



Section 3

3. Broad Character Type Analysis

3 Broad Character Type Analysis

3.1 The Broad Types represent the most basic level at which Historic Landscape Characterisation is carried out. At this level the Broad Types form what can be regarded as a common core of HLC types which, it is anticipated, will allow information to be joined at a regional and, in due course, a national level. For the LLR project there are twelve Broad Types which are outlined below which even at this level reveal a great deal about Leicestershire and Rutland's historic landscape character.

3.2 Unenclosed Land survives only in fragmentary pockets mostly located in Charnwood Forest, and represent the last remnants of what previously was an important landscape resource.

3.3 Fields and Enclosed Land illustrates the rural character of much of the study area and although at this level little is revealed about the nature or date of enclosure the dominance of agriculture particularly in the east and south of the study area is emphasised.

3.4 Orchards and Allotments in terms of total area covered represents one of the smallest of the Broad Types. Where the landscape is characterised as falling within this Broad Type it is often, though not exclusively, located either within or close to urbanised areas.

3.5 The Woodland Broad Character Type reflects the low levels of woodland coverage. Localised concentrations of woodland, tend to reflect recorded historical extents, e.g. Charnwood, Leicester and Leighfield Forests. There is a dispersed scatter of small woodland parcels across much of southern and eastern Leicestershire representing the creation and management of hunting landscapes. Recent policy and National Forest objectives have resulted in increases in woodland particularly in the west of the county.

3.6 Industrial is distributed primarily around the principal urban areas. Influenced by the road network it illustrates the contrast between central and western Leicestershire and the east of the study area. The changing character of industry, the decline of engineering and manufacturing and the growth of service and distribution is also reflected.

3.7 Extractive and Landfill reveals the predominant influence of the physical landscape character, notably its geology and soils.

3.8 Military primarily reflects the scatter of former and existing airfields, of which only Cottesmore remains in military use.

3.9 Ornamental Parkland and Recreational reveals patterns of modern recreational land use as well as the distribution of earlier parklands and landscape gardens.

3.10 Settlement illustrates the essential settlement hierarchy for the study area. The dominance of Leicester is apparent as is the relatively even distribution of second tier market towns and the subordinate nucleated village network. The impact of 19th and 20th expansion of Leicester which has driven the growth of adjacent settlements may also be charted. Analysis illustrates the relationship between settlement and transportation networks. The challenge to maintain settlement separation in light of development pressures is apparent.

3.11 Civic and Commercial complements the Settlement pattern with concentrations of this Broad Type being located typically either at the centre or on the peripheries of urban centres.

3.12 Transportation reveals the importance of the Soar Valley with Leicester clearly forming a central past and present communications hub.

3.13 Water and Valley Floor is indicative of the catchments of the Soar and Wreake, which dominate much of Leicestershire's drainage, but also the Welland, Avon and Mease/Sence. Rutland Water forms a significant regional resource, as a water source, recreational facility and natural habitat.

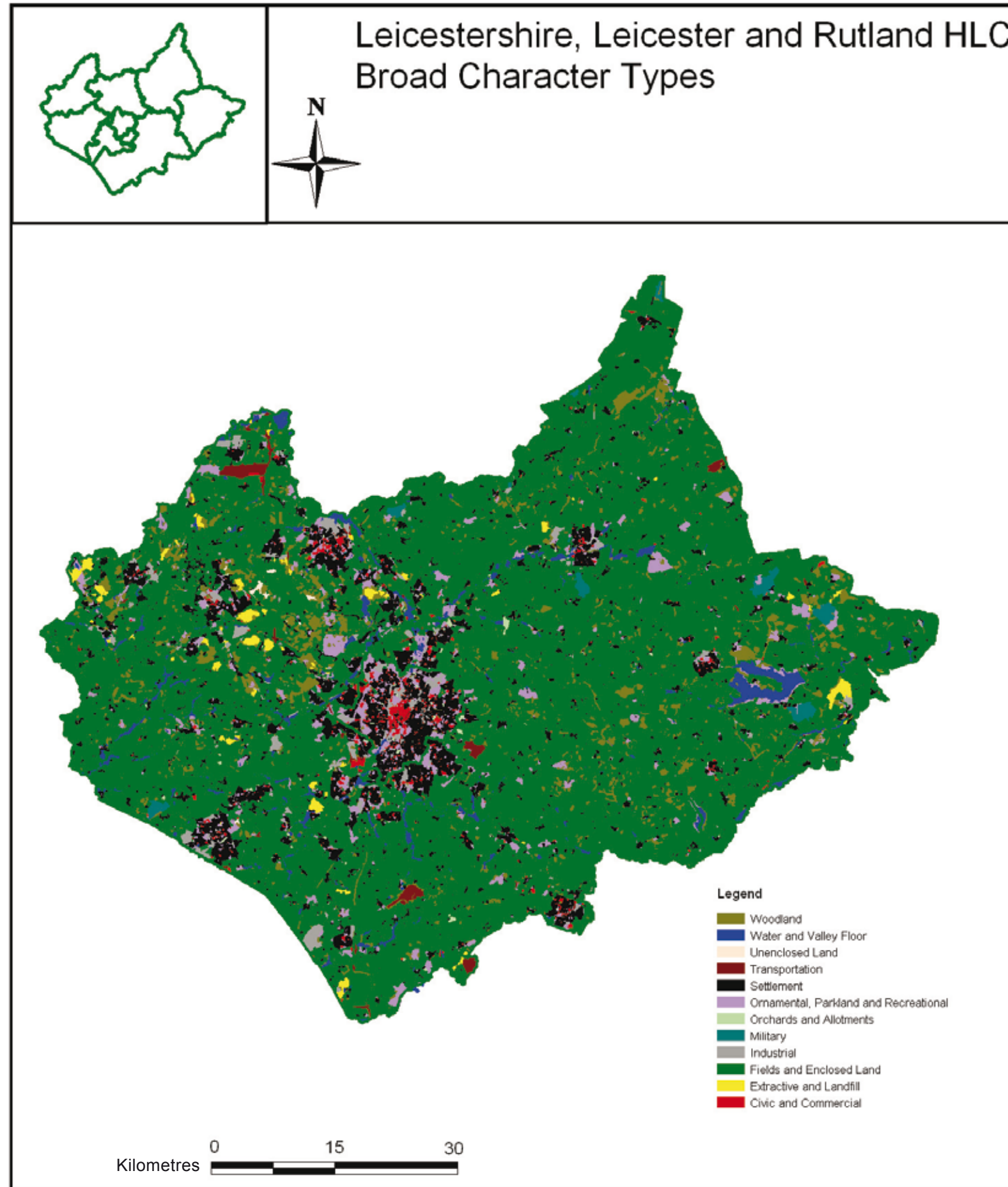


Figure 113. Broad Character Types: Whole Study Area

The whole project area includes the county of Leicestershire and the unitary authorities of Leicester City and Rutland. The total area characterised is 254,734 ha representing some 18,977 polygons. The Broad Character map clearly reveals an image of an overwhelming rural project area with Leicester and the immediately surrounding urban areas forming a focal point at its centre. The mapping at a Broad Character level also illustrates that the project area is split roughly into two halves. With the exceptions of Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray and Oakham the project area to the east of Leicester is sparsely populated with most of the population concentrated in a fairly even scatter of nucleated villages, which have undergone relatively little expansion since the publication of the 1st edition OS maps in the mid 1880s. The western part of the project area shows a distinct contrast; this part of Leicestershire is more densely populated largely as a consequence of the local economy shifting in emphasis from agriculture to industry and mineral extraction from the 18th century onwards. The Broad Types map also illustrates the fact that, with the exception of some local clusters, the project area is sparsely wooded with only 4.4% woodland coverage.

