



Section 6

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6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Leicestershire and Rutland are not heavily wooded counties with only 11,335 hectares characterised as woodland representing 4.4% of the study area, producing an average polygon size of 5.1ha. Taking Leicestershire separately a figure of 8,975 hectares has been characterised as woodland representing 4.3% of the county with an average polygon size of 4.9ha. This compares with a figure for woodland coverage in England in 2008 standing at around 8.5% (Forestry Commission, 2008). Although significantly lower than the national average, this figure represents an increase in woodland coverage for Leicestershire and Rutland since the 2001 publication of the Landscape and Woodland Strategy for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, which quoted woodland cover of 3.3% against an average of 7.3% for the English counties. Across Leicestershire and Rutland there is an increase of 1.1% of woodland cover between 2001 and 2008 whilst across the whole of England there was an increase of 1.2% during the same period. This increase in woodland cover can, to a large degree, be attributed to the establishment of the National Forest in north-west Leicestershire.

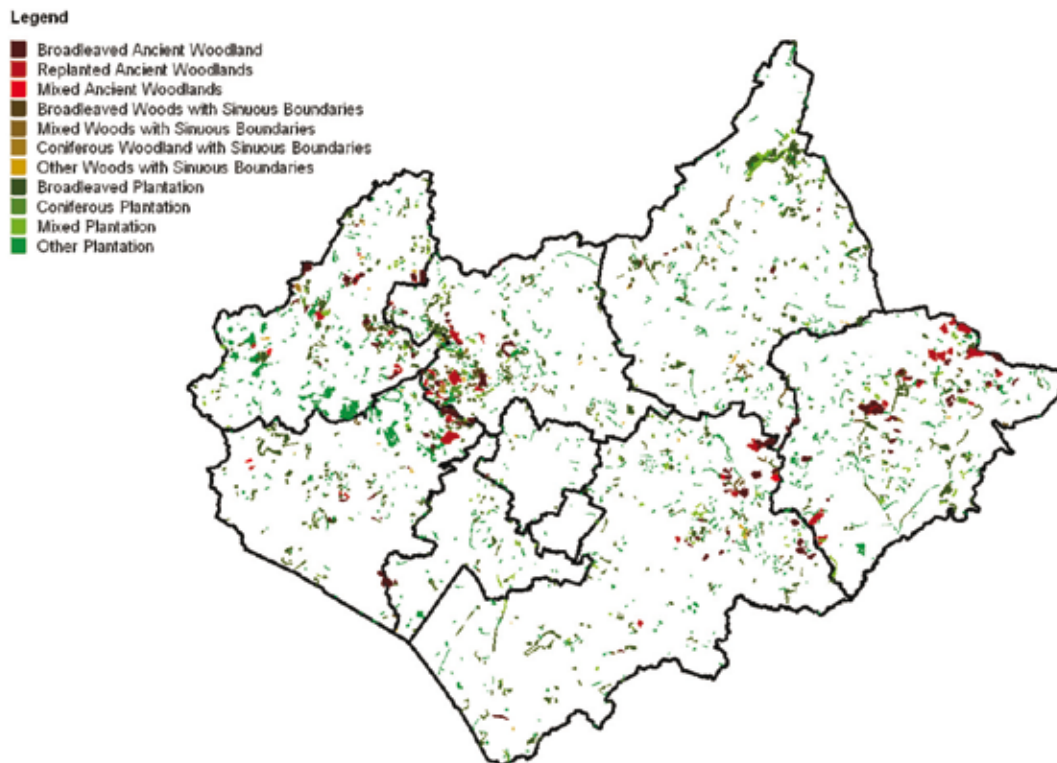


Figure 237. Woodland Distribution in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

6.1.2 The Woodland Broad Type category is divided into eleven Historic Landscape Character Types: *Broadleaved Ancient Woodland*, *Replanted Ancient Woodland*, *Mixed Ancient Woodlands*, *Broadleaved Woods with Sinuous Boundaries*, *Mixed Woods with Sinuous Boundaries*, *Broadleaved Plantation*, *Coniferous Plantation*, *Mixed Plantation* and *Other Plantation*. The definitions for each of these types can be found within the methodology. When studying the distribution of woodland it is possible to divide these HLC types into three groups: Ancient Woodland, comprising Broadleaved,

Replanted and Mixed Ancient Woodland, these represent what are likely to be the oldest blocks of woodland within the study area; woodland with sinuous boundaries, representing woodland of mixed origin and management; and plantation comprising broadleaved, coniferous, mixed and other plantation. Although the distribution of woodland outside the major settlement areas is not entirely even there does appear to be a fairly consistent spread of woodland plantation across the study area with the notable exceptions of the National Forest (high) and Vale of Belvoir (low). Squires and Jeeves (1994) in their study of the woodlands of Leicestershire and Rutland produced a series of maps which are of relevance here. The first of these shows the distribution of Anglo–Saxon and Viking major ‘woodland’ place names. These comprise settlements with the Old English place names; ‘*Bearu*’ (a wood), ‘*(ge)heag*’ (an enclosure), ‘*Leah*’, (a woodland glade or clearing), ‘*Sceagu*’ (a small wood), ‘*Wald*’ (high forest land or wold), ‘*Wudu*’ (a wood) and also the Old Norse element ‘*Lundr*’ (a wood). This analysis provides an early indication of the woodland distribution pattern across the study area. This distribution pattern is characterised by Squires and Jeeves as one with relatively little woodland and an almost complete lack of woodland over wide areas, notably west Leicestershire and south-east Rutland. The analysis of place-names also indicates a concentration of this limited woodland resource into six main areas:

1. Charnwood Forest
2. Leighfield Forest in west Rutland
3. Leicester Forest to the west of Leicester
4. an area of north-west Leicestershire bordering Derbyshire
5. the area of south-west Leicestershire bordering Warwickshire
6. an area of northern Rutland

6.1.3 This distribution pattern is largely repeated for the mapping depicting areas indicated within the Domesday Book as being wooded. Using evidence from Domesday, Squires and Jeeves suggest that that Leicestershire would have held about 20,000 acres (8,094 ha) and Rutland almost 12,000 acres (4,856 ha) of woodland in 1086. These figures indicate that Leicestershire would only have had about 3.7% and Rutland 12% woodland cover. It is also noted that woodland was concentrated in the least fertile areas which were, consequently, the least densely populated areas. At this time most people lived in what was an almost treeless belt running north-south through the central part of the study area. By examining a variety of documentary sources dating from between around 1200-1530 Squires and Jeeves illustrate with a third map that there is a continuity from the time of Domesday in woodland distribution throughout the medieval period. This woodland distribution pattern is supported by place-name evidence and it is suggested that this pattern may well go as far back as the Roman Period (Squires and Jeeves, 1994). Again there is an absence of woodland through the central part of the project area and what woodland there is seems to be highly localised in nature.

6.1.4 For the most part the modern distribution of woodland, as characterised through HLC, would appear to tie in with much of the evidence presented by Squires and Jeeves. Whilst the central part of the study area

remains relatively unwooded the rise of foxhunting from the 18th century here has been a significant factor in the plantation of many small woods intended to provide habitats suitable for foxes. The general pattern does however reveal a significant level of continuity. In Leicestershire 1,837 ha has been characterised as belonging to one of the ancient woodland HLC Types whilst in Rutland this figure stands at 946 ha, representing less than 0.9% and 2.1% respectively of the total areas for each historic county. These areas of ancient woodland indicate a strong correlation with the earliest woodlands identified by Squires and Jeeves, albeit significantly denuded.

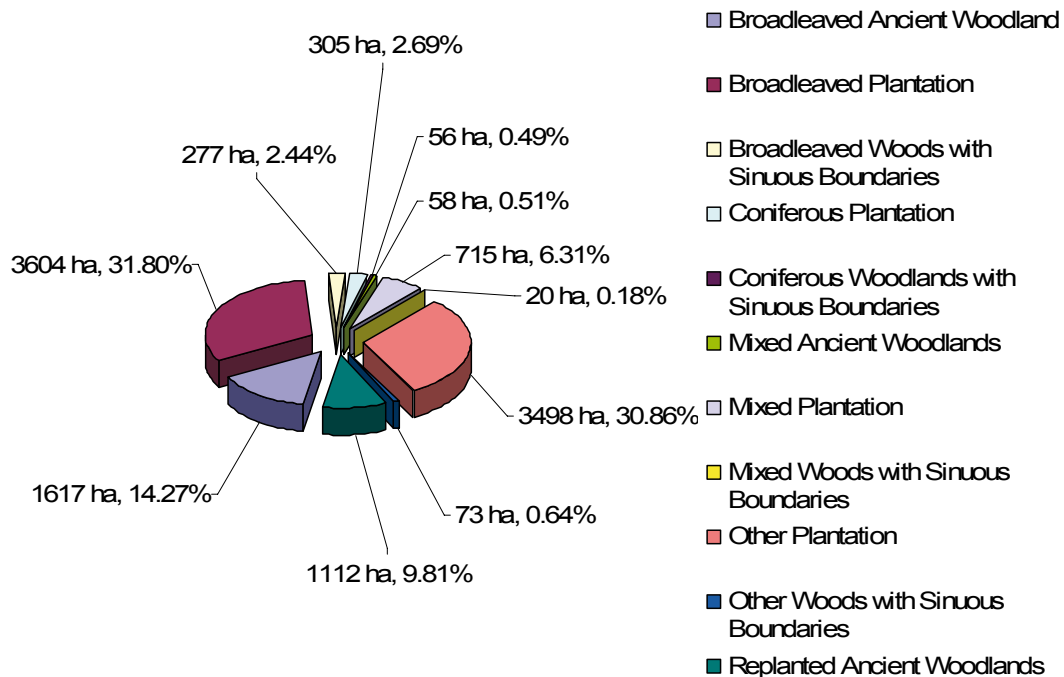


Figure 238. Woodland HLC Types for the Whole Study Area.

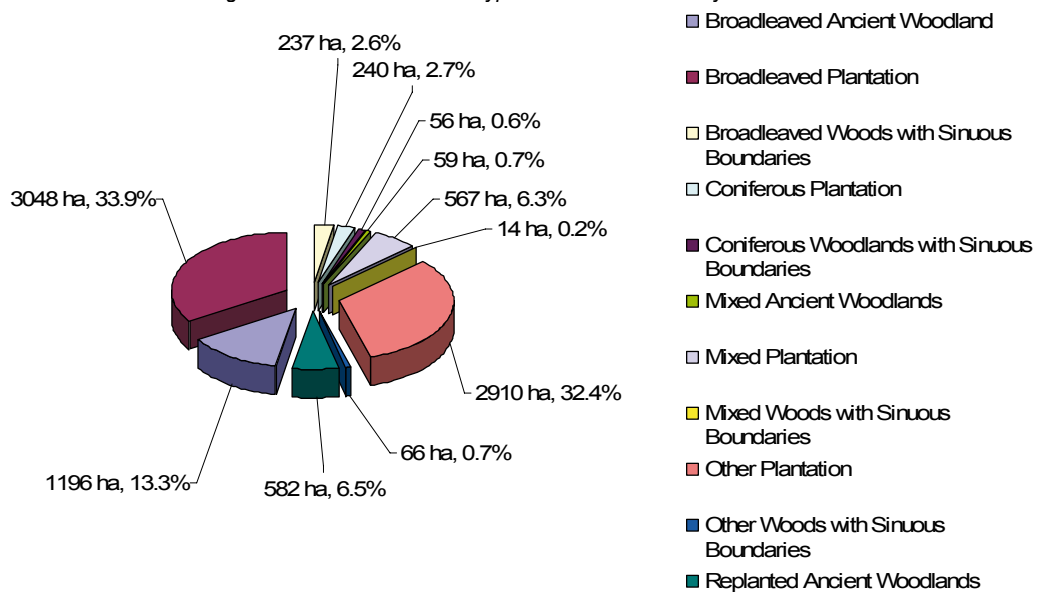


Figure 239. Woodland HLC Types for Leicestershire County.

6.2 Blaby

6.2.1 Blaby is the least wooded of the rural authorities in the study area. Almost all of the woodland in Blaby is plantation and tends to appear either as small rectilinear blocks or as linear blocks along the edges of major roads and existing or former train lines. The only blocks characterised as Ancient Broadleaved Woodland are Aston Firs in the south-west of the district on the border with Hinckley and Bosworth in the parish of Aston Flamville. Aston Firs along with Burbage Wood, in the neighbouring Hinckley and Bosworth parish of Burbage, is a broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland habitat designated as a SSSI. Both woods are marked on John Priors' 1777 map and the boundaries remain virtually unchanged from those drawn on the 2" Ordnance Survey Drawings of 1814

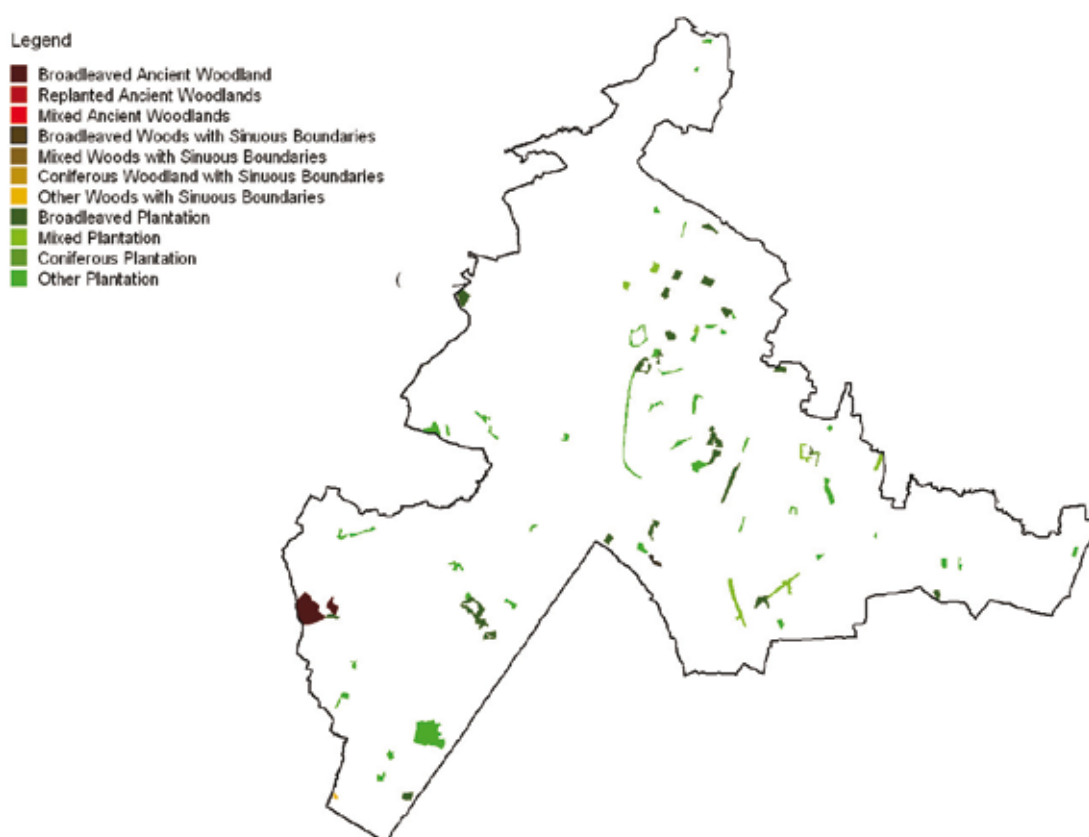


Figure 240. The Distribution of Woodland Across Blaby District

The average size of areas characterised as woodland in Blaby is 3.3 ha with a total coverage of 281ha representing about 2% of the district. The district holds 2.5% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 3.1% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicester. Historic mapping suggests that, with exception of Aston Firs, much of the authority area was sparsely wooded c. late C18/19th (Prior's/OS2"). Some remnant woodland place names are found in the area of the former Leicester Forest (Leicester Forest East/West), although apart from hedgerow trees this is not reflected in present woodland coverage.

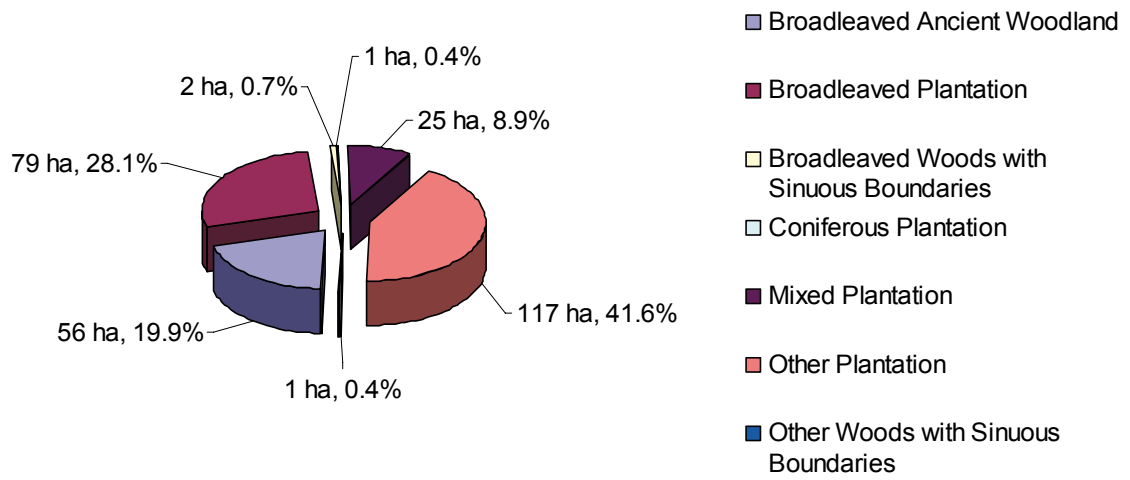


Figure. 331 Woodland HLC Types for Blaby District

6.3 Charnwood

6.3.1 Charnwood Borough has a high proportion of woodland cover and distinctive mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland. Even the most cursory examination of the distribution of woodland within the authority reveals that the highest concentrations occur on the western side of the authority area within Charnwood Forest itself. During the medieval period a forest did not apply specifically to an area of woodland, rather it defined a region in which the Crown (or nobility) had the right to keep deer and to make Forest Laws. The term Forest is often used exclusively to refer to land owned by the Crown, whereas land used for the same purpose and under the control of lesser nobles is often referred to as a chase. Charnwood was composed of the wastes of several surrounding manors and consequently under manorial control rather than by the Crown. Despite the fact that this was poor quality land, it was an important resource for the local population which, in addition to providing pasture and rough grazing, was a source of stone, wood and timber. There are several woodlands in Charnwood likely to have been in existence in the medieval period. These include Swithland Wood, Sheet Hedges Wood, Outwoods and Burley Wood. The survival of much of the Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Charnwood may be attributed to the fact that most assarting from the waste had ceased by the mid 16th century and land owners or their tenants were now actively managing the woodland resource for private profit (Squires and Jeeves, 1994, p 57).

6.3.2 The eastern side of Charnwood Borough shows a marked contrast to the west with far lower densities of woodland coverage. It is on this eastern side of the borough, that the study area becomes less intimate and opens out into a more rolling landscape. The fieldscape here starts to become dominated significantly more by *Planned Enclosure*, *Re-organised Piecemeal Enclosure* and *Very Large Post-War Fields* with most areas characterised as woodland typically being small rectilinear blocks of *Broadleaved* or *Other Plantation*.

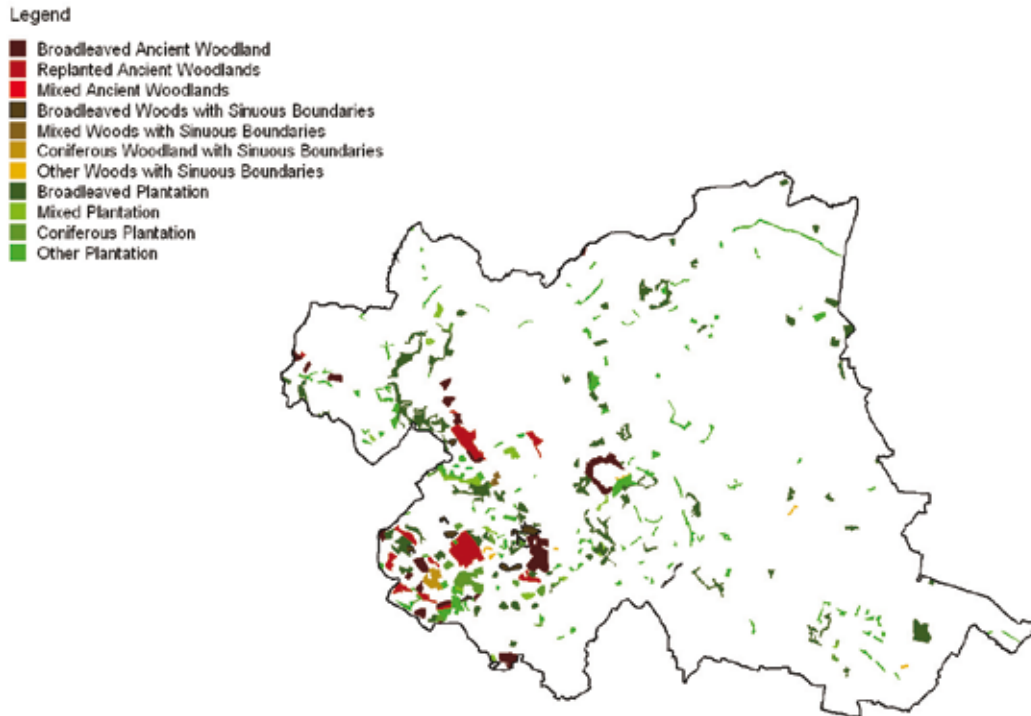


Figure. 242 The Distribution of Woodland Across Charnwood Borough

6.3.3 The average size of the GIS polygons characterised as woodland in Charnwood Borough is 5.3 ha with a total coverage of 1,688 ha; this represents about 6% of the borough. The borough holds 11.9% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 18.8% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. The 239 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Charnwood Borough represents 14.8% of the total for this type in the whole study area and 19.9% for Leicestershire County.

