

Bloxwich & Blakenhall Heath Character Area (WL01)

SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by settlement (73% of its area¹) and the majority of its landscape (54%) originates before 1930. It includes the historic town of Bloxwich and is bounded to the north and east by field systems, and to the west and south by more modern settlement and industrial sites. From the late 19th century Walsall (south of the area) expanded north until there was a continuous belt of housing between the centres of Walsall and Bloxwich.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

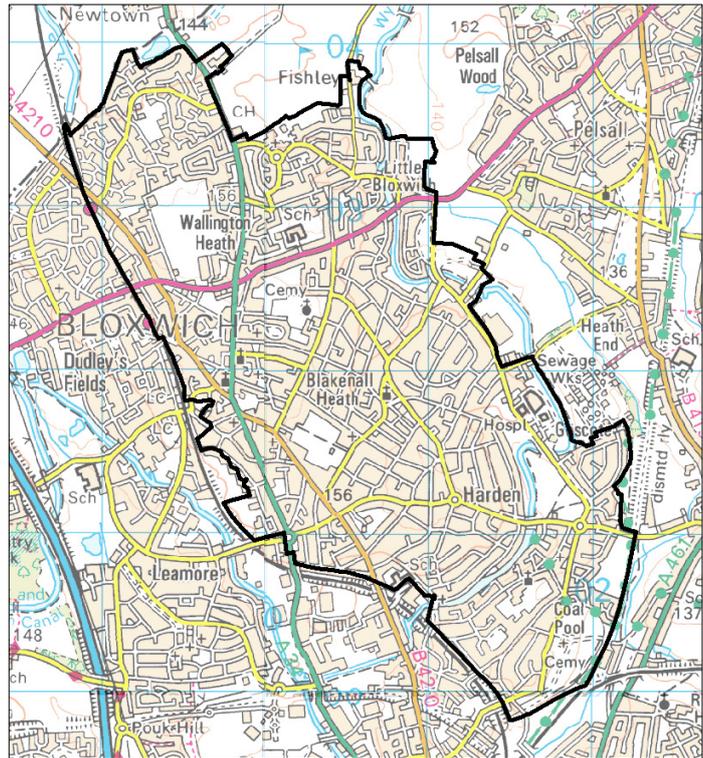
The majority of the area lies over coal measures. The highest point (at around 165m) is just north of the centre of the area and slopes down from here on all sides: to the south-east, to the west towards the M6 motorway, and to the east towards a tributary of Ford Brook (which itself runs to the south of the area).

MODERN CHARACTER:

This is an area dominated by housing from the period before 1930. The oldest part of Bloxwich, the area's largest historic settlement, runs in a north-south direction on its western side. This is also the commercial core of Bloxwich, and has probably been so since at least the 19th century, with some buildings surviving from that period.

Around the centre of Bloxwich are its earliest suburbs, which include medium sized 19th century terraces to the east, located around a modern industrial estate, which in turn has been built upon the site of 19th century terraces. The 19th century terraces are also interspersed with 20th century housing dating from the inter war period to the late 20th century. To the west of the High Street, beyond the late 20th century apartments are further small 19th century terraces. Bloxwich Park was established in the 19th century to the north of the town and this area in particular retains the character of an early Victorian suburb, the only additional housing being a number of late 20th century apartments.

The remaining 19th and early 20th century terraces lie towards the south towards Walsall. This development saw Bloxwich expand considerably towards the once small settlement of Leamore in the south, which was



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itself substantially developed between the wars. Like Leamore, Wallington Heath in the north originated as a small hamlet but was subsumed within an interwar housing estate.

To the north of present-day Bloxwich is a considerable expanse of late 20th century housing estates, which have been developed right up to the boundary with Staffordshire. Forming the centre of these estates is a superstore and public house. Housing of a similar period also forms the character of the area in the east of the area, around the older settlement of Little Bloxwich.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

The town of Bloxwich was mentioned in the Domesday Book as a woodland within Wednesbury manor. It may originally have been relatively dispersed and based around a series of greens. Of these, The Green survives to the north of the town centre (on the junction of the A41 and A4124) and was landscaped as a public park in 1890. To the south, Elmore Green is host to the church. Further out were open fields.

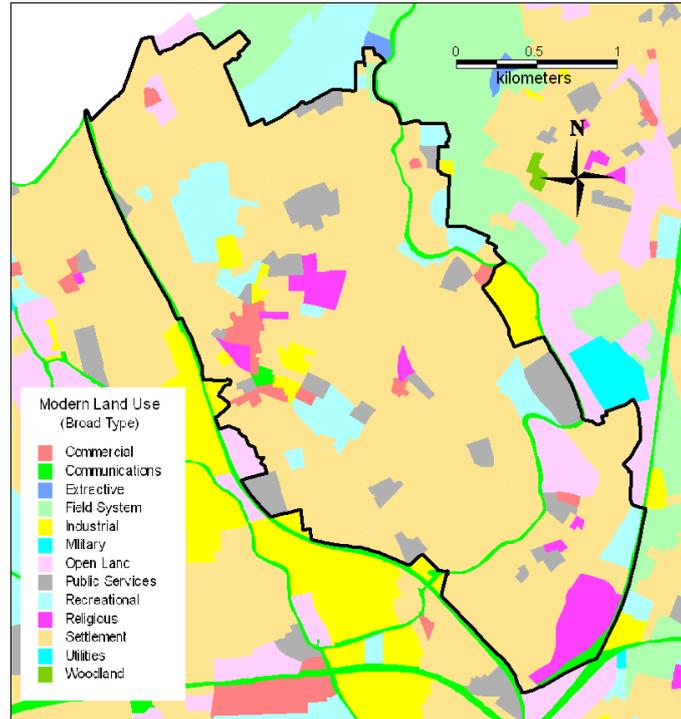
On a small area of high ground in the south of the area, a settlement at Harden is believed to have existed by the late 13th century. It was small and dispersed with its own field system.

On the north-eastern edge of the area, Little Bloxwich is first mentioned in the early 14th century. By the late 19th century the settlement consisted mainly of cottages and a school, and it remained a small hamlet until the middle of the 20th century. Also recorded in the early 14th century was Blakenall Heath, located in the centre of the area (to the east of Bloxwich itself). It was described as a heath in 1544, and this may have attracted squatter settlement: houses were certainly present by 1763. By the 19th century Blakenall Heath comprised a central church with cottages to the north and terraces to the south.

North of the modern A4124, settlement existed at Wallington Heath by the second half of the 18th century, but by the 19th century it was still small. The place name suggests that this area had previously been common land.

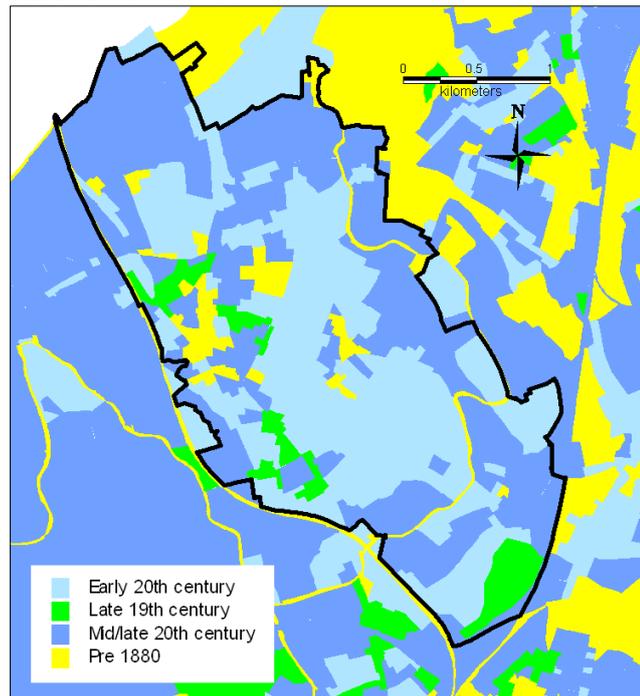
Small collieries existed inside the area and immediately to the east of it (for example at Fishley, Yieldfields and Goscote), and the presence of coal shows in place names such as Coal Pool, a former 19th century settlement in the south of the area now the location of a large housing estate. However, the main coal extraction in the district occurred to the west and south-west of Bloxwich and by the late 19th century the mines were already largely disused.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Streetly Character Area (WL02)

SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by settlement (81% of its area¹) and is largely (74%) of mid to late 20th century origin. It is bounded to the east by the city of Birmingham and, in particular, the Water Orton and Walsall railway line and Sutton Park which lies beyond it. Separated from the rest of Walsall by Barr Beacon, the area has close ties to the Park and to Sutton Coldfield.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

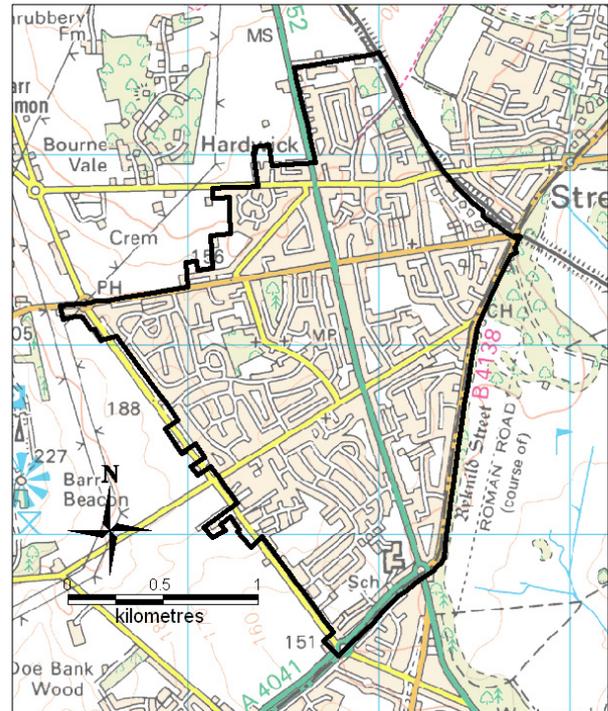
This area lies largely upon soft sandstone with some small pockets of sand and gravel. The elevation of the land falls from about 180m at the western edge (close to the high point of Barr Beacon, outside of the area) and it reaches a low point of around 150m at its eastern side.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by 20th century housing. Within it, some of the earliest and largest surviving houses (mainly dating to the early part of the 20th century) face Sutton Park, lying immediately to the south-east. The inter-war and immediate post-war housing, mainly medium in size, also radiates out from Sutton Park or is strung out along the main routes through the area (Chester Road and Foley Road) rather than being clustered in estates. These roads are long and straight reflecting parliamentary enclosure of this part of Sutton Chase.

From the 1950s, more houses appeared and new roads were built, creating small estates upon the former farmland. Most of the houses built in the 1960s/70s in the east of the area are on short cul de sacs or similar, representing infill between estates. The larger estates of this date were built in the west where the last of the farmland remained.

The Character Area contains a small number of surviving residential properties from the period before



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the 20th century, located at its western edge. On the other side, while Sutton Park (itself outside the area) is host to a golf club, the club house of which (on Thornhill Road and within the area) is also among the oldest buildings in the area.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

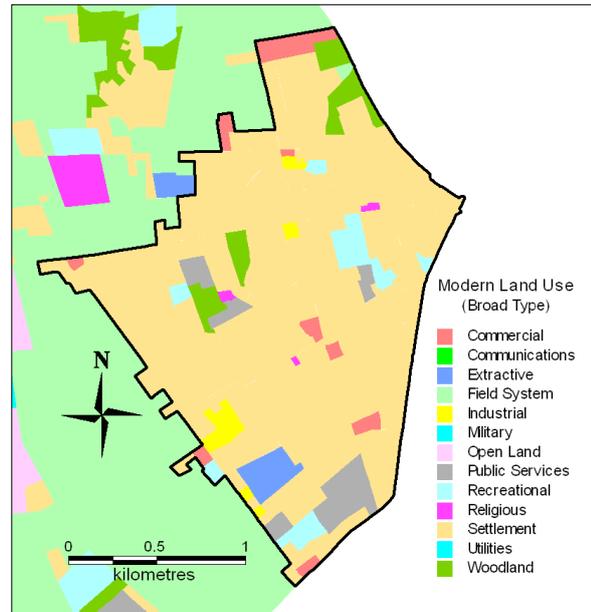
HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Until it was enclosed in the 18th/19th century this area had mainly formed part of Sutton Chase, a large medieval hunting forest. There is little by way of known medieval settlement, the possible exception being Little Hardwick (in the north), where a farm is known to have existed in the late 18th/early 19th century, but which is mentioned in documents as early as the 15th century.

Near Hardwick was an area of open fields which may have been part of the fields of Aldridge, which lie immediately to the north, or may have been part of a separate estate based upon Hardwick. Once the heath had been enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, several other farms appeared throughout the area as well as a few cottages along the Chester Road, Aldridge Road and Queslett Road East, presumably to house the farm workers.

