

# NCA 58 Merseyside Conurbation

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## *Overview*

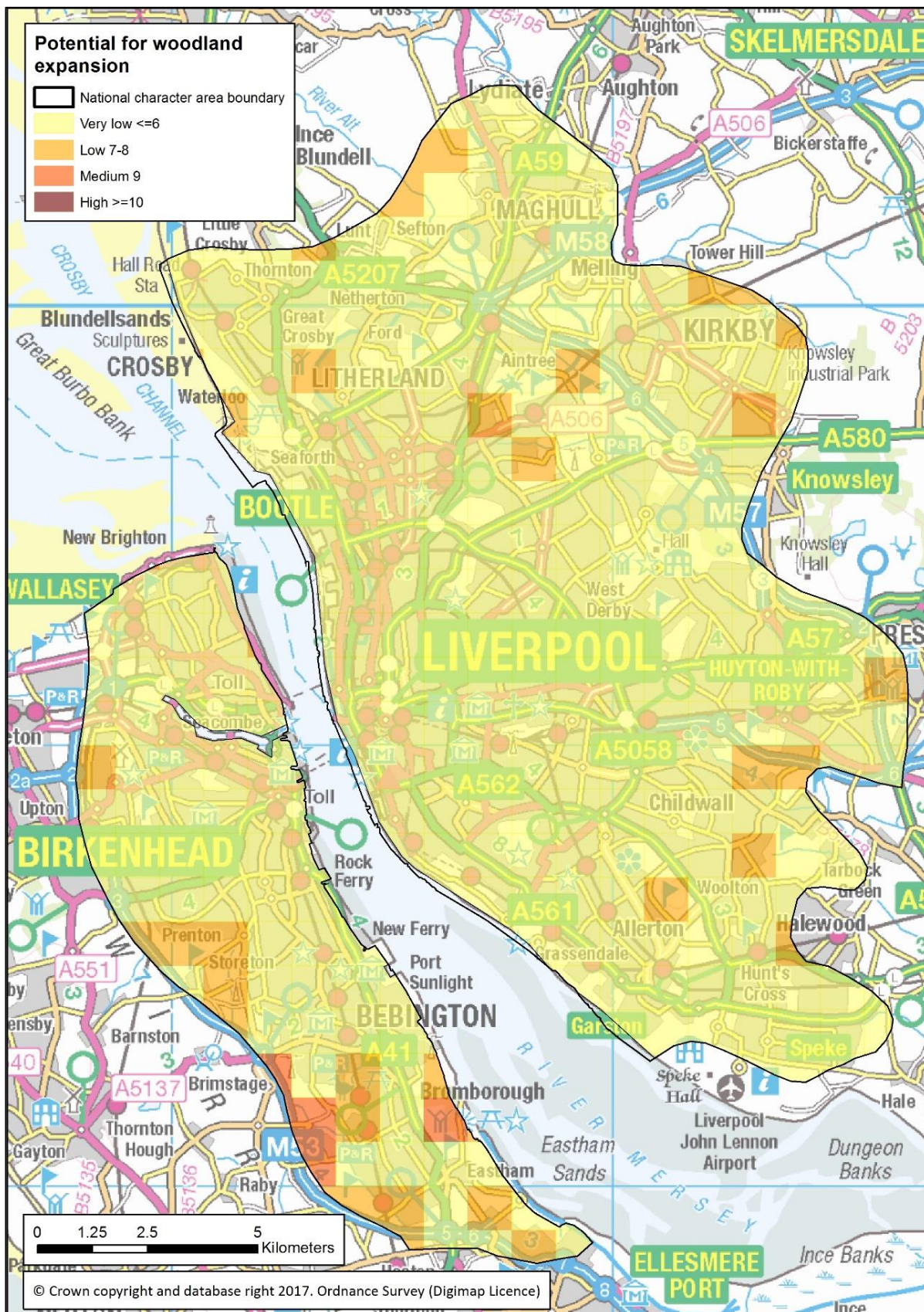
The NCA is a predominantly urban and suburban landscape straddling the Mersey Estuary, comprising the settlements of Liverpool, Birkenhead, Bootle, Kirkby, Maghull, Huyton, Bebington and Wallasey. In addition to the urban centres, there are large residential areas, industrial and commercial land, as well as extensive dock facilities on both sides of the Mersey. The area has a strong maritime character. The NCA is included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type, and there is a restricted rural hinterland with versatile, good-quality agricultural land around the villages of Sefton and Lunt, and between Maghull and Netherton, and on the urban fringe to the east along the M57 to the north of Huyton and in Wirral along the M53 west of Bebington. The small areas of farmland are often arable or horticultural, although subject to the pressures of the urban fringe. Woodland accounts for 5% of the NCA, and includes areas within the Mersey Forest Community Forest. Woodland is mostly found within urban parks and cemeteries.

## *The Historic Environment Character*

Liverpool was a small town with a castle in the medieval period. It began to grow and develop as a port in the post medieval period, taking over from the port of Chester. Its importance as a maritime centre grew in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century with the construction of the Old Dock. The docks expanded rapidly, adapting new technology as international trade increased, becoming a focus for the transatlantic trade. Alongside the docks, large areas of warehousing were built to deal with the large volume of goods passing through the port. The city expanded hugely in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, complementing the massive industrial expansion of the textile industry in Manchester and the Lancashire Valleys. The development of extensive settlements on the east of the Wirral Peninsula commenced with the introduction of the steam ferry in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and from 1886, following the opening of the Mersey Railway Tunnel, linking the Wirral and Liverpool. The formerly small communities of Wallasey, Birkenhead, Bebington and Bromborough expanded significantly and amalgamated into a single urbanised area. Docks were established at Birkenhead and in the Wallasey Pool in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, accompanied by ship building and a wide range of industry along the banks of the Mersey. Steel and ship-building industries transformed Birkenhead into a major 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial town with associated residential housing.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates only a very low potential for woodland expansion, as a result of the highly urbanised character of the NCA. Opportunities for woodland creation are restricted to urban parks, or on urban and industrial fringes.



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