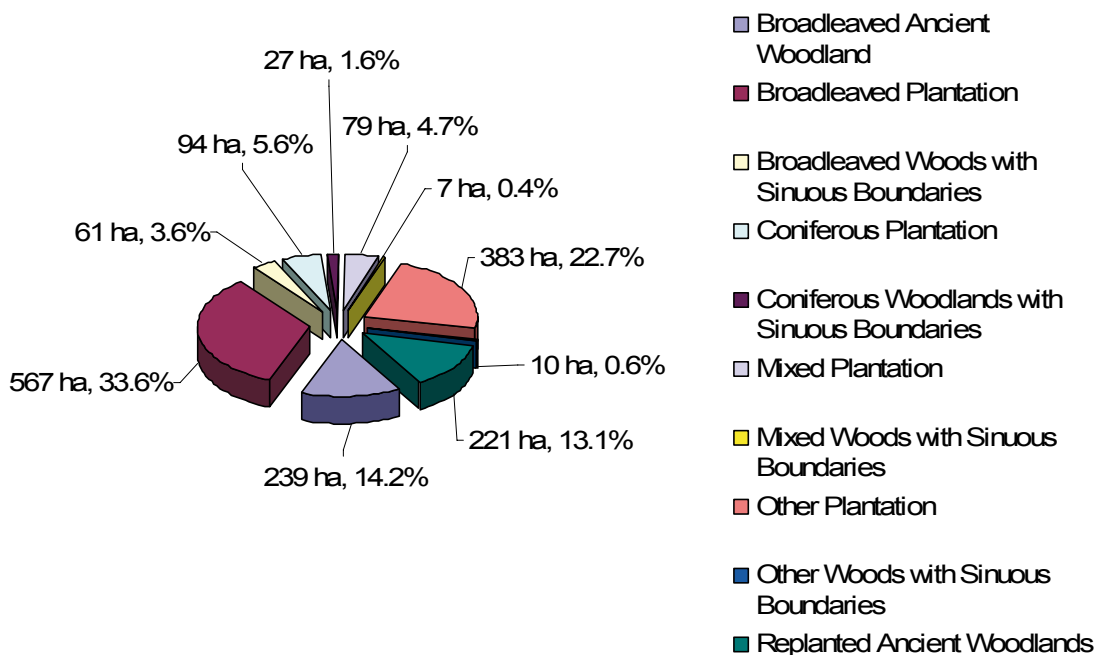


Figure 243. Woodland HLC Types for Charnwood Borough

6.4 Harborough

6.4.1 For the bulk of the western part of Harborough district woodland coverage is at a low density and tends to take the form of small isolated blocks. This, to a significant extent, can be seen to be a consequence of this area containing some of the more fertile soils within the study area which were more heavily exploited as an agricultural resource, and it is within this area that the process of change from open field to enclosure is most evident. What is evident from the historic mapping is a real dearth of woodland in the area west of Welford Road (A50). In central Harborough there is a good representation of Covert/Gorse woodland names likely to be associated with foxhunting. Also evident are areas of relatively recent managed woodland associated with estates and large houses such as Stanford Hall, Wistow, Gumley and Laughton Hills. Recent woodland regeneration and planting is much in evidence around Bruntingthorpe.

6.4.2 The highest concentrations of Harborough's woodland cover are on the eastern side of the district; this forms the western edge of Leighfield Forest. The Forest was created by Henry I shortly after 1100 and the Leicestershire portion was released from the Forest Laws in 1235. Along the district's eastern boundary with Rutland several medieval hunting parks were created including those at Owston, Launde, Loddington, Noseley, and Stockerston; a number of significant blocks of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland, associated with these former parks, survive in this area.

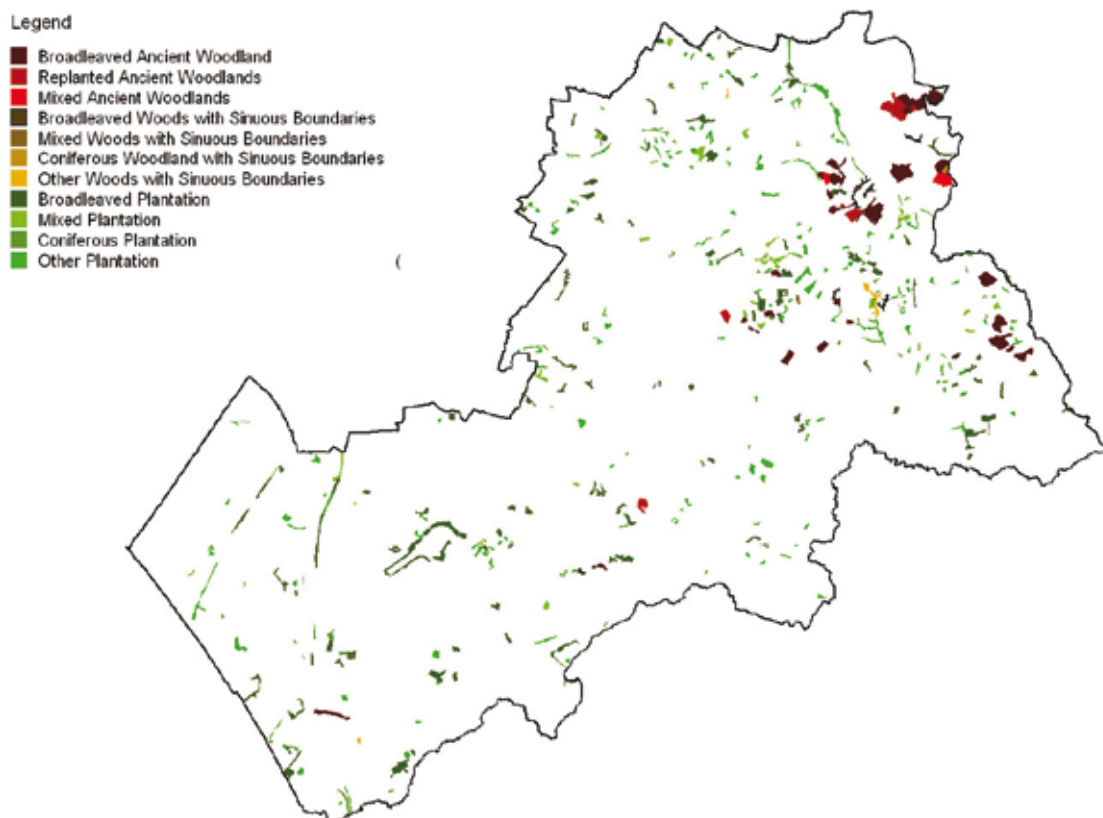


Figure 244. The Distribution of Woodland Across Harborough District

6.4.3 The average size of the GIS polygons characterised as woodland in Harborough District is 4 ha with a total coverage of 1792 ha; this represents about 3% of the district. The district holds 15.8% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 19.9% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. The 398 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Harborough District represents 24.6% of the total for this type in the whole study area and 33.2% for Leicestershire County.

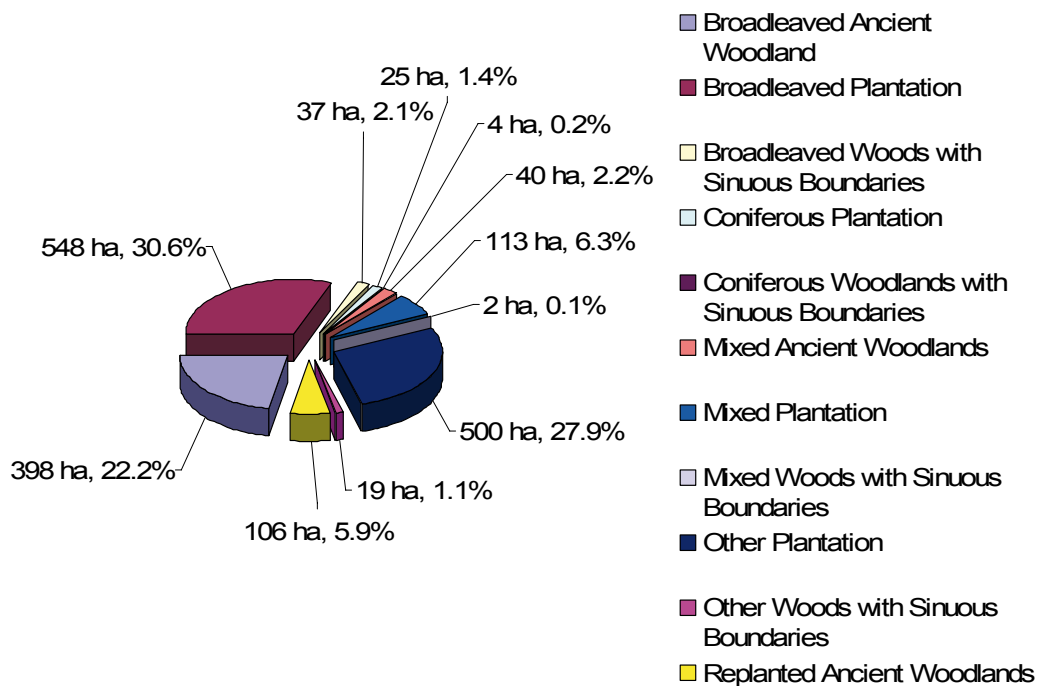


Figure 245. Woodland HLC Types For Harborough District

6.5 Hinckley and Bosworth

6.5.1 This borough contains a high proportion of woodland cover, particularly for Leicestershire, and there is a distinctive mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland. This higher level of woodland coverage, especially in the north-eastern segment, reflects to a degree the work of the National Forest but also the fact that this area lies on the edge of Charnwood Forest.

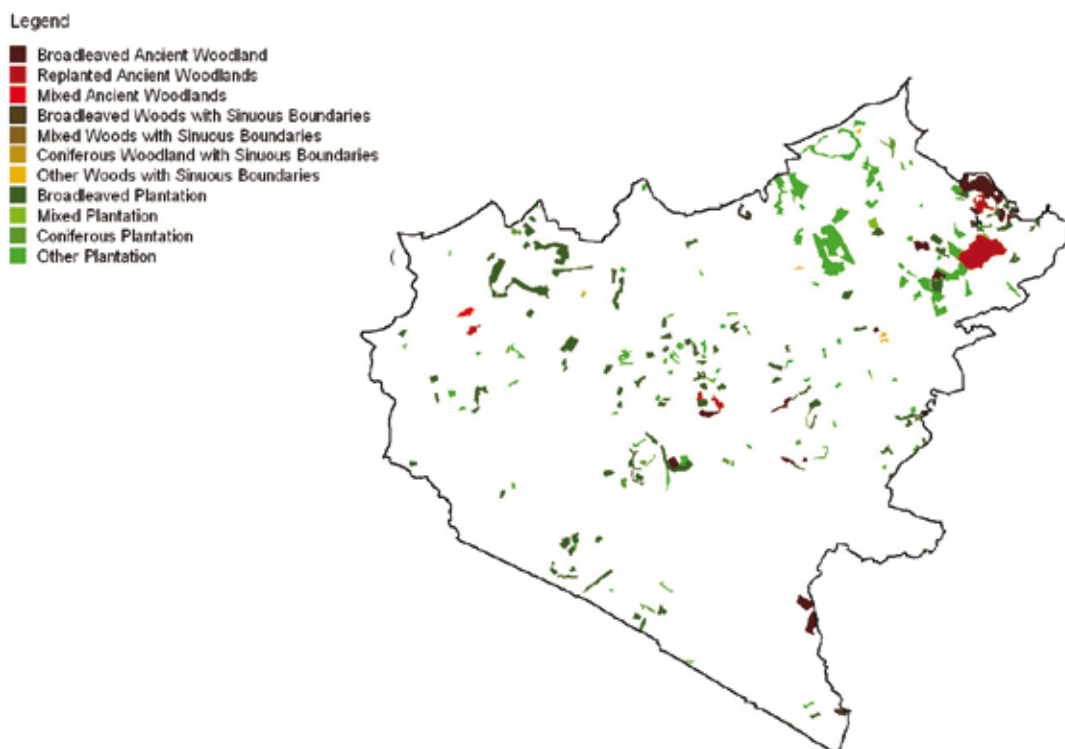


Fig 246 The Distribution of Woodland Across Hinckley and Bosworth Borough

6.5.2 The most extensive concentrations of woodland are in the north of the borough within the area covered by the Charnwood Forest LCA. This area contains several woodlands that belonged to the Manor of Groby which around 1100 covered the area from Botcheston, Newton Unthank and Ratby in the west, to Swithland in the east. Groby Manor also included all of Ulverscroft and, in terms of the amount of the waste of Charnwood Forest which it occupied, was second only to Barrow Manor (Squires and Humphrey, 1986, p14). Woods characterised as Ancient Broadleaved in this area include Lawn Wood, Old Wood, Lady Hay Wood, Martinshaw Wood and Ratby Burroughs; all of these are likely to have been in existence at least from the 14th century (Squires and Jeeves, 1994, p58).

6.5.3 In the south-east of the borough, bordering Blaby district and about three kilometres north-east of Hinckley, are Sheepy and Burbage Woods which now form part of the area known as Burbage Common. Burbage Wood is mentioned in Domesday and is recorded as measuring half a league by four furlongs, or just over 80 hectares, and was held subject to common rights.

6.5.4 Outside the urban areas there are a significant number of plantations which tend typically to be between 4 and 5 hectares. There are some significantly larger blocks of plantation such as those at Gopsall in the west of the borough. The plantation here represents surviving remnants of what was one of Leicestershire’s greatest park and garden landscapes. The park was bought by the ironmaster Humphrey Jennens in 1685 and from 1747 onwards his descendant Charles Jennens built the hall and developed the park of 1,000 acres (c 400 ha). The park is now farmland. Further north in the parish of Bagworth and Thornton there are substantial blocks of modern plantation which, in part, have their origins in landscaping to mitigate the effects of current and former minerals extraction as well as those established as part of the National Forest initiative.

6.5.5 The average size of the areas characterised as woodland in Hinckley and Bosworth is 5.4 ha with a total coverage of 1343 ha representing about 5% of the borough. The borough holds 11.8% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 14.9% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. The 145 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Hinckley and Bosworth represents 8.9% of the total for this type in the whole study area and 12.1% for Leicestershire County.

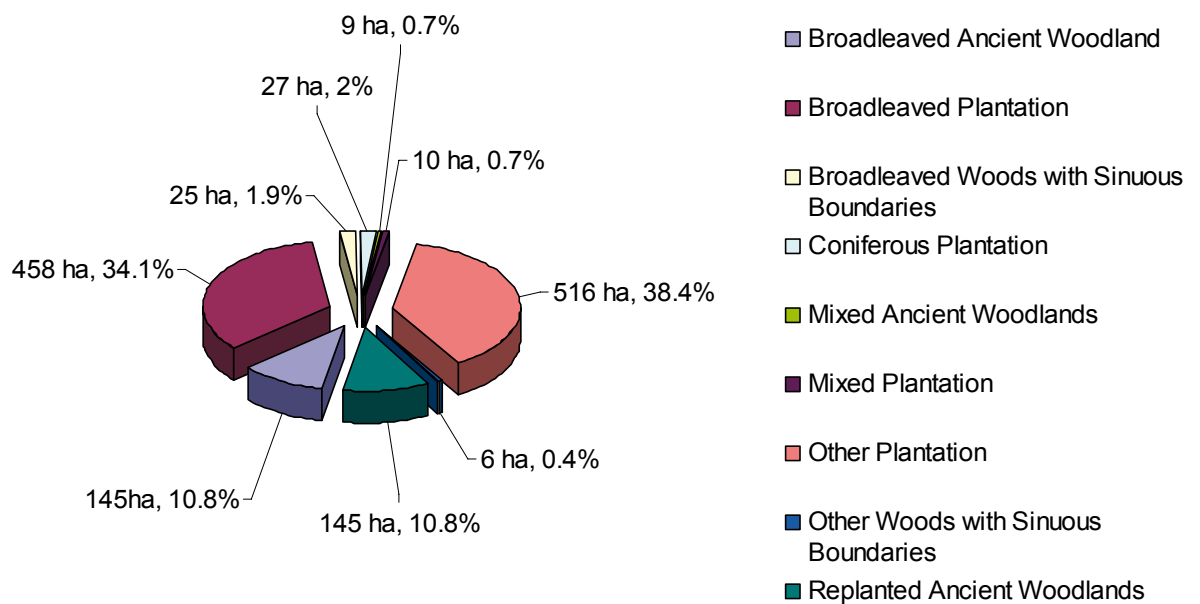


Fig. 247 Woodland HLC Types for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough

6.6 Melton

6.6.1 The most northerly part of Melton Borough occupies the Vale of Belvoir; this is an exposed, almost flat, plain which supports mixed farming with arable predominant in the east. Woodland cover in this part of the Borough is sparse. The Belvoir Scarp, a steep escarpment that bounds the southern edge of the Vale of Belvoir, dominates views to the south.

6.6.2 The agriculture of the area includes grazing on the steep scarp slopes with arable on flatter ground at the base of the scarp. The scarp also has a high proportion of plantation woodland which represents probably the single most coherent and extensive wooded landscape within the borough. This woodland should be viewed in association with Belvoir Castle and the Belvoir Estate and was planted in a deliberate attempt to enhance the landscape of the area. On the south-eastern boundary of the Belvoir Scarp and bordering Lincolnshire to the east, is the Knipton Bowl LCA. This takes the form of clearly defined north-east facing basin deeply 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, much of the central part of Melton Borough is within The Wolds LCA. This has a rolling landform drained by many stream valleys. The valleys 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 here tend to be small in size. Within the Borough the southern boundary of the Wolds adjoins the Wreake Valley LCA. The landscape here is characterised as a flat river valley with gently sloping sides. Mixed arable and pasture are the dominant forms of agriculture. There is 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. This LCA 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. This LCA has a fairly flat open landscape and is predominantly arable with large fields.

6.6.3 With the exception of the Vale of Belvoir, where cover is sparse, Melton has a fairly even distribution of woodland plantation. This cover is most extensive at the northern end of the Belvoir Scarp around Belvoir Castle.

6.6.4 In a consideration of the influence fox-hunting has had upon the landscape J Finch (2005) writes 'The Midlands landscape had been all but deforested in the medieval period. Enclosure brought with it hedgerow trees, but there were few additional woodland plantations. So hunts moved into direct land management, buying and planting small pieces of rough scrub as coverts. Some hunts even constructed artificial earths within their coverts to

further encourage the fox population. The landscape was transformed.'
 (<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba81/feat1.shtml>).

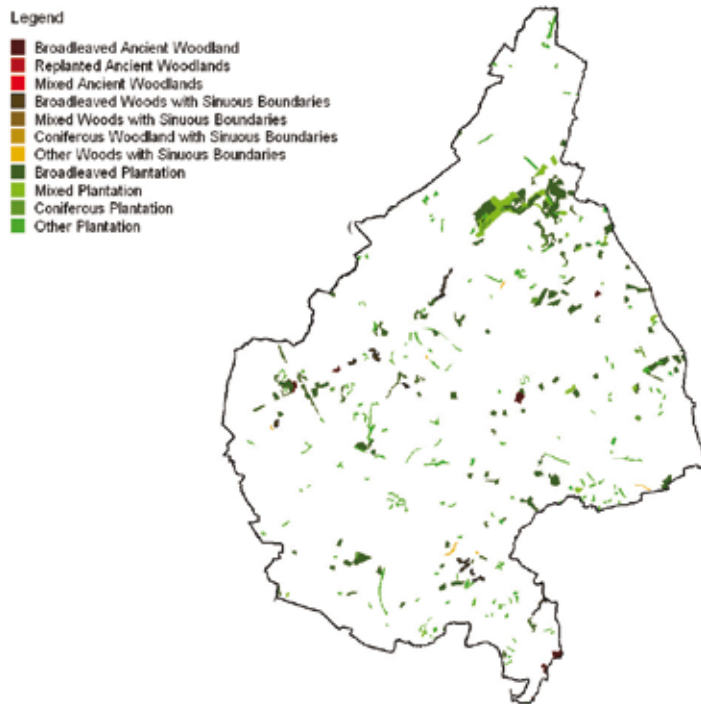


Figure 248. The Distribution of Woodland Across Melton Borough

6.6.5 The average size of the GIS polygons characterised as woodland in Melton Borough is 5.3 ha with a total coverage of 1859 ha; this represents about 3.9% of the borough. The borough holds 16.4% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 20.7% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. The 67 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Melton Borough represents 4.1% of the total for this type in the whole study area and 5.6% for Leicestershire County.

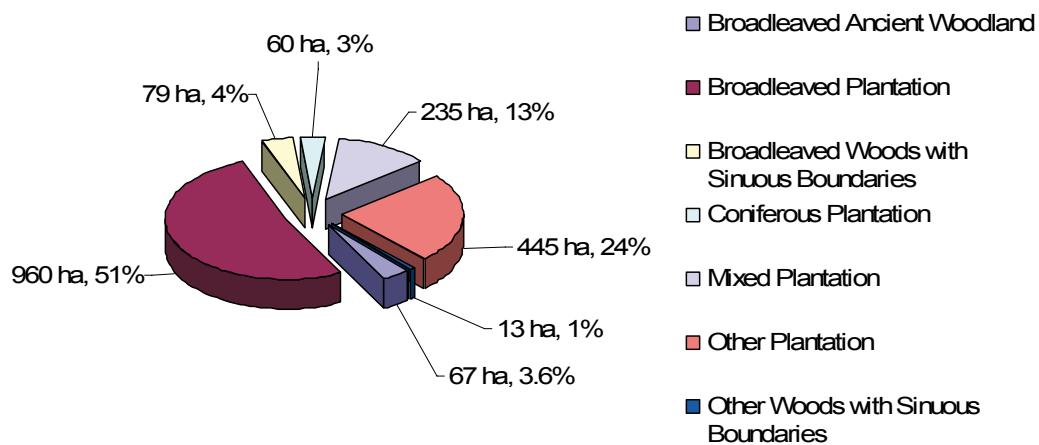


Figure 249. Woodland HLC Types for Melton Borough

6.7 North West Leicestershire

6.7.1 The western part of the North West Leicestershire district takes in the eastern side of the Charnwood Forest LCA; a predominantly upland landscape with rocky outcrops. This part of the district, which is also within the Leicestershire section of the National Forest, has a high proportion of woodland cover and distinctive mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland.