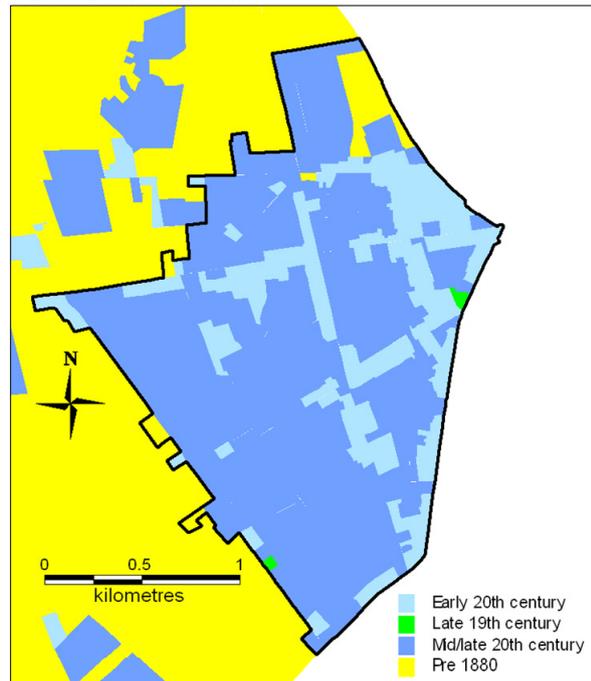
In the inter-war period there had been a steelworks and a quarry in the area, but both have since gone.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Aldridge East Character Area (WL03)

SUMMARY:

This part of Aldridge is dominated by settlement (74% of its area¹) and is overwhelmingly (78%) of mid to late 20th century origin. It is bounded in the north-west by an area of industrial sites (see Aldridge West Character Area profile), and on all other sides by field systems of earlier origin.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies over a mixed geology of sandstone, mudstone, conglomerate and limestone. From the south, the land drops from a high point of 200m to around 156m at the railway line, from where it rises again gently up to the north at around 170m. Additionally, a ridge runs north-south through the area, with land falling away either side.

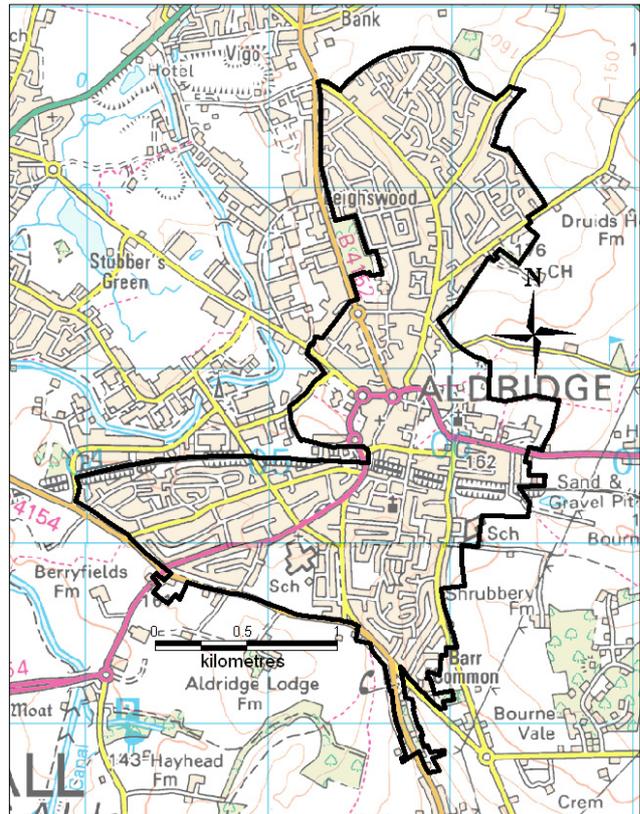
MODERN CHARACTER:

This area represents the residential part of the historic town of Aldridge, including its village green and medieval church (seen here just north of the main modern route through the town, the A454, running east-west). Twentieth century development, which characterises the present-day town, includes a significant retail centre.

Until the First World War, settlement at Aldridge was limited, and few older houses survive in its centre. Those that do are to be found mainly around the church. These are generally large houses dating from the 18th and early 19th centuries, although they are typically no longer inhabited as single dwellings.

Some of the housing around Aldridge centre dates from the late 19th and early 20th century, but the remainder were built in the inter war and immediate post war period, including a few 1960s/70s estates.

The other 20th century housing estates in the area do not appear to immediately relate to the original settlement at Aldridge, but rather to Pool Green (in the south-west of the area) and Druid's Heath (in the north-east), for example.



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The early houses at Pool Green appear to have been largely demolished in the 1960s/70s when St Mary's Way estate was built, although Forge Lane survives from an earlier period (on the southern side of the A454).

However, when these were still standing, two 1940s/50s estates were built to the north and south of them with inter-war housing to the west. Further west, a few early 20th century terraces survive surrounded by inter-war, post-war and 1960s/70s development.

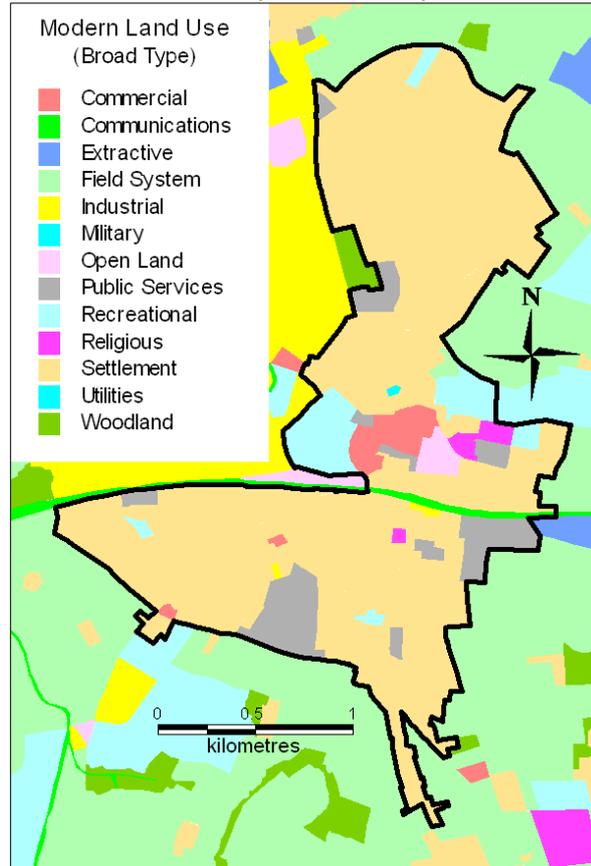
¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Aldridge is believed to have been a Royal Manor in the pre Conquest period and was mentioned in Domesday Book. A church had appeared by about 1200 (parts of the current building are 14th century). A medieval cruck-framed building on the High Street was recorded prior to its demolition in the 1960s and, within the area of The Croft (the current village green), earthworks suggest a medieval settlement existed in the area. To the north-west and south were the village's open fields, and beyond was common land (Druid Heath to the north and Barr Common to the south). The only other known medieval settlement in this area is Copy Hall, in the north; again demolished in the 1960s.

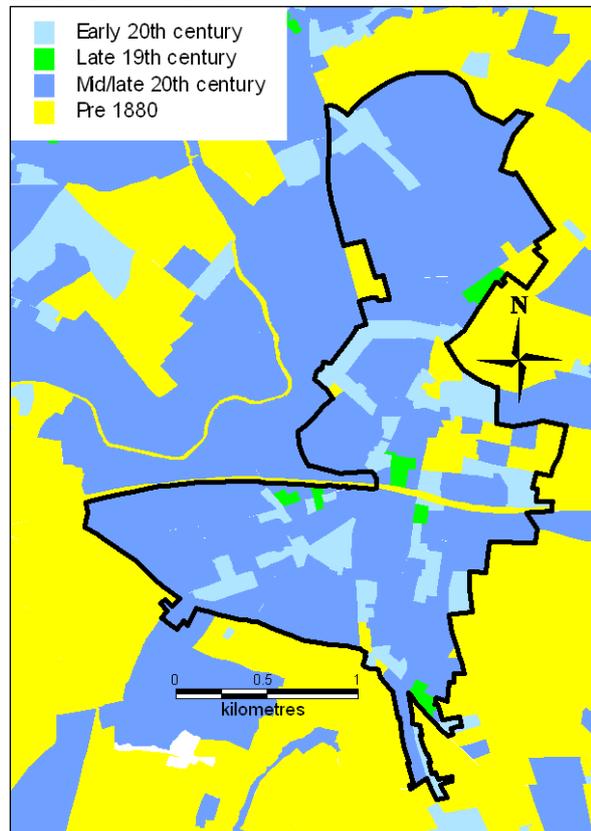
By the mid 18th century, farms and other dispersed settlements were established in the surrounding area and, in the late 18th century, both commons were enclosed by an Act of Parliament. The latter had been the most important change to take place in the landscape until the inter-war period, when housing began to be built in great numbers. Before this, only smaller developments had taken place on the former common.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Brownhills & Walsall Wood Character Area (WL04)

SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by settlement (50% of its area¹), although field systems are also important. These fields contribute to the fact that half of the landscape in this area originates before 1930. To the North and West the area ends at the Borough boundary, while open land and extractive sites outside of area are important in forming its limits to the East and South.

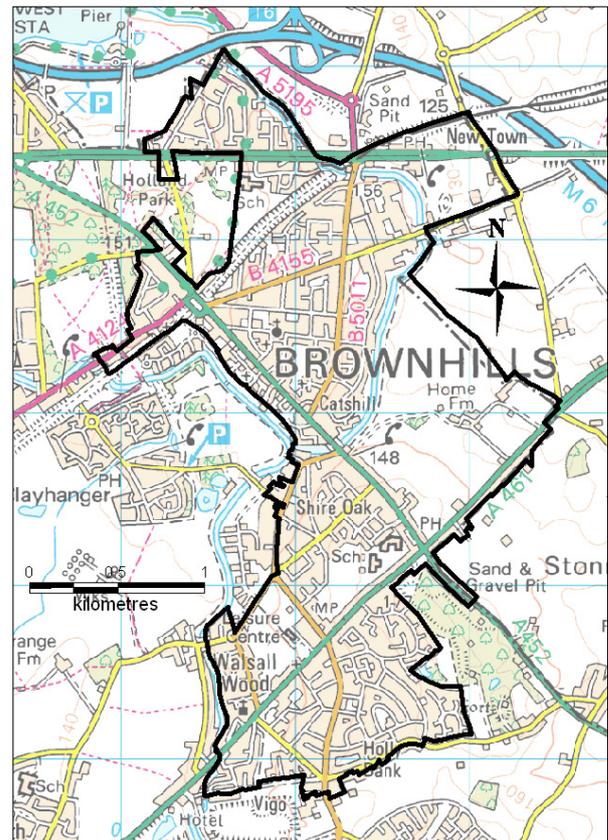
GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area generally lies just to the East of the coal measures, largely on sandstone, mudstone, and conglomerate. The areas of settlement are generally on the highest ground, especially in the south-east where it reaches a high point for the area of about 170m. The fields to the north-east fall away to less than 130m.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by two settlements: the small town of Brownhills to the north; and the more dispersed area of Walsall Wood to the south. Both were established on major routes: the roads from London to Chester (running south-east to north-west) and from Walsall to Lichfield (running south-west to north-east) respectively.

The modern settlement of Brownhills is dominated by housing estates, with a commercial core along the High Street (a continuation of Chester Road) comprising late 19th and 20th century buildings. Brownhills Common just beyond the area in the north-west was previously heath land heavily mined for coal. Most of Brownhills had been heath until the mid 19th century when the land began to be enclosed. The straight boundaries typical of parliamentary enclosure can still be seen - a pattern also reflected in the road system East of the High Street. In the late 19th century this area had planned new town. However the plans failed to materialise, and the building plots were eventually developed over a much longer time scale, and were not finally completed until the mid 20th century. The majority of the remainder of the houses originate from this time. To the north is a clay quarry, and beyond that is an area of industry mainly made up of large modern units and an industrial estate.



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The earliest surviving houses in Walsall Wood itself are cottages dating to the 19th century; while there are also medium-sized late 19th century semi-detached and detached houses in several surrounding areas. More typical of Walsall Wood are the estates of small houses which mostly date to the inter war and post war periods. In the centre of these estates is an area of 1960s/70s houses. The most recent housing has been built to the furthest east, comprising two large estates of medium-sized detached houses.