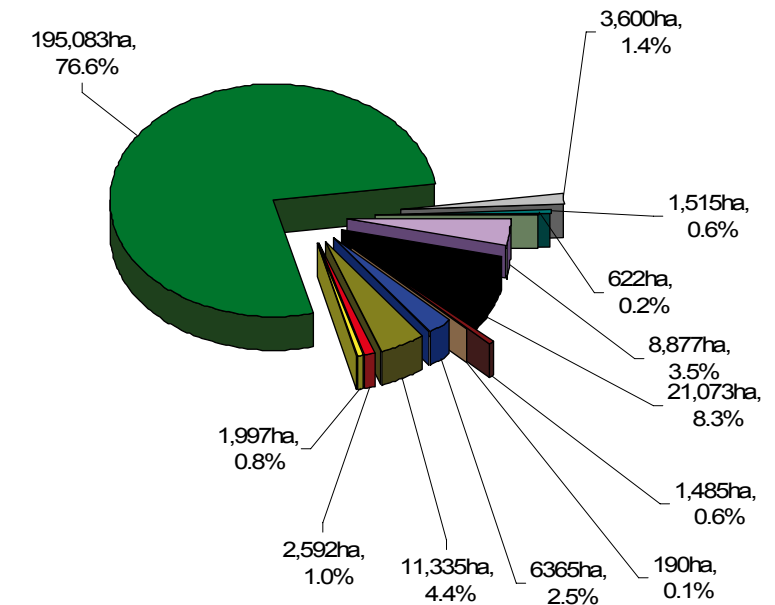


Figure 114. Proportions of Broad Types: Whole Study Area

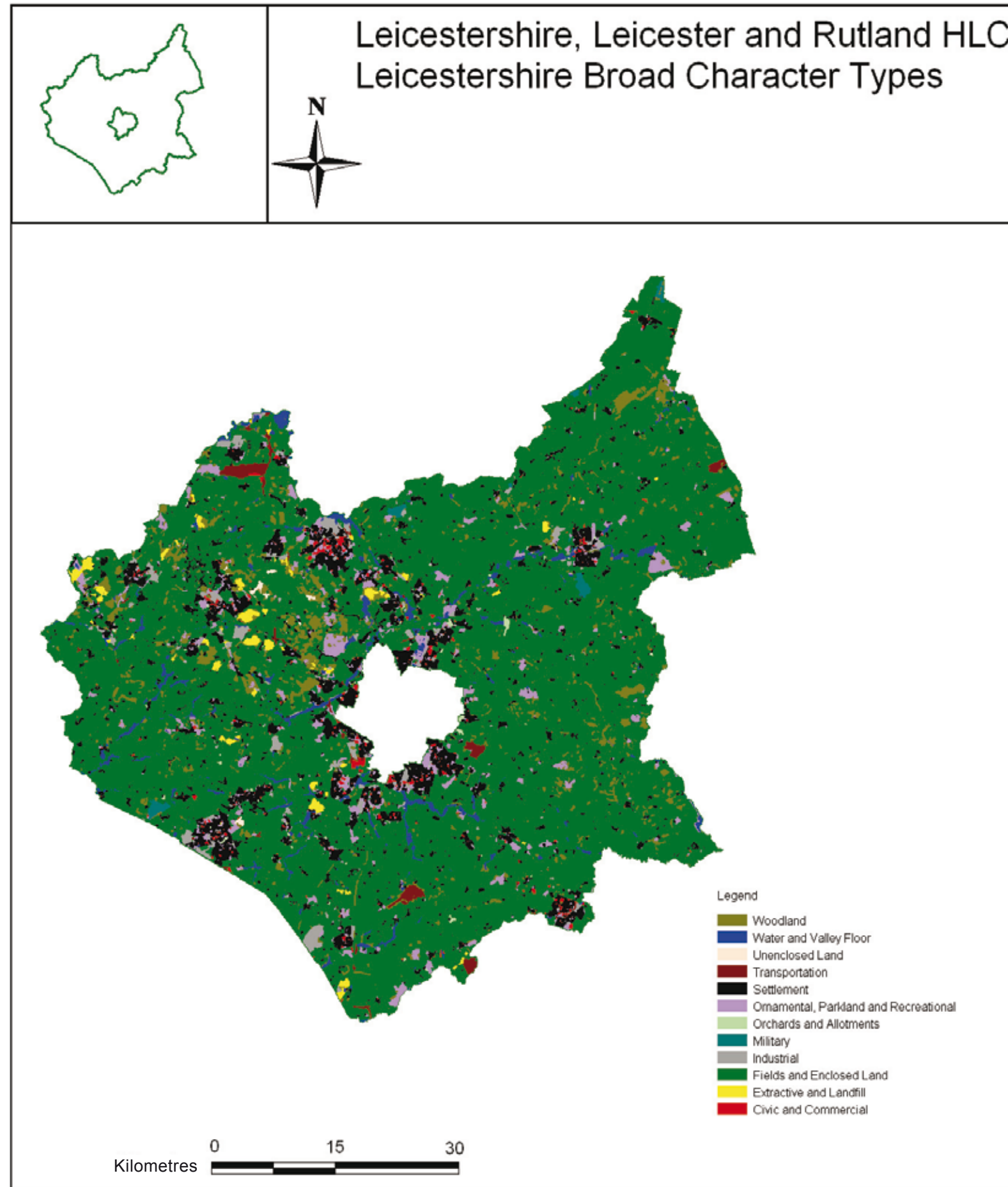


Figure 115. Broad Character Types: The Modern County of Leicestershire

The county of Leicestershire has 207,731 ha characterised representing some 14,739 polygons. The Broad Character map clearly reveals an image of an overwhelming rural county. Leicester and the immediately surrounding urban areas forms a focal point at its centre. The mapping at a Broad Character level also illustrates that Leicestershire is split roughly into two halves. With the exceptions of Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire to the east of Leicester is sparsely populated with most of the population concentrated in a relatively even distribution of predominantly nucleated villages. Until the later 20th century these had undergone relatively little expansion since the publication of the 1st edition OS maps in the mid 1880s. The western part of Leicestershire shows a distinct contrast; this part of the county is more densely populated largely as a consequence of the local economy shifting in emphasis from agriculture to industry and mineral extraction from the 18th century onwards. The Broad Types map also illustrates the fact that Leicestershire is sparsely wooded with only 4.3% woodland coverage.

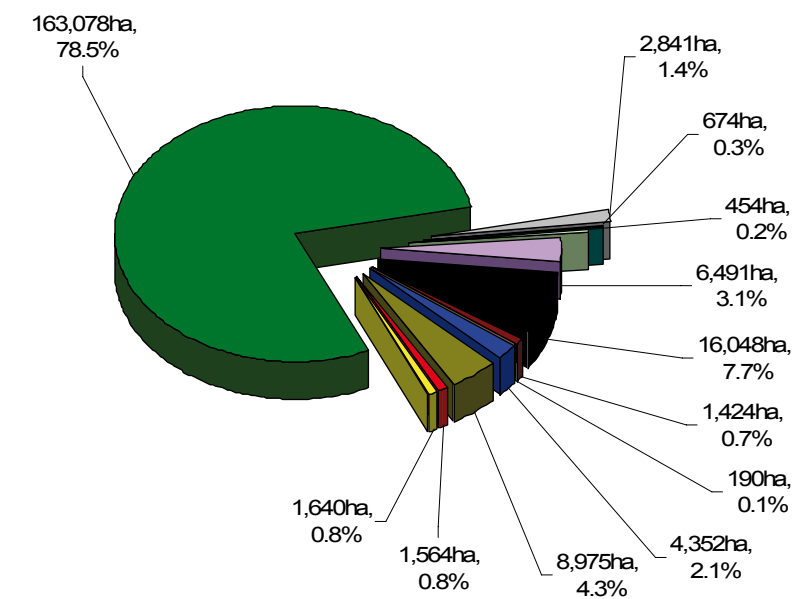


Figure 116. Proportions of Broad Types: Leicestershire County

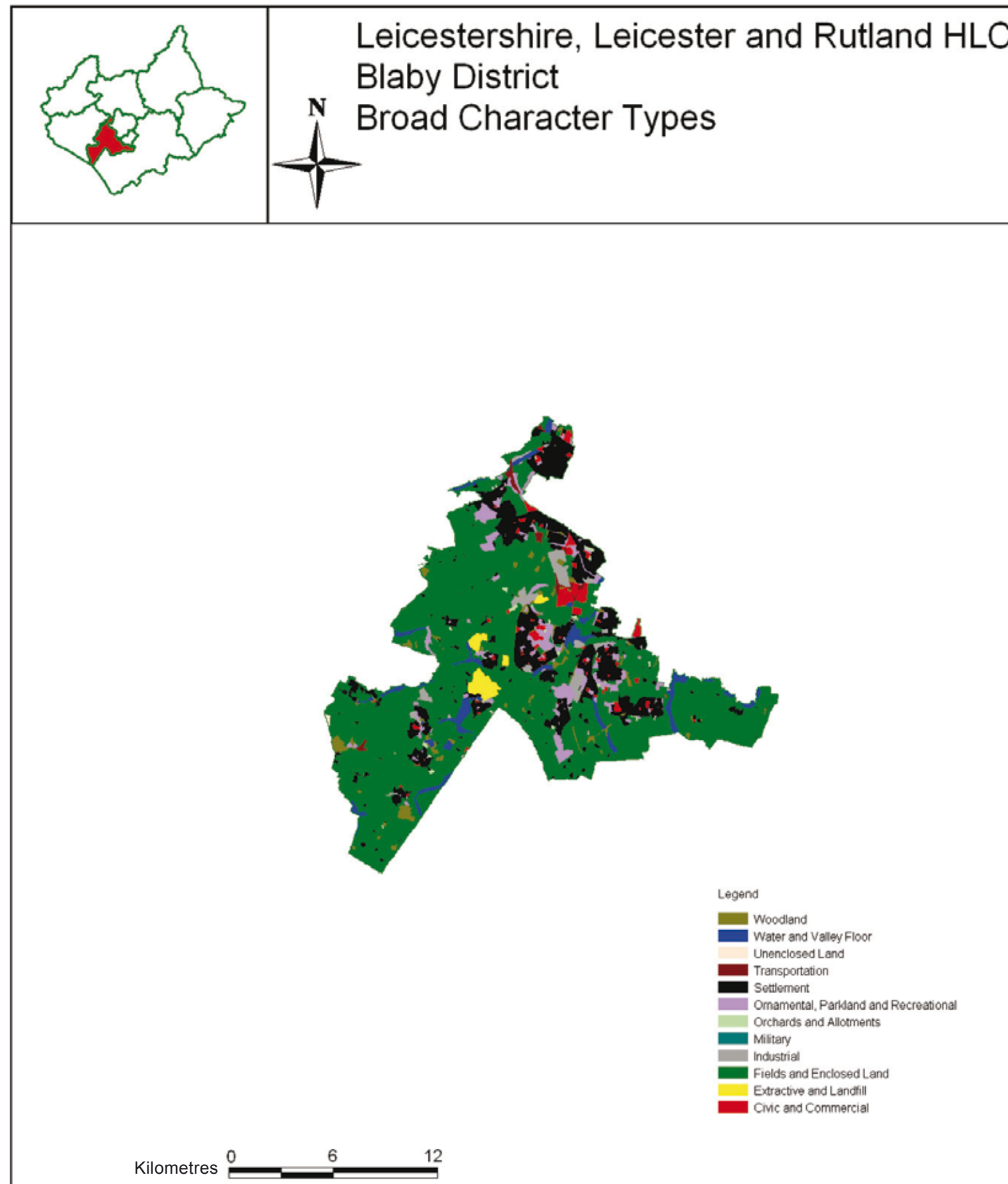


Figure 117. Broad Character Types: Blaby District

Blaby is the least wooded of the rural authorities, whilst having one of the highest proportions of settlement in the study area. The district, along its north eastern side, borders Leicester and, to the east, Oadby and Wigston. The communities in these areas acting as overspill for the city and have experienced fairly large scale urban expansion particularly during the second half of the 20th century. The enclosure pattern in the southern part of the district is predominantly one of Reorganised Piecemeal Enclosure with isolated pockets of Piecemeal Enclosure. In the north-western part of the district there is a sizable block of Planned Enclosure. Almost all of the woodland in Blaby is plantation and tends to appear either as small rectilinear blocks or as linear strips along the edges of major roads and train lines, or along the courses of abandoned rail tracks. Central Blaby is marked by the outline of Croft Hill, and the working and abandoned hard rock extraction sites at Enderby, Croft and Stoney Stanton.

