

NCA 55 Manchester Conurbation

Overview

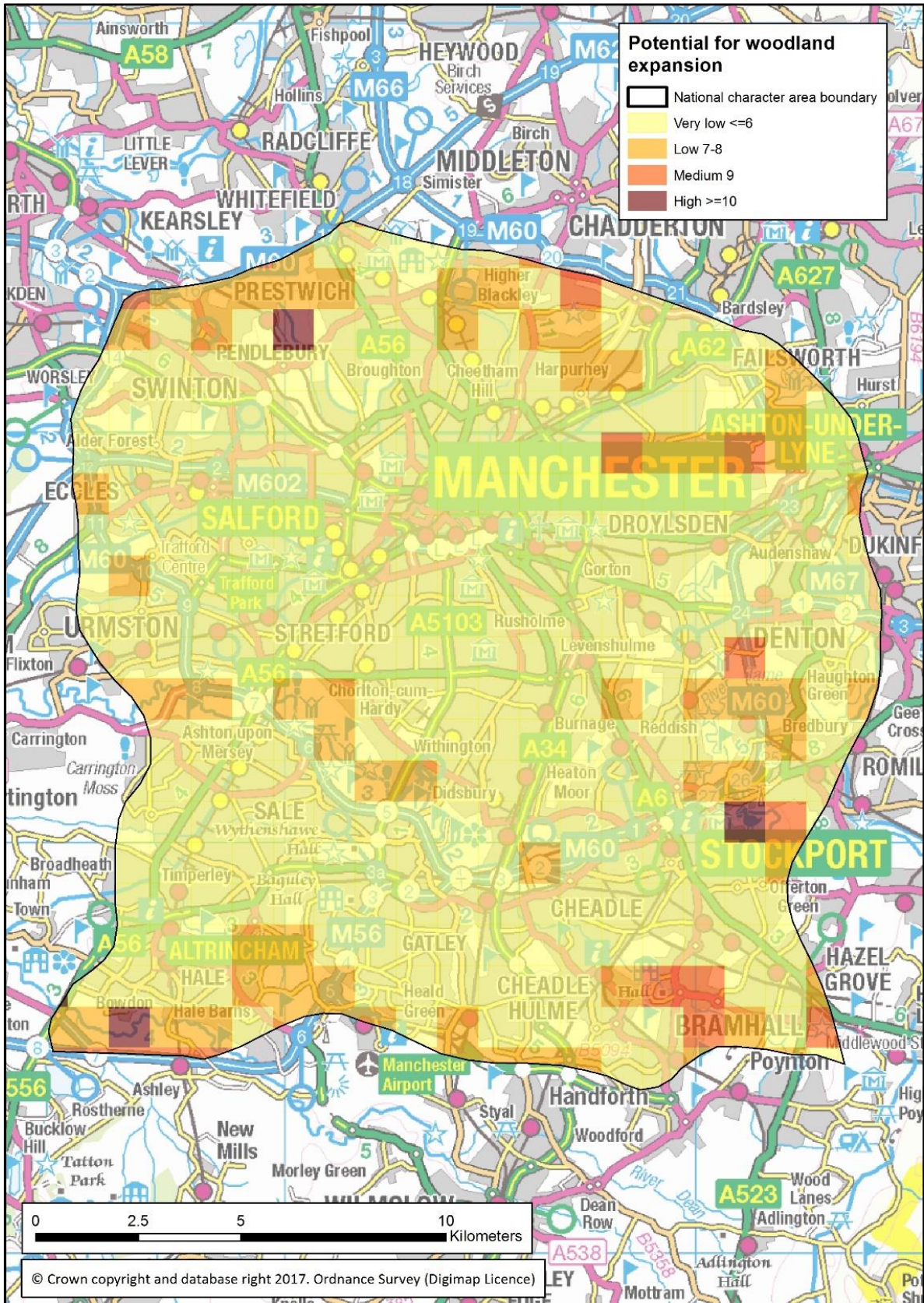
The area covers the Manchester conurbation, including Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Sale, Ashton-under-Lyne, Swinton, Altrincham, Stretford, Prestwich, Cheadle Hulme, Denton and Droylsden. It is included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type, though it is characterised by dense urban and industrial development, commercial, financial, retail and administrative centres, commuter suburbs and housing, interspersed with a network of green infrastructure. Watercourses are a key feature of the urban character, both in the rivers that cross the NCA, and also in the canals that developed in the late 18th and early 19th century. The river valleys are important corridors of semi-natural habitats and provide valuable green space in the urban environment. For such an intensive area of urban development, woodland cover is reasonably good at 7% of the NCA. Ancient woodland accounts for just under 6% of woodland cover. Large areas of woodland are found along the sides of the river valleys, both within the urban development zones and along the river valleys flowing from the Pennines into Manchester, and beyond to the River Mersey, providing important ecological links between areas.

The Historic Environment Character

There was a Roman fort at Manchester and it, along with Salford and Stockport, was a market town in the later medieval period. Much of the rest of the NCA was made up of a dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets, with occasional villages. Massive urban expansion began in the late 18th century, with the development of Manchester as a textile town. Manchester itself became a centre of spinning, and merchants took the yarn to be spun in settlements in the Lancashire valleys. Manchester merchants handled the imported cotton, distributing it for spinning and weaving, and distributing the finished cloth, including sending it on to Liverpool for international export. The network of canals and later railways were an essential part of Manchester's development as a world-leading centre for textile production. Alongside textiles, associated industries developed, such as engineering and chemical works.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The opportunities for woodland expansion is extremely low in the NCA, as shown by the mapping of historic and natural environment attributes. This is a consequence of the intense urban development across the NCA. There are opportunities, as highlighted in the NCA profile, for expansion of woodland along the river valleys, and for linking community woodlands in the urban fringe.



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