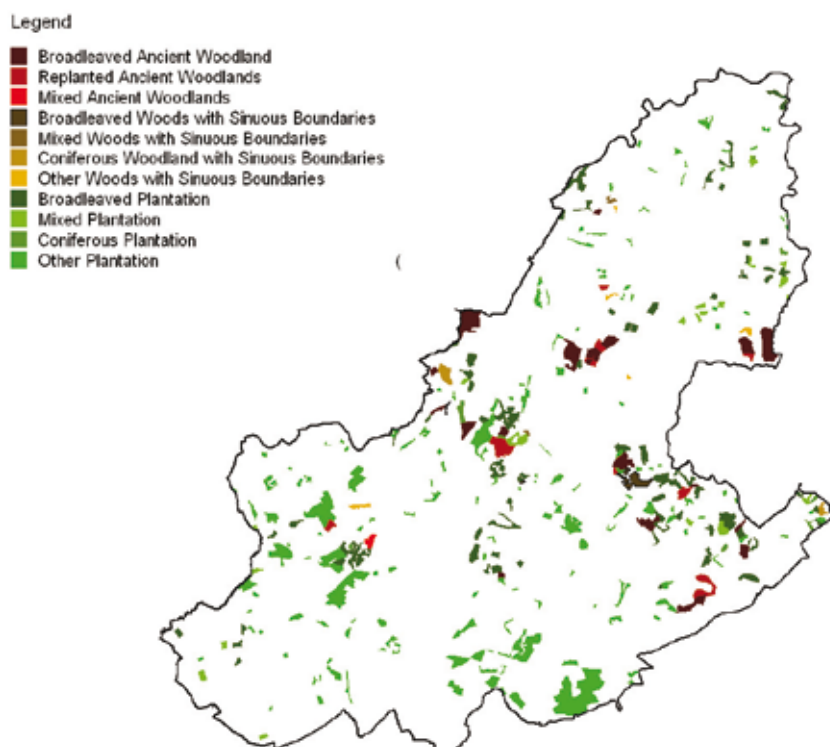


Figure 250. The Distribution of Woodland Across North West Leicestershire District

6.7.2 Most of the southern part of the district is within the National Forest boundary, and forms part of the most densely wooded part of Leicestershire. All woodland HLC Types are represented in the district ranging from Ancient Broadleaved woodland to the more recent plantation schemes sponsored by the National Forest Company.

6.7.3 The central eastern part of the district as well as lying within the National Forest, includes a sizable part of the proposed Charnwood Forest Regional Park. The proposed Regional Park is a non-statutory, partnership led initiative which has among its objectives the management and promotion of the Forest's landscape and settlement character. A landscape character study for the proposed Regional Park identifies seven character areas within Charnwood Forest, two of which lie partly within North West Leicestershire. The first of these, Bardon, is described as an urban fringe landscape heavily influenced by quarrying, including several former quarries which are now restored land. There are also several blocks of woodland of mixed ages typically used to screen views of quarry working. To the north of Bardon is the character area of Charley, the key characteristics of which include rocky

outcrops, woodland clumps and rolling farmland. Here the woodland cover is mixed and includes clumps in fields, linear strips and shelter belts, coniferous and mixed plantation blocks and deciduous and semi-natural woodland.

6.7.4 The proposed Regional Park also coincides with much of the medieval chase known as Charnwood Forest. This was, in effect, a private hunting forest belonging to the lords of whose manors it formed a part, but which also provided pasture, rough grazing and a source of stone, wood and timber to the local population. Charnwood Forest contains several woods likely to have been in existence during the medieval period. These include Grace Dieu Wood; Burrow and Birch Woods within the parish of Charley and what remains, following extensive quarrying, of Bardon Wood in Whitwick.

6.7.5 The average size of the areas characterised as woodland in North West Leicestershire is 5.7 ha with a total coverage of 1999 ha this represents about 7% of the district. The district holds 17.6% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 22.3% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. The 290 ha. of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in North West Leicestershire represents 17.9% of the total for this type in the whole study area and 24.2% for Leicestershire County.

6.7.6 In addition to having a relatively high proportion of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland, North West Leicestershire has a notably high proportion of woodland that comes within the Other Plantation HLC grouping. This can be attributed to the fact that this HLC group includes significant plantation classified as New Plantation within the National Woodland Inventory and blocks of woodland that do not receive a classification, either because they are too recent to appear on the inventory or because they are below 2 hectares in size. Woodland plantations such as these typically occur across much of the National Forest which covers much of the authority's area.

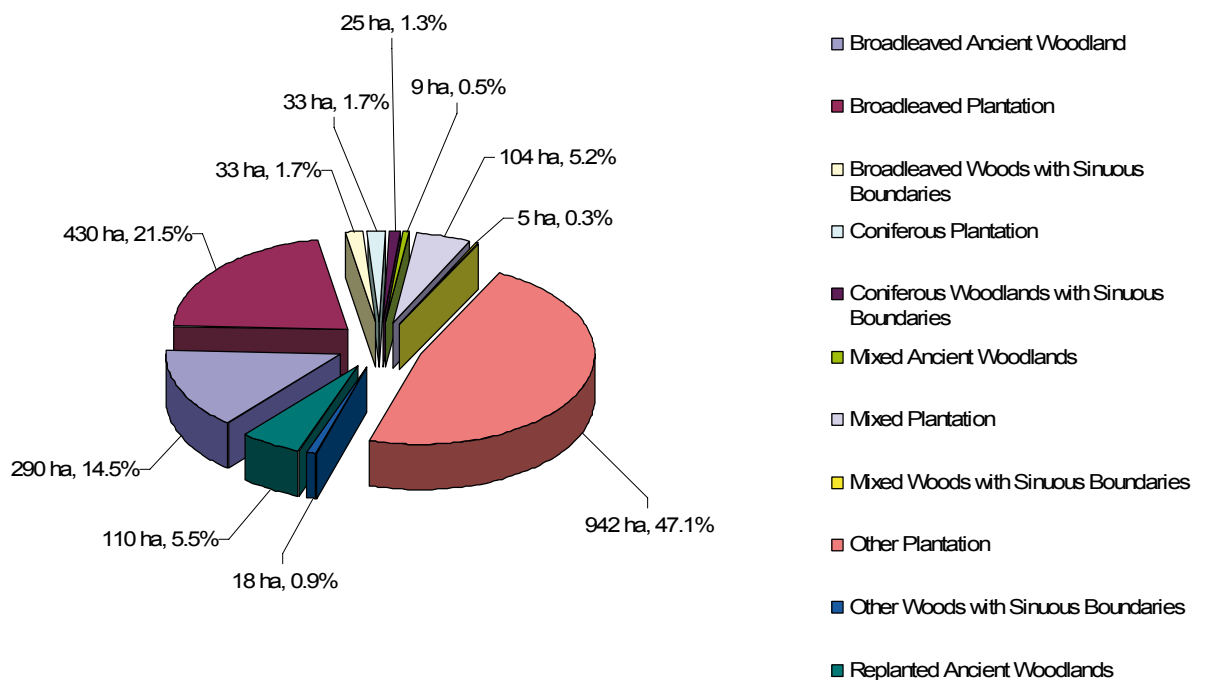


Figure 251. Woodland HLC Types For North West Leicestershire District

6.8 Oadby and Wigston

6.8.1 This borough has very little woodland coverage, comprising only two types namely Broadleaved Plantation and Other Plantation. The average size of the areas characterised as woodland in Oadby and Wigston is 2.2 ha with a total coverage of 11 ha representing less than 0.5% of the borough. The borough holds 0.09% of all woodland for the study area which equates to 0.12% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. Although the borough contains a small proportion of the woodland across the study area the blocks mapped are of a reasonable size. These include Stackyard Spinney on the northern border of the borough which represents 1.5 ha of plantation woodland marked on the 1st edition 6" OS map and probably associated with, the now demolished, Stoughton Grange. Further south on the eastern side of Oadby there is another significant block of woodland plantation, also marked on the 1st edition 6" OS map and almost 3 ha, which runs along Fludes Lane east to west. Just south-east of Fludes Lane, straddling the Harborough – Oadby and Wigston boundary is Glen Gorse. This 5.4 ha block, which has been characterised as Coniferous Plantation, appears on the 1st edition mapping. The last block of woodland of note is a 1 ha area of plantation in south Wigston which forms the remnant of what was a larger belt of plantation woodland following the Midland Railway line.

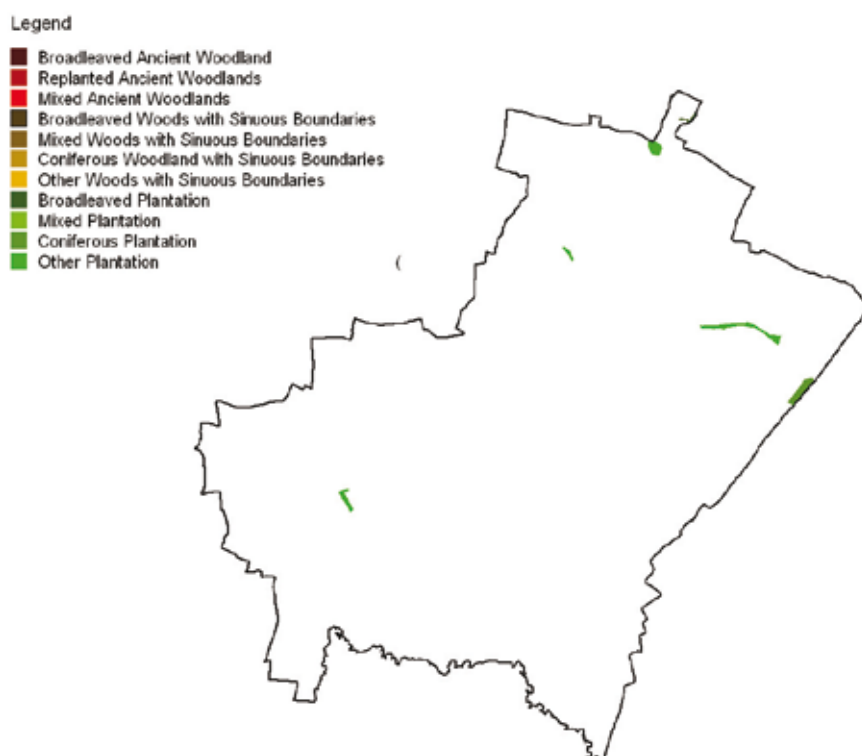


Figure 252. The Distribution of Woodland Across Oadby and Wigston Borough

6.9 Leicester

6.9.1 Leicester City is a unitary authority and its character is dominated by residential, industrial, civic and commercial development. Most of the authority lies within the Upper Soar LCA 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. Almost all of the land characterised as belonging to the Woodland Broad Type is plantation of varying types often set within parks such as at Braunstone and Knighton Parks and along dismantled railway lines, for example the area that is now a nature reserve along the southern edge of Humberstone Park. The only area characterised as Broadleaved Ancient Woodland is Meynell's Gorse located at the eastern edge of the city on the border with Blaby District.

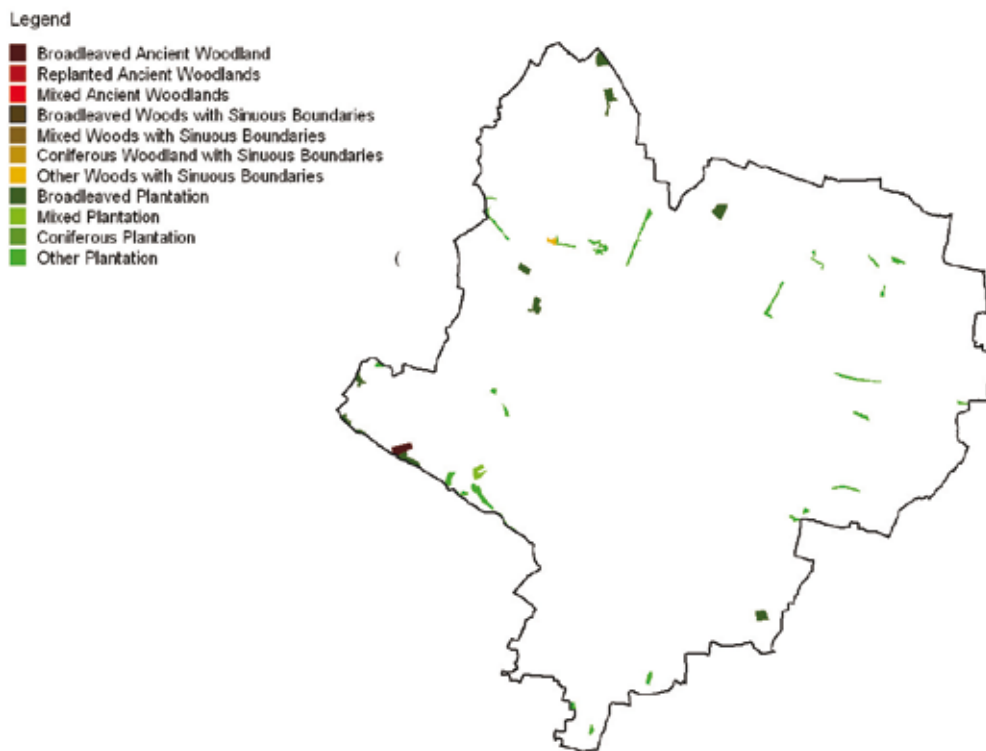


Figure 253. The Distribution of Woodland Across Leicester City

6.9.2 The western border of the city has been significantly shaped by Leicester Forest. Place name evidence including Beaumont Leys, Braunstone Frith and Stockings Wood, together with Western Park and New Parks, are all indications that this was a previously well wooded area. Along the edge of Anstey Lane a park or woodland bank survives as an earthwork feature. The small pocket of *Ancient Broadleaved Woodland* at Meynell's Gorse represents a possible remnant of a larger area of woodland. Woodgate which was an important entrance to the city provides another indicator to the likely wooded character of the landscape on the western side of Leicester.

6.9.3 The average size of the areas characterised as woodland in Leicester City is 1.9 ha with a total coverage of 72 ha representing about 0.9% of the authority. The borough holds 0.6% of all woodland for the study area; this equates to 14.9% of woodland within the administrative county of Leicestershire. The 4 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Leicester represents 0.2% of the total for this type in the whole study area.

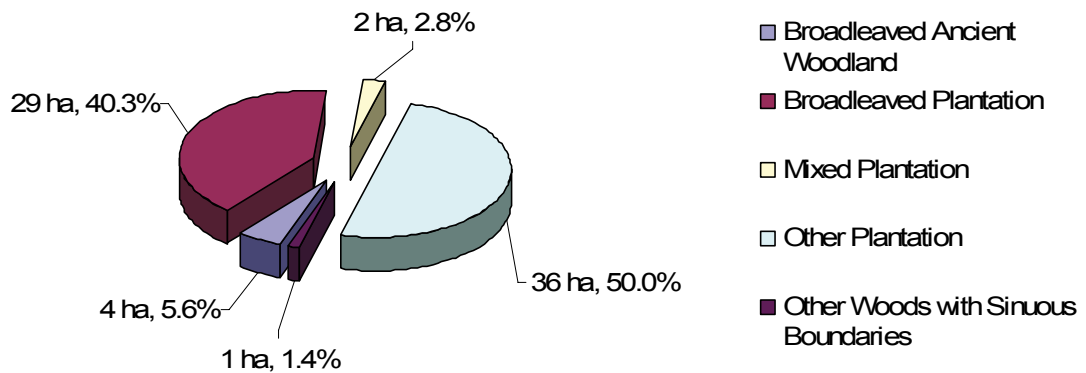


Figure 254. Woodland HLC Types for Leicester City

6.10 Rutland

6.10.1 Rutland has a good and relatively even distribution of woodland with notable concentrations of Ancient Woodland around the south-west border with Harborough and in a band running from the central part of the county at Burley Wood to the north-eastern border with Lincolnshire.

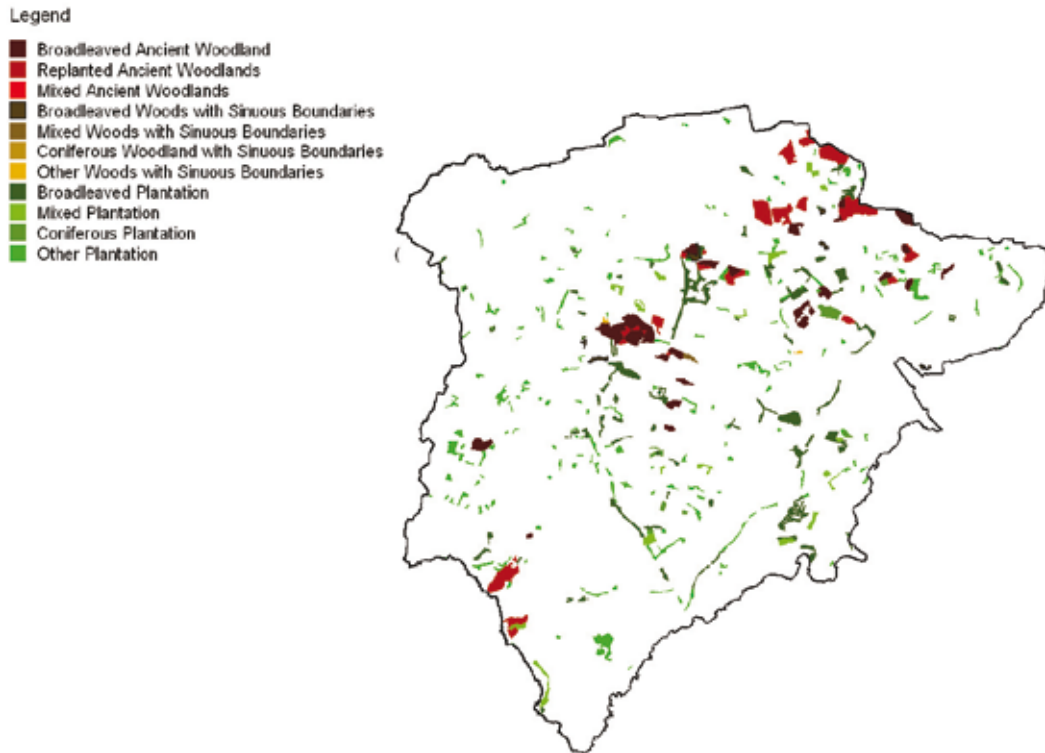


Figure 255. The Distribution of Woodland Across Rutland County

6.10.2 The concentrations of woodland, particularly of Ancient Woodlands in the south-west of Rutland, form remnants of Leighfield Forest which was created by Henry I shortly after 1100 and largely released from forest laws in 1299.

6.10.2 The average size of the GIS polygons characterised as woodland in Rutland is 6 ha with a total coverage of 2286 ha; this represents about 5.8% of the authority. The district holds 20.1% of all woodland for the study area. The 416 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Rutland represents 25.7% of the total for all woodland in the county. Although proportionately this would appear to indicate a good survival of ancient woodland within Rutland in the Leighfield Forest area this is perhaps not the case since in 1630 Royal protection was removed and the land sold by Charles I resulting in nearly all the woods being cleared and land converted to pasture and arable use.

6.10.3 Survival of *Broadleaved Ancient* and *Replanted Ancient Woodlands* has been significantly higher to the north-east of Oakham notably at Burley Wood and the area around Clipsham.

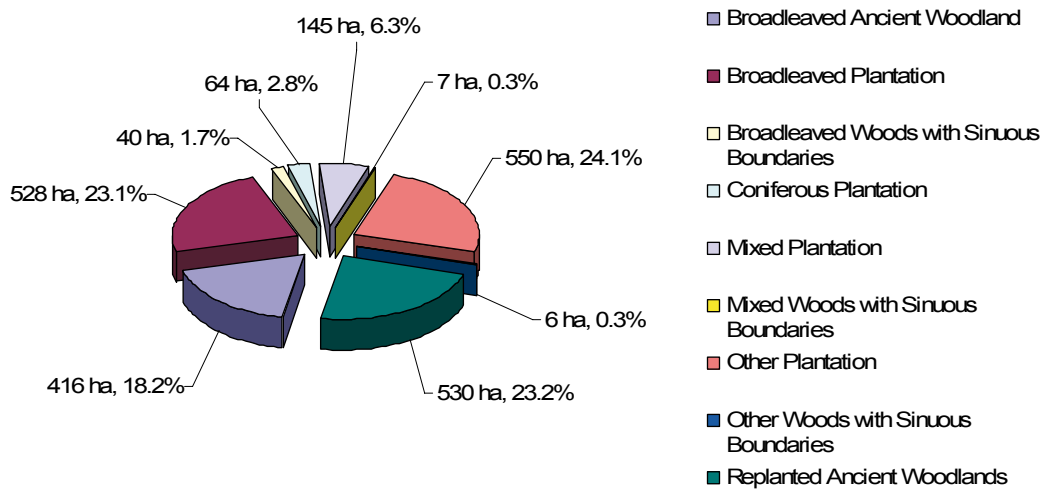


Figure 256. Woodland HLC Types for Rutland County

6.11 The National Forest

6.11.1 The National Forest comprises some 51,800 hectares; approximately half in Leicestershire, the remainder split between Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and is an attempt to link the remnant ancient forests of Needwood and Charnwood. Between 1995 and 2008 the National Forest has, within its administrative area, initiated the planting of over 7 million trees and increased woodland cover from 6% to nearly 18% and aims to increase this further to around 20% by 2014 (National Forest, 2009). In Leicestershire the area covered by The National Forest covers some 24,353 ha. of which 3,132 ha. has been characterised as belonging to the Woodland HLC Broad Type category. This represents a level of almost 13% woodland coverage within the Leicestershire section of the National Forest. It is this part of the study area which is the most densely wooded with character types ranging from *New Plantation* to *Ancient Broadleaved Woodland*.

6.11.2 The location 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 stated aim of the National Forest Company is to create a new, large scale, forested landscape. The key objective is to increase woodland coverage from an original 6% to about one third of the area covered by the Forest, in an attempt to establish a sustainable working forest and achieve large scale landscape change which should enhance the environment and provide a stimulus to the local economy.

6.11.3 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.

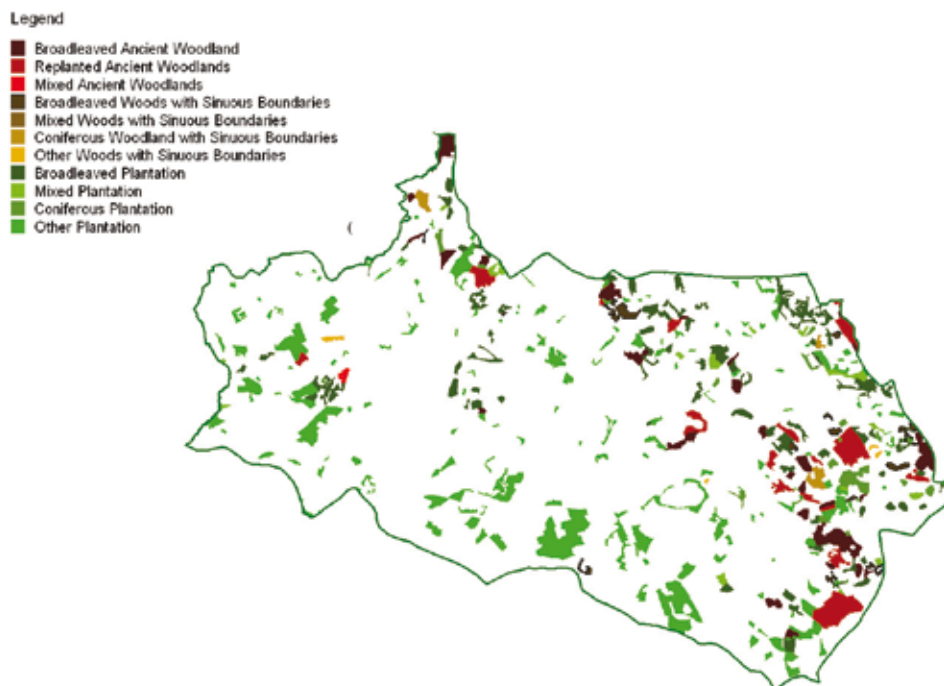


Figure 257. The Distribution of Woodland Across the National Forest In Leicestershire

6.11.4 The National Forest is split mostly between two Landscape Character Areas; The Coalfield to the west and Charnwood Forest on the east. The Forest's northern boundary also skirts the south-west tip of the Langley Lowlands whilst the southern edge crosses into the Mease/Sence Lowlands and Upper Soar LCAs. The Charnwood Forest LCA is a predominantly upland landscape with rocky outcrops. Here there is a high proportion of woodland cover and a distinctive mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland. The influence of quarrying is also in evidence. The Coalfield LCA 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 Zouch and Coalville are the two largest settlements in the Leicestershire section of the National Forest.