Immediately north-west of Lichfield Road is a large school, beyond which are further housing estates mainly dating to the mid 20th century. To the west of the school is a sports ground known as Oak Park, which had been established in the inter-war period.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

Large and medium semi-detached and detached houses of 19th/20th century date line the Lichfield Road heading east towards Staffordshire. To the north-east of this road a field system survives, along with a small, probably 19th century, country house known as Sandhills and an associated farm. The field system was probably the enclosed after an 1876 Act of Parliament.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

There is little surviving evidence for medieval settlement within the area. A number of roads, including the Pelsall Road and Coppice Lane/Engine Lane may date to at least the medieval period. Part of Ogley Hay manor also falls within this area: Ogley Hay is mentioned in a charter of AD994 as belonging to the monastery at Wolverhampton, and it is also referred to in Domesday Book.

Walsall Wood is mentioned in about 1200. The whole area was within Cannock Forest, which had probably been founded in the 11th century as a hunting forest. The majority of the area was dominated by heath and woodland, although there would have been some early settlement. The documentary sources first refer to squatter settlement in about 1600.

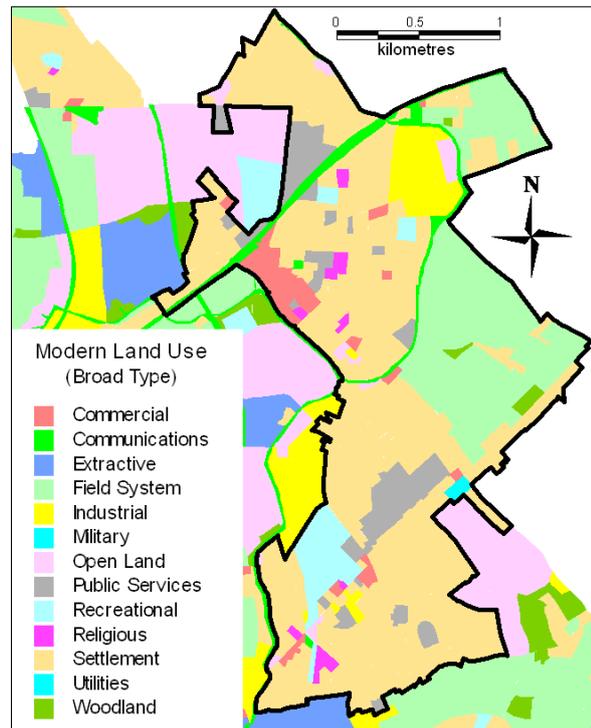
By the 18th century, settlement had become established at Walsall Wood along the Lichfield Road and at Catshill on the Chester Road, immediately south of the area later to become Brownhills. These may all have originated as unofficial settlement in wooded and heathland areas ('squatter settlement').

By the early 19th century the Wyrley & Essington canal had been constructed through the area and a major change also occurred in the late 19th century, when the heath to the east of the area was enclosed. This has survived as farm land.

The town of Brownhills is interesting as a completely new settlement established from around the middle of the 19th century, and based on the exploitation of the adjacent coal seams to the north-east and the opening of the railway.

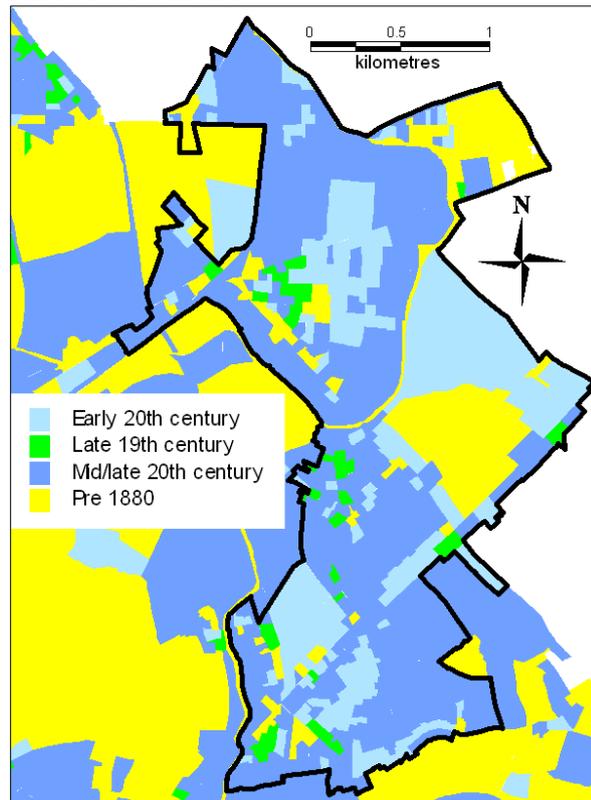
Cottages dominated Walsall Wood in the late 19th century, and areas of heath also survive to the South and east of the main settlement. To the north was Walsall Wood Colliery which opened in 1871 and closed in the 20th century. The presence of the colliery helped stimulate the growth of settlement here also at the end of the 19th century.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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West Central Walsall Character Area (WL05)

SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by industrial sites (49% of its area¹), although settlement and commercial uses are also important. It is largely (61%) of mid/late 20th century origin but includes the generally older commercial centre of Walsall, together with the main industrial parts of both Walsall and Bloxwich. The area is largely surrounded by areas of settlement, and is also generally bounded by the railway line in the East and canal in the West.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

In its northern part the area lies over coal, and is crossed east-west by the Bentley Faults. In the south, the geology is largely limestone. The land forms a shallow slope from its highest point (158m) at its northern tip in Bloxwich, down to its opposite extremity (115m) about 5km to the south. To the South East, beyond the line of the railway, the land rises again to a high point (Walsall High Street) of about 147m.

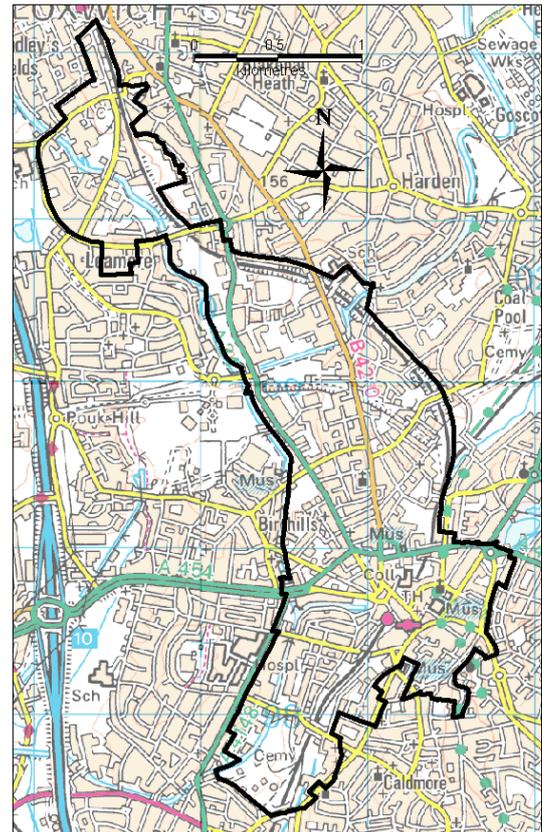
MODERN CHARACTER:

This particular Character Area accounts for almost a quarter (23%) of the industrial land in the Borough of Walsall, as well as its largest commercial centre. The surviving landscape dates largely from the 20th century, although the centre of Walsall also contains the largest concentration of buildings in the Borough from before 1880.

The industrial parts of the Character Area, some of whose buildings date to the 19th and early 20th century, include the Rolling Mill Industrial Estate in the South, the sites bounded by Green Lane/Bloxwich Road in the centre of the area, and the zones either side of the Wyrley & Essington Canal in the North. Much of this area has its origins as industrial land in the extractive industries of the 19th century and before, in particular coal mining and brick making.

The area also includes Walsall's Leather Quarter where a leather industry survives, now predominantly producing saddles. The surviving buildings date from the mid 19th century onwards.

The Commercial Centre of Walsall is in the south-east of the Character Area with its shops, offices and civic buildings. Although of earlier origin, is largely made up today of post medieval or modern buildings. The shops, public houses and offices in this area belong to a variety of periods, the earliest of which date to the mid/late 18th century and include a shopping arcade dating to 1895-7 as well as late 20th century purpose built shops. To the north is an area of civic buildings



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including the current Town Hall, dating to 1902-05, a court building of 1831 and the mid/late 20th century civic centre.

Despite its industrial and commercial character, some areas of housing do exist within the boundary of the Character Area. These are largely of late 19th or early 20th century origin, and are clustered round Stafford Street /Bloxwich Road (and particularly to the east of this route) as it leaves Walsall to the north.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

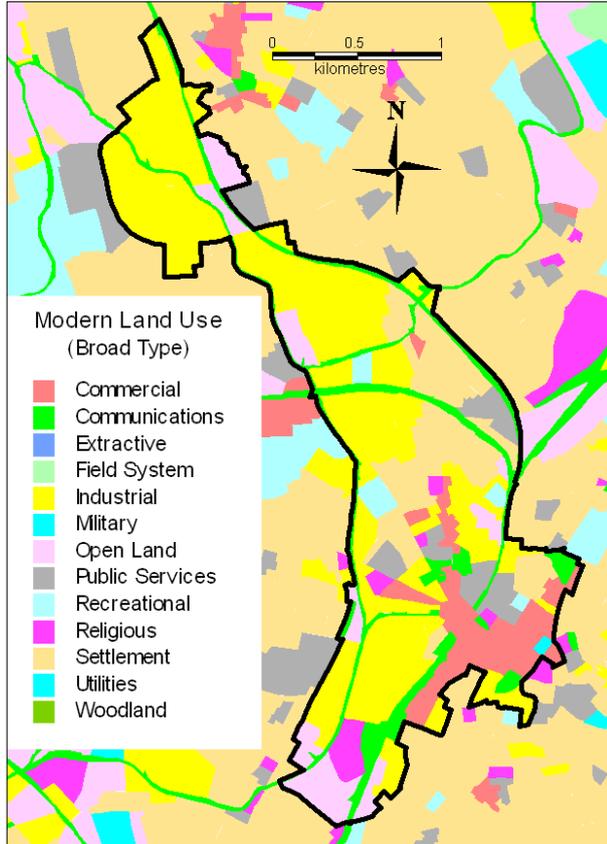
There was a settlement at Walsall by the mid 12th century when it was granted to Herbert Le Rous by Henry II. Surprisingly, it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. This does not necessarily mean that it was not in existence by this time; its entry may have been subsumed within that of an adjoining area, or it may have been left out as it was part of the crown lands. The likely location of the earliest settlement is on the limestone hill occupied by St Matthew's church (the church itself being just outside of the Character Area).

The High Street which runs off from the hill to the north-west looks like a deliberately planned extension, as it is wide enough to be used as a market street and lined by burgages – properties with a narrow street frontage but running back for some distance at right angles to the street frontage. Such a deliberate design is likely to have been the work of Herbert le Rous after he was granted the settlement in 1159 (or of one of his descendants). A right to hold a weekly market at Walsall (on Monday) was granted in 1220 and it is likely that this planned extension was in existence by or soon after this date.

Industry was a major part of the town's economy from an early period. Certainly by the mid 15th century the manufacture of metal goods was prevalent particularly those associated with horse furniture (bits, spurs etc.). From this developed the more famous saddle and harness making which had begun here by the later 18th century.

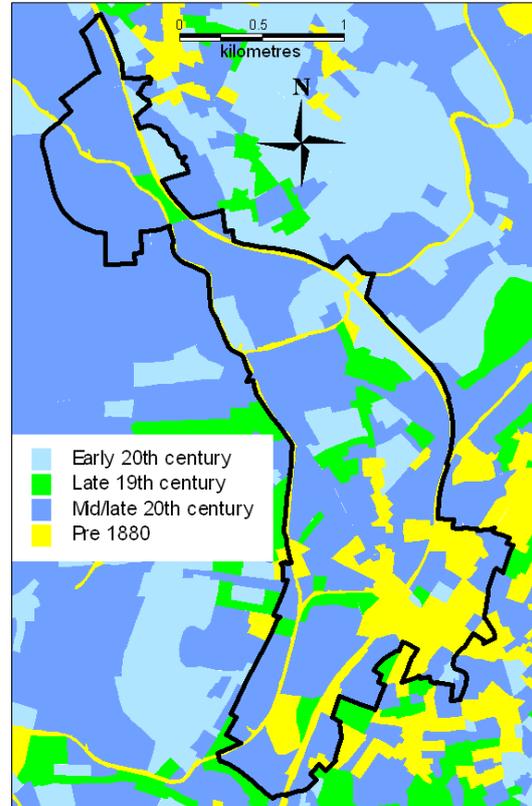
Mining and quarrying were also an important part of the area's economy from an early period. Coal and ironstone mining are first mentioned in the 14th century and limestone quarrying in the 15th century.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Willenhall Character Area (WL06)

SUMMARY:

This area contains an important historical settlement and almost half its land is still given to housing¹. The townscape is mostly of mid/late 20th century origin, but with large areas of older buildings. It includes the residential and commercial centre of Willenhall, together with significant industrial sites, the latter being important in defining the landscape's character. The area is demarcated by the Walsall borough boundary to the south/west, and areas of more modern origin to the north and east.