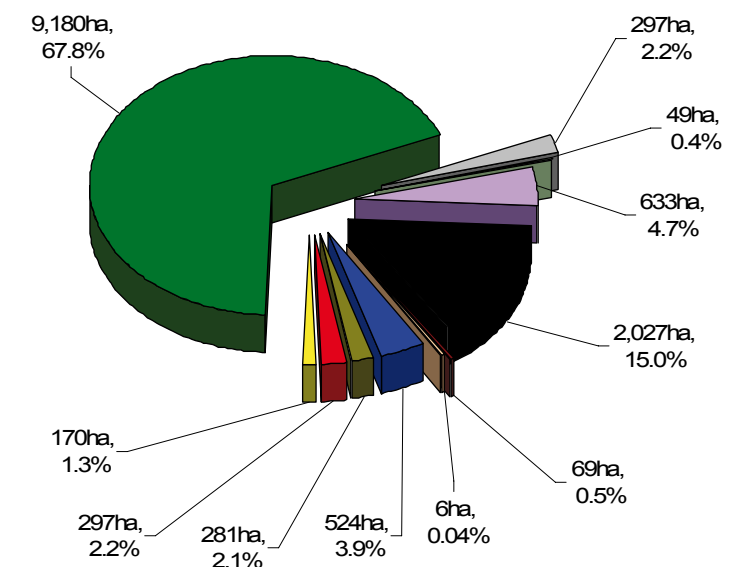
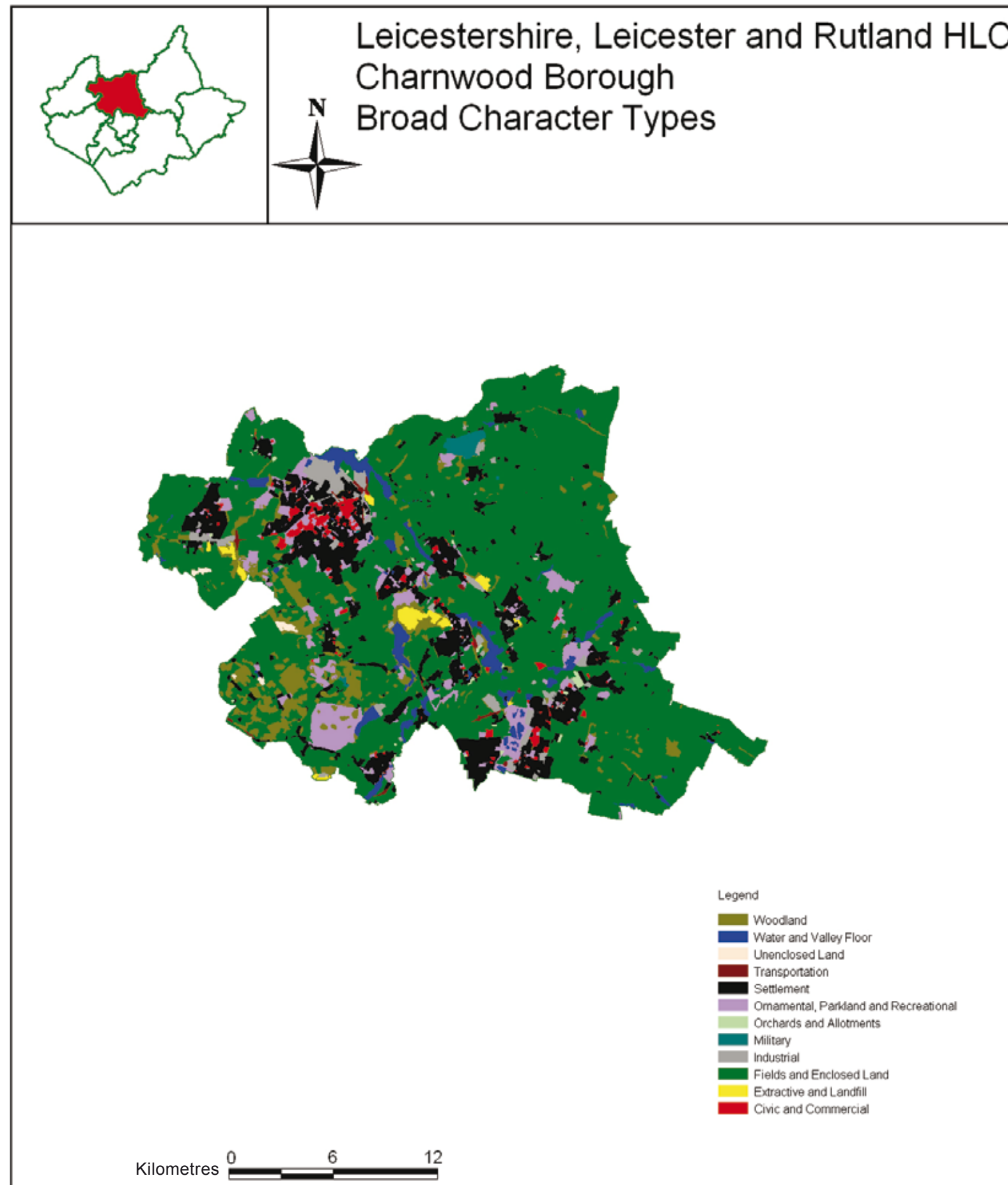


Figure 118. Proportions of Broad Types: Blaby District



Charnwood Borough lies to the north of Leicestershire and despite being predominantly rural in character is, along the Soar Valley in particular, fairly densely populated. The administrative centre of the borough is Loughborough which is also the largest settlement in the county of Leicestershire. The borough cuts across six Landscape Character Areas (LCAs): Charnwood Forest, High Leicestershire, Langley Lowlands, Soar Valley, The Wolds and Wreake Valley, the approximate outlines of which are evident in the HLC Broad characterisation. In the south-west of the borough Charnwood Forest LCA may be described as an upland landscape with rocky outcrops. This area has a high proportion of woodland cover and distinctive mixture of woods, heath, farmland and parkland. Drystone walls are a common feature of the area which has to a large extent been locally influenced by quarrying. The south-east of the borough takes in parts of the High Leicestershire LCA. This is a high plateau cut by radiating watercourses, spurs of which define the southern and eastern Wreake and Soar Valleys. Also in evidence is pasture on slopes and in valleys; arable is typical on ridge tops. The south-easterly tip of the Langley Lowlands LCA encroaches into the north-west of the borough which may be characterised as a rolling landform dissected by minor watercourses, supporting mixed pasture and arable. Running north-south through the borough is the Soar Valley LCA. This is an elongated floodplain with pasture on the floodplain and arable farming on the valley sides. Here there is little woodland although there are some willows along the river. The valley is also a road, rail, canal and power corridor with gypsum works, gravel extraction and marina developments. The north-eastern part of Charnwood is within The Wolds LCA which has a rolling landform drained by many stream valleys. The area contains pasture in valleys, arable on ridges and little woodland. The western end of the Wreake Valley LCA also extends into the eastern side of Charnwood Borough which is characterised by its flat river valley with gently sloping sides. Agriculture is a combination of mixed arable and pasture along with a small amount of woodland coverage.

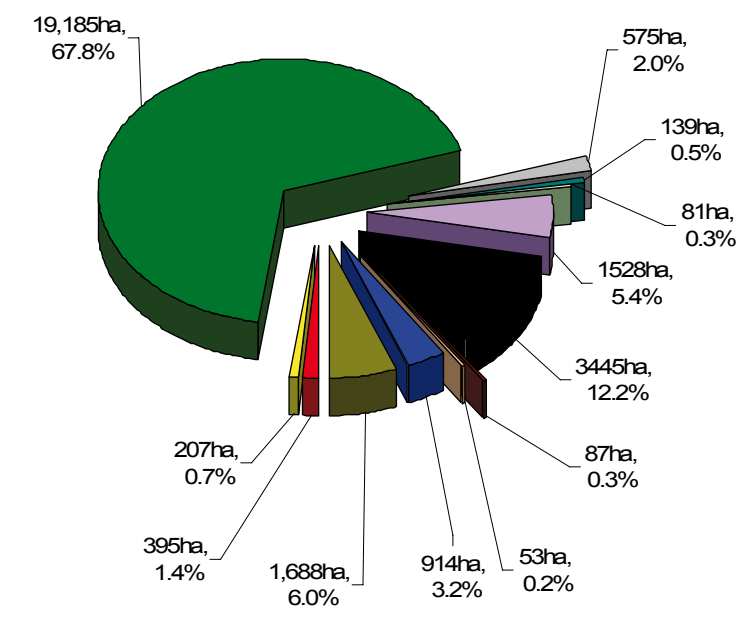
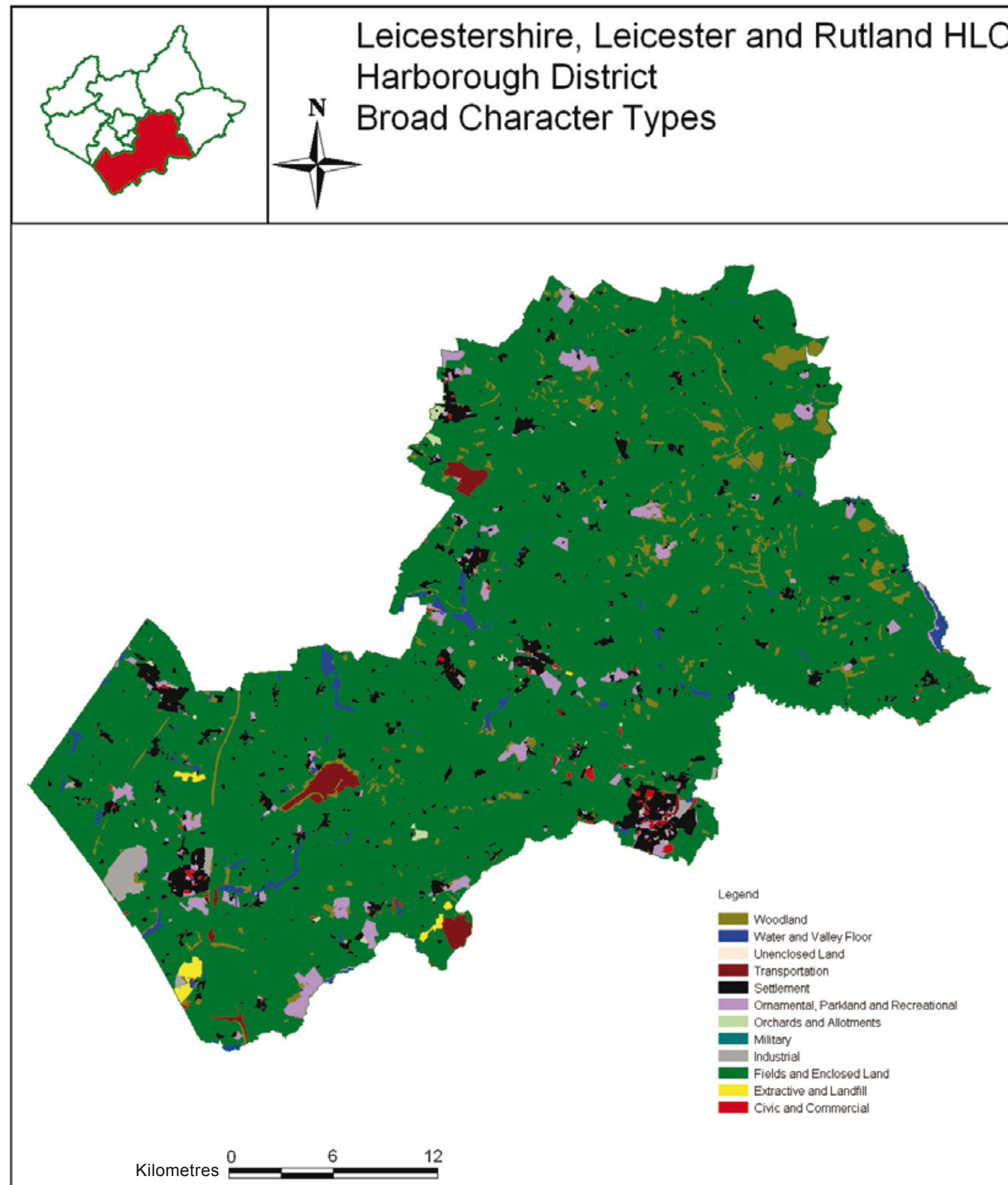


Figure 120. Proportions of Broad Types: Charnwood Borough

Figure 119. Broad Character Types: Charnwood Borough



Harborough is, in terms of area, the largest of the district authorities within the study area and takes in all of the south-east of Leicestershire. With only 1.29 persons per hectare, population density is low. Market Harborough is the largest settlement in the district with just under 21,000 people and apart from Lutterworth and Broughton Astley with populations of a little over 8,000, all other settlements in the district have below 5,000 people distributed across the district in an even spread of nucleated villages. The dominant field patterns for the district are of Re-organised Piecemeal Enclosure and Planned Enclosure, although there is also a good showing of Planned Enclosure Containing Ridge and Furrow.