6.11.5 The area contained within the Forest holds a diverse range of Leicestershire's landscapes. These include late planned enclosure of former heathland in and around the parish of Charley, which to the west of Charley Hall includes an area of diagnostically earlier piecemeal enclosure. Within the Forest area is an important 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 also been considerable levels of new woodland plantation across The Coalfield LCA, much of which has targeted the derelict and mineral worked land that has a significant presence here.

6.11.6 The average size of the GIS polygons characterised as woodland in the Leicestershire part of the National Forest is 7.1 ha with a total coverage of 3132 ha. This represents about 13% of the area covered by the National Forest in Leicestershire and just over 6% of the total area covered by the Forest. The National Forest in Leicestershire holds 27.6% of all woodland in the study area and 34.9% of the area characterised as woodland in Leicestershire. The 378 ha of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in the Leicestershire part of the National Forest represents 23.3% of the total for this type in the whole study area and 31.6% of Ancient Broadleaved Woodland in Leicestershire

6.11.7 Across the National Forest Area the differing characters of The Coalfield in the west and Charnwood Forest in the east are apparent. In the west we see a gently undulating landform influenced by the effects of coal and clay extraction, with the former mining towns and villages of the area producing a relatively dense settlement pattern and, even with significant woodland plantation initiatives, lower woodland cover than that in the eastern half of the National Forest. By contrast Charnwood Forest is very much an upland landscape with rocky outcrops and far higher levels of woodland cover.

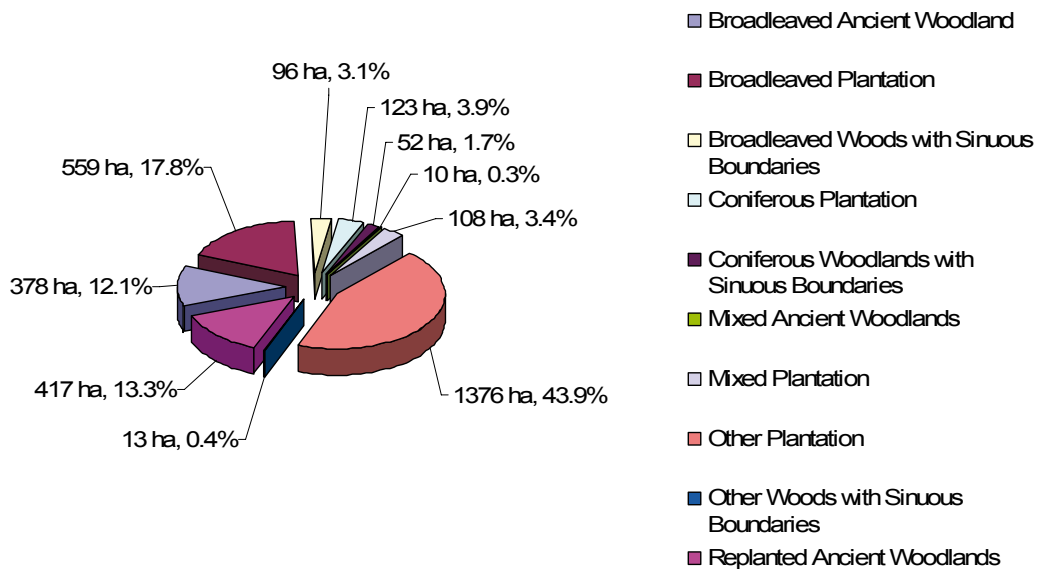


Figure 258. Woodland HLC Types for the National Forest in Leicestershire

6.12 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy

6.12.1 The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, published in 2001 by Leicestershire County Council in partnership with Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council, was designed to sit within the Leicestershire Structure Plan 1991-2006; a function which carries over into the current Structure Plan 1996-2016. The Structure Plan has been prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990. This, together with more detailed Local Plans and the Minerals and Waste Local Plans, formed part of the statutory development plan for each of the local planning authorities in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. The purpose of the Plan was to set out a strategic framework for the use and development of land which also considers environmental, social and economic impacts. In addition the Plan takes into consideration national and regional policy, in particular, the principle of sustainable development and the integration of land-use and transportation. It is within this context that the Landscape and Woodland Strategy was designed to sit. Subsequently however, with the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Structure Plan has, for the most part, been superseded by the East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy which in Policy 31 states the priority for the

establishment of criteria-based policies in Local Development Frameworks to ensure that development proposals respect intrinsic landscape character in rural and urban fringe areas, including, where appropriate, recognition of the value of tranquillity and dark skies; and the identification in Local Development Frameworks of landscape and biodiversity protection and enhancement objectives through the integration of Landscape Character Assessments with historic and ecological assessments.

6.12.2 Within such a framework the Landscape and Woodland Strategy remains an important and relevant document to aid in the provision of an informed policy regarding the landscape at both regional and local levels.

6.12.3 The Strategy assesses the nature of the existing landscape and woodland in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and describes eighteen distinctive landscape character areas within the boundaries of the three authorities. These Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) correlate closely with the regional Joint Character Areas (JCAs) developed and promoted by the Countryside Agency in partnership with English Nature which formed the Character of England map, published in 1996. Subsequent to publication the Countryside Agency and English Nature have been combined to form Natural England and in 2005 the map was revised and is now called the Character of England Landscape, Wildlife and Cultural Features Map with JCAs now being referred to as National Character Areas (NCAs). Despite there being a good level of fit between the LCAs and NCAs the map produced by Natural England is a national assessment and, consequently, is at a coarser grain with some minor differences in boundary details and omissions of some character areas which have been viewed as significant at the finer county level.

6.12.4 The following set of maps looks at the distribution of woodland within each of the LCAs. Each map is accompanied by a pie chart designed to show the composition, in HLC terms, of the woodland cover within each of the areas. A bar chart also appears alongside the map. This considers each of the woodland HLC Types held within an LCA and expresses as a percentage what that character area holds in relation to the total for that type across the study area.

6.12.5 Since woodland cover, both in terms of extent and composition, was a significant factor in determining LCA boundaries for the Landscape and Woodland Strategy each of the maps, consequently, shows a wide variation in the levels and types of woodland present. The Vale of Belvoir LCA, for example, contains only two different woodland HLC types; Broadleaved Plantation and Other Plantation and what cover there is represents less than 1.5% of the total woodland cover in the project area. This contrasts with Charnwood Forest, The Coalfield, High Leicestershire and Langley Lowlands which each contain ten out of the eleven woodland HLC Types and hold around 18%, 11%, 17% and 5%, respectively, of the woodland cover in the project area.

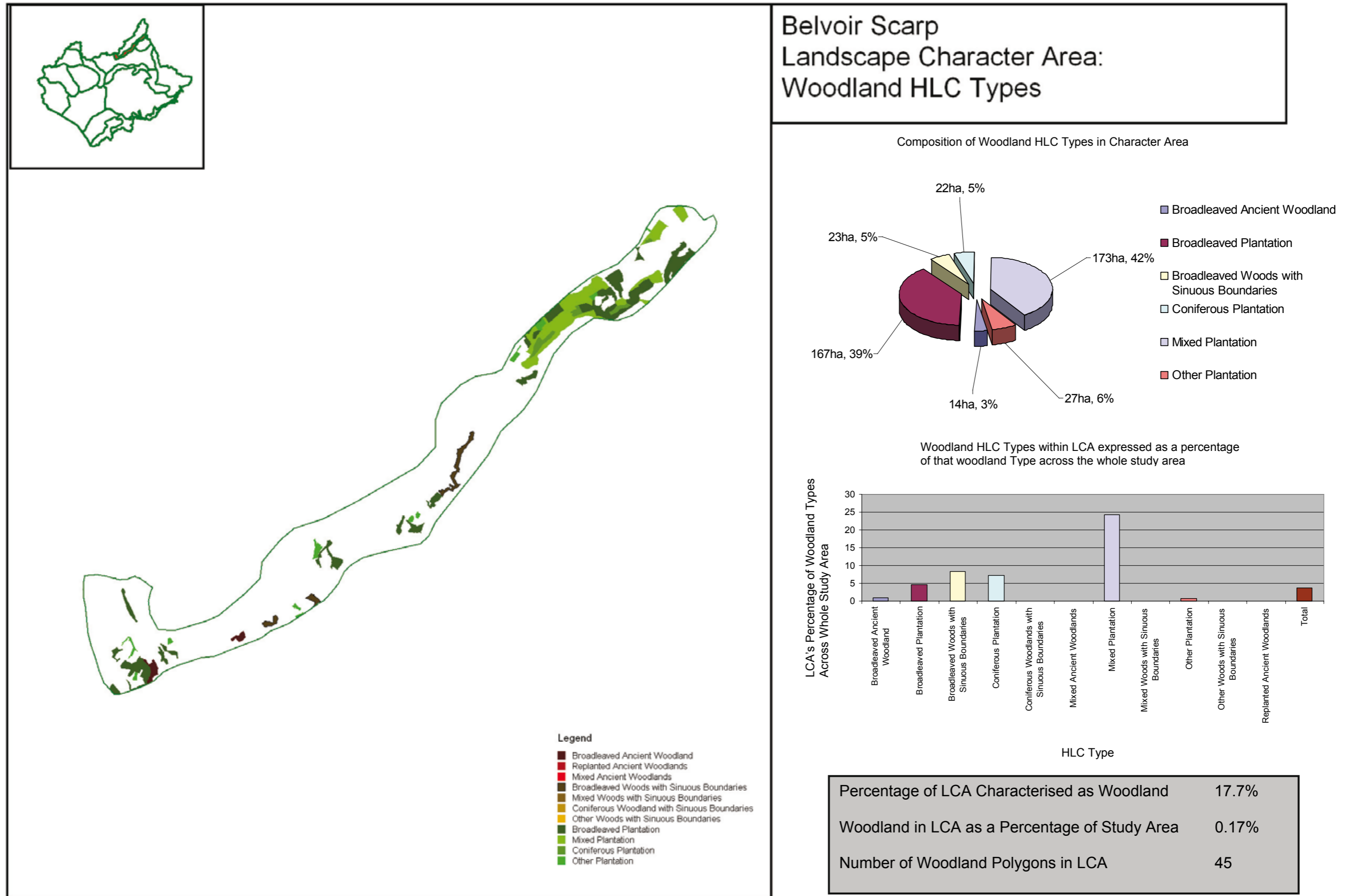
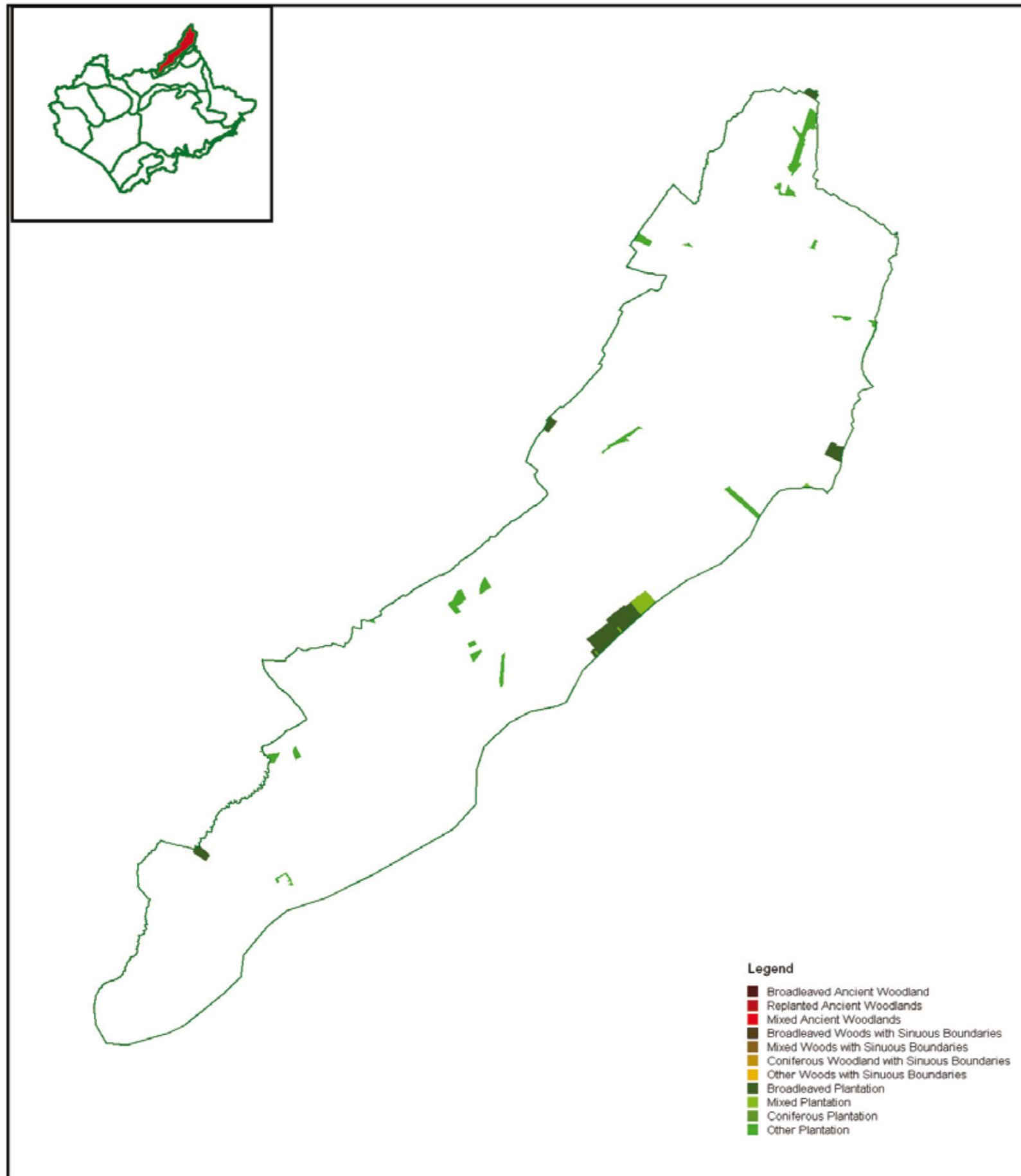
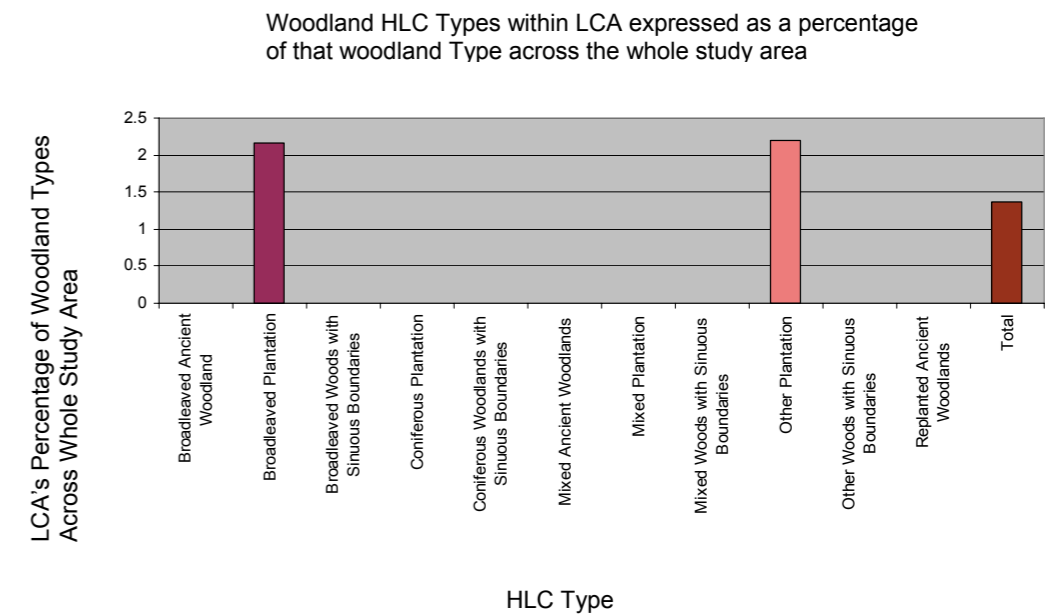
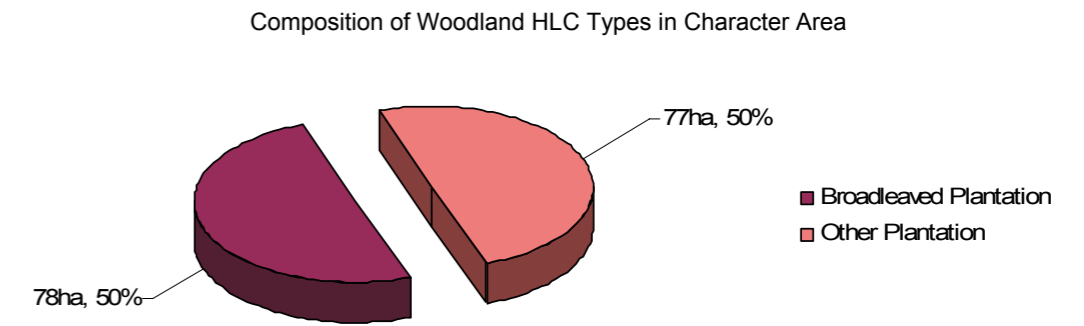


Figure 259. Belvoir Scarp LCA Woodland Distribution

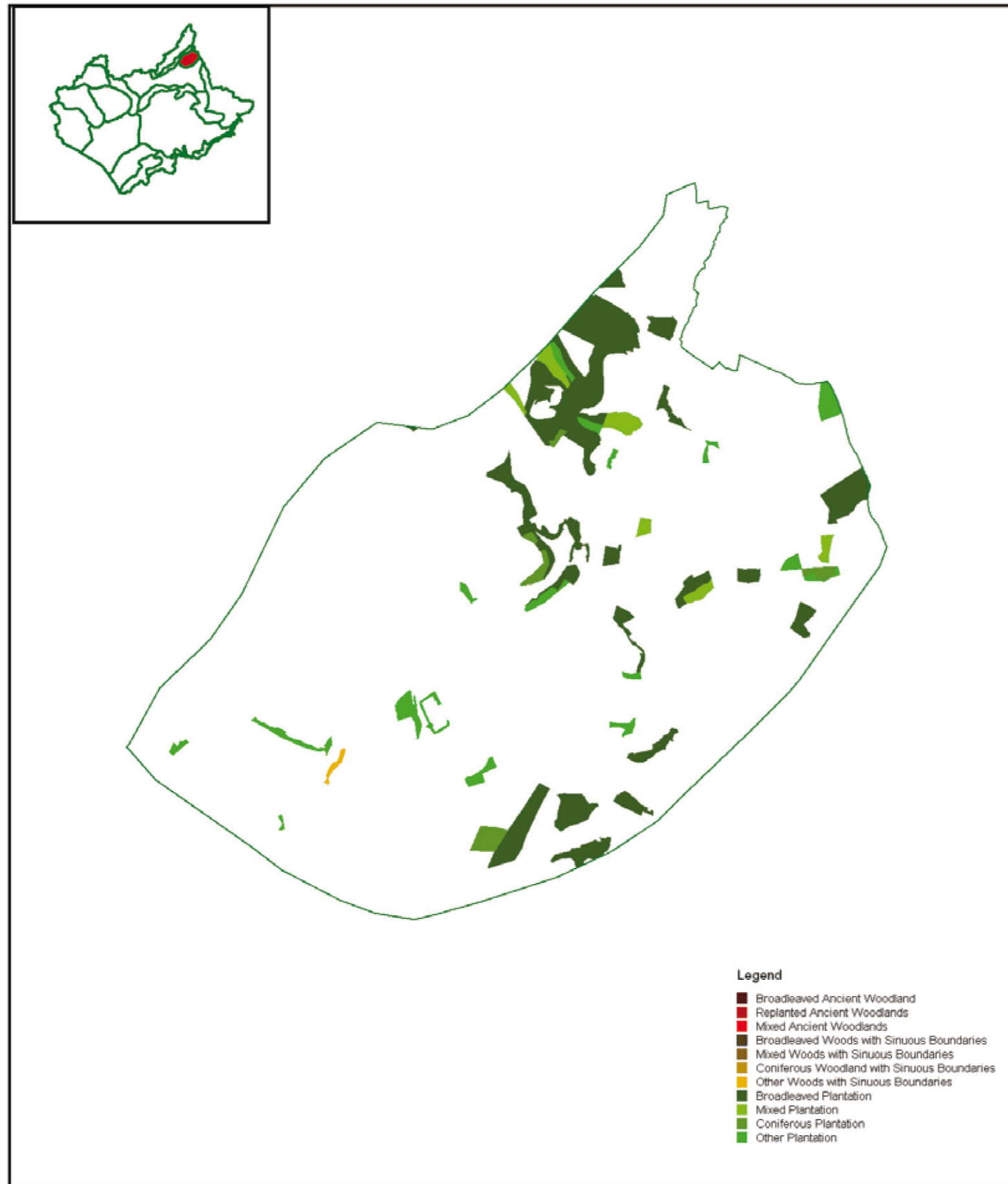


Vale of Belvoir Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

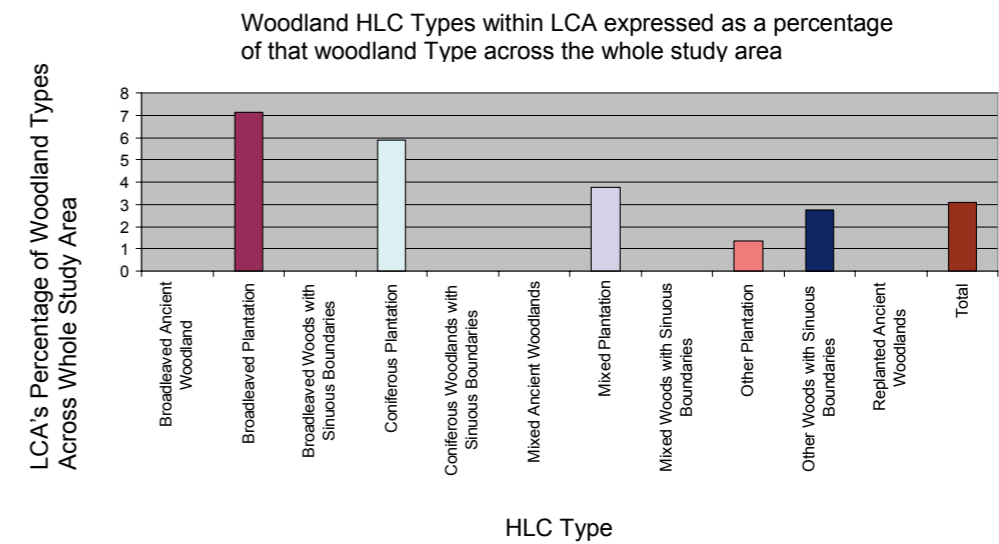
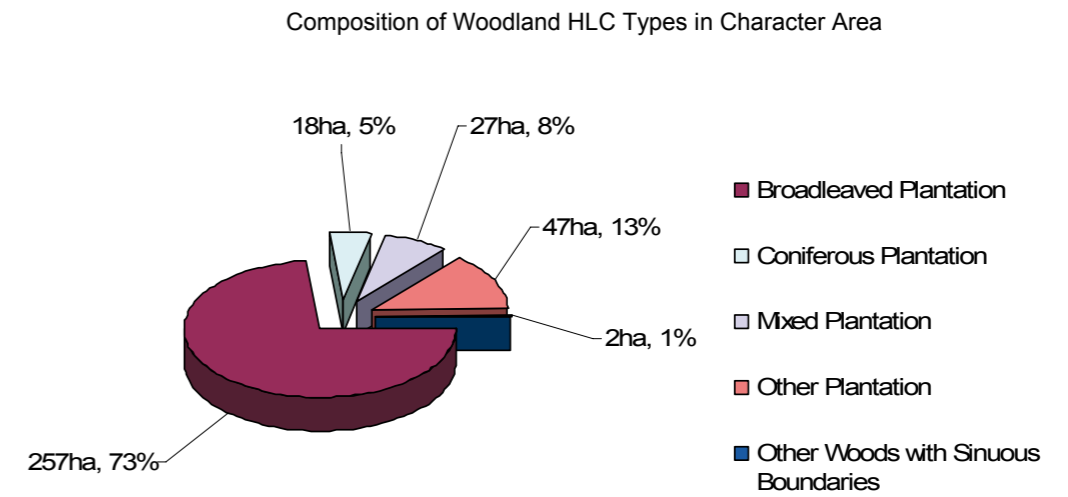


Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	1.9%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.06%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	25

Figure 260. Vale of Belvoir LCA Woodland Distribution

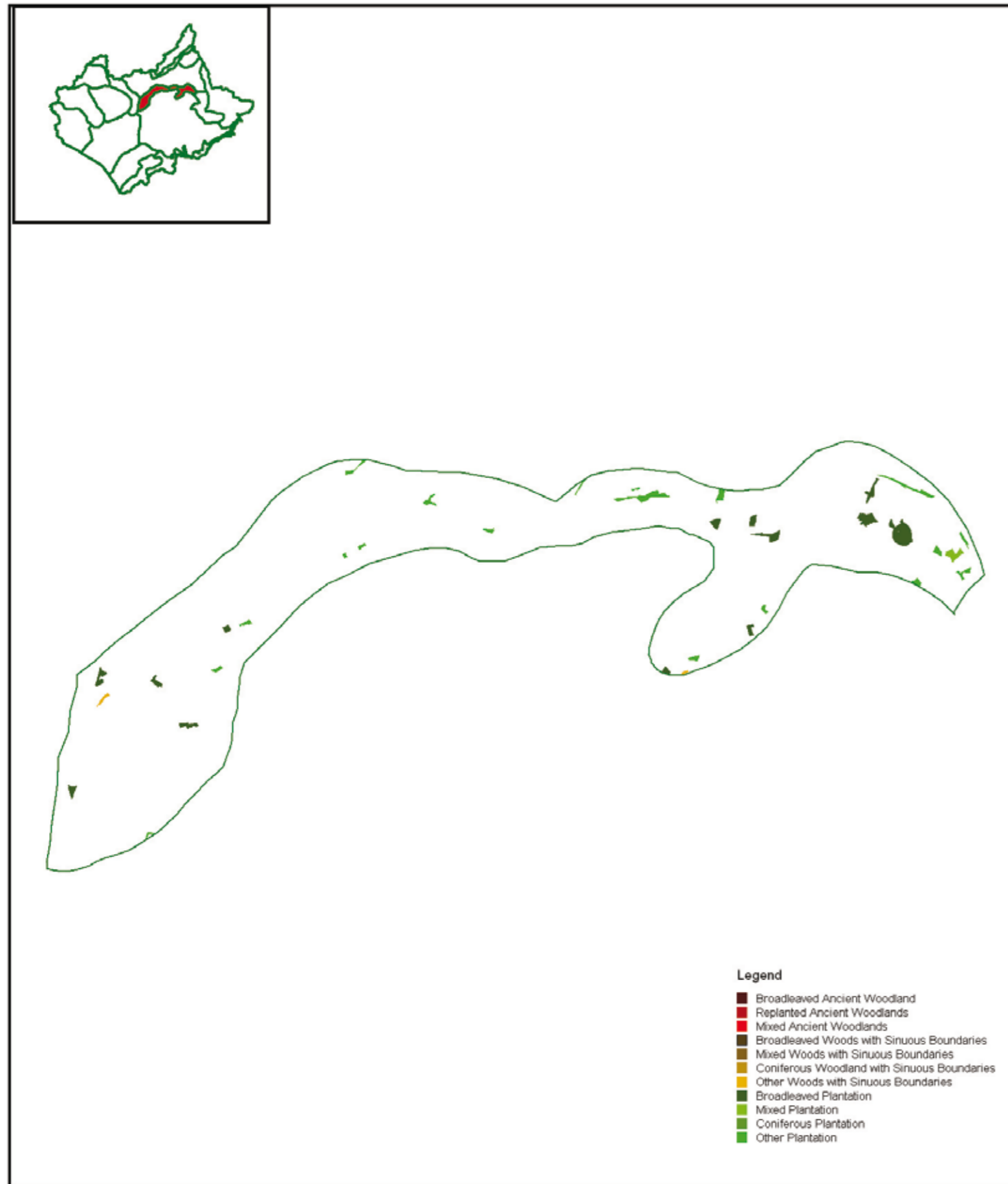


Knipton Bowl Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

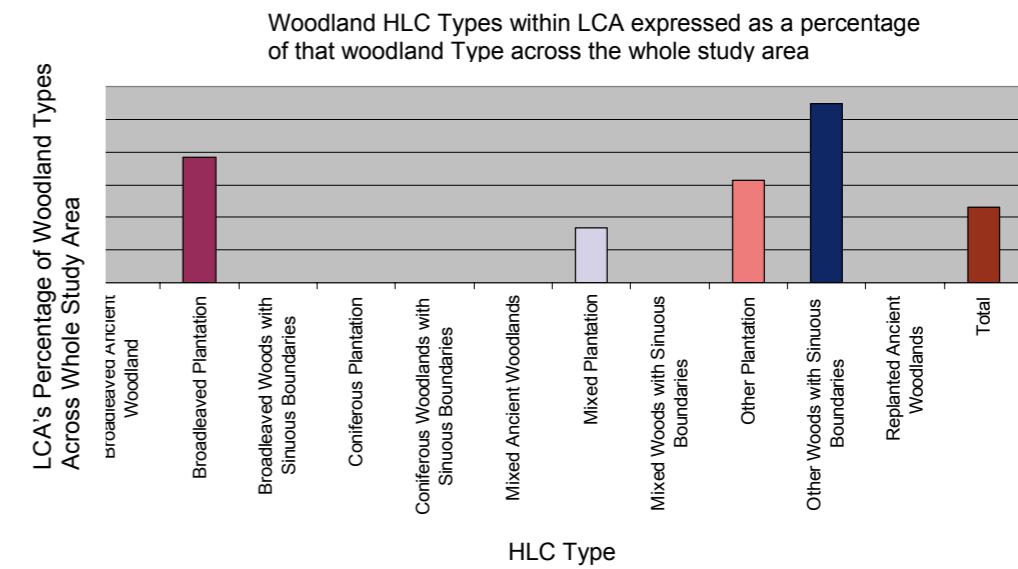
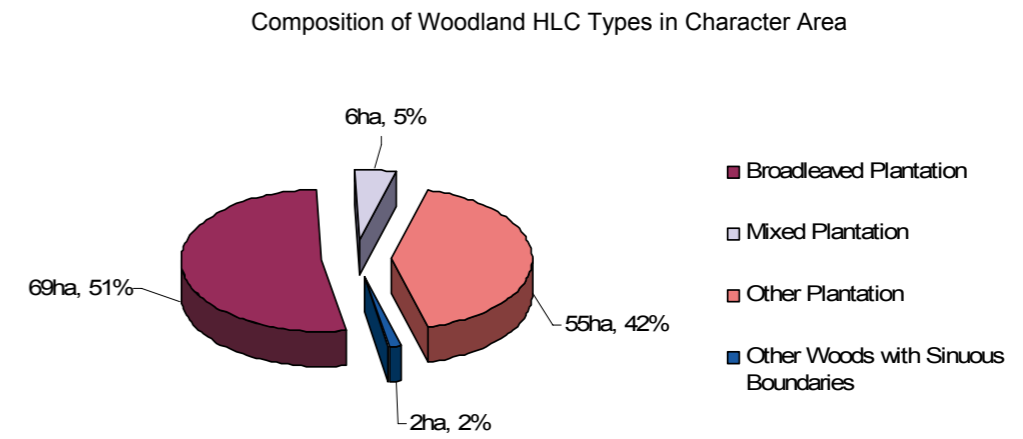


Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	9.6%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.14%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	46

Figure 261. Knipton Bowl LCA Woodland Distribution

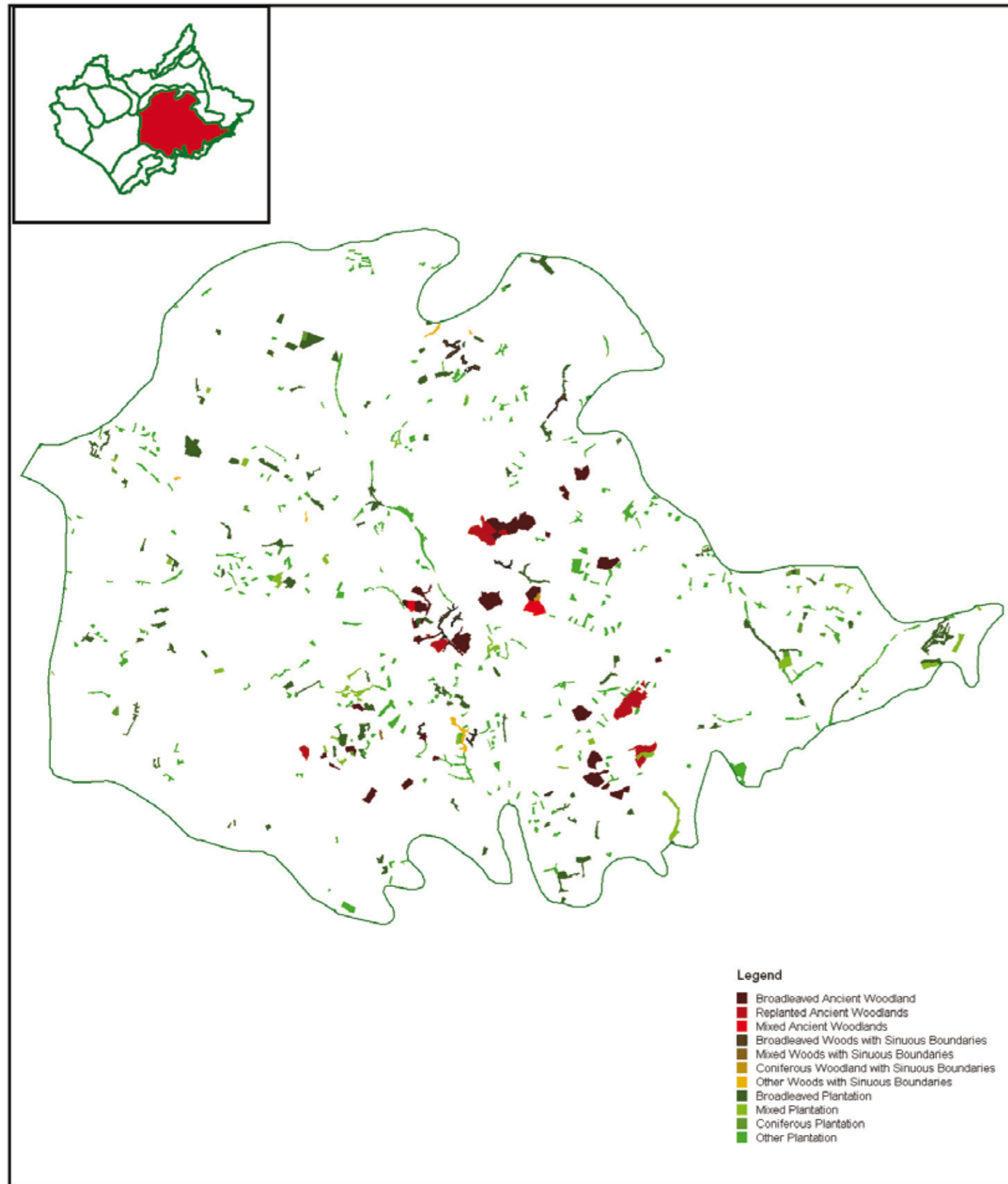


Wreake Valley Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types



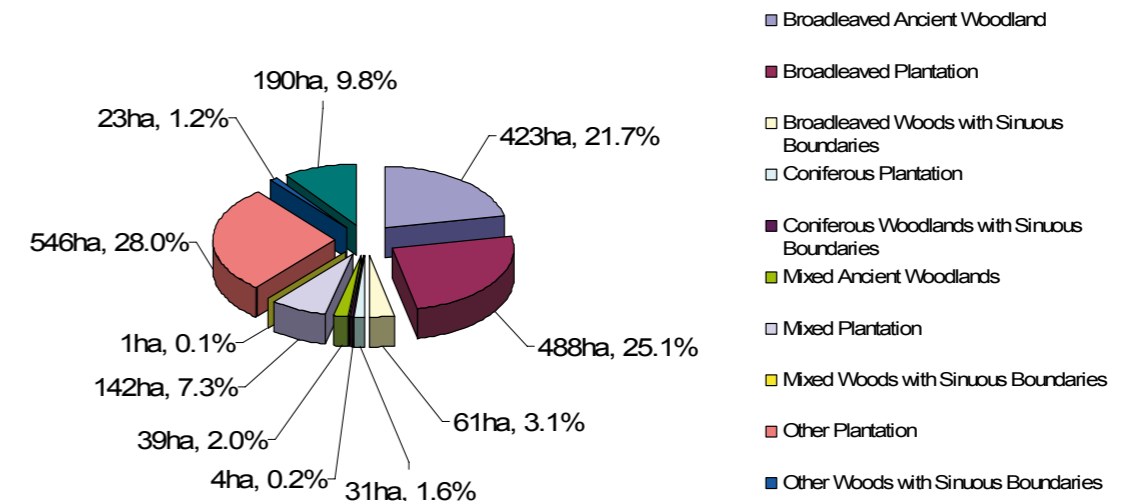
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	2.3%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.05%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	37

Figure 262. Wreake Valley LCA Woodland Distribution

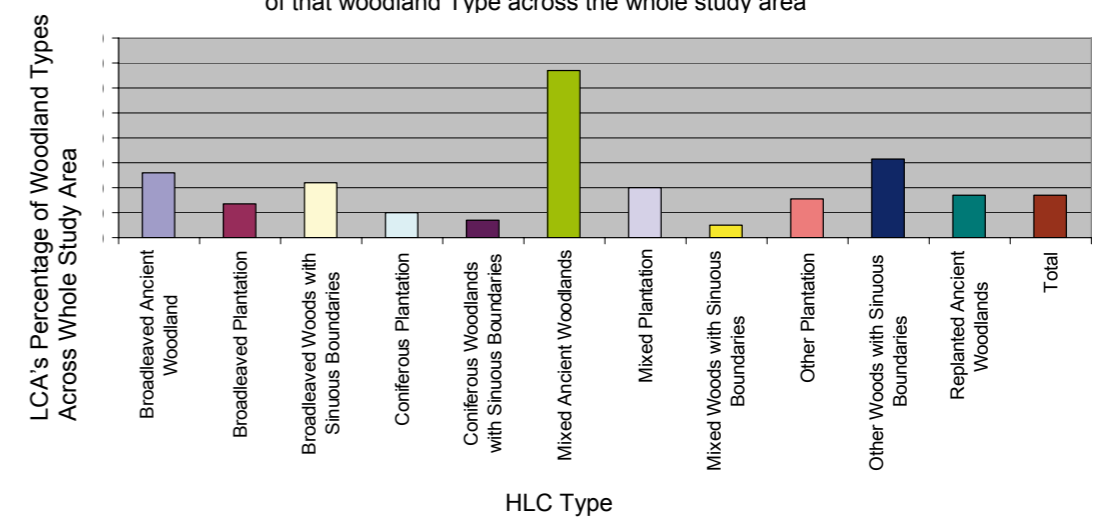


High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

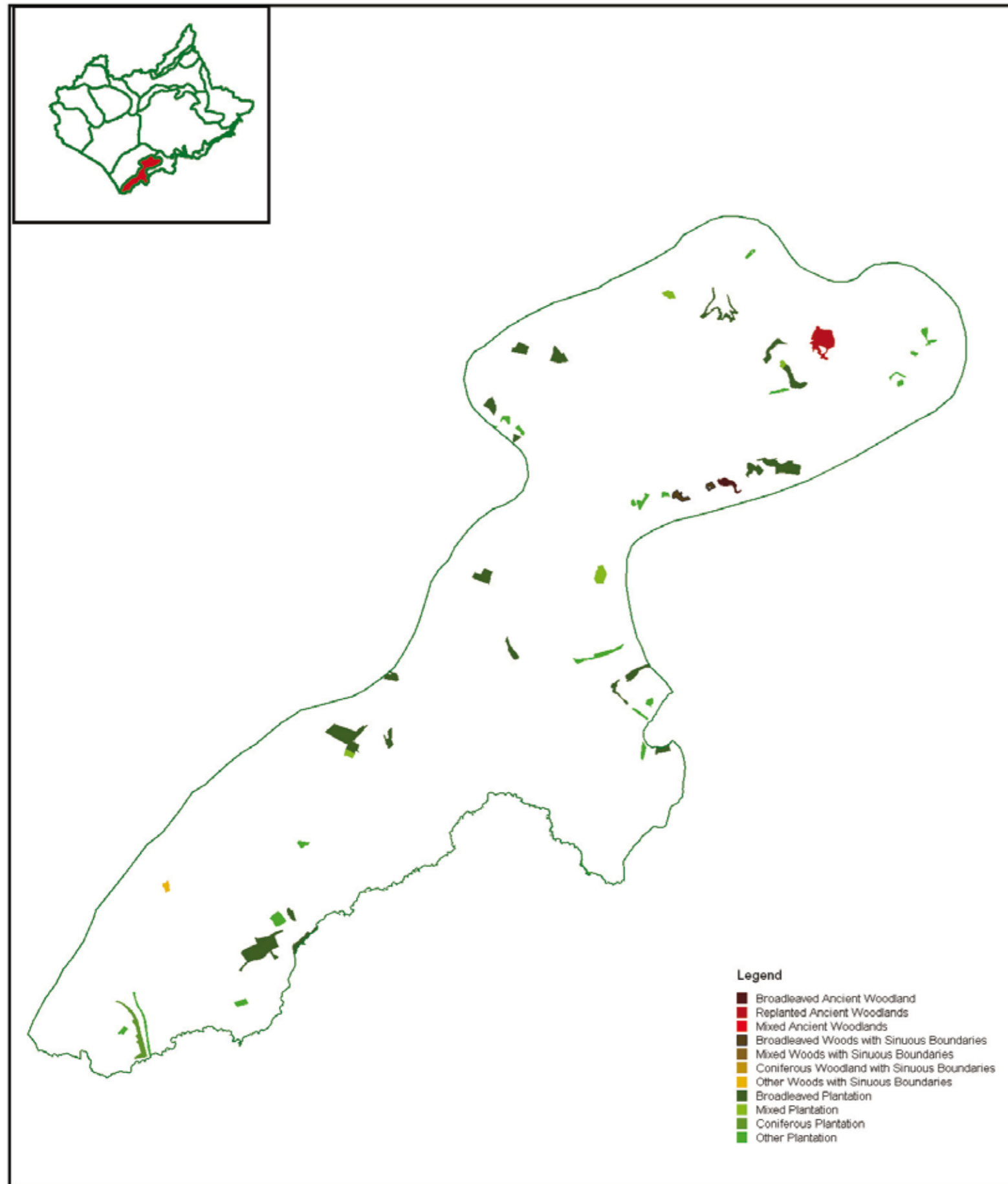


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



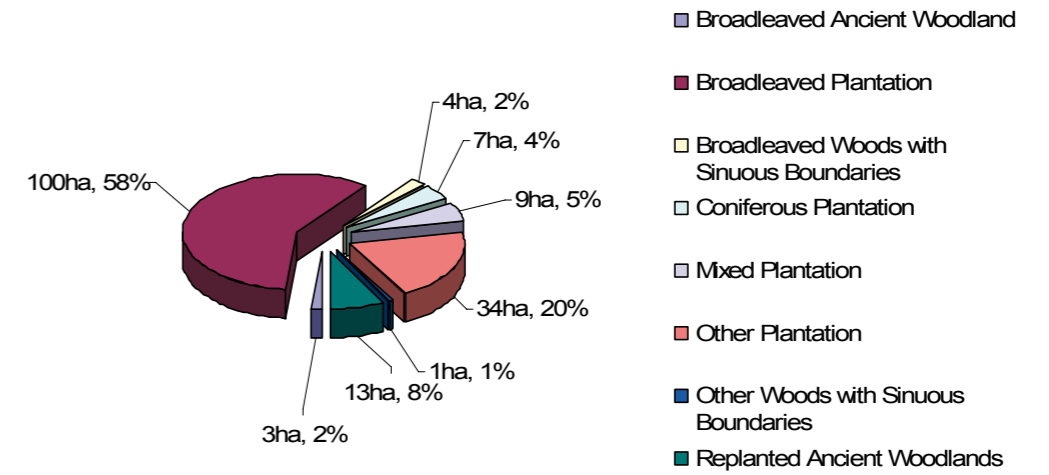
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	3.5%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.76%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	525