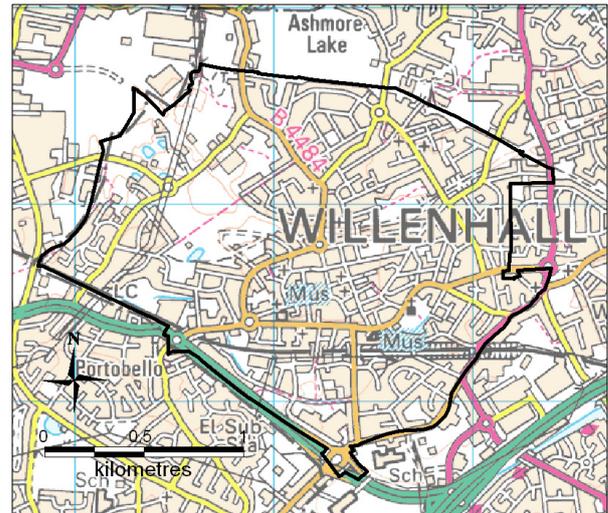
GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

This area lies on coal measures, which here include large areas of sandstone. Overlain are deposits of till (boulder clay), glacial material and alluvium, which line the sides of the Somerford brook, running through the south eastern side of the area, and flowing into the Tame in the south. The land is reasonably flat varying between 135m and 125m (along the line of the brook).

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area contains the historic industrial town of Willenhall, which has been a centre for lock making since at least the 17th century. The settlement itself dates to the medieval when it was concentrated around the market place and adjoining streets. Many buildings in the area date to the 18th and 19th centuries.

Industrial sites virtually encircle the town centre. The majority of the industrial buildings are of mid/late 20th century date, although there are several inter-war and 19th century buildings. Metal working is still carried out within this industrial zone, as it has been within the whole area since at least the 19th century.



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Market Place, Willenhall

Several of the houses nearest to the town centre date to the 19th century, particularly to the north, but also to the south and west. These houses are mainly mid/late 19th century terraces. Around Walsall Road/New Road (which runs parallel to the railway to its north) are two small areas of large Victorian semi-detached and detached houses, which appear to be the only examples in Willenhall.

The majority of the 20th century housing estates are composed of small properties and they radiate out from the original town, its industrial core, and the earlier 19th century residential areas. These estates are mainly of inter-war and immediate post-war origin, built originally within industrial areas or with industry nearby. However, several industrial areas have themselves been redeveloped in the late 20th century as housing. Residential areas also include several schools, mainly of mid/late 20th century date.

To the north-east of the town is a large recreational area made up of the Memorial Park and a large playing field. The park dates to the 1920s, whilst the playing field was established in the mid/late 20th century. Both were laid out on the site of a 19th century colliery, and beyond these recreational areas is some rough grassland, which had also once been colliery land.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

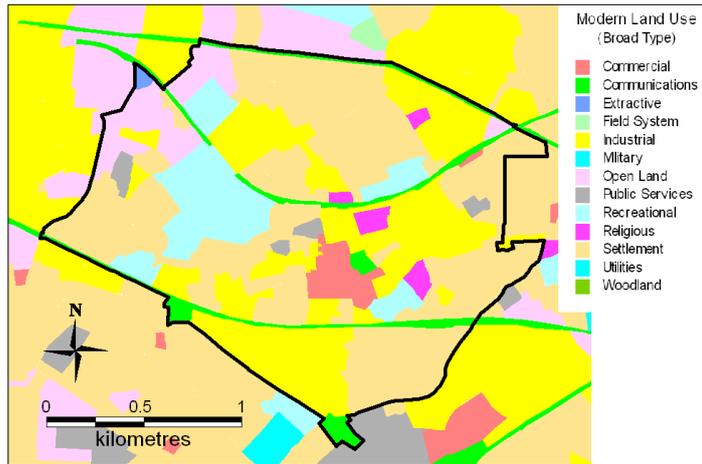
HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Willenhall is first recorded in a charter of AD994 and is also mentioned in Domesday Book (1086). The medieval settlement is likely to have centred on Market Place, and the adjoining Stafford Street, Wolverhampton Street and Walsall Street. To the north there was a large moated site, but this completely disappeared by the 20th century. The current 19th century church is south-east of the main town on Walsall Street, and this is likely to have also been the site of the original medieval church which is known to have existed by 1298.

Willenhall was surrounded by open fields in the medieval period, which were probably progressively enclosed in the late medieval and post medieval period. It remained largely rural until the 19th century.

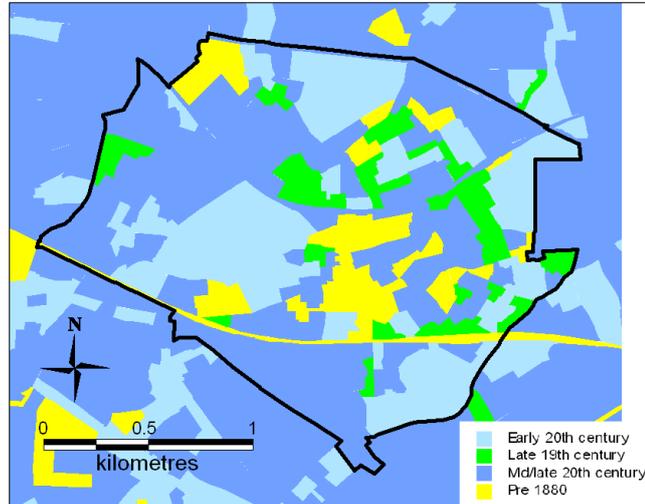
Willenhall was already renowned as a lock making centre by the later 16th century and this industry continues to survive today.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Bentley Character Area (WL07)

SUMMARY:

This large Character Area is dominated by settlement (54% of its area¹) and its landscape is some of the most modern in the Black Country: development after 1930 accounts for almost four fifths (78%) of the area. In addition to housing, land given to recreation and public services forms an important part of the area's character. It extends to the Borough Boundary, to adjacent areas of generally older settlement, and (in the East) to neighbouring industrial districts.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies almost wholly over the coalfield. Also present is sandstone and a small outcrop of (extensively quarried) dolerite at Pouk Hill (north-east of Junction 10 of the M6). The land slopes gently down from its high point in the north-west (166m) to 116m in the south-east.

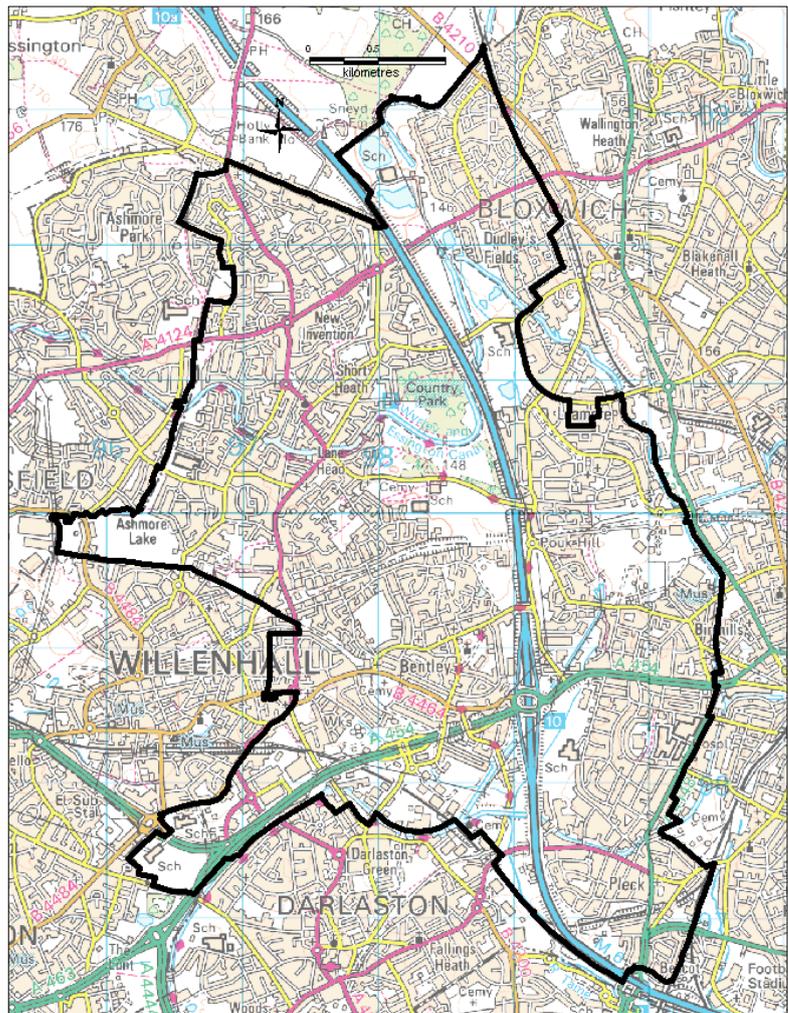
MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by areas of modern housing - originally distinct settlements which had, by the 1970s, become almost continuous. Some of these areas had formed the suburbs of Willenhall (in the south-west), Bloxwich (north-east), and Walsall (south-east). Other housing was built around the smaller, older settlements of Short Heath, Lane Head, New Invention, Bentley and Bescot.

Few houses survive from before 1900. Of those that do, large clusters include the 19th century terraces in Bescot and the Birchills area of Walsall (in the far south-east). Elsewhere, the mid 19th century Bentley House stands largely isolated in more modern development (just west of the motorway junction) while, further north-west, some 18th and 19th century cottages, terraces and semi-detached houses remain in historic settlements.

What remains of pre-war 20th century housing, mostly inter-war semis, is largely in the south-east of the area, in the neighbourhood surrounding two hospitals.

A large part of the housing in the northern half of the area in particular originates from the second half of the



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20th century. The estates located east of the M6 and north of Pouk Hill, for example, were probably built in the 1950s, before the motorway arrived. Much of the remaining housing in the north-west of the area is later – built in the period between 1960 and 2000.

There are a number of important recreational areas within the Character Area, several of which are situated along the line of the M6, running north-south through the area. The largest of these is Rough Wood Country Park which was established in the mid/late 20th century

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

having previously formed part of Bentley Heath and Bentley Coppice. It was heavily mined for coal during the 19th century. There are other areas of park and open land along the M6 corridor many of which were formerly fields and collieries. The most significant park in the area away from the M6 is the 19th century Reeds Wood Park on its eastern edge.

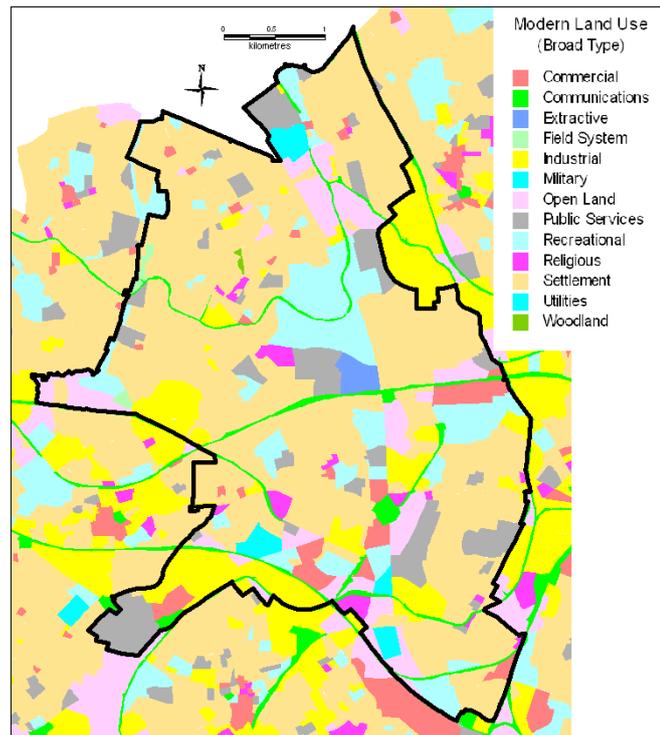
HISTORIC CHARACTER:

There is little evidence of medieval settlement in this area, with the exception of Bescot and Bentley. Bescot, in the south west, was mentioned in Domesday and was the site of a medieval moated house. A mill mentioned in 13th century documents is presumed to have been on the site of the later Bentley Mill to the very south of the Character Area. The 11th century Bentley Manor, on a small piece of raised ground north west of the modern Junction 10 of the M6, later became the site of Bentley Hall.

Two areas of common (part of Cannock Forest), at Bentley and Sneyd, may date back to the medieval period. Evidence exists that there were medieval open fields to the west and east of Bentley Hall, and also around Bentley Mill. A medieval deer park may have existed to the north of the Hall. The location of a settlement of Bentley is more difficult to trace, although one has been implied in medieval documents. In the 19th century, settlement around Bentley was very dispersed, with farms and cottages mainly lying around the Wolverhampton Road south of the Hall and this pattern and location may have been similar in the medieval period. The only other medieval evidence is of open fields to the north west (which may have been associated with a moat, now within Wolverhampton).