Five Landscape Character Areas cut across the District; High Leicestershire, Laughton Hills, Lutterworth Lowlands, Upper Soar and Welland Valley. High Leicestershire covers most of the northern half of the district. This is an area of high plateau cut by radiating watercourses. Pasture is common on slopes and in valleys with arable predominant on ridge tops. This area has many local concentrations of woodland including a good number of ancient woodland sites. To the south of High Leicestershire, along much of the southern edge of the district and forming part of the county boundary with Northamptonshire, is the Welland Valley LCA. This is a wide shallow river valley that supports pasture on the floodplain and arable farming on the valley sides. Apart from some waterside willows with many old pollards the LCA has little woodland cover. To the east of the Welland Valley and forming the most southerly part of Leicestershire's border with Northamptonshire is the Laughton Hills, an area with a high rolling landform and supporting mixed farming with pasture predominant. Ridge and furrow, parkland, and woodland are all locally important. To the east of the Laughton Hills and south of High Leicestershire and bordering Warwickshire in the south are the Lutterworth Lowlands. This LCA is characterised by a flat to slightly undulating landform. The area supports mixed farming with pasture predominant. There is very little tree cover in this area. Evident here are the localised influences of sand and gravel extraction and the Magna Park distribution centre. The most western part of Harborough, which borders Blaby District, takes in the south-eastern portion of the Upper Soar LCA. This is an open rolling landscape with distinct high level ridges. The area supports mixed agriculture and contains little woodland.

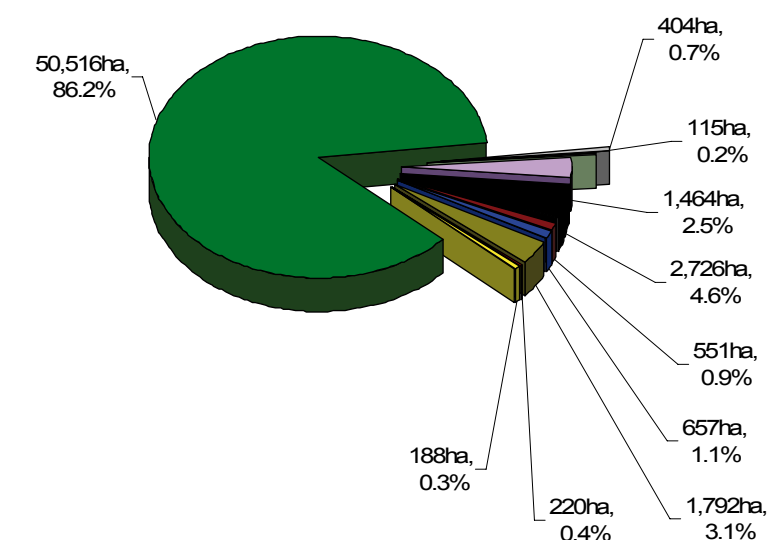
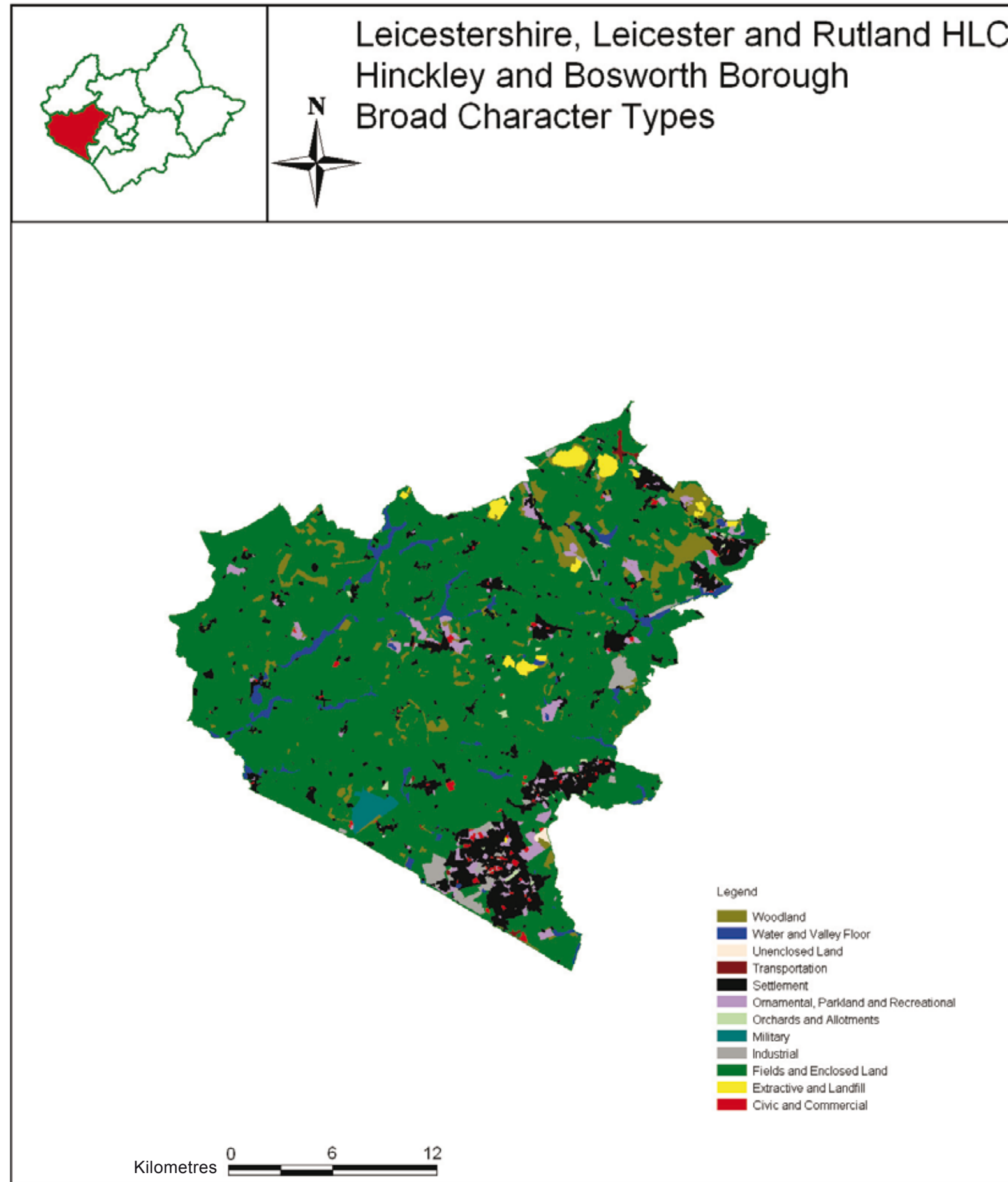


Figure122. Proportions of Broad Types: Harborough District

Figure121. Broad Character Types: Harborough District



Although predominantly rural the borough of Hinckley and Bosworth has several sizeable settlements. Along the border with Charnwood, on the borough's north-eastern boundary, are the settlements of Markfield and Groby; just south of Groby is Ratby. As a consequence of their proximity to Leicester these settlements that have been through a process of significant urban expansion during the course of the later part of the 20th century and serve in part as dormitory towns or overspill for Leicester. In the south-east of the borough are the larger settlements of Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton. These all expanded significantly through the course of the 19th and 20th centuries with an economy based, to a considerable extent, upon the shoe, hosiery and knitwear industries. Elsewhere the borough is characterised by an even scatter of predominantly nucleated villages.

Most of the south-eastern side of the borough is within the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area (LCA) which, outside of its urban areas, may best be described as an open rolling landscape with distinct high level ridges with mixed agriculture, little woodland and some local rock outcrops. The south-western part of the borough forms most of the Mease/Sence Lowlands which has an undulating landform with a mixture of arable and pasture. The north-western border area with North West Leicestershire falls into the most southerly part of The Coalfield LCA, again an area of mixed farming with a gently undulating landform. Many of the settlements in the coalfield are former mining towns and villages and the character of much of this area is heavily influenced by past and present coal and clay working. The most northerly part of Hinckley and Bosworth, bordering with Charnwood Borough, lies within the Charnwood Forest LCA. This is a more of an upland landscape with rocky outcrops, related extractive industries and more extensive woodland, further amplified by its location on the edge of the National Forest.

