

# NCA 70 Melbourne Parklands

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## *Overview*

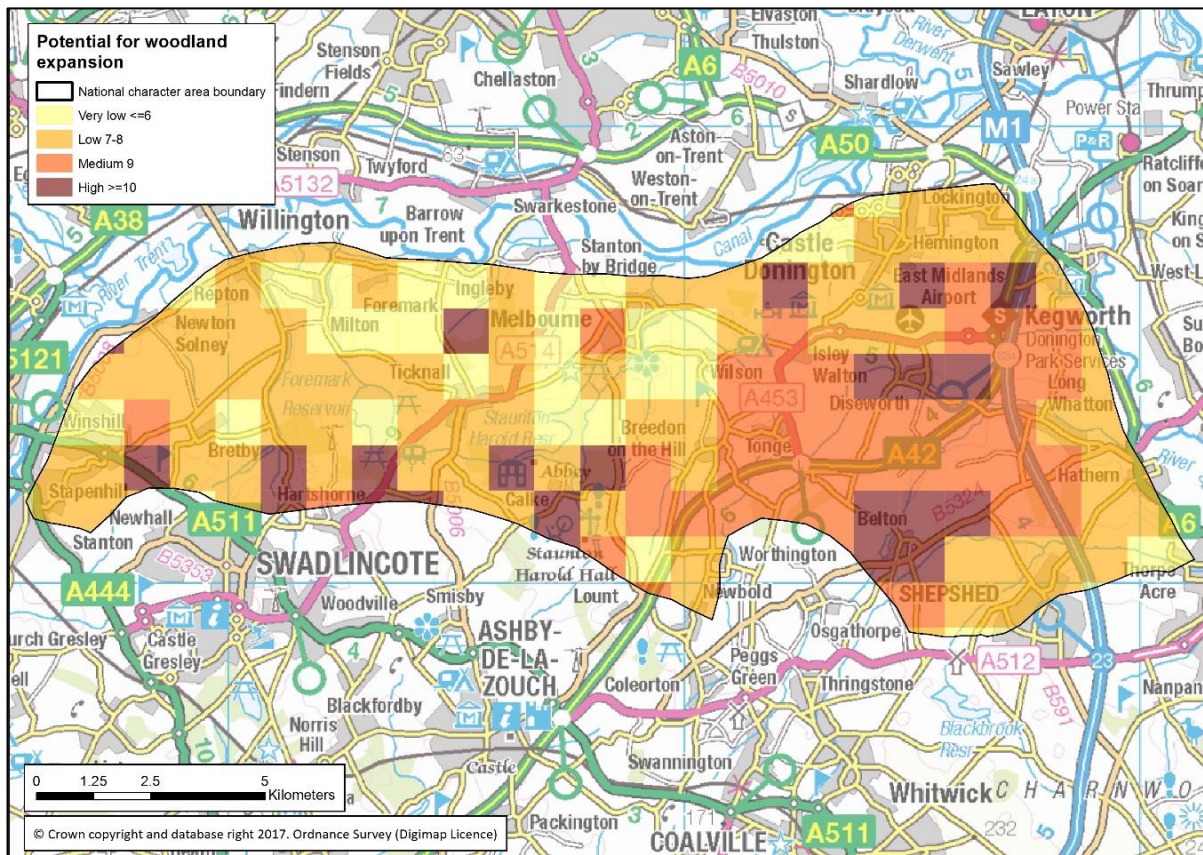
This small NCA lies between the medieval forests of Needwood and Charnwood. It is a predominantly rural landscape, included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type, though surrounded by urbanised areas. It has rolling farmland, woodland and several landscaped parklands with large country houses, as well as two large reservoirs supplying water to Leicestershire. Agriculture is mainly arable, with more pasture on steeper ground, in medium-sized regular and semi-regular fields bounded by hedgerows. To the west, settlement is dispersed with hamlets and farmsteads, whilst the east has larger nucleated settlements including Melbourne, Kegworth and Castle Donnington. The east side of the NCA is more built-up in general, with East Midlands Airport and a transport corridor including the M1 and junctions with the A42 and A50 arterial roads. The area is quite well-wooded, with 10% coverage, of which over a quarter is ancient woodland. Trees and woodlands play an important role in emphasising estate character. There are dense lines of trees along watercourses and in designed parkland, such as Bretby Hall and Calke Abbey. Many estate woodlands are mixed species plantations managed as game coverts or for commercial timber. Around 25% of the NCA lies within the National Forest where extensive woodland planting is being undertaken, including large blocks between Melbourne and Swadlincote. Between 1990 and 2012 some 8 million trees have been planted in response to the fragmentation of the existing woodlands, and to the decline in industry and mining in central England.

## *The Historic Environment Character*

The NCA has particularly rich evidence for the early medieval period. Repton, was an early Christian foundation and an important centre for the Kingdom of Mercia. Breedon-on-the-Hill was the site of an early medieval monastery, founded within the defences of an Iron Age hillfort. The parish church sits within the precinct of the monastery and contains several examples of early medieval sculpture. Ingleby, on the northern edge of the NCA, has a Viking cemetery. The influence of monastic houses and large manorial estates has left a clear legacy, in the estates that succeeded them, in the form of country houses and deer parks, such as Calke Abbey, Bretby Hall and Staunton Harold Hall. The form of medieval field patterns is still legible in the landscape, with small, irregular ancient enclosures, and strip fields enclosed from common fields.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes suggests that there is a low potential for woodland expansion within the NCA, perhaps reflecting the large amount of planting that has already been undertaken. The mapping attributes do not take into account areas of potential planting within the extensive areas of designed parkland, however, as that would require careful consideration of the original landscape design. The mapping highlights areas to the east of the NCA, where there is more development and busy road corridors, including the A42 and M1. Here, new planting could extend and link woodland habitats, as highlighted in the NCA profile. There are also some clusters of higher potential for new planting within the boundaries of the National Forest.



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