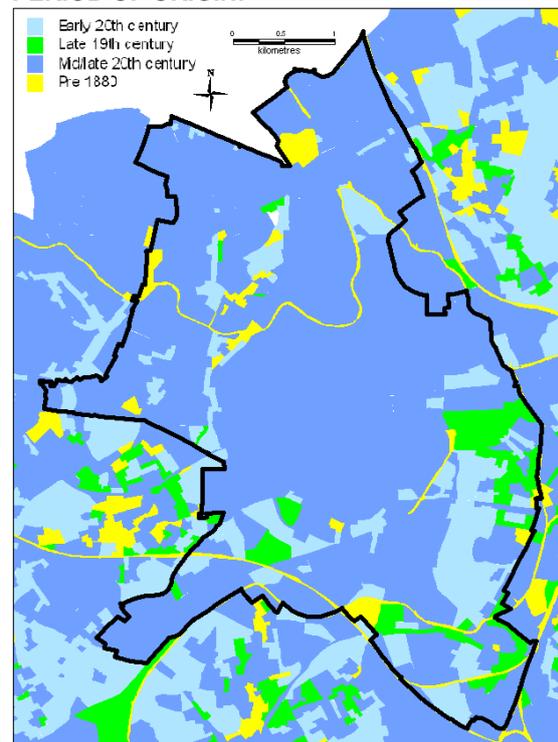
To the north lies the settlement of New Invention, whose name (from at least the 17th century) may refer to an early engine house, although this is uncertain. Later 18th century settlement included Short Heath and Lane Head. Other settlement sites were generally farms, the area being still dominated by agriculture, with some woodland. Accessible coal transformed the area's landscape so that, by the late 19th century, it was dominated by mining. Bentley Hall was surrounded by active collieries and, to the north, collieries were worked around Short Heath and New Invention. The hamlets of Lane Head, New Invention and Short Heath probably expanded to house the mine workers and their families, although there was less expansion around Bentley itself.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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By the early 20th century most of the collieries had closed with the exception of one south of Bentley Hall and another north of Lane Head. By WW2 all the collieries had also closed and Bentley Hall itself had to be demolished due to mining subsidence.

Pheasey Character Area (WL08)

SUMMARY:

This small area is dominated by settlement (71% of its area¹) and reflects one of the most modern areas of housing in Walsall: 85% of the area originates after 1930. It is on the boundary between Walsall and Birmingham (to the South East) and surrounded on other sides by older field systems and recreational areas.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

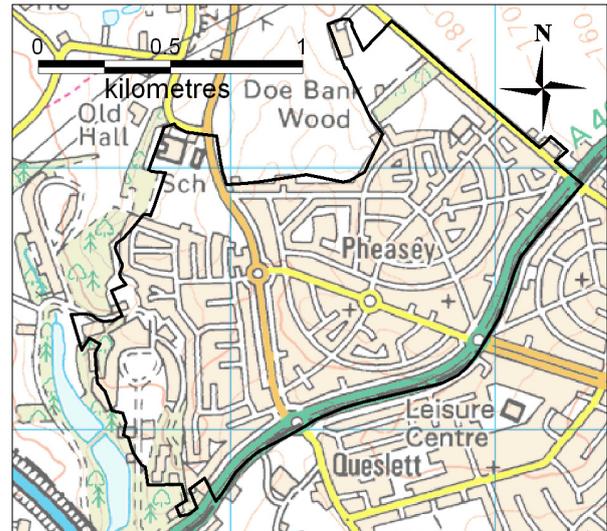
The geology of the area is essentially sandstone. There is an area of glacial till to the North around Doe Bank Wood. The land falls from almost 200m in the North, where it adjoins Barr Beacon, to about 135m in the South.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by large inter-war and post-war housing estates with a distinctive rounded and oval street pattern. Associated services include four schools, two public houses, a sports ground and two churches. The housing estates are made up of small semi-detached, detached, and terraced houses. One small area of small 1960s/70s terraces and apartments appear within the centre of the area.

Housing in Pheasey is of a similar design to that to the south of the area, at Queslett and Kingstanding in Birmingham.

The oldest feature within this landscape is a small wood known as Doe Bank Wood which divides the houses from an associated sports ground. The wood was in existence by the 19th century.



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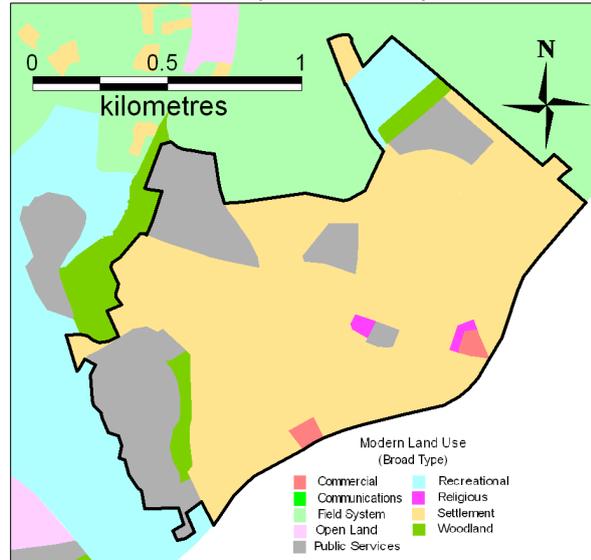
¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Until the Second World War, this Character Area was dominated by field systems which surrounded Pheasey Farm (now demolished) and the eastern, developed, portion of Great Barr Park. This included Great Barr Hall and Barr Hall Farm, as well as St Margaret's Hospital which was built in the park in the early 20th century. The undeveloped portion of the park lies in an adjacent Character Area (Barr Beacon and Aldridge Fields).

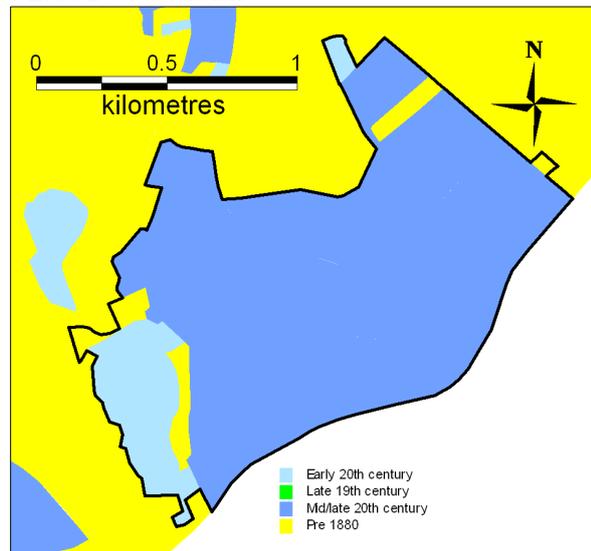
In the mid 20th century most of the streets in the area were laid out and housing constructed alongside them. These were largely, in and around the pre-existing routes of Doe Bank Lane, Queslett Road (the area's north-eastern and south-eastern boundary respectively), and Beacon Road, which heads north out of the area to Barr Beacon.

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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields Character Area (WL09)

SUMMARY:

This area is the most rural landscape in Walsall, with field systems covering more than two thirds of its surface (although recreational land is also important). Four fifths (80%)¹ of the area dates to before 1900. It is bounded on almost all sides by settle-ment, and in the north-east and south-east by the boundaries with Staffordshire and Birmingham respectively.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

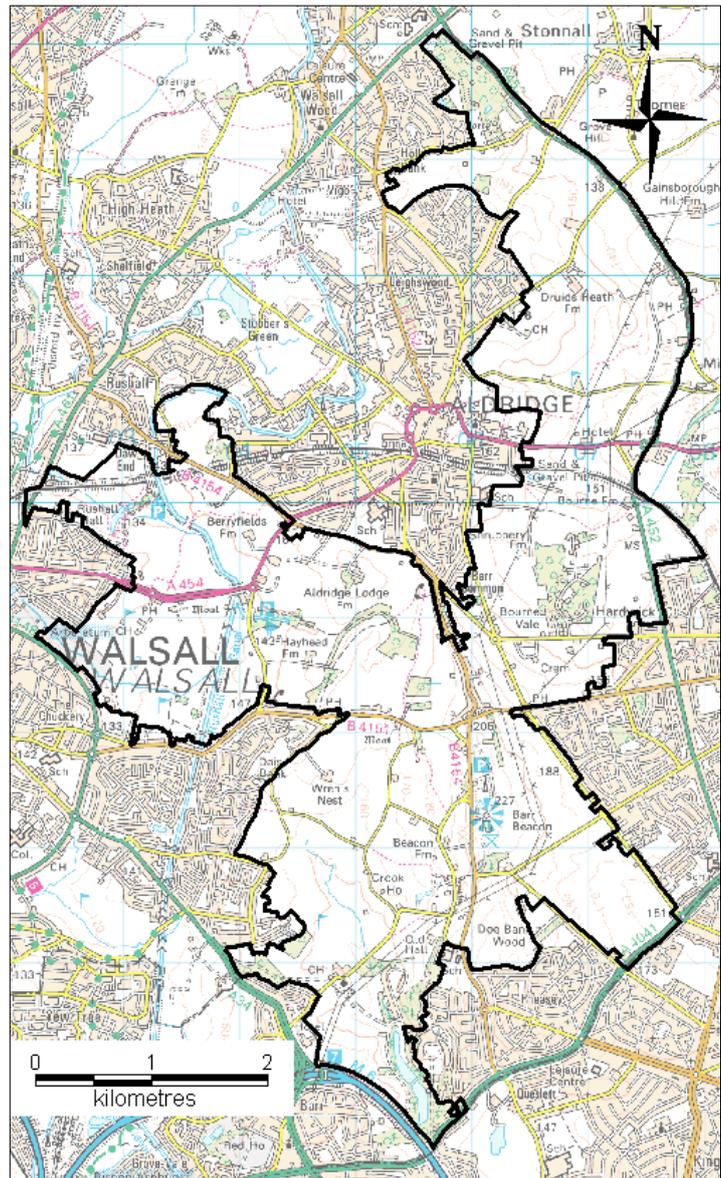
The area has a mixed geology. In the west it lies on mudstone and limestone, in its central part on sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate, and east of Barr Beacon, on sandstone. In the west, Rushall Hall lies on coal measures.

A ridge runs north-south through the centre of the area rising to 227m at Barr Beacon, the highest point in Walsall. The low point of around 124m is on the A452 Chester Road which forms the area's north-eastern boundary. Streams flow off the ridge in the east (Bourne Vale), the west (near Rushall Hall and Walsall Arboretum), and the south (through Great Barr Park).

MODERN CHARACTER:

Unusually for the Black Country, this area is characterised mainly by agricultural land and dispersed farms. Important recreational land also makes up the area and, in the central part, there are two small areas of housing, parcels of woodland, and a surviving area of ancient heath at Barr Beacon.

Farmland in the area is almost entirely enclosed field systems. It is likely that the earliest of these were created in the late medieval and early post medieval periods through the piecemeal enclosure of the open fields which once covered most of this area. Ridge and furrow earthworks survive; a legacy of how medieval open fields were ploughed. However, some of these fields have been subject to boundary loss, especially during the 20th century. To the east lie field systems enclosed during the late 18th/early 19th century, which exhibit straight roads and boundaries typical of parliamentary enclosure.



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Like the fields systems, the associated farms date from many different periods. The earliest have medieval origins, although the oldest surviving farm buildings date to around the early 18th century. Others have been rebuilt between the 18th and 20th centuries but have much earlier origins.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

Three of Walsall's five golf courses are located in the area, at Druid's Heath in the north, in the West adjacent to Walsall Arboretum, and at Great Barr in the south. All were laid out in the 20th century, but the oldest recreational area is Great Barr Park in the very south of the area. This covers over 100 hectares and is an English Heritage registered park and garden (grade II). There had been an earlier park here, but in c.1797 it was redesigned by Humphrey Repton, and much of this layout survives.

Two small clusters of housing lie in the centre of the area. One is a distinctive estate of large houses in woodland at Bourne Vale, dating to the inter/post war period. It was built on the site of a landscaped park belonging to Bourne Vale House. The other is a number of detached houses from a similar period located on the Longwood and Erdington Roads south of Aldridge.

Also south of Aldridge, small areas of woodland survive – originating from at least the 18th or 19th centuries. Some of these are areas of former limestone quarrying. A further survival is the heath land at Barr Beacon, which is the only area of what had once formed part of Cannock Forest to survive the planned enclosures of the 18th/19th century.