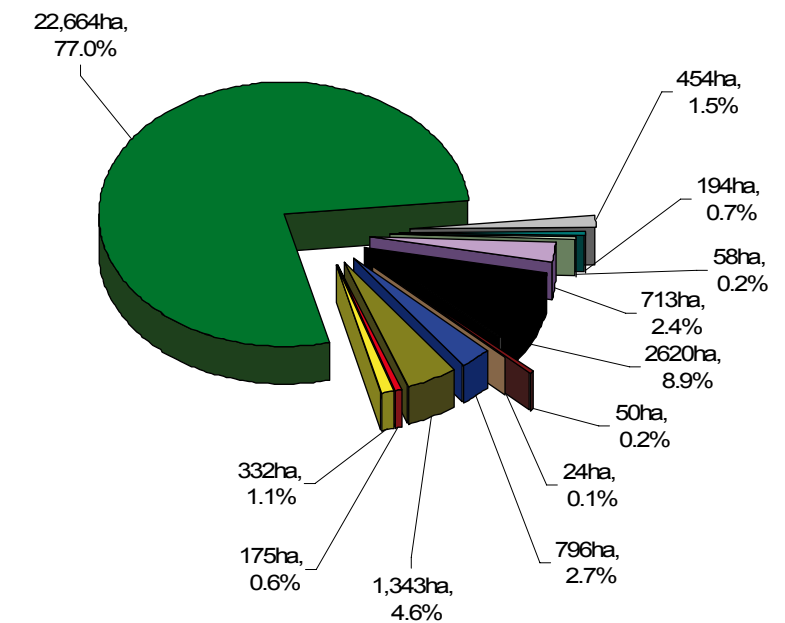
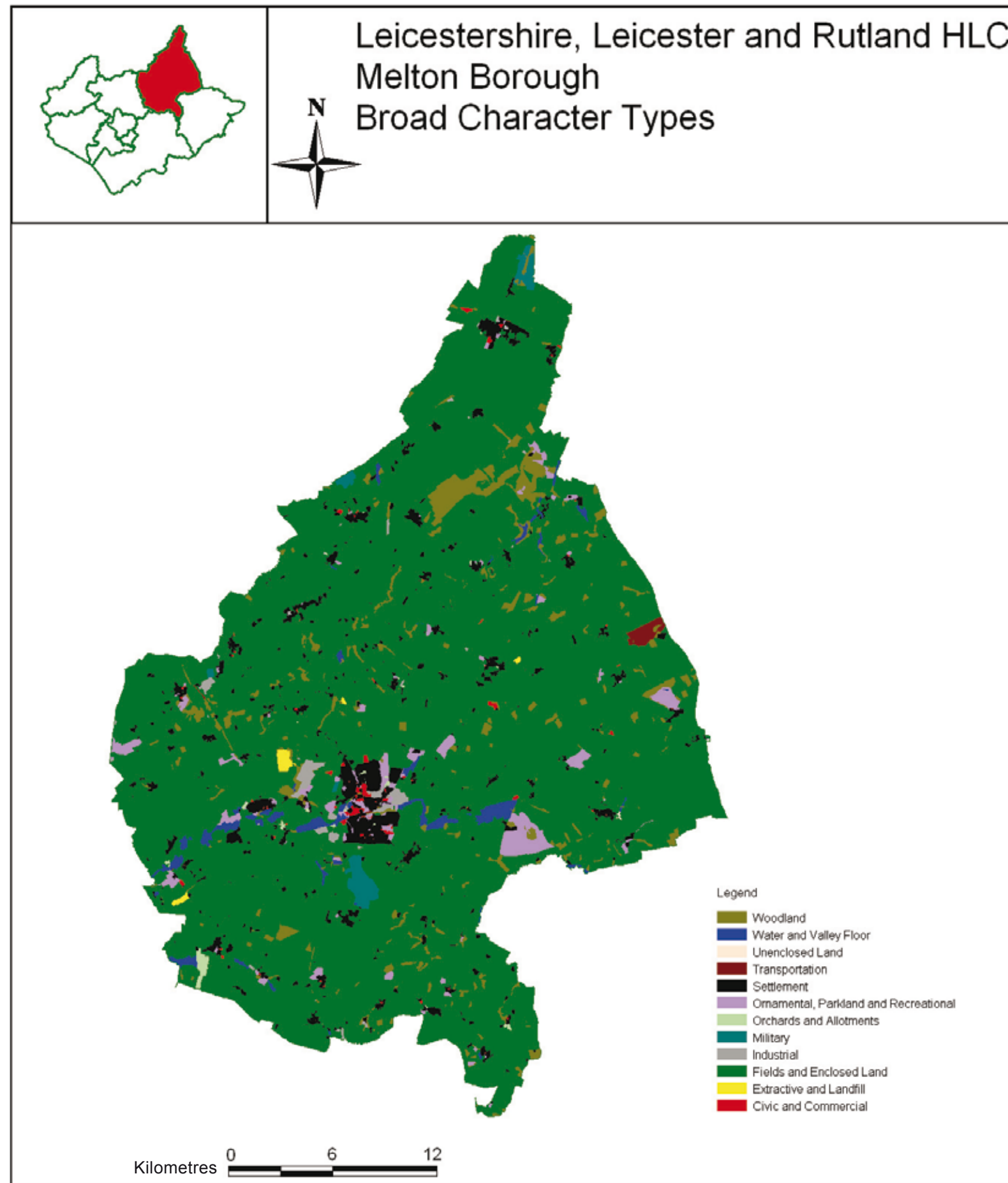


Figure 124. Proportions of Broad Character Types: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough

Figure 123. Broad Character Types: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough



Melton Borough occupies the north-eastern part of Leicestershire and is the most sparsely-populated of the authorities within the project area with a population density of below 1 person per hectare. Apart from Melton Mowbray, with a population of 22,554, settlement can be characterised as being predominantly small nucleated villages set within a landscape dominated by Planned Enclosure, Piecemeal Enclosure and Very Large Post-War Fields.

The Borough cuts across seven Landscape Character Areas (LCA); Belvoir Scarp, Cottesmore Plateau, High Leicestershire, Knipton Bowl, The Wolds, Vale of Belvoir and Wreake Valley. The northern part of Melton Borough occupies the Vale of Belvoir; an exposed, almost flat, plain supporting mixed farming with arable predominant in the east. There is little woodland here and the Belvoir Scarp dominates views to the south. The Belvoir Scarp is a steep escarpment bounding the southern edge of the Vale of Belvoir; agriculture includes grazing on steep scarp slopes with arable on flatter ground at the base; there are also significant blocks of plantation woodland. South-east of the Belvoir Scarp, and with Lincolnshire to the east, is the Knipton Bowl LCA. This takes the form of clearly defined north-east facing basin incised by the River Devon and its tributaries and includes within its boundary Knipton Reservoir. Agriculture is generally mixed farming and there are many mature hedgerow trees. The Knipton Bowl is well-wooded in the north-east with mature mainly deciduous woodland. South of the Knipton Bowl and Belvoir Scarp and occupying much of the central part of Melton is The Wolds LCA. This has a rolling landform drained by many stream valleys that are dominated by pasture; arable is more dominant on ridges and towards the east. Woodland cover is low here and those woods that do occur tend to be small in size. Within the Borough the southern boundary of The Wolds adjoins the Wreake Valley which is characterised as a flat river valley with gently sloping sides. Mixed arable and pasture are the dominant forms of agriculture here with relatively little woodland, although there are some small scattered plantations to the east. High Leicestershire lies to the south of the Wreake Valley and takes in the southern part of Melton Borough and is a high plateau cut by radiating watercourses. Pasture dominates on slopes and in valleys whilst arable is common on ridge tops. Woodland is a significant feature throughout High Leicestershire and there are several ancient woodland sites. To the east of High Leicestershire and bordering Lincolnshire on its eastern side is the northern tip of the Cottesmore Plateau which forms a fairly flat open landscape predominantly arable with large fields.

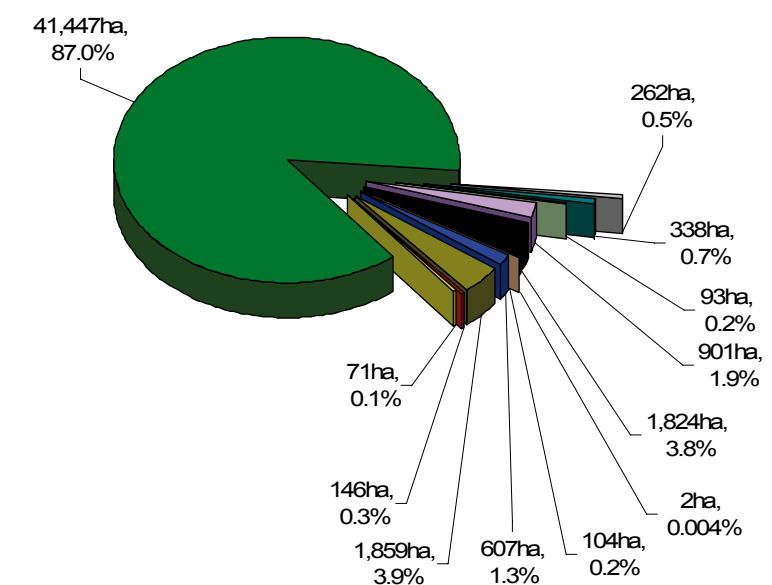
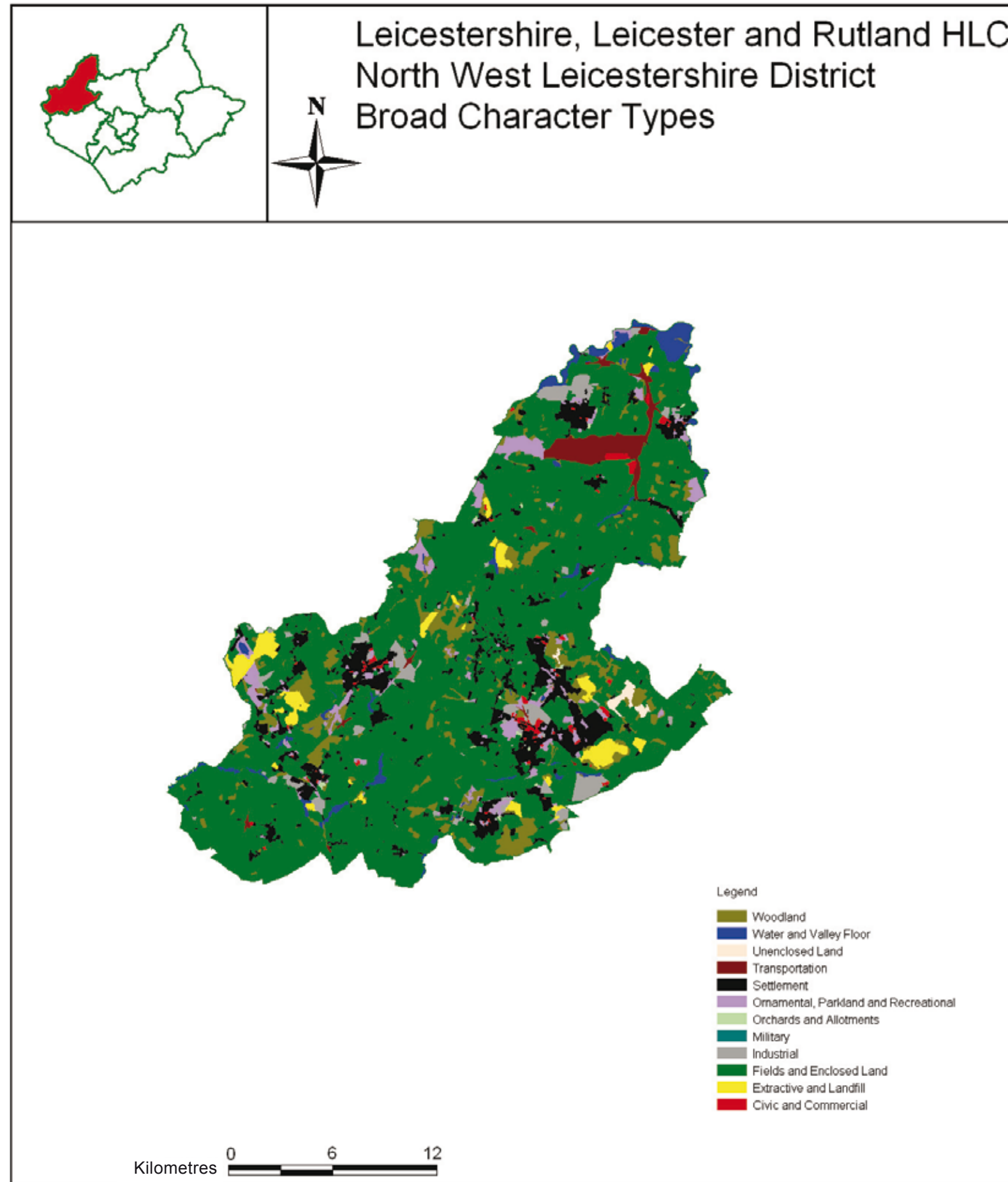


