

NCA 49 Sherwood

Overview

The NCA is a long, north-south orientated area covering a Sandstone outcrop, with underlying coal measures, extending from Retford and Worksop in the north, to Nottingham in the south. It is included within the Eastern Arable Agricultural Landscape Type, and the area is intensively cultivated for root crops, though there are large areas of livestock farming, particularly pigs and poultry. The field pattern is one of rectilinear, medium to large fields. There are important areas of wood pasture, lowland heathland and acid within Sherwood Forest. The settlement pattern was traditionally one of small villages and scattered farmsteads, though many of the villages expanded as mining settlements. There are large urban areas within the NCA, including part of Nottingham, Worksop and Mansfield. To the south of Worksop, in the Dukeries, settlement is characterised by estate villages and isolated farmsteads and very large designed estate parklands. Mining has left a significant impact on the character area, though many of the relict features of former industry have been reclaimed and restored to heathland or woodland, or developed for business, industrial or community uses. The local road network is limited by the expanse of Sherwood Forest, but the large urban areas are linked by major roads, including the A1 in the north of the NCA. The area is very well wooded, at 22% of the NCA, though only 7.5% of this is ancient woodland. The largest expanses of woodland lie between Worksop and Nottingham, and it is roughly evenly divided between broadleaved and coniferous plantation.

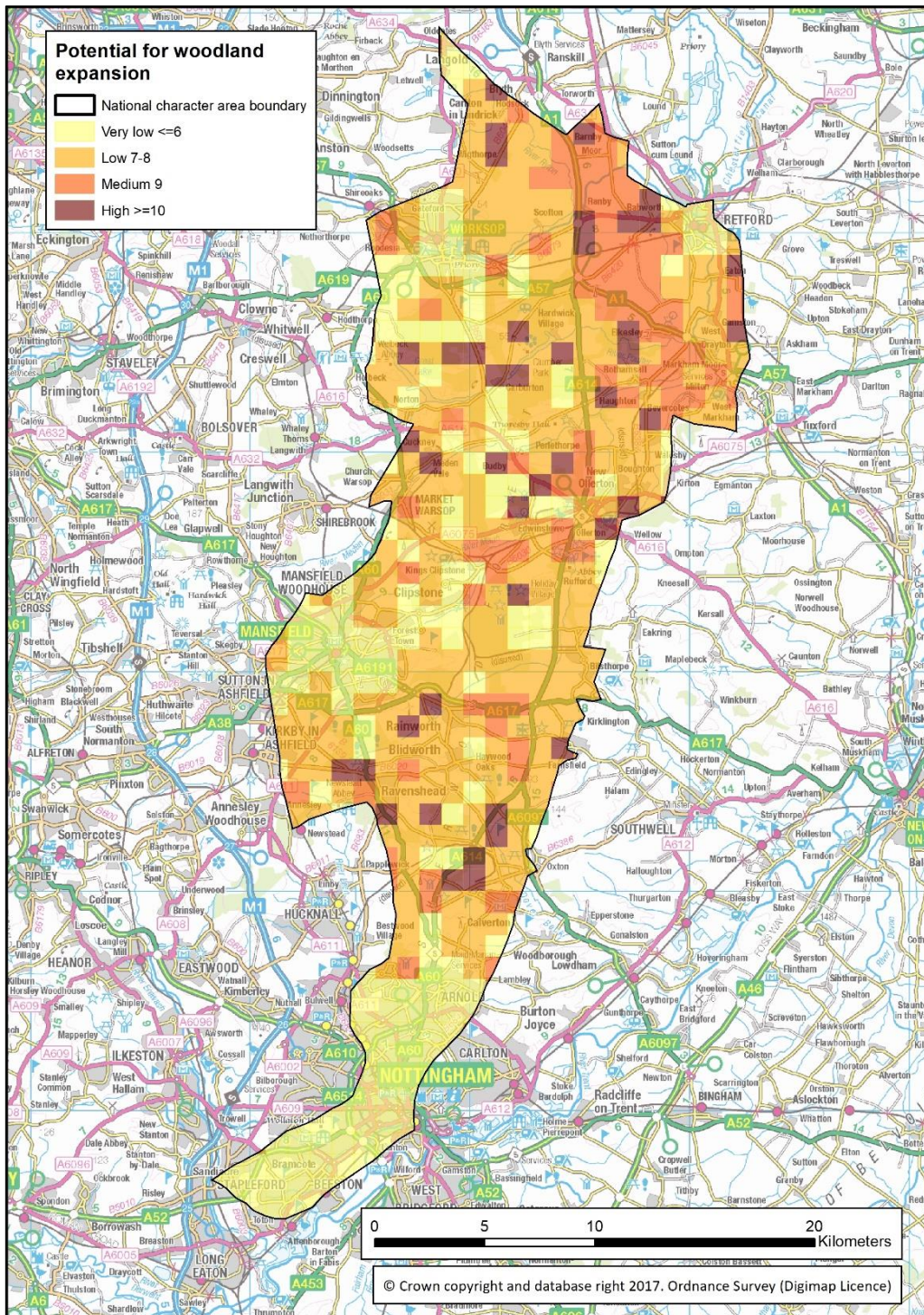
The Historic Environment Character

There is limited evidence of occupation during most of the late prehistoric period, although there is some evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and field systems. Archaeological evidence indicates that woodland was cleared in the Roman period, although substantial stands may have remained in the south. In 1086, the area is recorded as wood pasture, suggesting active management of the woodlands. The area was brought under forest law by the Normans, though there seems to have been a continual process of piecemeal enclosure, through assarting and encroachment. By the 16th century only the core woods of the surviving royal estates and parks remained. In the 17th century, the area was described as having newly established farmhouses and enclosures under arable cultivation, though there were clearly extensive areas that were still wooded. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, large areas of land came into the ownership of a few powerful and influential families. They established great country houses and parklands on their estates in the area known as 'The Dukeries'. Other less fertile areas of the estates provided shooting cover, timber and managed fuel supplies for local industry. Together with the enclosure of arable land, the physical framework of this landscape was established by the early 19th century. Large-scale enclosure and agricultural improvement produced a field pattern of regular fields. The coal mining industry had a major effect on the landscape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, not only in the industrial infrastructure of mining, but also in the expansion of settlements and a growing network of railways and roads.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The opportunities for woodland expansion within the NCA are low, according to the mapping of historic and natural environment attributes. The low score is probably a result of

the large areas of urban settlement as well as by the significance of intensive farming within the NCA. Where areas of potential woodland expansion are identified, these are tied closely to existing woodland cover. This accords well with the opportunity highlighted by the NCA profile, which recommends expansion of the mosaic of woods, heaths and parklands. The acid grassland and lowland heath are significant elements of the Forest, and the mosaic needs to be maintained and linkages strengthened. New planting, therefore, is likely to be small-scale.



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