In addition to the evidence of former extractive industries, modern sand extraction still continues east of Aldridge.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

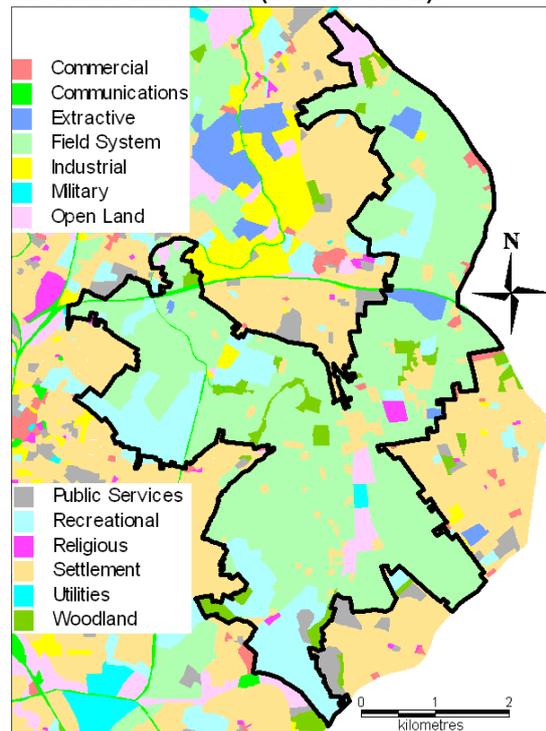
In the medieval period much of this area was open fields; those to the north were associated with Walsall, Aldridge, Rushall and Stonnall (in Staffordshire), those to the south to Great Barr. In the central area there were several medieval moats, and is evidence that trackways and roads throughout the area are medieval in origin. There were churches established at Rushall and Great Barr and probably small associated settlements too. Rushall is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086) and, by the 14th century, there was a fortified manor house on the site. Great Barr is first mentioned in a charter of 957AD. Two large areas of common land (at Aldridge Heath and Stonnall) may have dated to at least the medieval period. However by 1820 both had been enclosed by Acts of Parliament.

By the mid/late 18th century there were two country houses in the area: Great Barr Hall and Aldridge Lodge. The latter was demolished in 1956 and woodland has grown on it, although remains of the gardens may survive.

The surviving field systems were enclosed either piecemeal in the late medieval/early Post medieval period out of the open fields, or were enclosed out of Aldridge Heath.

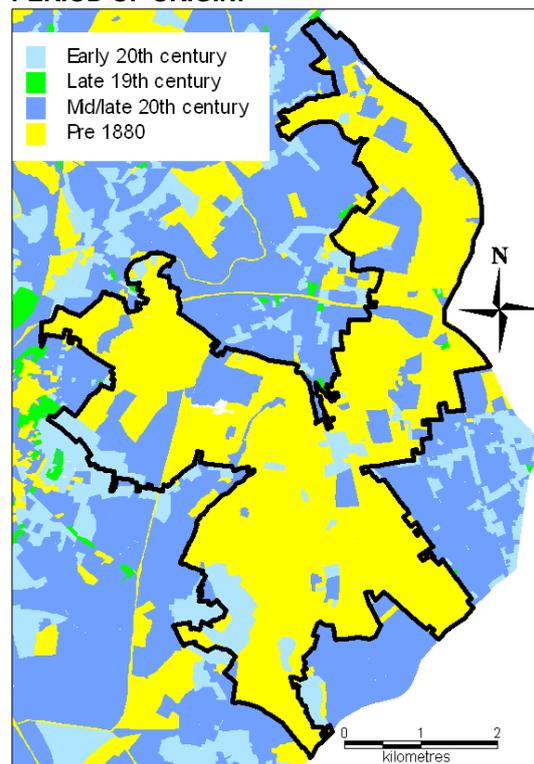
Later developments within this area include an airfield, known as Walsall Airport, which was developed in 1934 and closed in 1956.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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Aldridge West Character Area (WL10)

SUMMARY:

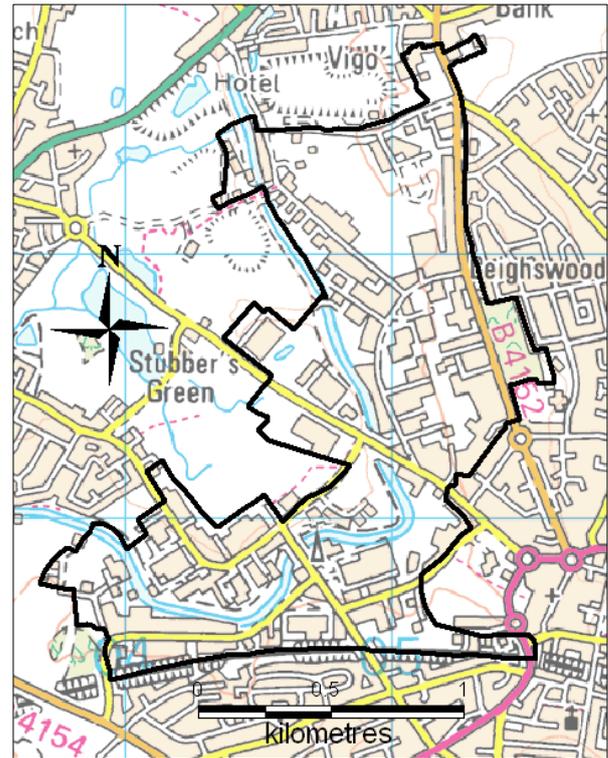
This area is dominated by industrial sites (84% of its area¹), and is overwhelmingly (86%) of mid/late 20th century origin. It is bounded by the residential districts of Aldridge in the east and south (generally on the other side of the railway and Northgate, the road leaving Aldridge to the North), and by areas of extraction in the north-west. The Daw End branch of the Rushall Canal runs through the area.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

This area lies on sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate, with a small area of mudstone and limestone in its south western corner. The land slopes down gently from the higher, residential parts of Aldridge in the east and south – its highest point is 156m in the east and its lowest 132m at its western edge.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area forms the industrial part of Aldridge. The majority of the buildings date to the mid/late 20th century and include several large warehouses, depots and factories. There are also three brick works and an associated clay quarry: the latter may date to the 19th century and may represent one of the oldest surviving features of the area. Brick making has been characteristic of this area, reflected in the street name Brickyard Road, for example, which runs through the northern part of the area. While extractive industries have featured more prominently in the area's past (see below), its modern character is of much more mixed industrial use.



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¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

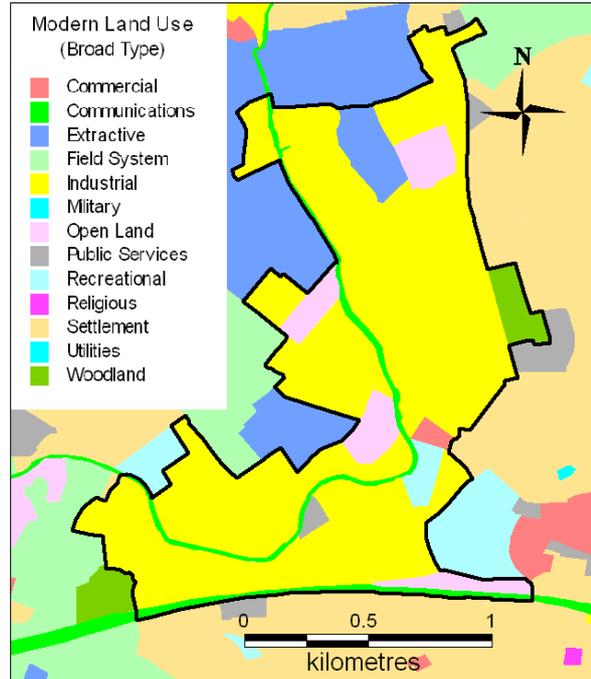
Clay has been extracted from this area since at least the 19th century and by the later part of this century there were large brickworks in this area. By this date coal was also being extracted most notably at the Leighswood Colliery, in the northern part of the Character Area, but two other small collieries also existed nearby. All of the collieries had ceased operation by the inter-war period and the sites were developed as industrial estates and units.

Even in the later 19th century, however, agriculture dominated. A few of the field systems had formed part of open fields in the medieval period; the majority of these fell within the township of Aldridge.

An area of open fields lay south of Walsall Wood adjacent to a small area of heath land. The heath was enclosed by an Act of Parliament, its straight and regular boundaries being typical of parliamentary enclosure.

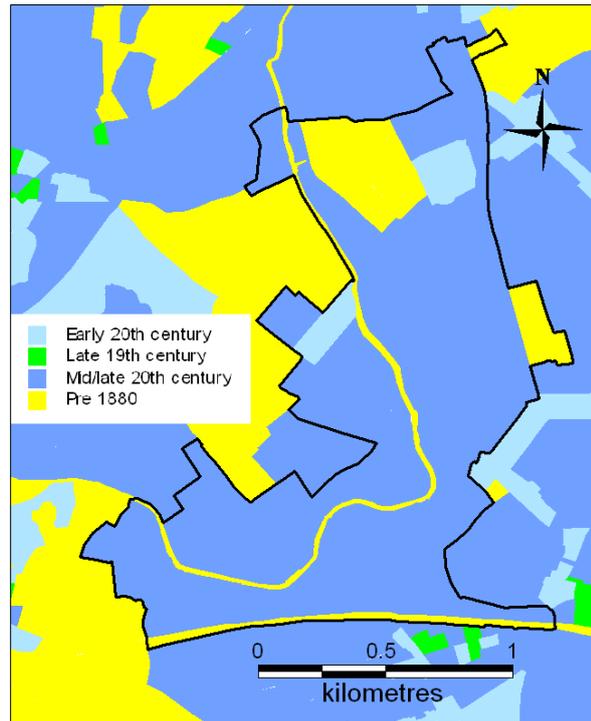
The only known medieval settlement in this area is a moated site located at the site of the modern Leighswood Industrial Estate. By the time of the later 19th century there were several small areas of cottages, including Stubber's Green. One lay just south of Walsall Wood and may have been an early extension of that settlement. Others lay close to collieries and clay workings and had presumably developed to house workers there.

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South East Walsall Character Area (WL11)

SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by settlement and is largely of mid to late 20th century origin. It comprises the residential centre of Walsall, together with more suburban areas to the South and West and North. It is distinguished from its neighbouring Character Areas by the dominance of commercial and industrial land to the West, fields systems to the North East, and the boundary with Sandwell to the South.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

This area lies over coal measures at its western end and, towards the east, on mudstone and siltstone. Deposits of till (boulder clay), glacial material and alluvium are present along the channel of Ford Brook in the south-west.

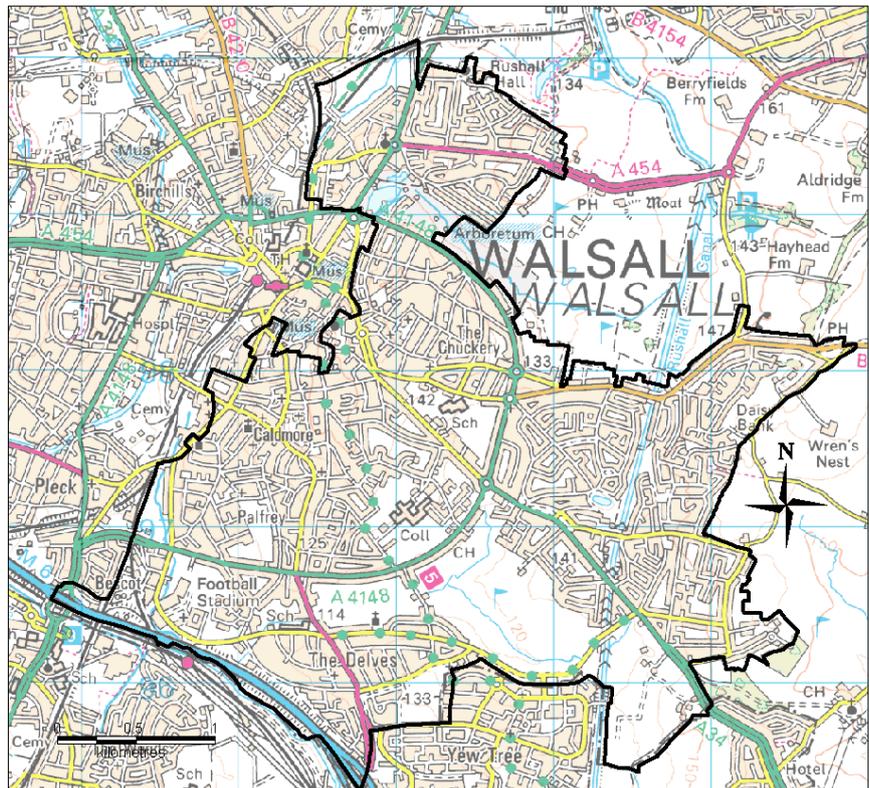
The land slopes from around 160m at its eastern end down to around 115m along the brook.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area comprises the residential part of central Walsall, and its southern, eastern, and northern suburbs. It is dominated by medium sized semi-detached and detached housing.

