

# NCA 102 Teme Valley

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## *Overview*

The Teme Valley lies mostly within north-west Worcestershire, but also stretches into Shropshire and Herefordshire. It is a complex undulating rural landscape of fertile farmlands dissected by the River Teme, and is included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type. The field pattern is the result of piecemeal enclosure, though reorganised in places, resulting in a mixture of regular and irregular fields. Although there is arable agriculture, the area is an important fruit growing area, the majority of the orchards being located on the warmer south-facing slopes to the north of the Teme. The area is known for its cherry orchards, but also apples and damsons. Damson trees are also a feature of the hedgerows. Although there are villages scattered across the NCA, the settlement pattern is mainly dispersed, comprising farmsteads and hamlets linked by lanes and minor roads. Woodland cover is very high, at 17% of the NCA, of which over 38% is ancient woodland. Woodlands are found mainly on the steep slopes of valleys and hills, particularly of the River Teme, with orchards on the lower hillsides. At Abberley, there is old parkland with mature trees scattered across the open landscape. Oak woodlands are typical of the NCA, though some have been replanted with conifers, whilst there are wild service trees and small-leaved lime in some woodland and in hedgerows.

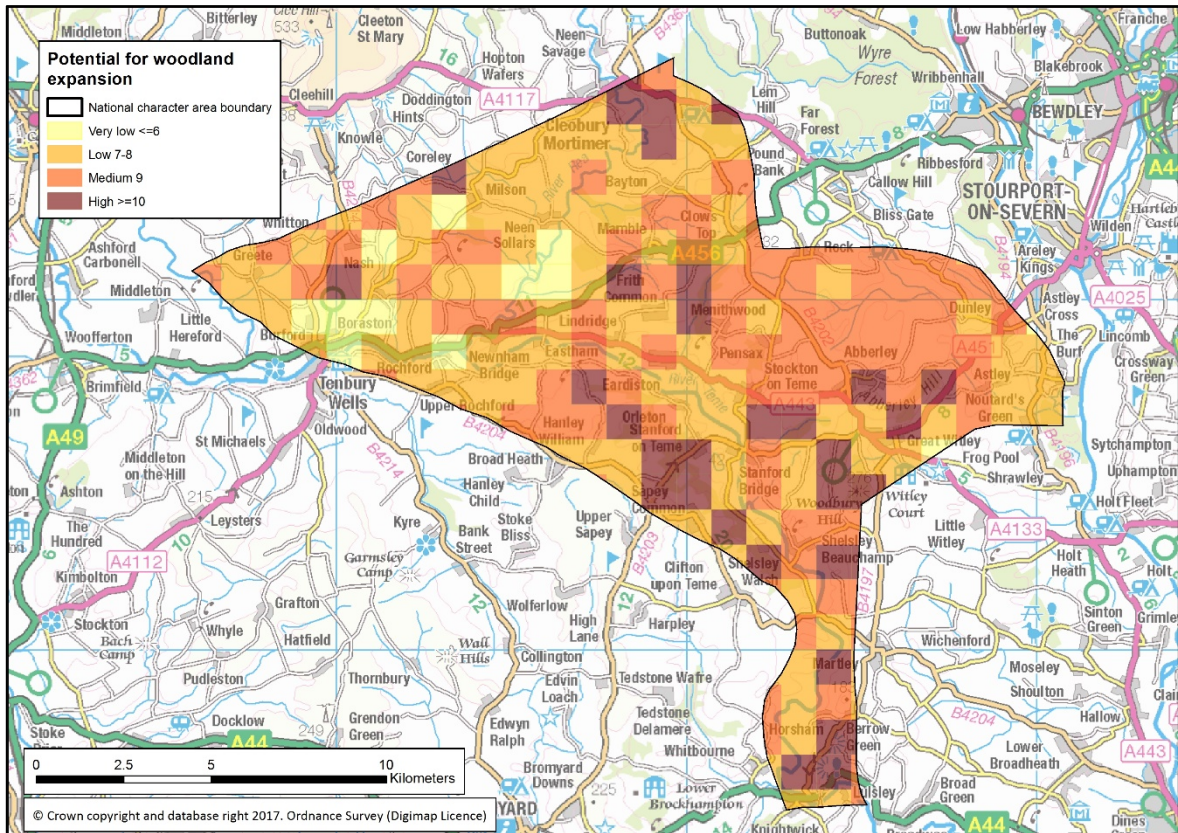
## *The Historic Environment Character*

Defended settlement is a feature of the NCA. On the foothills of the Malverns, which extend into the area, there are prehistoric camps at Woodbury Hill and Berrow Hill, and there are earthwork castle sites scattered along the valley of the River Teme, in particular. In the later medieval period, the area developed as a corn-livestock region primarily. Cattle, many of which were bought in for fattening, and pigs were an important part of the system, often living in the orchards. The orchards were used for cider-making from at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and hop fields were brought in from 18<sup>th</sup> century, typically planted in the valley of the River Teme and intermixed with arable. As part of the pasturing system, extensive water meadows were established along the wide river valleys from 17<sup>th</sup> century. The small hamlets and farmsteads and irregular field patterns are typical of the dispersed settlement that often developed along common-edge locations. There was some coal mining in the west of the area, around Abberley and Whitley Court in the post medieval period, and well as iron processing. The introduction of the railway had a major influence on fruit production, and made the wider area more accessible to visitors to the spas at Malvern and Tenbury Wells from the Victorian period. Victorian prosperity is reflected in the many large houses and rectories.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a medium level of potential for woodland expansion, particularly of the valley sides of the River Teme and on the lower slopes of the Malvern Hills. These areas are already well-wooded, and new planting would improve connectivity between fragmented woodlands, as recommended by the NCA profile. The profile also recommends the re-introduction of coppicing for traditional, sustainable management. Wood pasture is also a priority in the area. It is also important, however, to maintain and conserve the field pattern of piecemeal enclosure, as

well as sites of archaeological and historical importance, and their settings, such as hill forts and quarries.



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