Figure 126. Proportions of Broad Character

Figure 125. Broad Character Types: Melton Borough



North West Leicestershire District contains several large settlements including Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Coalville, Whitwick, Thringstone, Kegworth and Measham. Many settlements here owe their existence to the long history of mineral extraction, with coal, brick clay, gravel and granite resources all present. The district cuts across five Landscape Character Areas (LCAs); Trent Valley, Langley Lowlands, Charnwood Forest, The Coalfield and Mease/Sence Lowlands. The Trent Valley, located at the northern end of the district, is an area of flat open floodplain, dominated by pasture and arable and heavily influenced by sand and gravel extraction and transport infrastructure. South of the Trent Valley is the larger part of the Langley Lowlands. The landform here is rolling and dissected by minor watercourses containing mixed pasture and arable. There are many hedgerow trees giving the area a well-wooded appearance. Limestone quarries at Breedon Hill and Breedon Cloud and Nottingham East Midlands Airport have had a significant impact.

The western part of the district is on the eastern side of Charnwood Forest; a largely upland landscape with rocky outcrops. Here there is a distinctive mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland with evidence of the influence of quarrying. The Coalfield cuts across much of central North West Leicestershire. has a gently undulating landform supporting mixed farmland. Much of the settlement is described as former mining towns and villages with the influences of coal and clay working, both past and present, in evidence. The southern end of the district lies within the north-western part of the Mease/Sence Lowlands which has an undulating landform containing frequent hedgerow trees and willows along small streams. Southern North West Leicestershire is largely within the National Forest boundary, and forms part of the most densely wooded part of Leicestershire. The central eastern part of the district is in the National Forest and crosses the boundary of the proposed Charnwood Forest Regional Park. A landscape character study for the proposed park identifies seven character areas within Charnwood Forest, two of which are partly in North West Leicestershire. The first of these, Bardon, is an urban fringe landscape influenced by quarrying, containing several areas of restored previously quarried land. There are also several blocks of woodland of mixed ages planted to screen views of quarry working. North of Bardon is Charley, characterised by rocky outcrops, woodland clumps and rolling farmland; woodland cover is mixed and includes linear strips and shelter belts, coniferous and mixed plantation blocks and deciduous and semi-natural woodland. The proposed Regional Park also coincides with much of the medieval chase known as Charnwood Forest. This includes several woods likely to have been in existence during the medieval period such as Grace Dieu Wood; Burrow and Birch Woods in the parish of Charley and remnants, following extensive quarrying, of Bardon Wood in Whitwick.

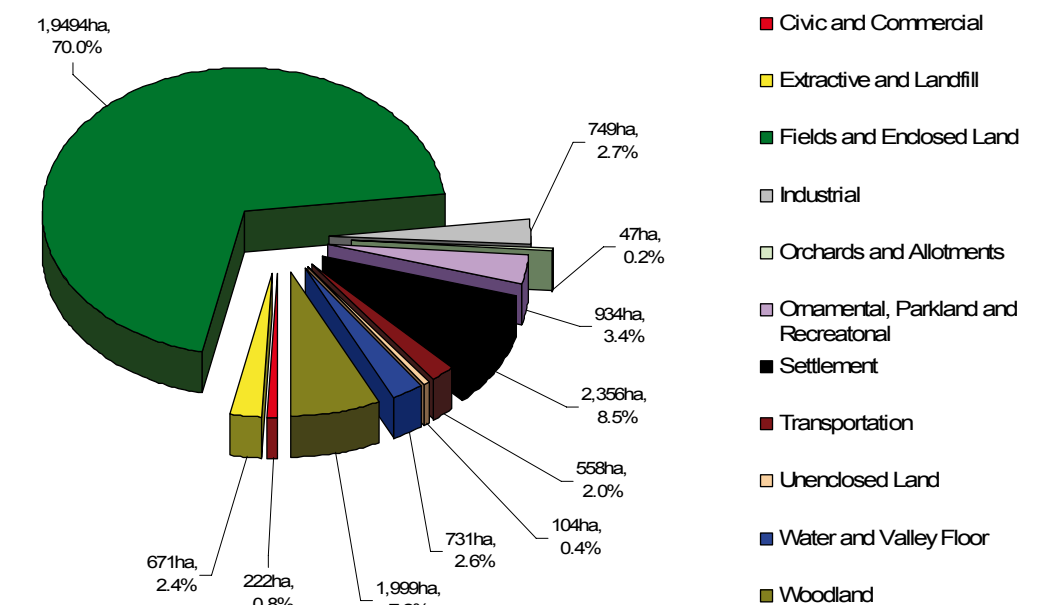


Figure 127. Broad Character Types: North West Leicestershire

Figure 128. Proportions of Broad Character Types: North West Leicestershire District

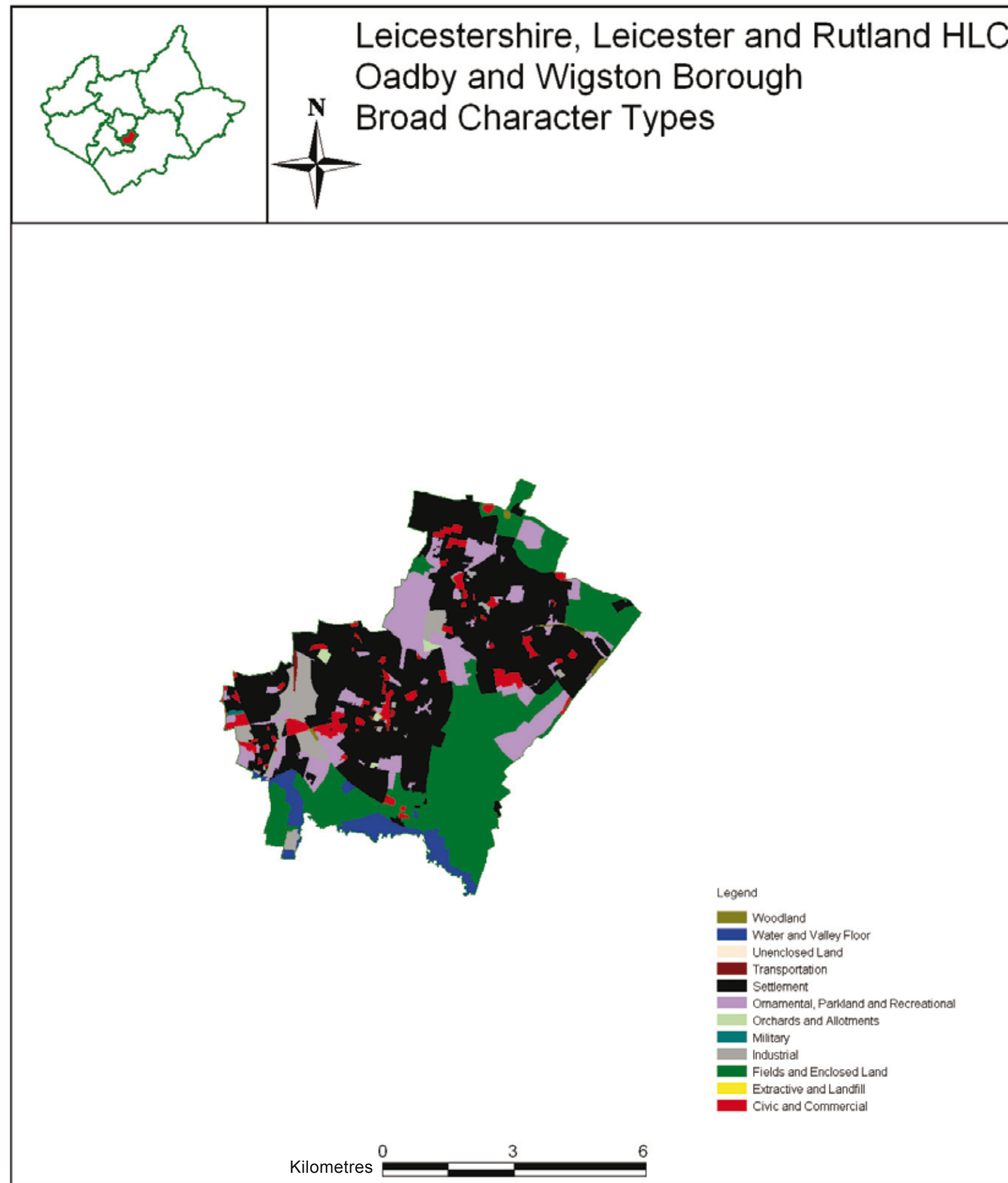


Figure 129. Broad Character Types: Oadby and Wigston Borough

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council is, in terms of area, the smallest authority within Leicestershire. The borough is predominantly urban in character, although there are blocks of Re-organised Piecemeal Enclosure and Large Post-War Fields along the southern border. Oadby was a small rural settlement until around the end of the 19th century when it became a fashionable suburb amongst many of the factory owners of Leicester's textile and boot and shoe industries. Through the course of the 20th century the town has expanded significantly. Wigston has also seen rapid expansion through the course of the 20th and owes much of its development from the 18th century onwards to its associations with the textiles industry.

The borough is situated within three Landscape Character Areas. Oadby, on the eastern side of the borough lies almost entirely within the High Leicestershire LCA; Wigston, to the east, is in Upper Soar. The extreme southern tip of the borough clips the northern edge of the Lutterworth Lowlands.