Figure 263. High Leicestershire LCA Woodland Distribution

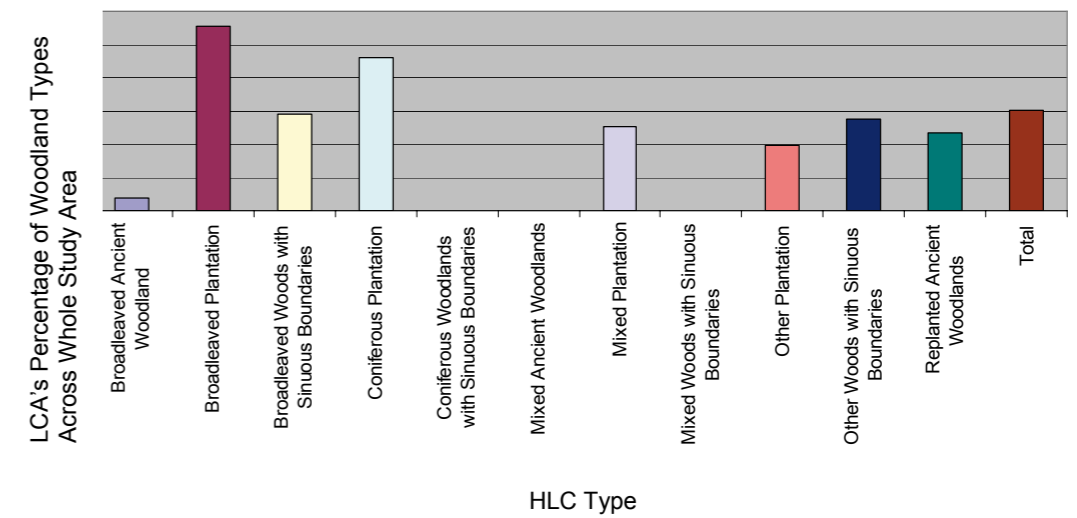


Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area



Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	2.1%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.07%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	53

Figure 264. Laughton Hills LCA Woodland Distribution

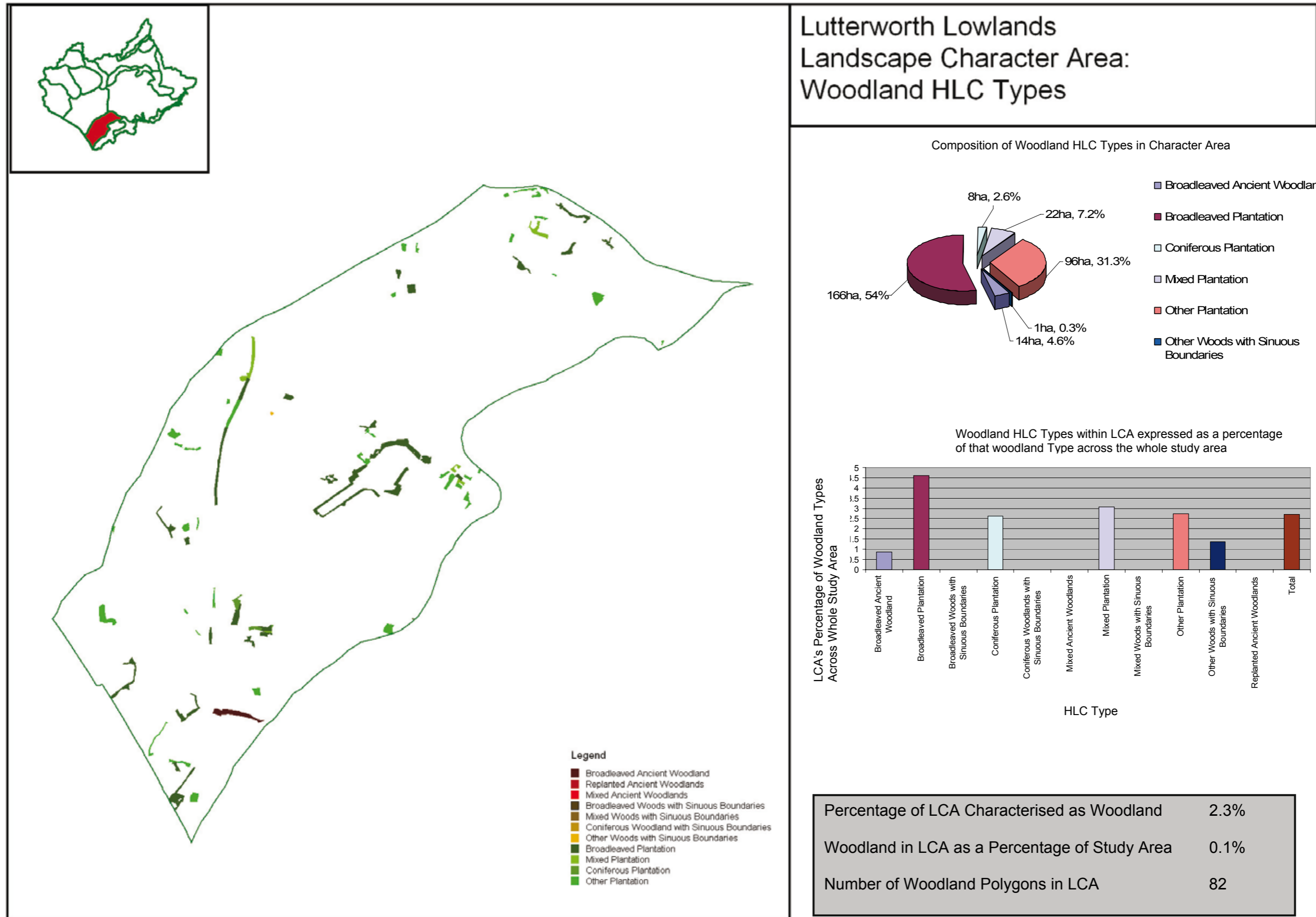
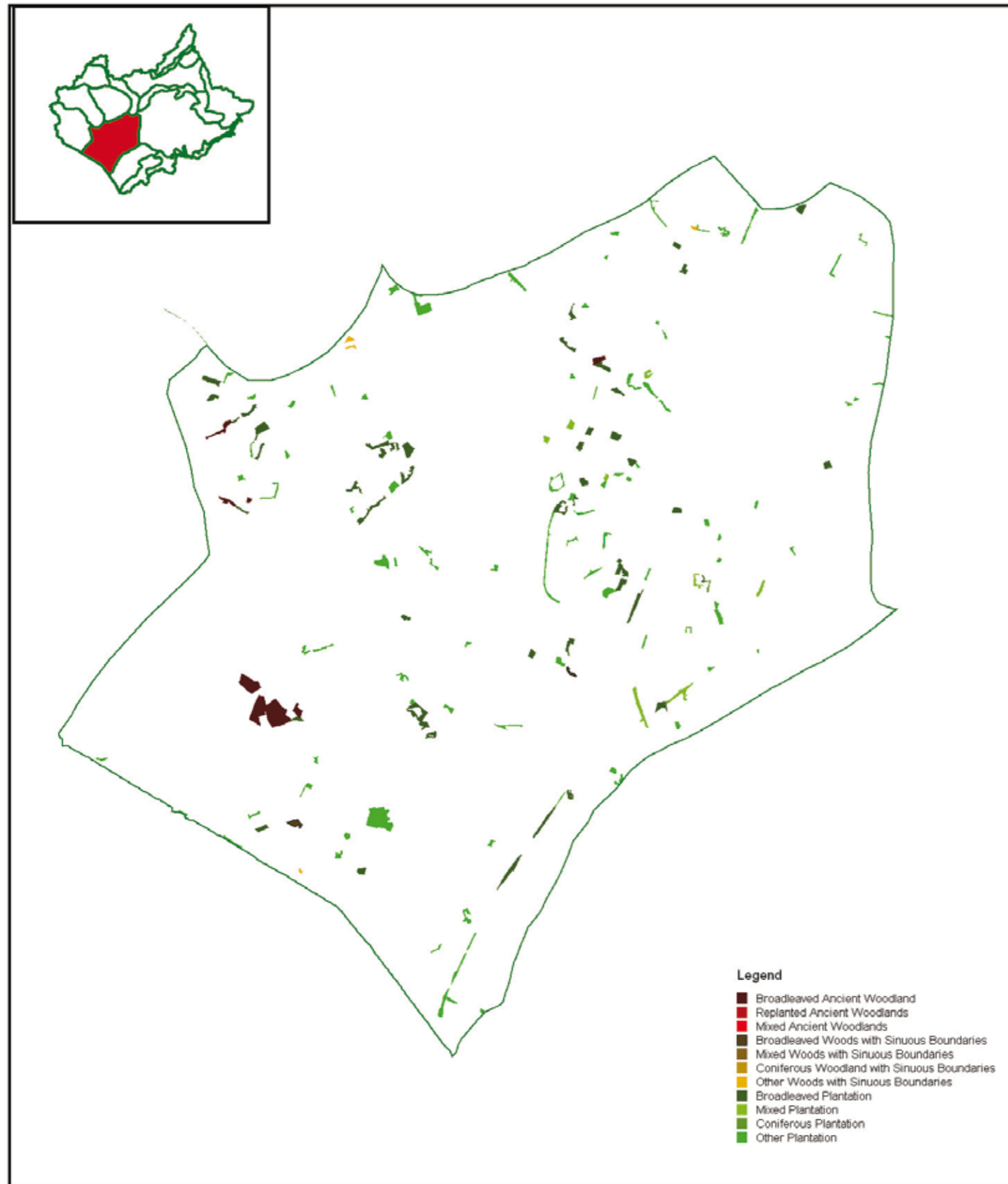
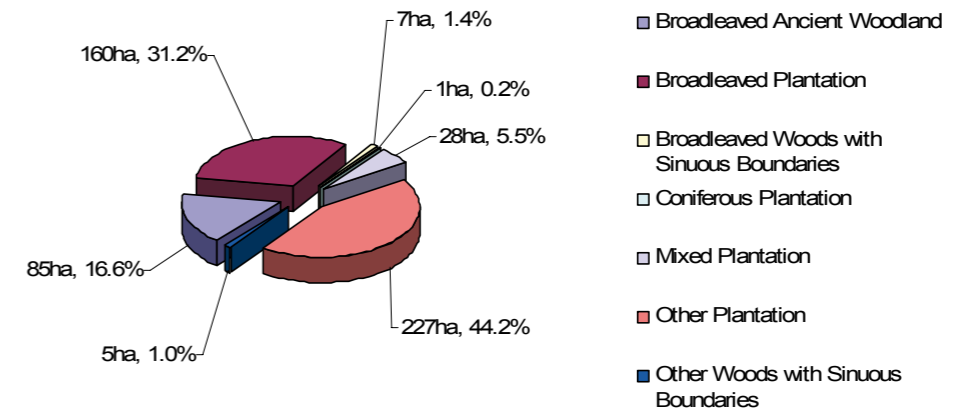


Figure 265. Lutterworth Lowlands LCA Woodland Distribution

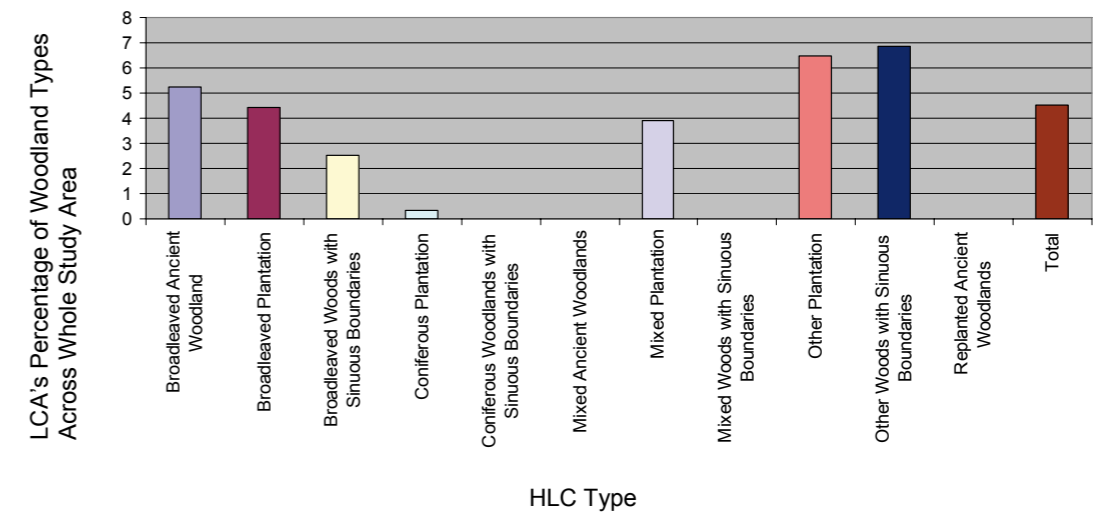


Upper Soar Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area



Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	1.6%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.2%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	170

Figure. 266. Upper Soar LCA Woodland Distribution

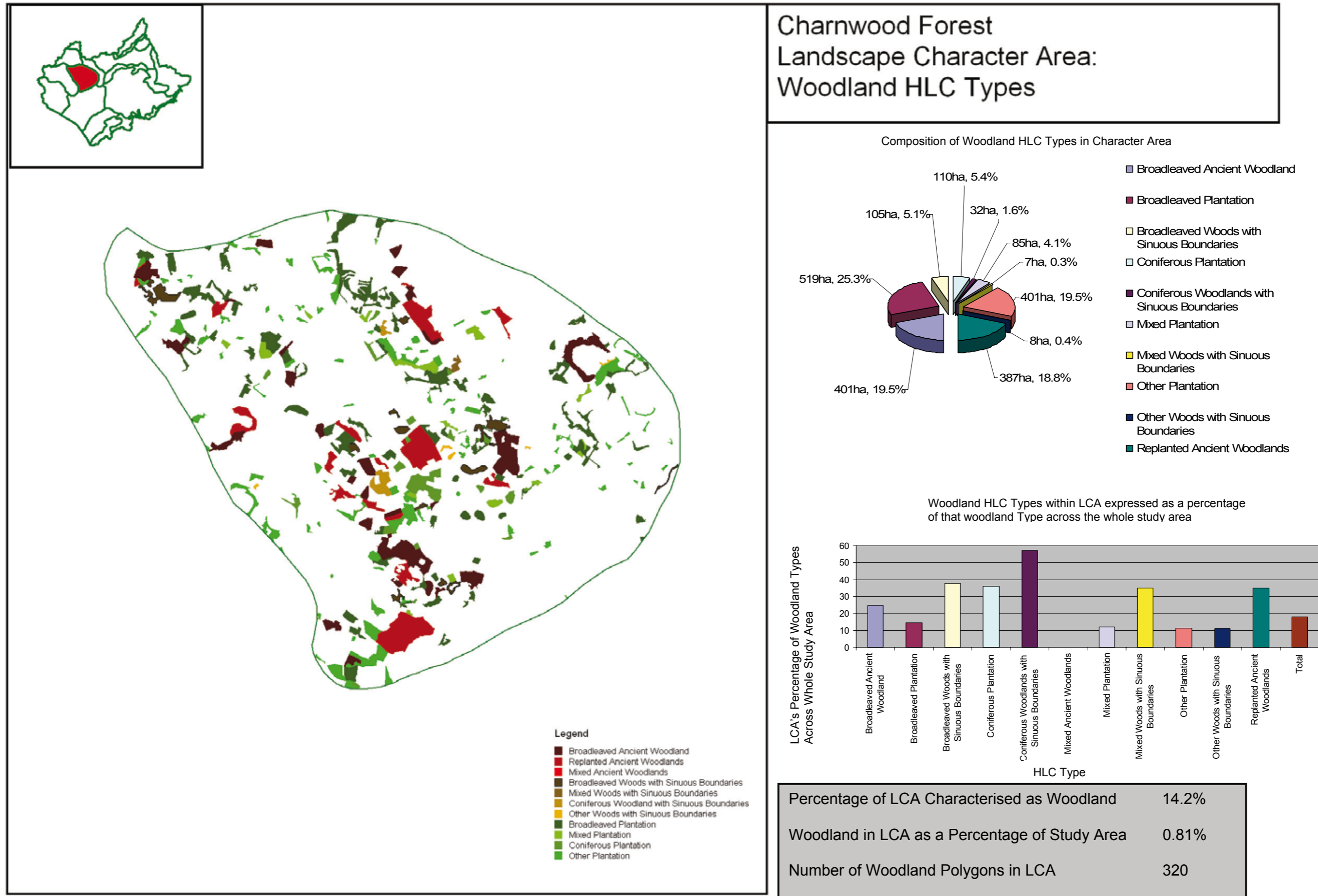
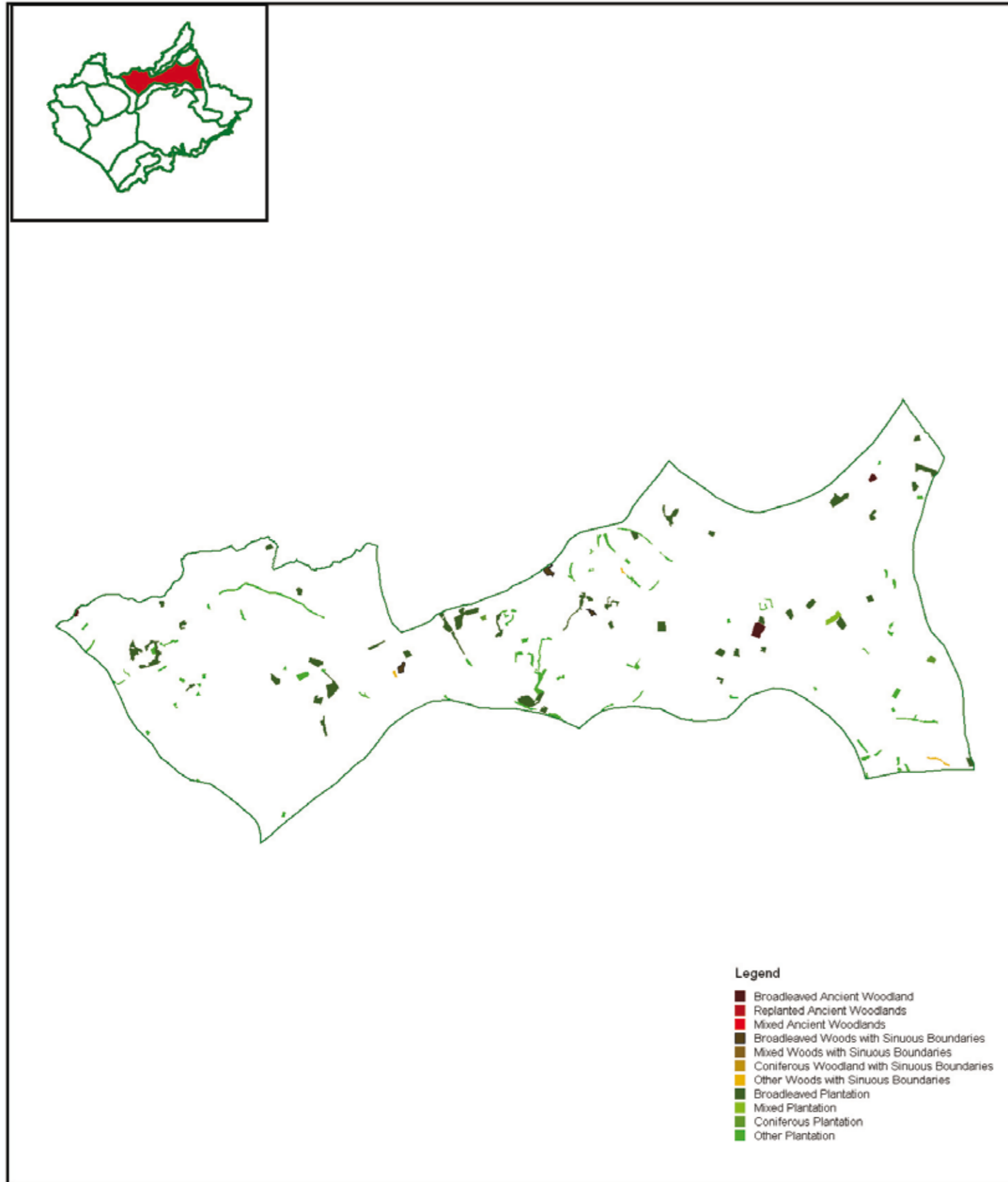
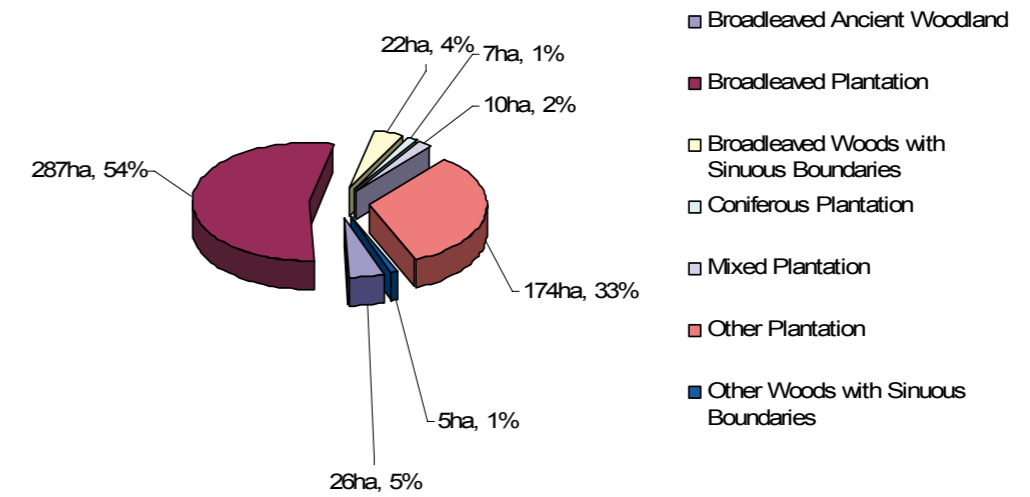