The houses built during the inter-war and post war periods are mainly close to Walsall town centre, with two large estates of 1960s/70s houses further out. Late 20th century houses have also been built on small, dispersed plots amongst the older houses, and represent either infill or the redevelopment of sites. The area also includes associated services such as schools, but also a university campus.

In the eastern half there are several estates of large inter-war and post-war houses. In this part, the oldest surviving properties are on or near the Birmingham Road, which heads south-east to north-west through its centre. However, the expansion in housing from the 1950s onwards has left them as an island of earlier 20th century character.



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In its south-east, the area contains substantial open and recreational land, largely laid out in the 20th century and, in the centre of this is Walsall golf course. At The Delves, the area of housing in the south, a small area of ancient common land survives and has been surrounded by inter and post war small houses with a school and two religious buildings, probably of a similar date. The school had been built upon earlier cottages and, in turn, the cottages had presumably been the original focus for the expansion of settlement in this area.

The M6 skirts the southern part of the area. Along its line are modern industrial sites, a new football stadium and a modern retail park, all located to take advantage of the proximity of Junction 9 of the motorway.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

In the medieval period this area was dominated by open fields and a small settlement or manor house at The Delves. There was also a large deer park to the west of Great Barr, although its actual extent is unknown.

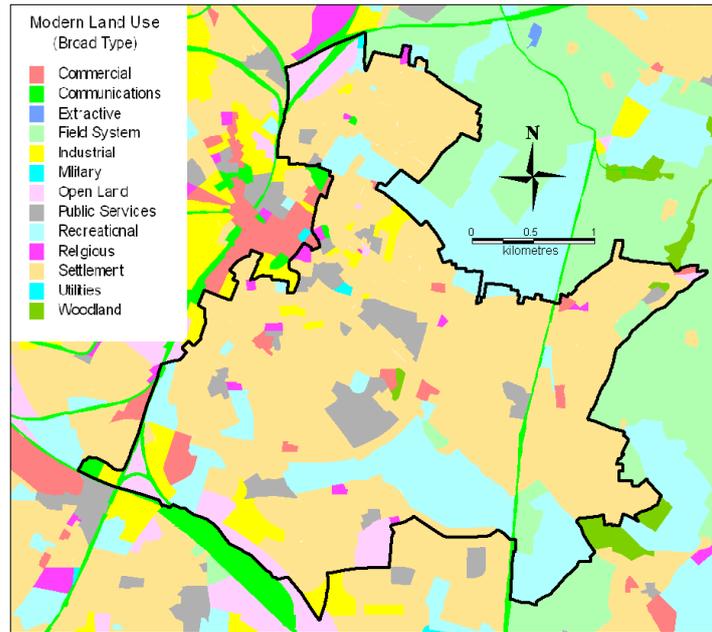
By the mid 18th century a mill had been established at New Mills, in the south-west of the area, and a country house had been built near The Delves. However, the landscape was still mainly agricultural in nature during this period. The deer park had been enclosed for agriculture.

By the late 18th/early 19th century, woodland had been established in the south-east of the area near Great Barr, and this survived until the inter war period. Two more country houses were established: Park Hall (next to the modern line of the Rushall canal, itself cut in the 19th century) and Gorway House, in the centre of the area.

By the late 19th century there were seven farms, and three country houses with small landscape parks. A large sewage farm was established to the south and survived into the mid 20th century. Small areas of large semi-detached and detached housing had been built; along the Birmingham Road medium sized houses had been built and this area expanded in the early 20th century.

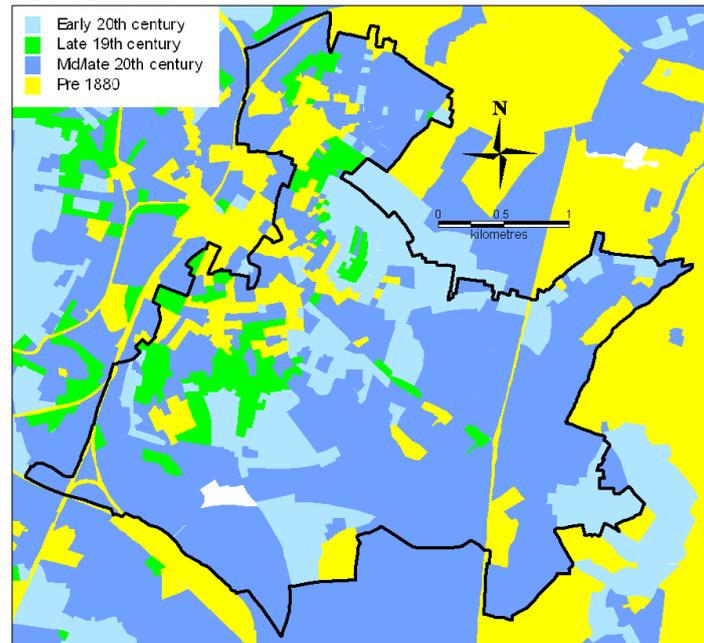
By the early 20th century two areas of allotments, near Cricket Close and to the rear of Lord Street, had been established. Gorway Road cricket ground also dates to the early 20th century, although the original pavilion has not survived.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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Darlaston Character Area (WL12)

SUMMARY:

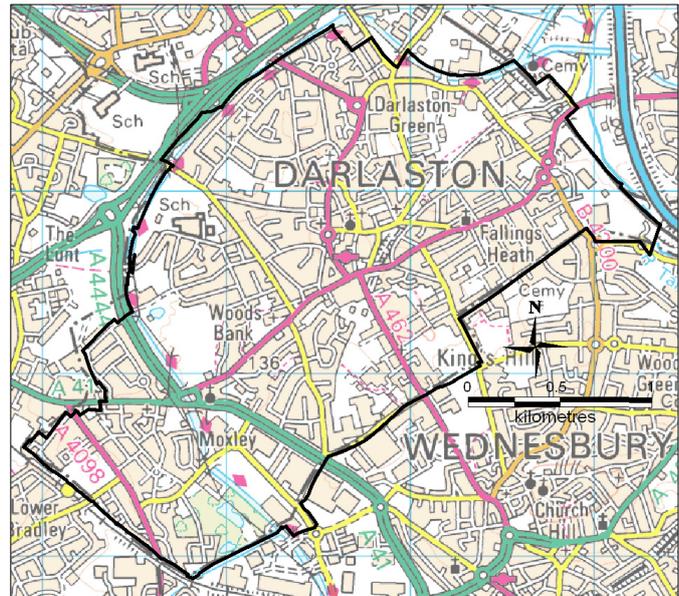
This area is dominated by settlement (49% of its area¹), although this is mixed with industrial and other land. Although most of the townscape originates after 1930, there are several older districts included. The area encompasses the residential and commercial centres at Darlaston and Moxley, as well as industrial sites to the east of these. It is bounded on three sides by the Borough boundary and in the north by canals, railways and more recent settlement.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies over coal, with superficial deposits of sandy till and gravel. To the north-east, alluvium lines the Tame valley. The centre marks the highest point of the area, at around 140m. The ground falls away to below 115m to the north-east by the River Tame and to around 120m along the curve of the canal in the west.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by the historic industrial town of Darlaston whose origins are medieval. The town centre is an area of shops and small businesses, where the earliest known buildings date to the 19th century. The medieval street plan probably survives within the modern town.



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The bend of the Walsall Canal at Moxley, in the south of the area. The industrial buildings on the left were demolished in 2008.

Also nearby is Victoria Park, established around 1902.

Darlaston appears to have developed in three distinct areas: the present town centre (in the centre of the area) with its medieval origins, and Catherine Cross (to the west) and Darlaston Green (to the north) both in existence by 1750.

The town is surrounded by housing and industrial sites. To the west, near Catherine's Cross, is an area of early 20th century semi-detached and terraced housing; while in the east is an area of late 19th century terraces and detached houses with other smaller properties of a similar date located even further east. To the north, around Darlaston Green, is an area of late 19th century terraces within more recent housing.

The later suburbs developed in the mid 20th century, and comprise predominately small semi-detached and terraced houses. A few 1960s/70s properties lie within areas of older housing. Late 20th century housing is concentrated to the north-west; including one estate which has been built upon the site of the large inter-war Victoria Iron Works.

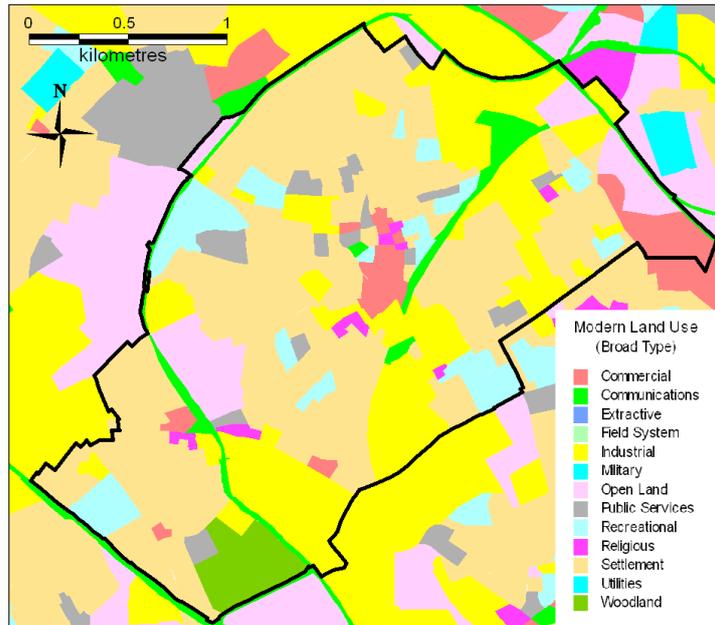
¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

The original settlement at Moxley in the south-east provides a focus for the housing expansion of the mid 20th century. There are two large mid 20th century housing estates there dominated by small semi-detached and terraced housing, as well as an estate of inter-war date further west.

Industrial buildings are mainly mid/late 20th century in date, although they occupy the sites of earlier industrial complexes. A few industrial buildings do survive from the inter-war period, and one or two from the early 20th century.

Within Darlaston there are several schools and community centres, as well as recreational sites. The public parks in the area were established in the late 19th century or the first half of the 20th.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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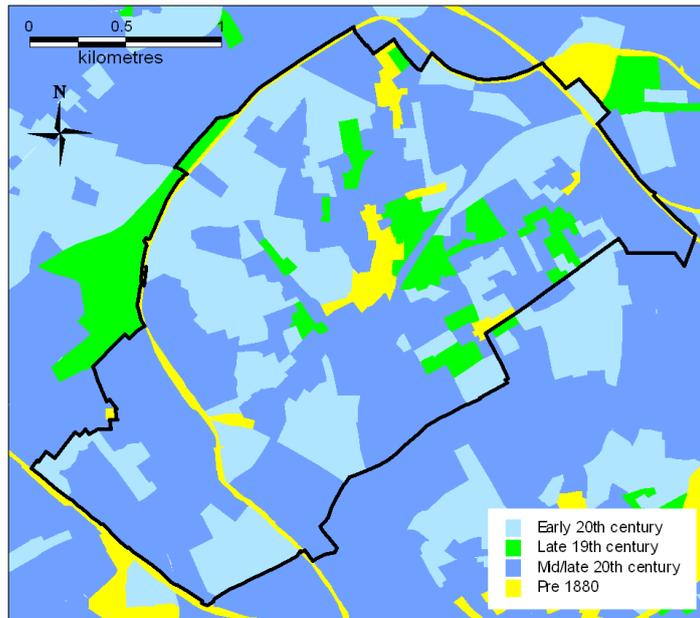
HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Darlaston is first mentioned in the late 12th century when it formed its own manor, and the original settlement is likely to have been around St Lawrence's Church.

The medieval settlement had more of the character of a village, with no evidence of an official market, though there is likely to have been small-scale industry in the surrounding area, and possibly some unofficial market activity. In the medieval period and probably through much of the post medieval period the town was surrounded by open field agriculture. The place names Cock Heath and Fallings Heath suggest there was common land in the south and east.

Coal was probably mined on the heaths from the medieval period onwards. By the beginning of the 19th century, collieries were beginning to have a major impact, particularly to the west and south-west around Moxley and near Bradley.

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Pelsall Character Area (WL13)

SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by field systems (41% of its area¹), although open land and settlement are also important. Unusually within the Black Country, most of the landscape (58%) originates from before 1900. The northern limit of the area forms the boundary with (rural) Staffordshire, while its other sides abut more densely settled or industrialised districts.

