

# NCA 92 Rockingham Forest

---

## *Overview*

Rockingham Forest occupies a broad, low undulating ridge to the west and south of Peterborough and Stamford, and stretching south to Kettering. It is included within the Chalk and Limestone Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type, and has a largely rural character. The area is sparsely settled with a settlement pattern of small villages, with occasional isolated farmsteads. At the south end of the area are the two large urban areas of Corby and Kettering. Fields are generally medium to large with regular, straight boundaries. Older, more irregular fields are found around some villages. Agriculture is mixed arable with some pasture. The road system between the villages mostly comprises local roads, but there are major routes linking Corby and Kettering and towns outside the NCA. The A1 crosses the NCA to the south-west of Peterborough. It is a well-wooded area, with 15% coverage of the NCA, of which more than half is ancient woodland. Woodland is a strong characteristic of the NCA, many large areas lying on the highest parts and accessible to the public for recreation. Many woodlands were formerly extensively coppiced and small-leaved lime is a particular feature of the eastern woods. Woodland is also associated with several historic country houses and their designed parklands.

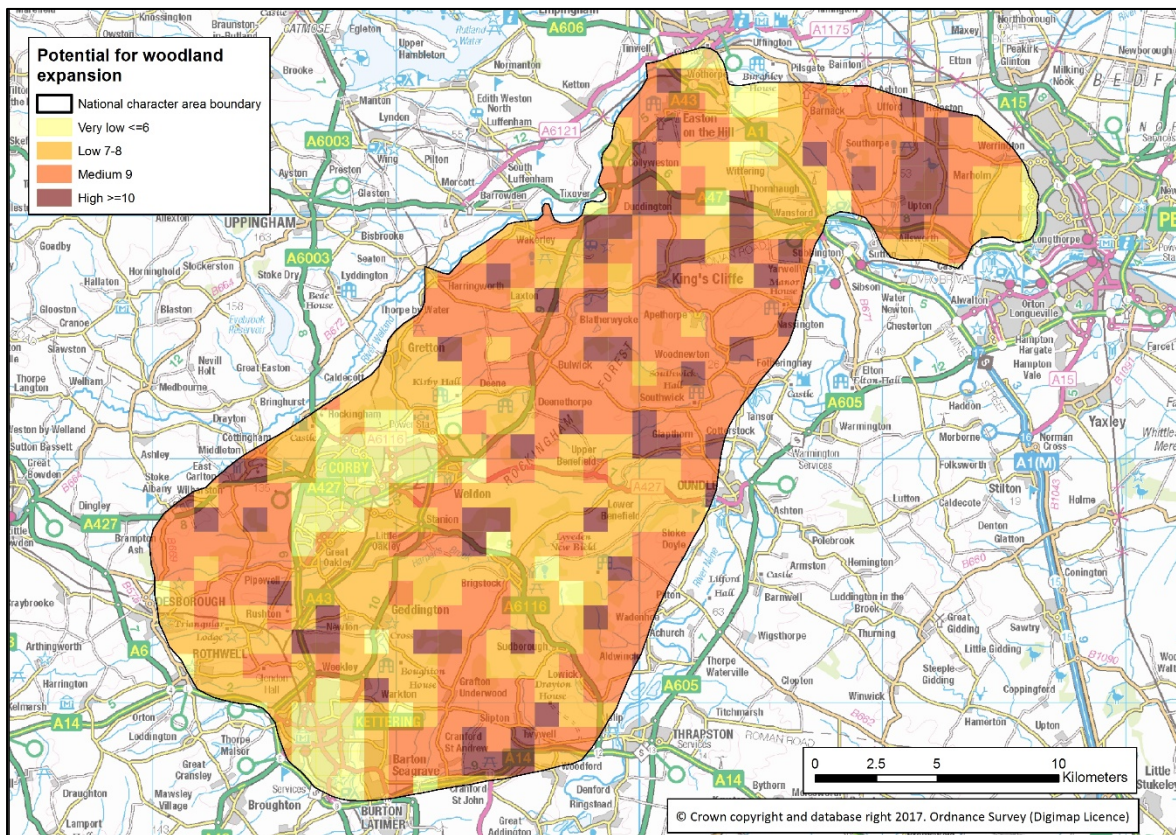
## *The Historic Environment Character*

The historic landscape character of the NCA has been greatly influenced by its status as part of the Royal Forest of Rockingham in the medieval period. The area was heavily wooded, but also included villages and tracts of agricultural land. By the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, however, land was already being granted out of the forest, with areas being cleared for agriculture, whilst hunting and other rights were granted to various landowners. By the early post medieval period, the woodlands were of more value as fuel and timber than for hunting cover. From the medieval period, large areas of woodland had been managed as coppice, with standards providing timber trees. It is notable that where woodland was managed through coppicing, it survived into the post medieval period and beyond, whereas other areas were often cleared for grazing. Industry played a significant role in the development of the forest, partly because of the plentiful supplies of woodland fuel, particularly for the iron and pottery industries. Ironstone mining and iron working is known from the Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon period, as well as the later Middle Ages. Ironstone mining was revived in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries on a large scale, particularly following the coming of the railways. Corby developed as a major centre for iron and steel works, and expanded into a large town. The area ceased being administered as a royal forest by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following disafforestation, there were large-scale clearances and enclosures.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates that there is a low potential for woodland expansion, though some areas of greater opportunity are highlighted. Areas where there are greater opportunities for new planting are generally associated with existing areas of woodland which suggests that planting would mainly comprise extending woodland cover. The NCA profile places an emphasis on new woodland planting, as well as on managing existing areas, for example through coppicing, but also acknowledges the need to respect features of historical interest, particularly historic boundaries. Although there has been rationalisation of field systems and new enclosure

patterns introduced from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, some boundaries are clearly much older, and their legibility in the landscape should be retained.



NCA 092 Rockingham Forest