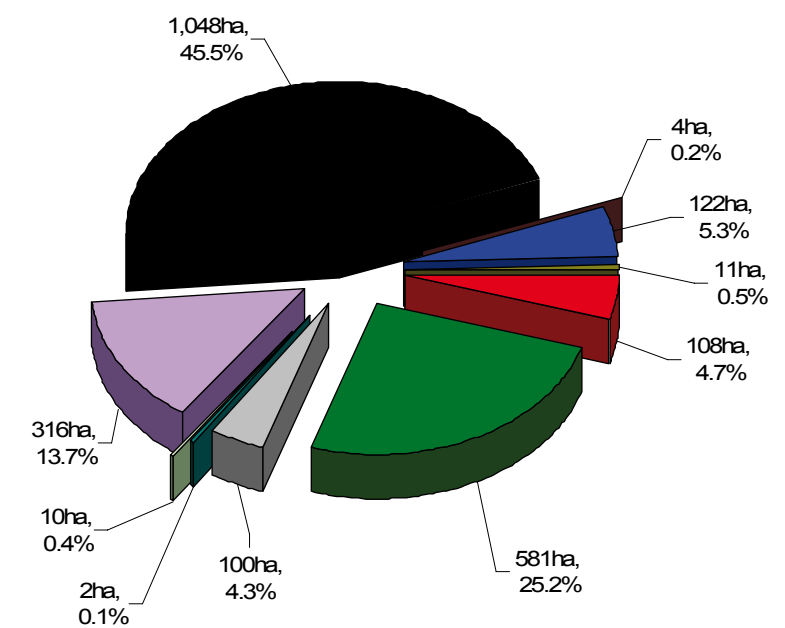
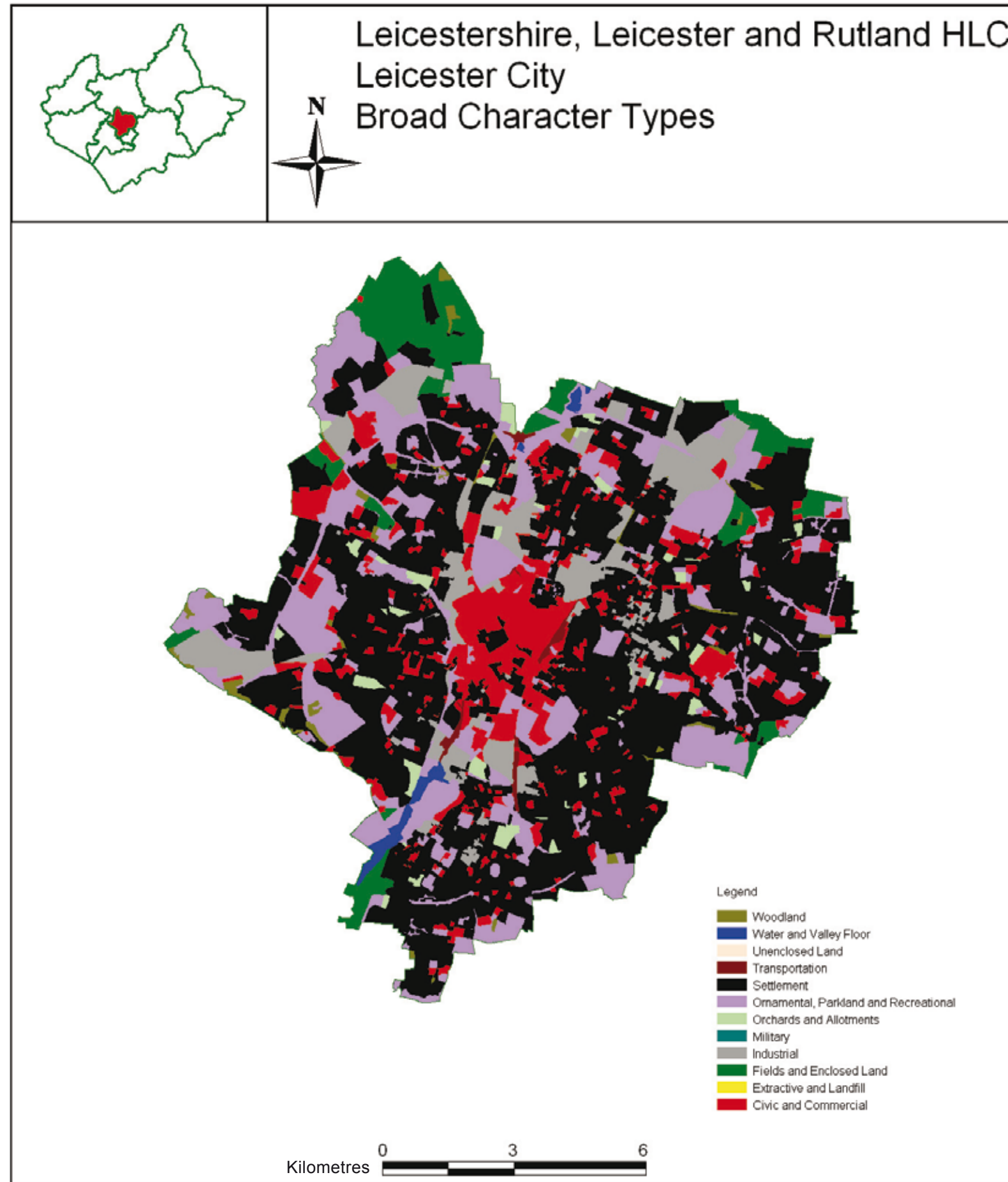


Figure 130. Proportions of Broad Character Types: Oadby and Wigston Borough



Leicester City is a unitary authority; its character is dominated by residential, industrial, civic and commercial development. A small area of identifiable Historic Settlement Core sits at the centre of the city and is immediately surrounded by commercial and retail development which in turn is surrounded by near concentric rings of subsequent phases of residential development. Scattered across the city are significant blocks of land characterised as Ornamental Parkland and Recreational which cover 1,497ha representing 20.7% of the authority's administrative area. Most of the authority is within the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area although a significant portion of its eastern side is in High Leicestershire. The northern fringes of the city clip the southern edges of the Charnwood Forest and Soar Valley LCAs.

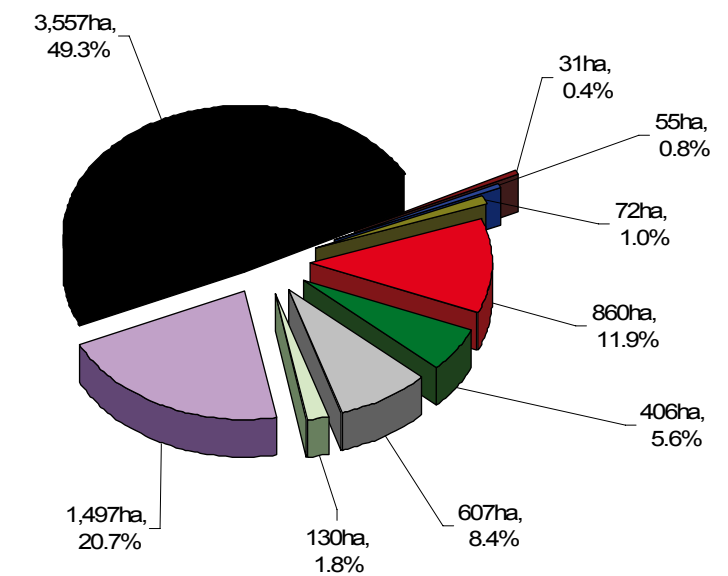
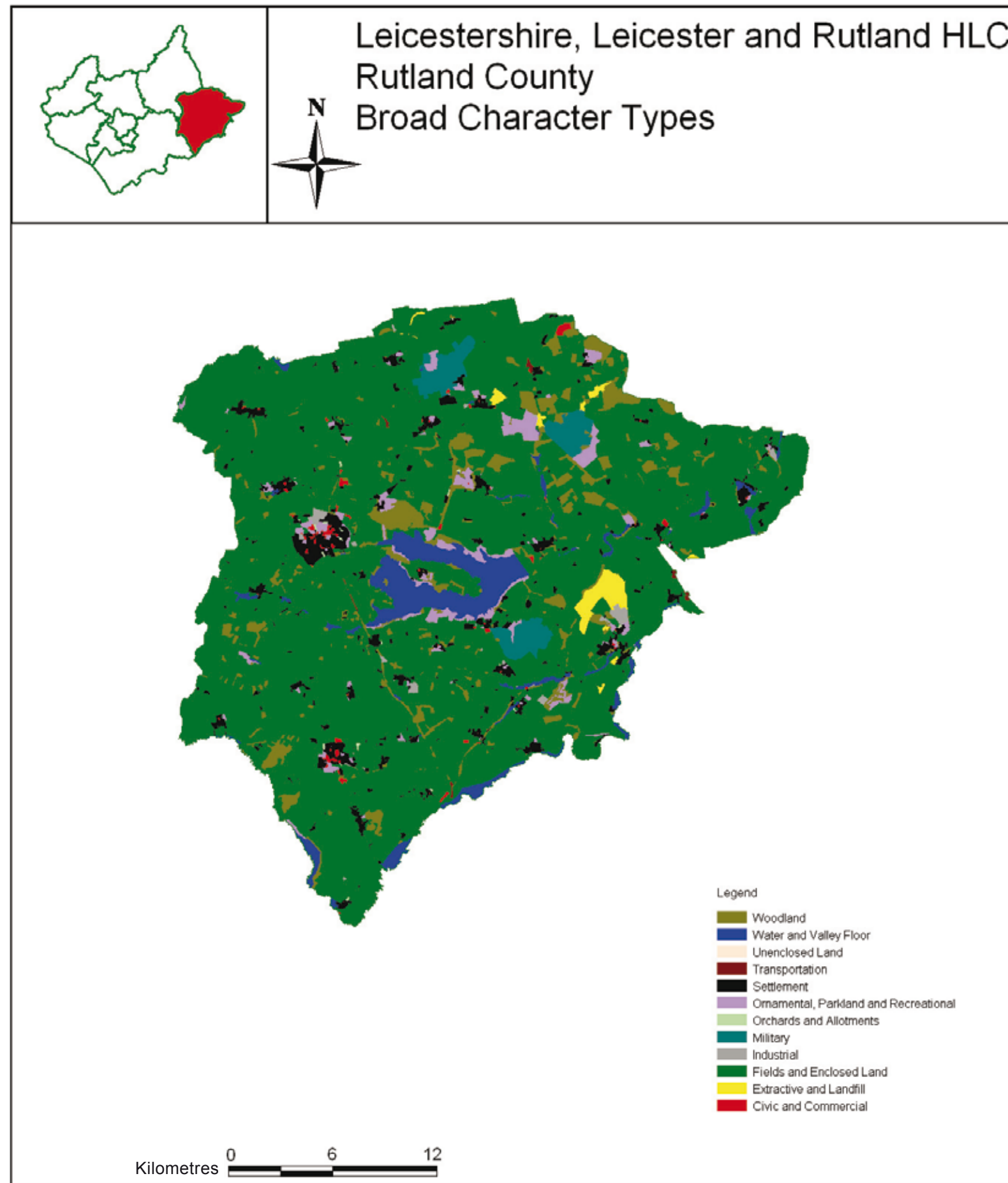


Figure 133. Proportions of Broad Character Types: Leicester City

Figure 132. Broad Character Types: Leicester City



Rutland County Council is, in terms of population, the smallest normal unitary authority in England. In terms of area Rutland is also the smallest historic county in England. The authority, which had a population density at the 2001 census of just below 1 person per hectare, has only two towns; Oakham and Uppingham. The remaining settlements across Rutland are generally nucleated villages. The predominant field patterns in Rutland are Planned Enclosure and Very Large Post War Fields, most of which have a previous character of Planned Enclosure. The central part of the county is dominated by Rutland Water which is by surface area the largest reservoir in England.