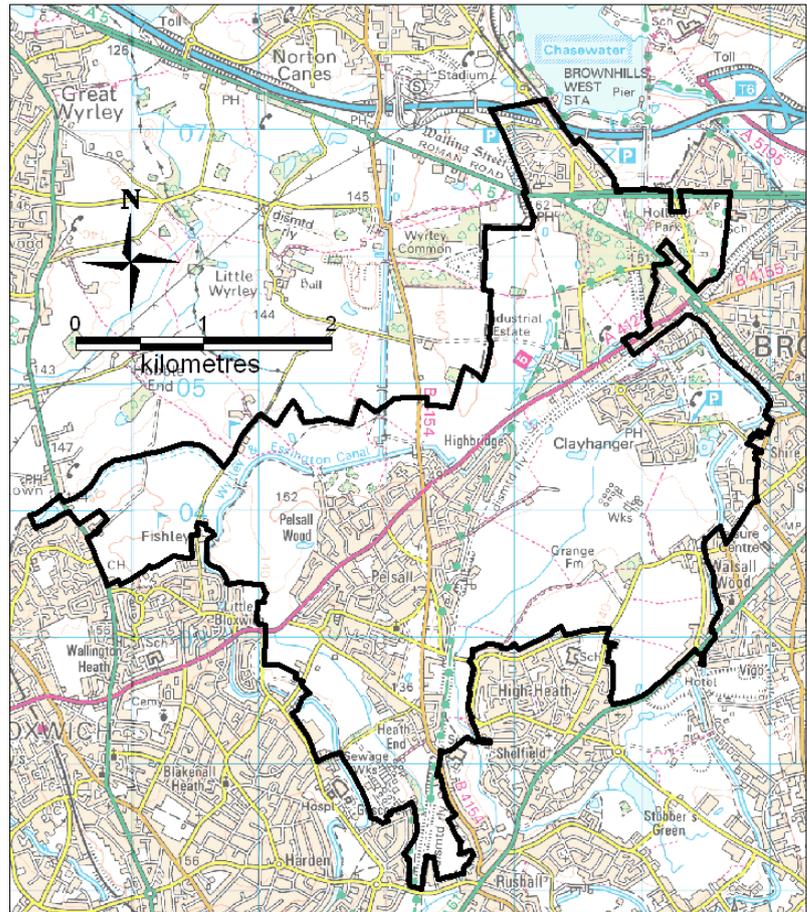
GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

For the most part, the area lies over the eastern edge of the South Staffordshire coalfield. The highest point (158m) is in the north (near the line of the modern M6 Toll motorway) while, in the south-east, the land falls to around 125m. The A4124 Lichfield Road reaches another high point of around 150m as it passes through the settlement of Pelsall in the centre of the area.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is characterised by field systems, open land, and dispersed settlements. The largest settlement, Pelsall, occupies the centre of the area and has a large central common. The oldest surviving houses are still to be found around the common and mainly date to the early 19th century.

The 20th century estates which surround the historic settlement of Pelsall are mainly of small and medium-sized houses, with the inter-war and 1950s houses dominating in the west and north, and large 1960s/70s estates mainly lying to the east and south of the common. One of these later estates was built on the site of a former colliery.



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¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

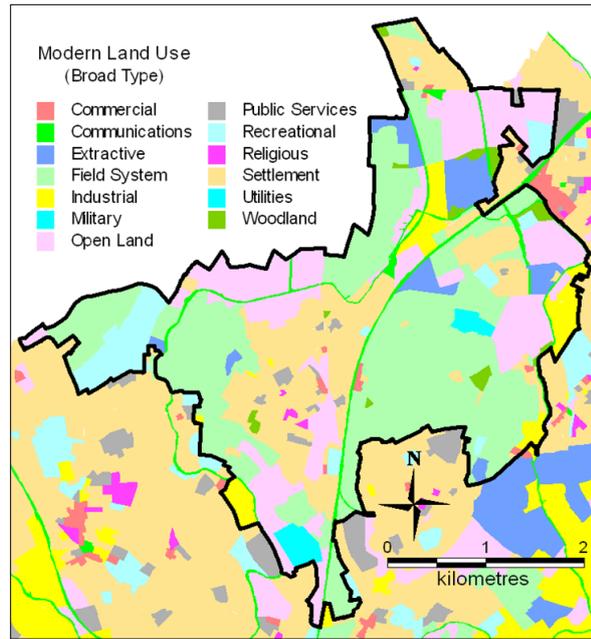
HISTORIC CHARACTER:

First mentioned in a charter of AD994 granting land to the church at Wolverhampton, the settlement of Pelsall remained part of Wolverhampton parish until the 19th century. The earliest settlement is likely to have been around Pelsall Hall (replaced by the present church in the 19th century). The settlement pattern, however, appears to have been relatively dispersed, with houses set on the edge of a series of greens.

Medieval Pelsall was surrounded by open fields, which were progressively enclosed in the late medieval and post medieval periods. The Common is likely to have existed in the medieval period (and there is evidence of it having been ploughed at that time), although its original extent is not known.

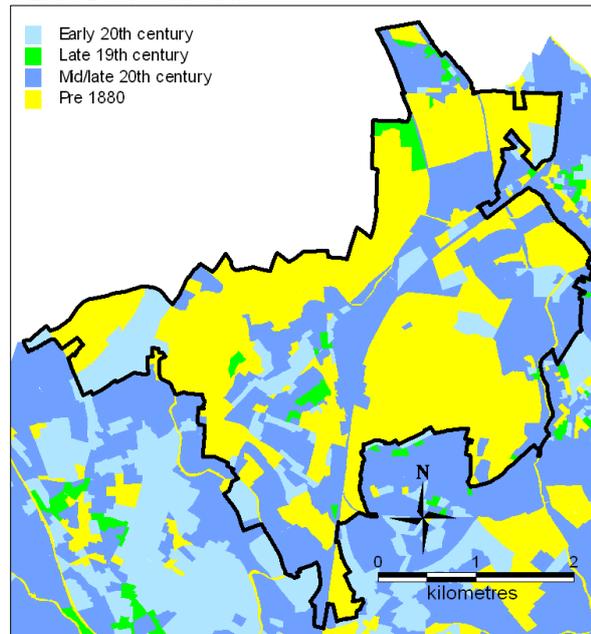
Several parts of the area have been used for extraction of coal in the 19th and early 20th centuries, although most collieries were disused by 1900. Several railway lines crossed the eastern half of the area (including the South Staffordshire line, the Norton branch line, and Walsall Wood extension), but all went out of use by the mid 20th century.

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Rushall & Sheffield Character Area (WL14)

SUMMARY:

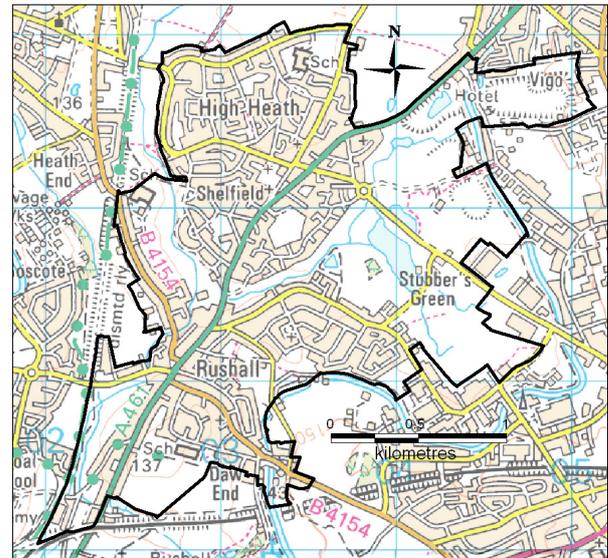
This area is dominated by settlement (46% of its area¹) although land given to extractive industries is also important. The landscape, which is largely (59%) of mid to late 20th century origin, is surrounded by field systems to the north and south, and an industrial district to its west.

GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

This area lies over the eastern edge of the South Staffordshire coalfield. In its north-east, sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate are present. Alluvium lines the sides of the Ford Brook which runs north-south down the western side of the area (with a tributary which runs to meet it from Stubber's Green to the east). The area is fairly flat lying at around 140m, except where it falls down to around 120m in the valley of the Ford Brook and its tributary.

MODERN CHARACTER:

This area forms the industrial part of Aldridge. The majority of the buildings date to the mid/late 20th century and include several large warehouses, depots and factories. There are also three brick works and an associated clay quarry: the latter may date to the 19th century and may represent one of the oldest surviving features of the area. Brick making has been characteristic of this area, reflected in the street name Brickyard Road, for example, which runs through the



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northern part of the area. While extractive industries have featured more prominently in the area's past (see below), its modern character is of much more mixed industrial use.

¹This figure and others relating to the proportion of land in the Character Area are based on data for the year 2000.

HISTORIC CHARACTER:

The earliest settlement in the area, Sheffield, is mentioned in Domesday Book and is referred to as a hamlet in 1276. By the 18th century it was a dispersed settlement with houses clustered in several distinct areas, one of which retains a possible village green. The earliest surviving houses date to the late 19th and early 20th century. Other early settlement includes School Farm, whose origins may be early Post Medieval. Sheffield's 20th century inter-war expansion occurred mainly along Mill Road, the main east-west route through the settlement. The remainder of the area along the main north-south route, the Lichfield Road, was redeveloped in the 1960s/70s. Large estates of this date were also built to the north of the area towards High Heath.

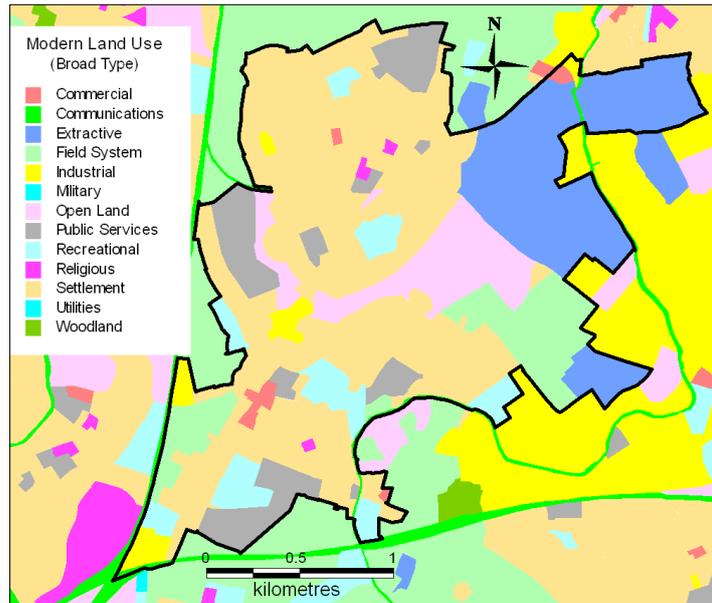
The Lichfield Road, clearly important to the development of the Character Area, was turnpiked in 1766, though it may originate in the 13th century. It was an important part of Rushall's development; although the date of origin of the settlement which was recorded in 1775 on the Lichfield Road is unknown (it is, for example, some distance from the medieval parish church next to Rushall Hall, which is actually just south of the Character Area). The oldest parts of Rushall are still to be found along the road.

Twentieth century expansion of Rushall included four inter-war estates of small semi-detached houses. Rushall's largest expansion however, was to the north east, towards Sheffield, curving around the northern bank of the Daw End Branch canal. Housing here was mainly built in the 1950s on what were fields.

Settlement at Daw End appeared by the 18th century and consisted of a farm and cottages, probably associated with limestone quarries. The settlement expanded in the late 19th/early 20th century, mainly built on the fields to the north. Some redevelopment also took place in the inter-war period, with cottages being replaced by semi-detached houses.

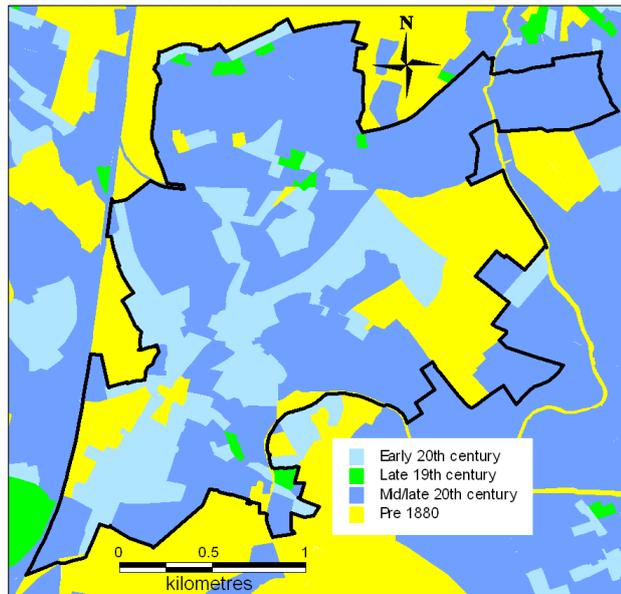
High Heath had originally been common heath land, probably since the medieval period, and settlement may not have existed here until the 16th century: the

MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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first mention of it was in 1576 when a cottage is described as encroaching on the common. The heath was enclosed around the turn of the 19th century through Act of Parliament, when settlement became firmly established. An early 19th century map shows a concentration of houses in the far north-west of the Character Area: later in the 19th century more houses were added, and several survive today.