

## NCA 30 Southern Magnesian Limestone

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### *Overview*

This very long, narrow NCA covers a ridge of Permian Magnesian Limestone, extending from Bedale in North Yorkshire to Nottingham, and is included within the Chalk and Limestone Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type. The landscape is rolling, generally fertile with arable cultivation. Fields tend to be regular and bounded with hedges or stone walls. Settlement varies across the NCA, but is characterised by a nucleated pattern of villages and towns. Landscape character varies greatly from north to south. The north is the most rural in character, where Ripon is the most significant urban area. Further south, the NCA lies to the east of the Leeds/Bradford conurbation, and there are more market towns, such as Wetherby and Tadcaster, amongst the villages. It is a communications corridor, as the A1/A1M/M1 runs along most of its length. The densest levels of settlement are around key transport corridors and hubs, where the A1 and A1M intersect with major east-west routes such as the M62 and the M18. Here the landscape character is one of intense development, with roads, railways, power lines, power stations and relict industrial sites. The industrial character continues to the south, where the NCA crosses Nottinghamshire and the Nottinghamshire coalfield. The NCA has a fairly low woodland cover of 9%, of which over a quarter is ancient woodland. The NCA profile states that woodland cover is reasonably high, though woodlands tend to be more fragmented and smaller in the more rural northern section. There are significant areas of woodland associated with designed parklands and estates managed for game in the form of plantations and coverts. Ancient woodland tends to occur on the steep valley sides and on parish boundaries, but are often fragmented.

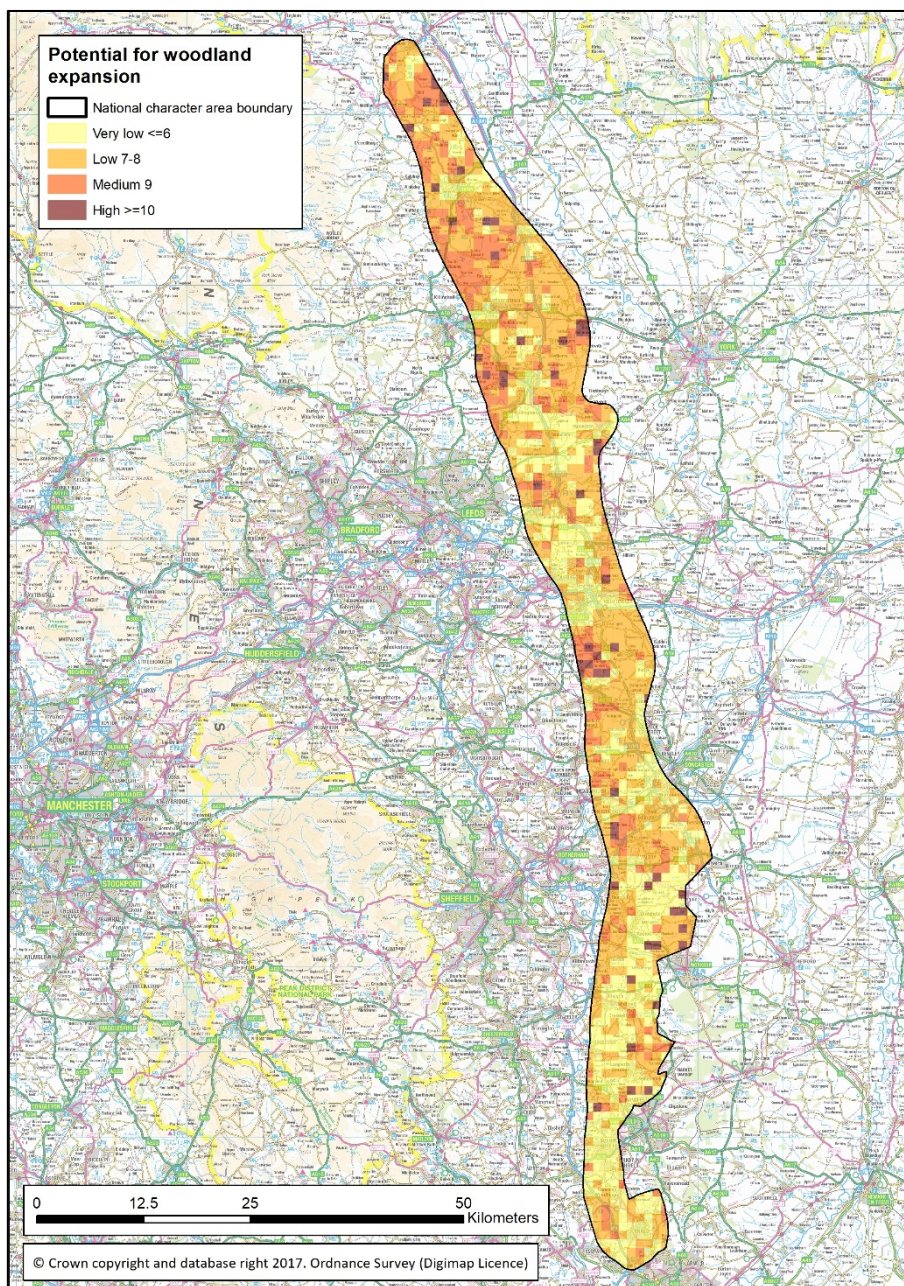
### *The Historic Environment Character*

There is internationally important archaeological evidence for early human activity from the caves at Creswell Crags to the south-east of Sheffield, ranging from Neanderthal to upper Palaeolithic occupation. The area has important Neolithic remains, particularly in the north, where there are group of barrows and henge monuments, for example at Thornborough Henges between the Ure and the Swale rivers. The light and fertile soils are favourable to settlement and there is evidence from the Iron Age and Roman periods of landscape-scale divisions with settlements and field systems. In the Roman period, roads such as Ermine Street and Dere Street were constructed along the ridge, along with military camps and settlements. The settlement pattern in the later medieval period was one of villages and towns, with associated arable-based common fields, though there are also some small-scale and irregular enclosures around some villages. Many of the towns in the NCA have medieval origins, for example Ripon was an ecclesiastical centre from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, later becoming a planned borough with a market, and there were planned markets towns at Bolsover, Knaresborough and Pontefract. The NCA has a notable number of country houses and designed parklands, some created from lands granted following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and some resulting from investment by wealthy industrialists in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The southern half of the NCA became part of the industrial development of south Yorkshire and the north Midlands, particularly with the development of coal resources, other minerals and stone, leading to a significant increase in settlement from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst most of the heavy industry has now gone, the transport corridor of

the A1 and M1 with links to east-west motorways, has become the focus of both industrial and residential development in recent years.

### *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates that there is only a low level of opportunity for woodland expansion within the NCA. The opportunities for new woodland identified by the NCA profile are limited to the expansion of tree cover on valley slopes, but also on degraded land and around new development. This is reflected in the mapping, which suggests that most opportunities lie around expanding existing woodland and around settlements, where woodland can be used to screen new development. Care should be taken, however, to avoid important archaeological remains, including former industrial sites which may be classed as degraded land.



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