Four Landscape Character Areas cut across Rutland; Cottesmore Plateau, High Leicestershire, Vale of Catmose and Welland Valley. The Cottesmore Plateau covers the north-east of Rutland and is a fairly flat open landscape supporting predominantly arable farming with large fields. The LCA has numerous large blocks of woodland, many being of significant ecological value. The south-east border of Rutland takes in the Welland Valley; a wide shallow river valley supporting pasture on the floodplain and arable on the valley sides. With the exception of waterside willows and many old pollards the character area has little woodland. To the west of the Cottesmore Plateau LCA is the Vale of Catmose which is described as a broad, flat-bottomed, elongated, curved basin. This is a generally open landscape which supports mixed farming. Little woodland is present although woodland around Burley in the adjoining Cottesmore Plateau LCA is visually important. Much of the western and southern part of Rutland forms part of High Leicestershire, a high plateau cut by radiating watercourses. Pasture is the dominant agricultural regime on the slopes and in valleys; arable is common on the ridge tops. Local concentrations of woodland and many ancient woodland sites are present. Parkland is an important feature here, as are ridge and furrow and deserted village earthworks.

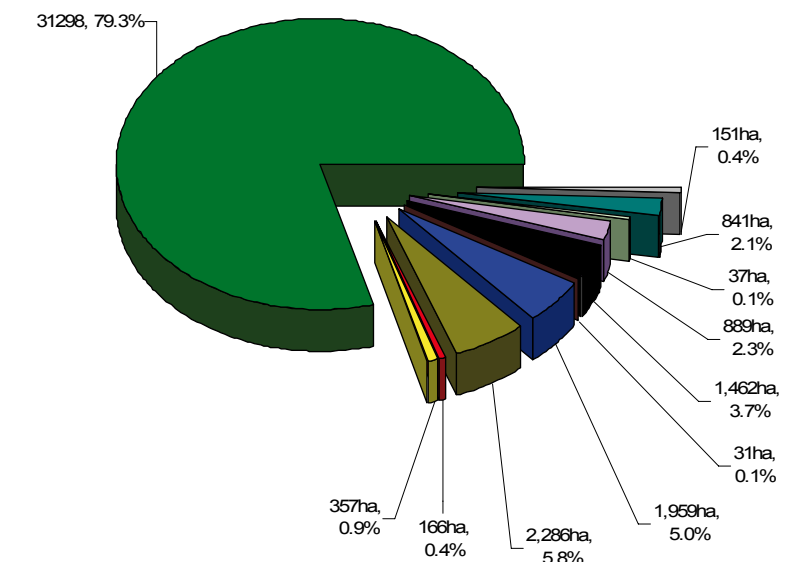
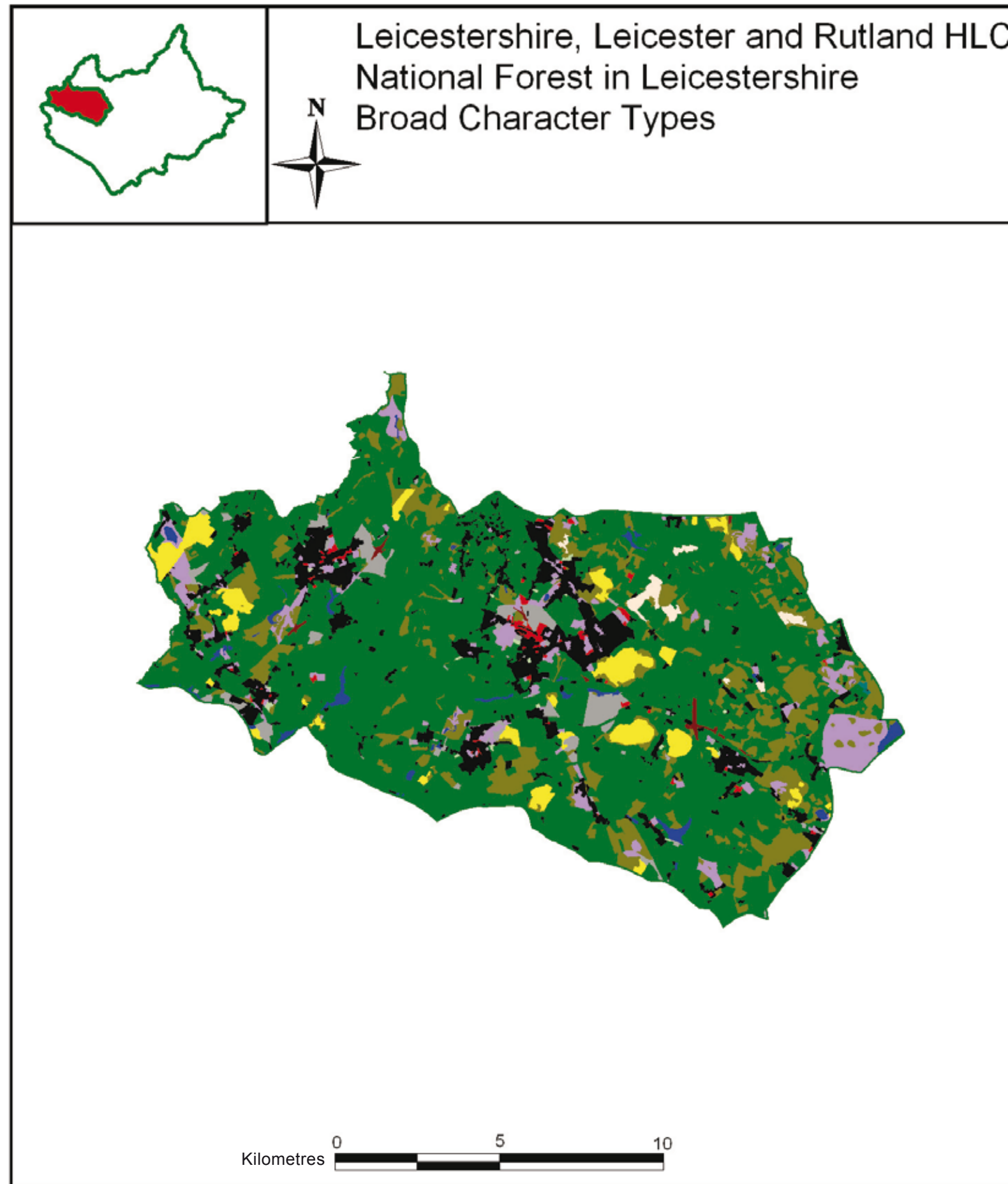


Figure 135. Proportions of Broad Character Types: Rutland County

Figure 134. Broad Character Types: Rutland County



The site of the National Forest was determined in 1990 and, following public consultation and the publication of a strategy, The National Forest Company was set up in 1995. The Forest spans three counties, Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire and has the objective of linking the ancient forests of Needwood in Staffordshire and Charnwood in Leicestershire. The stated aim of the National Forest Company is to create a new, large scale, forested landscape. The key objective is to increase woodland from a level of around 6% to about one third of the area covered by the Forest. This key objective is an attempt to establish a sustainable working forest which will achieve large scale landscape change enhancing the environment and providing a stimulus to the local economy.

The Leicestershire section of the National Forest cuts across three local authority boundaries; North West Leicestershire District takes in most of this area with Charnwood Borough and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough covering north-eastern and south eastern sections of the Forest respectively.

The National Forest is split mostly between two Landscape Character Areas (LCAs); The Coalfield to the west and Charnwood Forest on the east with its northern boundary skirting the south west tip of the Langley Lowlands and the southern edge crossing into the Mease/Sence Lowlands and Upper Soar. Charnwood Forest is a predominantly upland landscape with rocky outcrops and a distinctive mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland. The influence of quarrying is also in evidence. The Coalfield has a gently undulating landform and supports mixed farmland. Former mining towns and villages make up much of the settlement in this area with the influences of coal and clay working, both past and present much in evidence. Ashby-de-la-Zouche and Coalville are the two largest settlements in the Leicestershire section of the National Forest.

The Forest comprises a diverse range of Leicestershire's landscapes ranging from the late planned enclosure of former heathland around Charley to an intimate mix of small irregular fields and dispersed settlement patterns at Coleorton, Griffydam and Swannington Common which developed out of small scale coal mining dating from at least the 13th century. Woodland is a dominant theme across much of this area, particularly in the east across the former medieval parklands of Charnwood Forest. As the National Forest has developed there have been significant levels of woodland plantation across The Coalfield LCA, often targeted at derelict and mineral worked land that had a significant presence here.

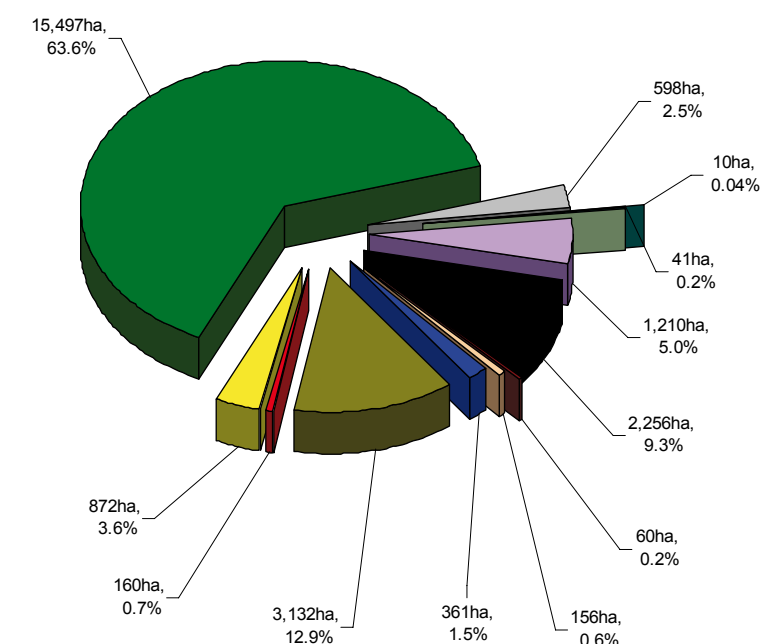


Figure 137. Proportions of Broad Character Types: National Forest in Leicestershire

Figure 136. Broad Character Types: National Forest in Leicestershire