 (ha.) 28.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 126 1:10,000: SJ 41 NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Reasons for Notification:
The Meres & Mosses of the north west Midlands form a nationally important series of open water and peatland sites. These have developed in natural depressions in the glacial drift left by the ice sheets which covered the Cheshire-Shropshire plain some 15,000 years ago. The majority lie in Cheshire and north Shropshire, with a small number of outlying sites in adjacent parts of Staffordshire and Clwyd.

The origin of most of the hollows can be accounted for by glaciation, but a small number have been formed at least in part by more recent subsidence resulting from the removal in solution of underlying salt deposits.

There are more than 60 open water bodies known as 'meres' or 'pools' and a smaller number of peatland sites or mires known as 'mosses'. They range in depth from about one metre to 27 metres and have areas varying between less than a hectare to 70 hectares.

Although the majority of the Meres are nutrient rich (eutrophic) the water chemistry is very variable reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the surrounding drift deposits. Associated fringing habitats such as reedswamp, fen, carr and damp pasture add to the value of the meres. The development of these habitats is associated with peat accumulation which in some cases has led to the complete infilling of the basin. During this process the nutrient status of the peat surface changes and typically becomes nutrient poor (oligotrophic) and acidic thus allowing species such as the bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp. to colonise it. The resulting peat bogs are the mosses. In a few cases colonisation of the water surface by floating vegetation has resulted in the formation of a quaking bog known as 'schwingmoor'.

Despite its name, Hencott Pool now contains little, if any, open water. It is a peat-filled basin supporting fen and carr vegetation, and represents a stage in the succession from open water to carr woodland and peat bog.

Most of Hencott Pool is swamp carr on very wet peat dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa* and common sallow *Salix cinerea* with frequent crack willow *Salix fragilis*. Although there are considerable areas of bare peat beneath the trees, there is a rich flora of fen plants. The site is notable for the size of its population of elongated sedge *Carex elongata*. Other uncommon species include purple smallreed *Calamagrostis canescens*, cyperus sedge *Carex pseudocyperus*, cowbane *Cicuta virosa*, great spearwort *Ranunculus lingua* and fine-leaved

water dropwort *Oenanthe aquatica*. There are locally extensive moss carpets of *Calliergon cordifolium*, *C. cuspidatum* and *Sphagnum squarrosum*.

The site includes areas of dry woodland dominated by pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*.