Figure 267. Charnwood Forest LCA Woodland Distribution

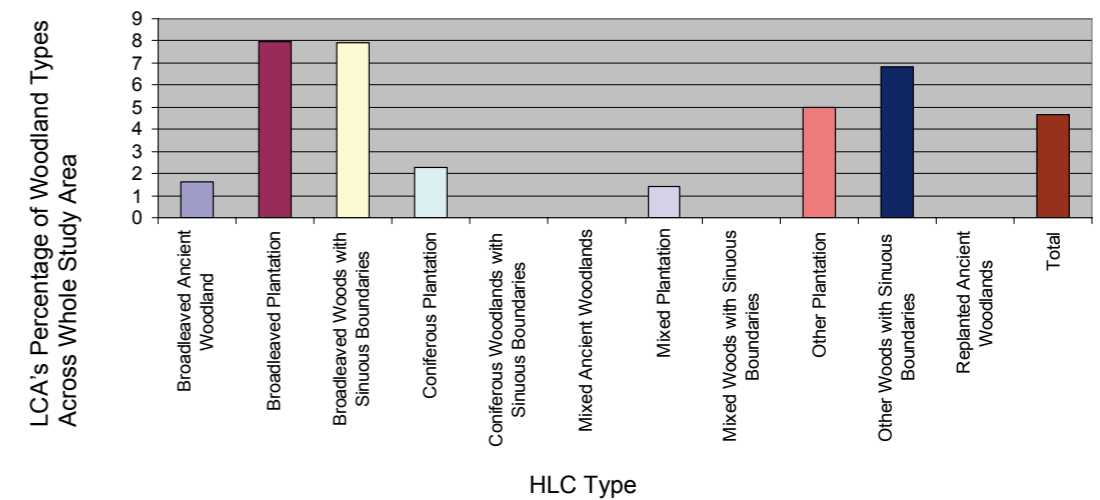


The Wolds Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

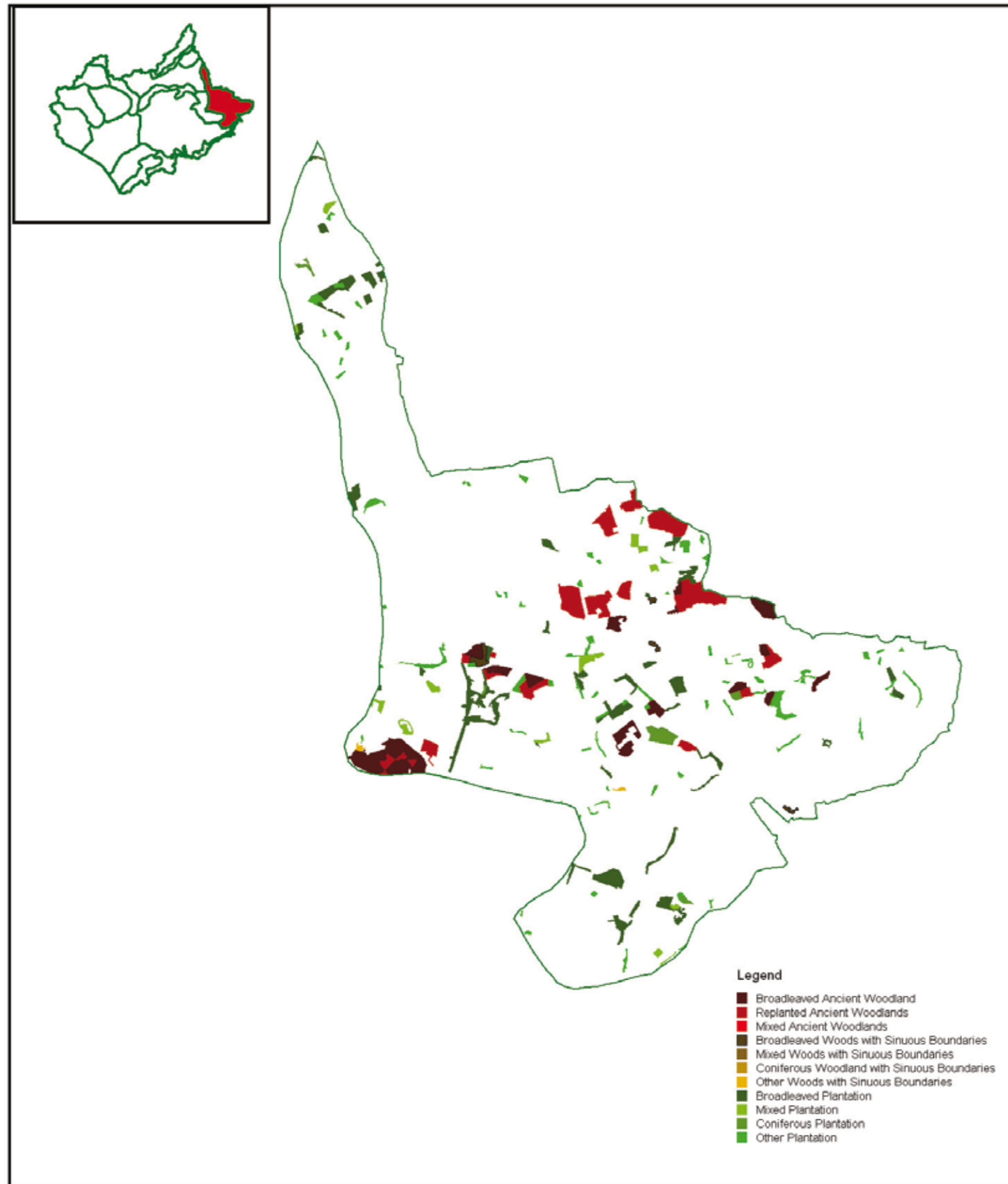


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area

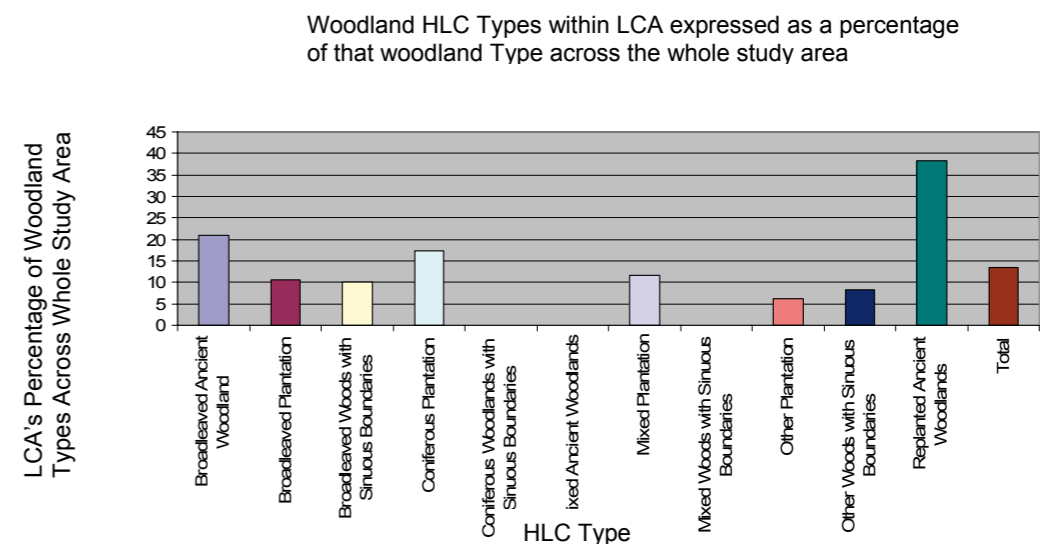
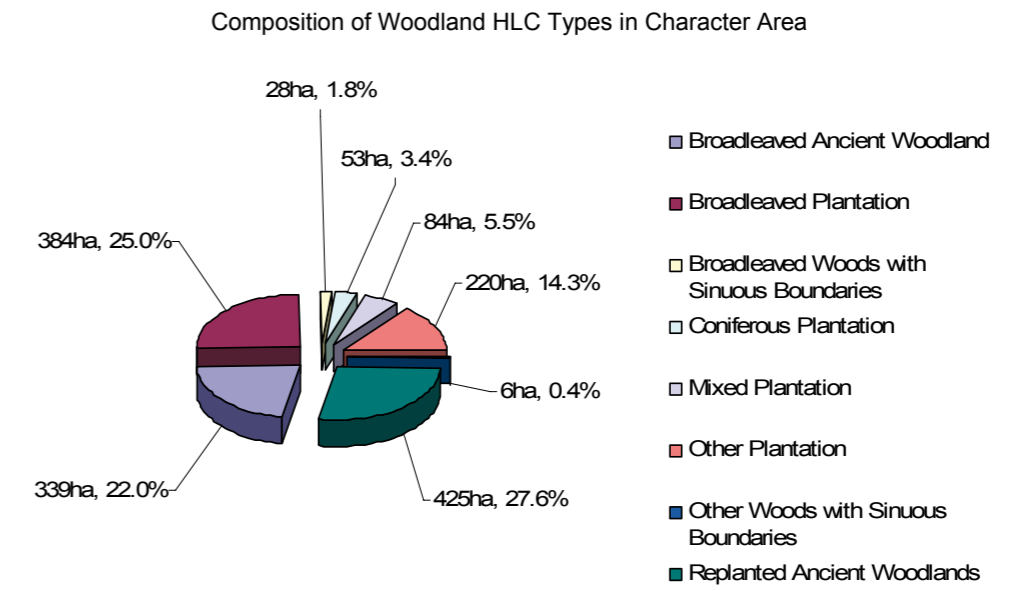


Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	2.3%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.21%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	130

Figure 268. The Wolds LCA Woodland Distribution

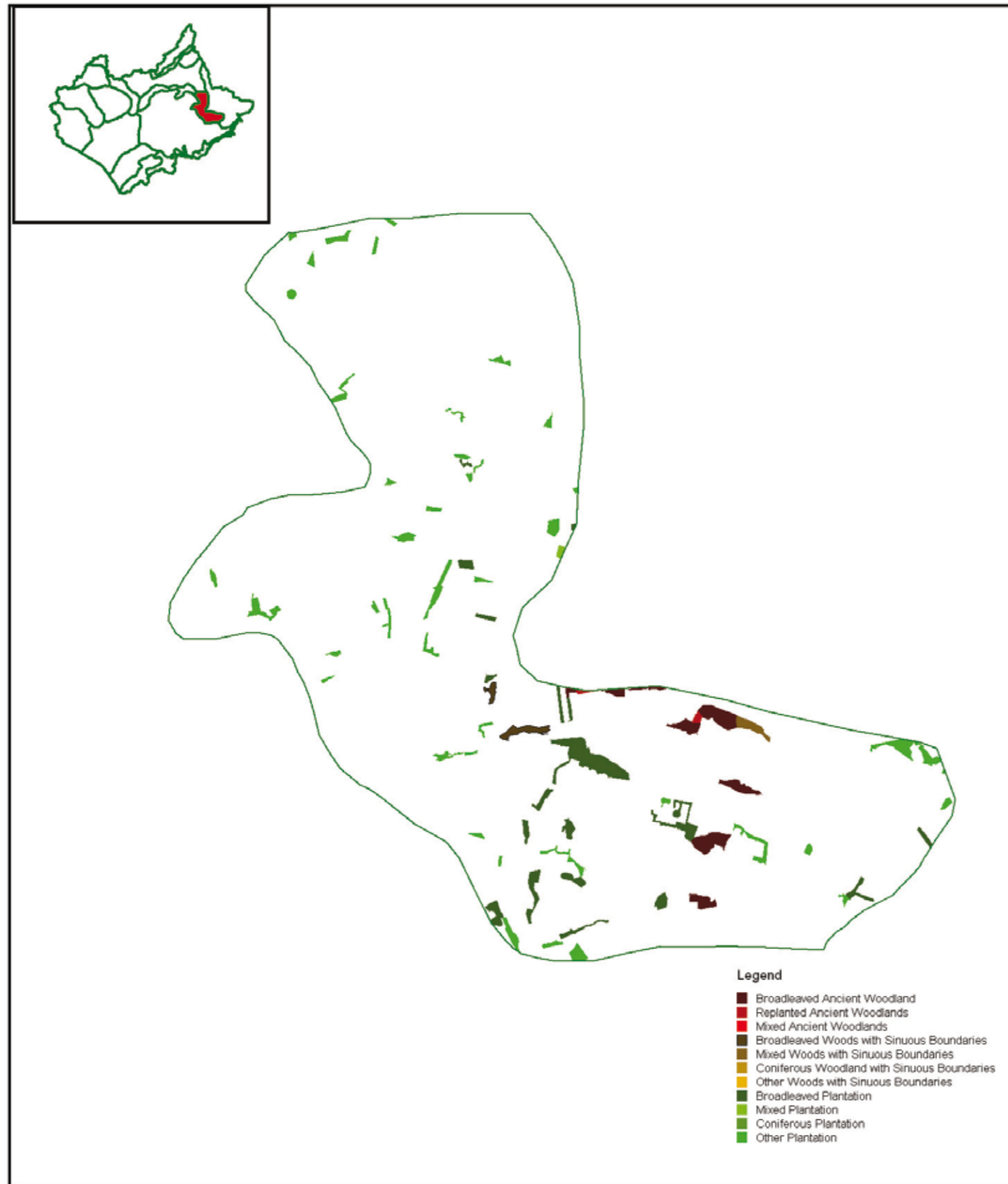


Cottesmore Plateau Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

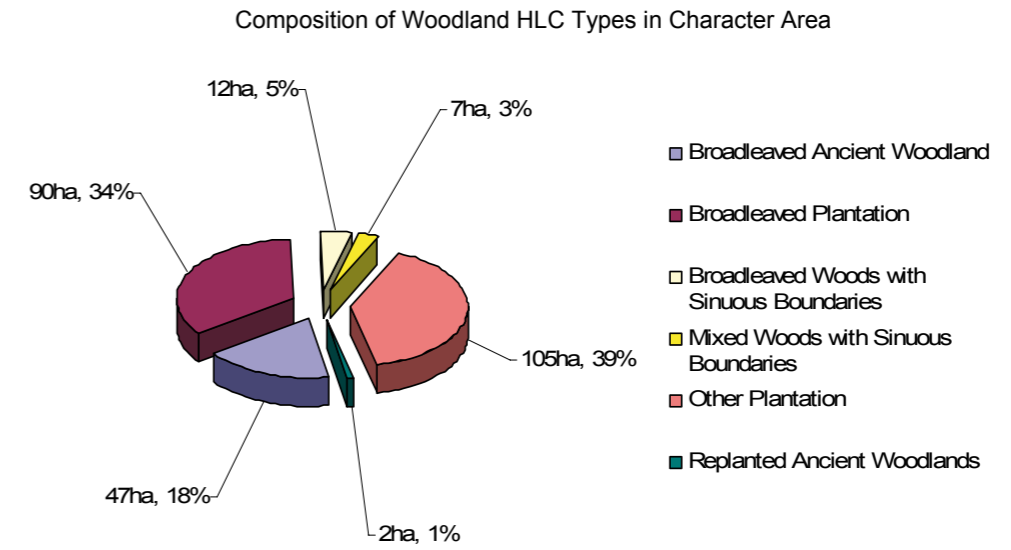


Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	8.2%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.6%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	190

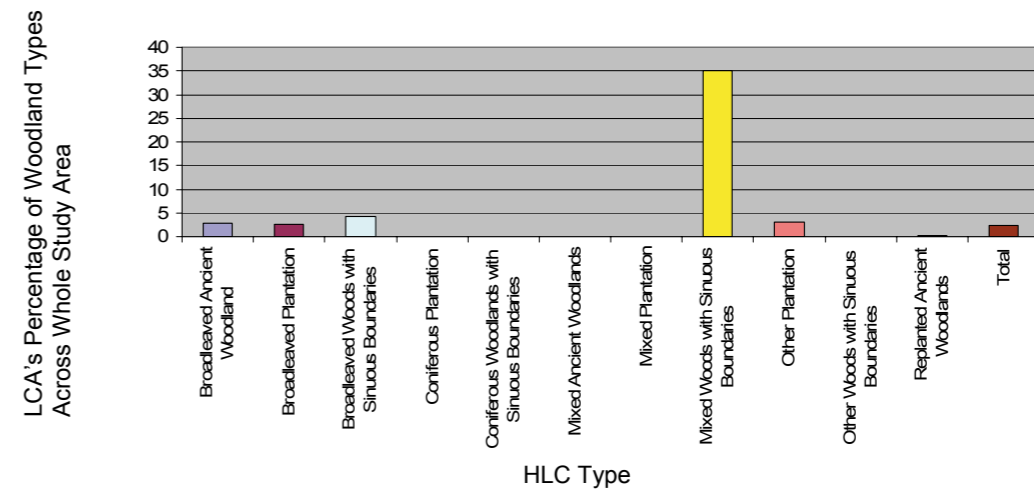
Figure 269. Cottesmore Plateau LCA Woodland Distribution



Vale of Catmose Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

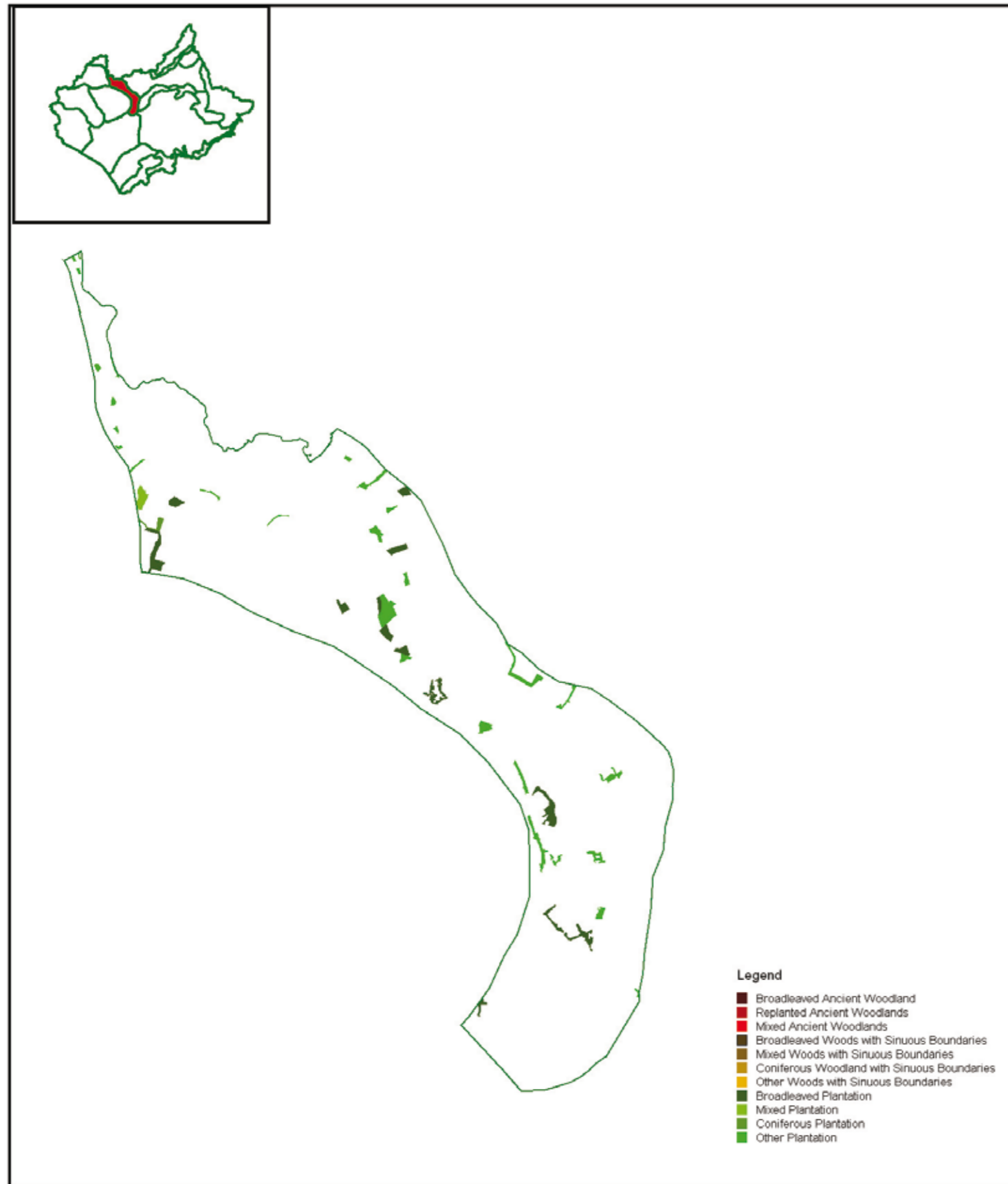


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



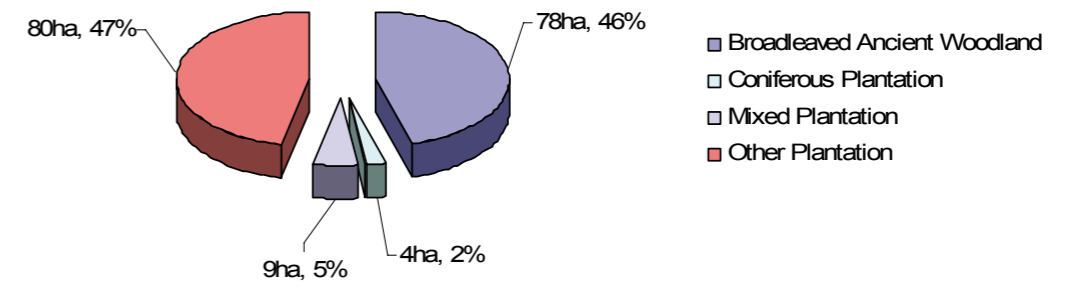
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	3.6%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.1%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	14

