

## NCA 28 Vale of York

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### *Overview*

The Vale of York NCA is a fairly flat landscape dominated by the city of York, but is otherwise a largely rural area, of quite fertile soils farmland dominated by arable cultivation and mixed vegetable crops. The north-eastern boundary is defined by the rising land of the Howardian Hills, a very small portion of which extends into the NCA. The NCA is included within the Eastern Arable Agricultural Landscape Type, and fields are medium to large in scale, enclosed by hedges, but with few hedgerow trees. This gives the landscape a generally large-scale, open, well-tended character. Other than the city of York, the settlement pattern is one of large villages, with solid brick farmsteads scattered between. York forms a major transport hub of major roads and railways, which include the A19 and the East Coast main railway line. Many stream courses and drainage channels cross the flood plain linking into the main river system of the Ouse, Derwent, Ure, Nidd and Foss. Only 5% of the NCA is wooded, of which less than 2% is ancient woodland. Areas of ancient semi-natural woodland are concentrated on the dry, sandy soils, especially to the north, east and south of York, where there are also remnants of historic heathland. Many of these areas have been planted with coniferous woods, usually Scots pine, creating a greater feeling of enclosure.

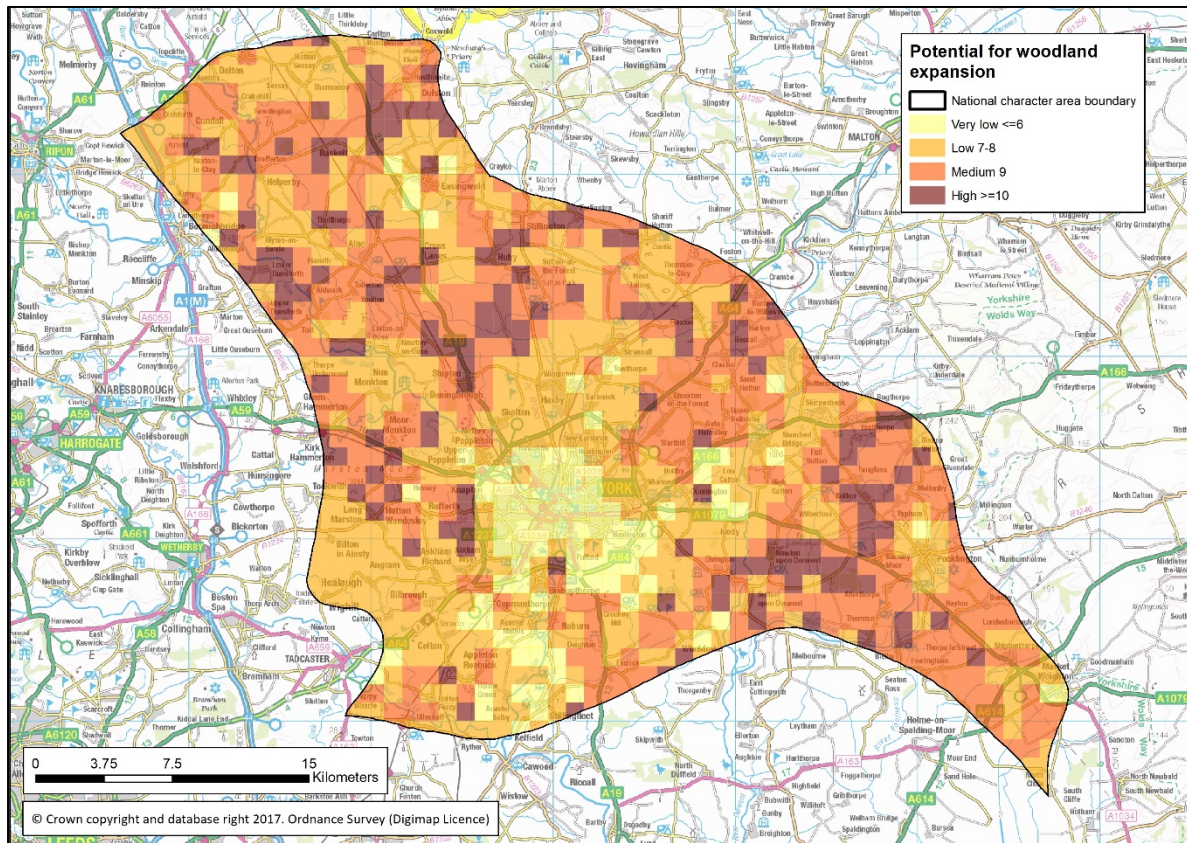
### *The Historic Environment Character*

The historic character of the NCA is influenced greatly by the Roman period. There was a legionary fortress and *colonia* at York, which became the central focus of a road system. Outside of York, there is archaeological evidence for outlying military camps and some settlement. York was a trading centre in the early medieval period, and it was also a centre of early Christianity, with the Minster founded in AD 627. Following the capture of York by the Vikings in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, it became known as Jorvik, and was the capital of a Viking kingdom and an important centre of manufacturing and international trade. Following the Norman Conquest, York continued to be an important regional centre, as well as being the location of England's second archbishopric. Around the city in the medieval period, the settlement pattern was one of well-spaced, planned villages with associated common field systems, many of which survive as ridge and furrow earthworks or as strip fields, though the rationalisation of field boundaries has removed much of this pattern. The low-lying and wetland and flood plain character of much of the area led to the creation of moated sites, many of which survive as earthworks, cropmarks or soilmarks. Moated sites were usually associated with higher status dwellings. Large areas were enclosed by Act of Parliament from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, there was a predominance of pastoral farming, and the area was used to fatten livestock from the surrounding hills. The presence of the race track in York led to the introduction of stud farms to the area in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a low to medium potential for woodland expansion, with clusters of some potential spread fairly widely across the Vale. The NCA profile suggests that new woodland could be established through the creation of small woodlands and shelterbelts, including riparian and floodplain woods. Opportunities are limited, however, in part because of the open nature of much of the landscape and wetland features that supports an internationally important assemblage of

wading birds. Care should also be taken with the location of new woodland, because of the many archaeologically sensitive medieval settlement remains around existing settlements. The NCA also contains two registered battlefield sites, at Stamford Bridge and Marston Moor, where new woodland should be avoided.



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