Figure 270. Vale of Catmose LCA Woodland Distribution

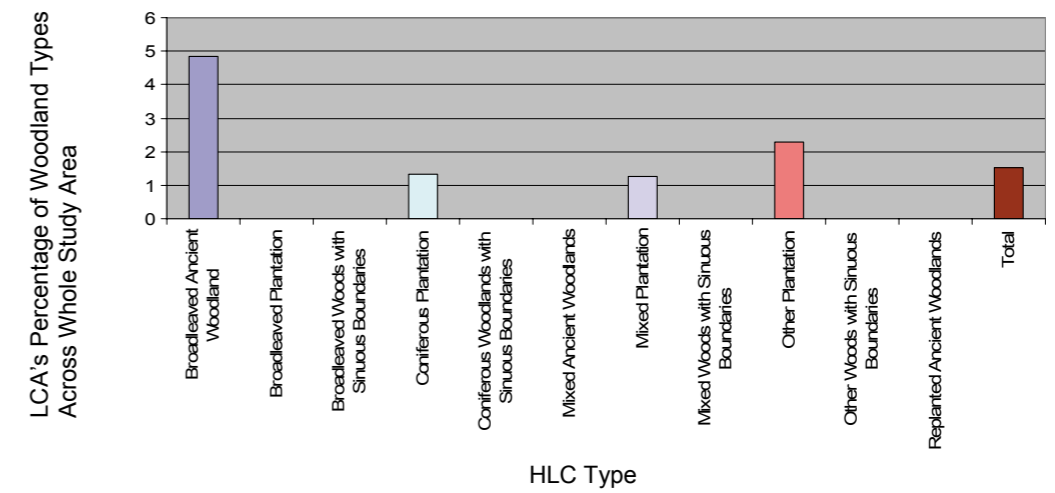


Soar Valley Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

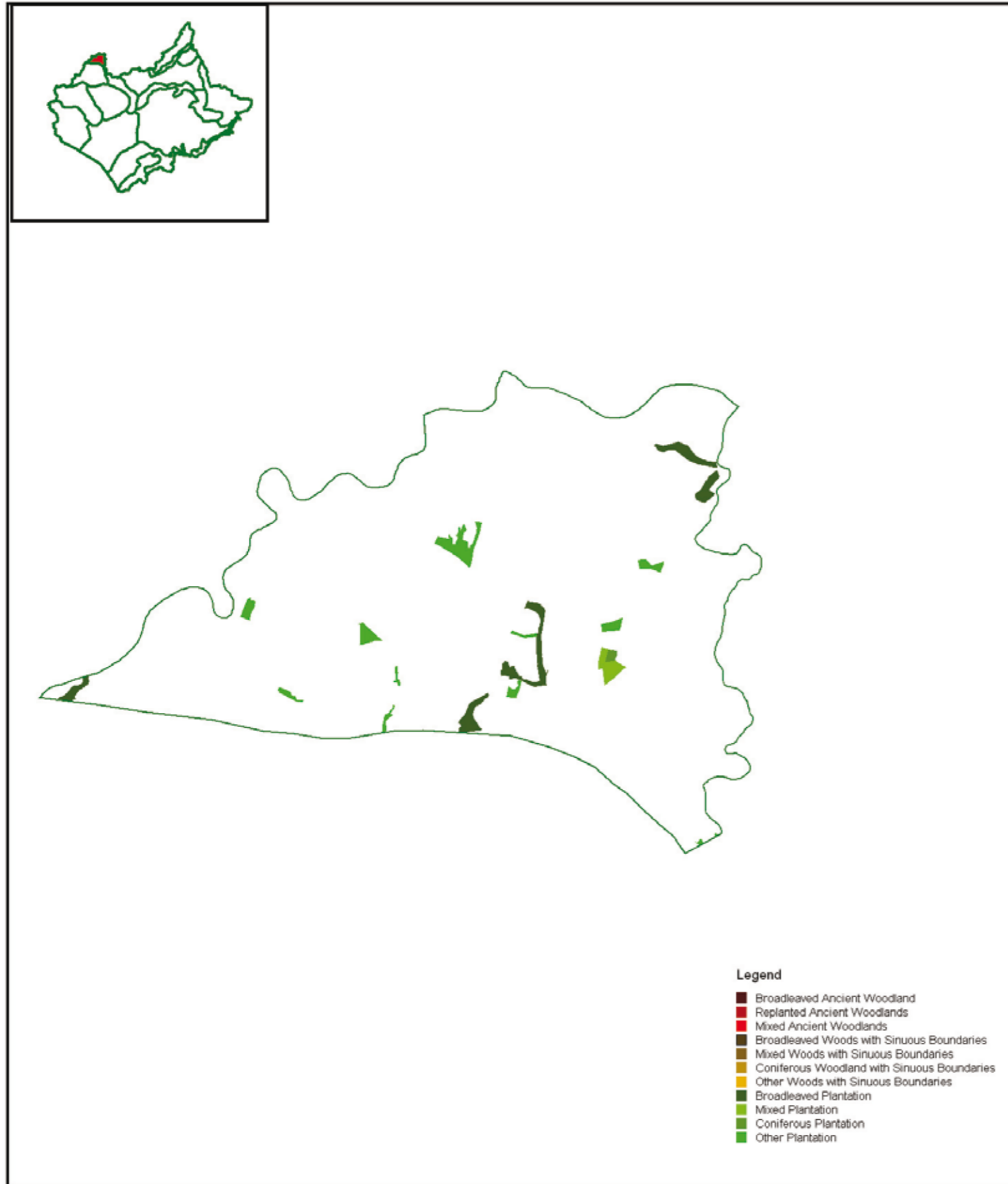


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



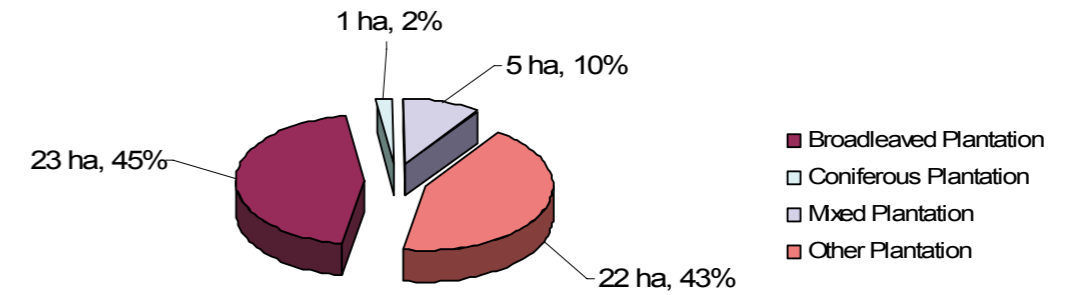
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	2.8%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.07%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	47

Figure 271. Soar Valley LCA Woodland Distribution

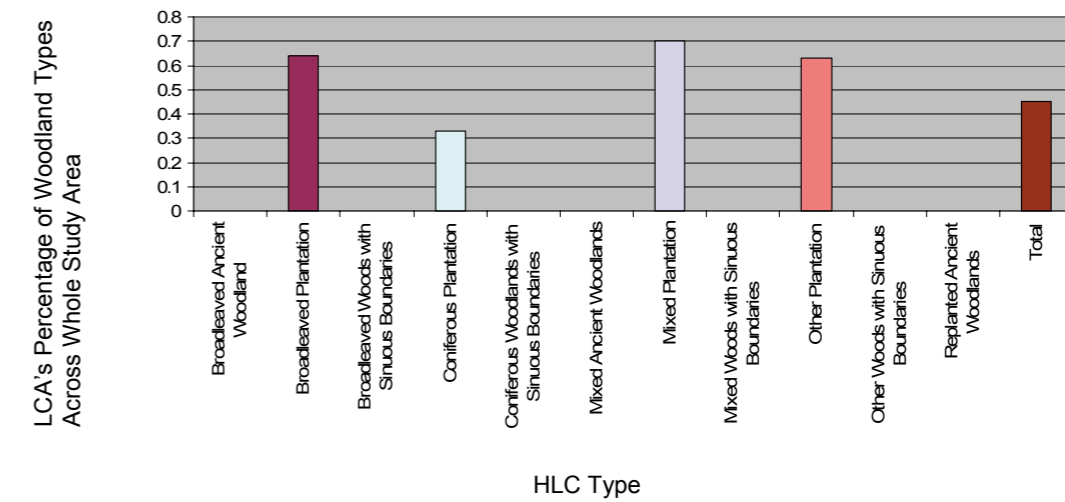


Trent Valley Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

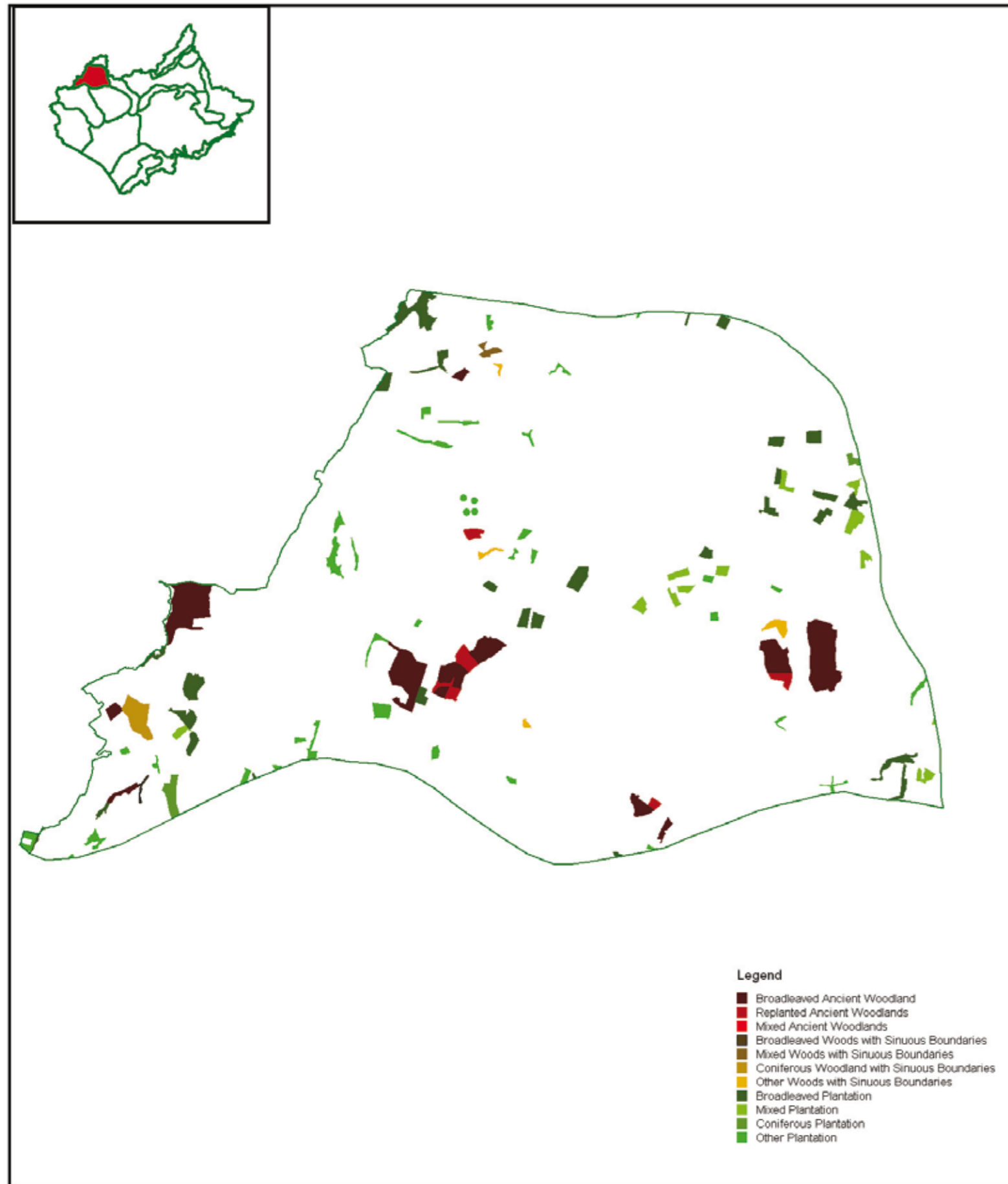


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



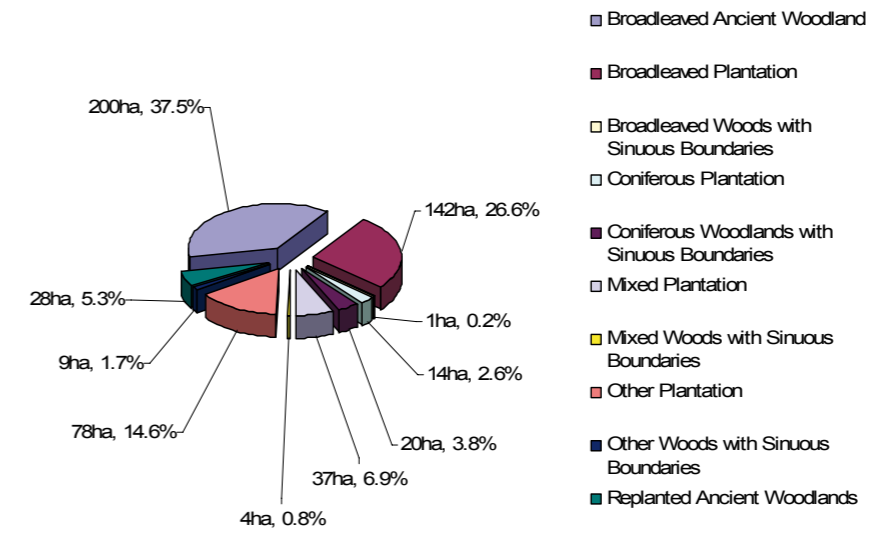
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	2.5%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.02%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	16

Figure 272. Trent Valley LCA Woodland Distribution

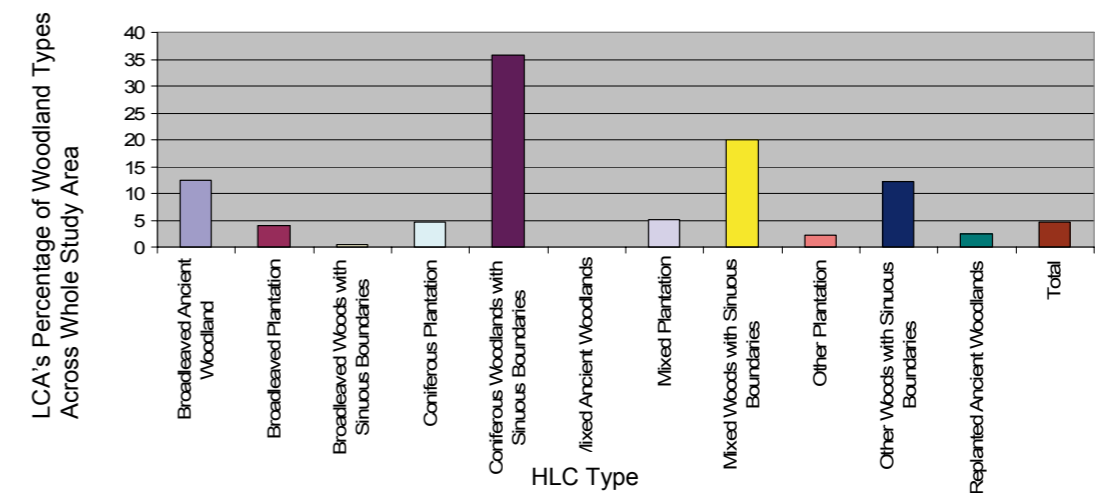


Langleys Lowlands Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

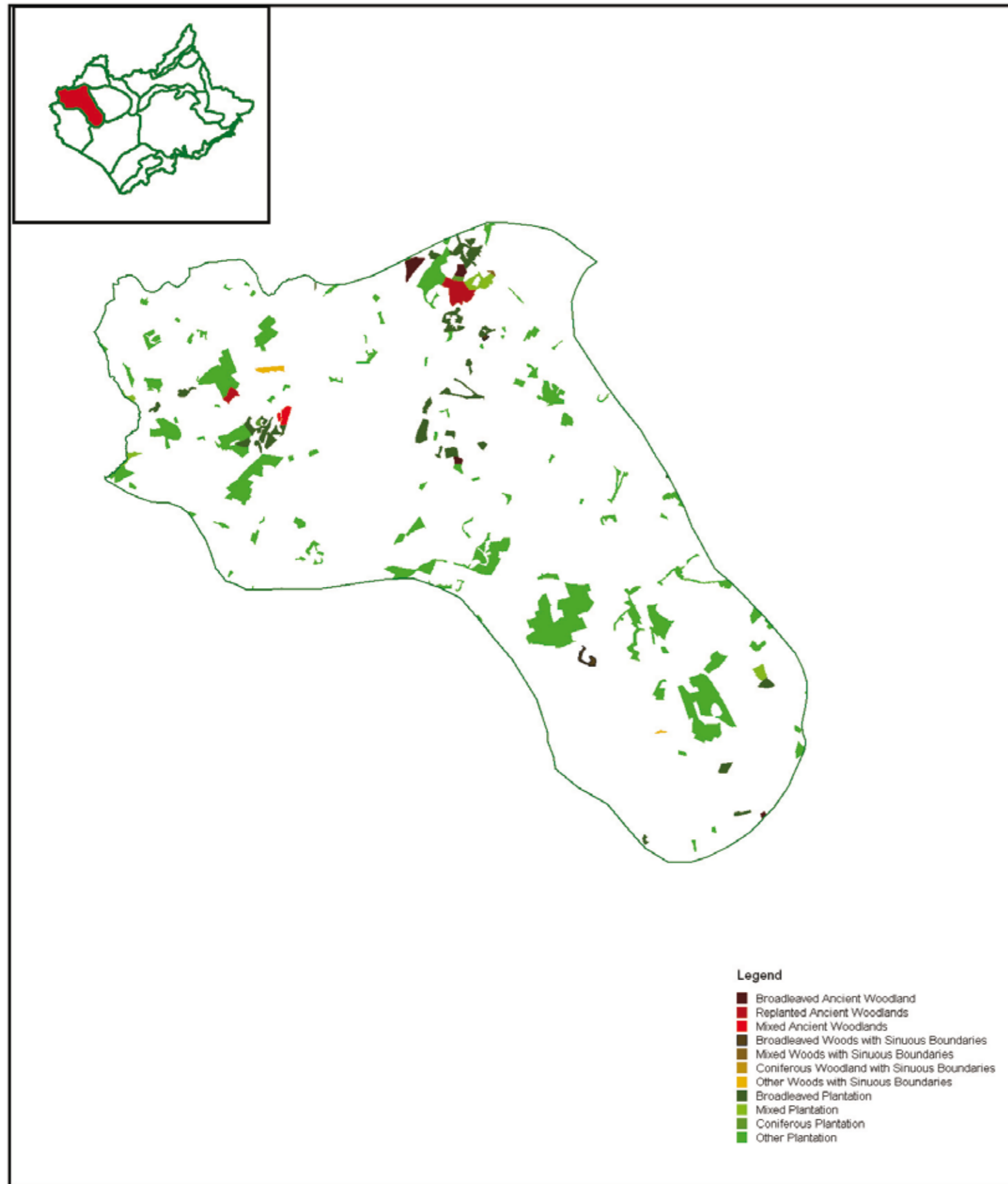


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



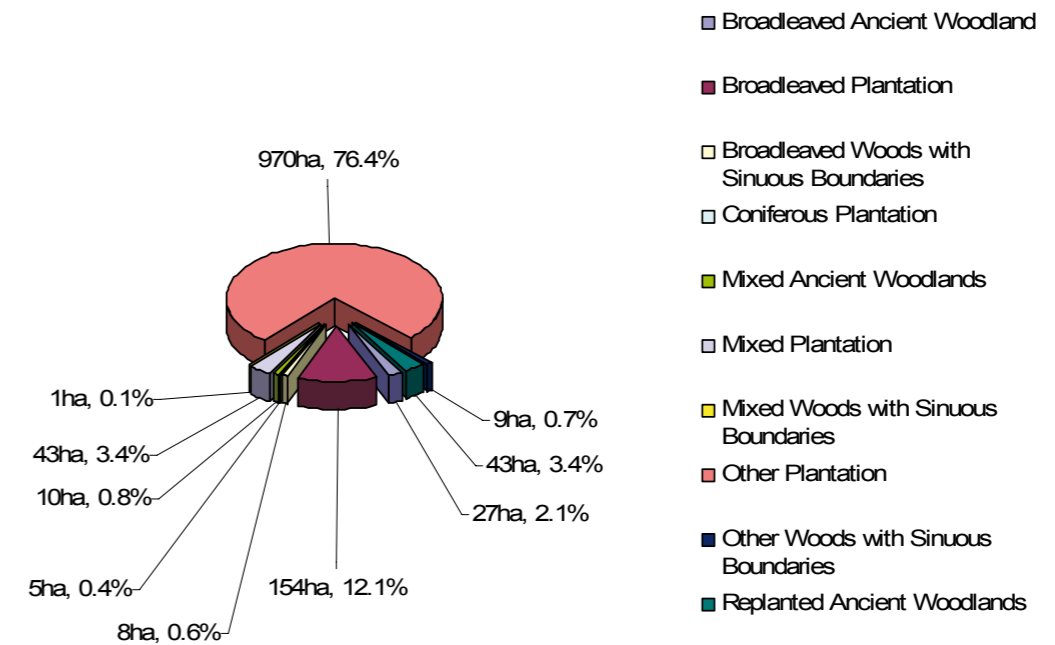
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	5.9%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.21%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	101

Figure 273. Langleys Lowlands LCA Woodland Distribution

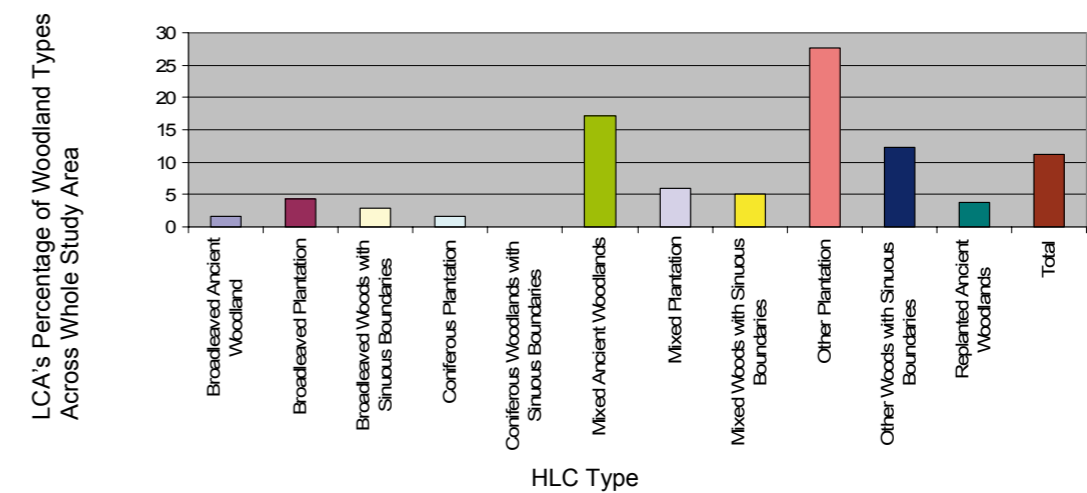


The Coalfield Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

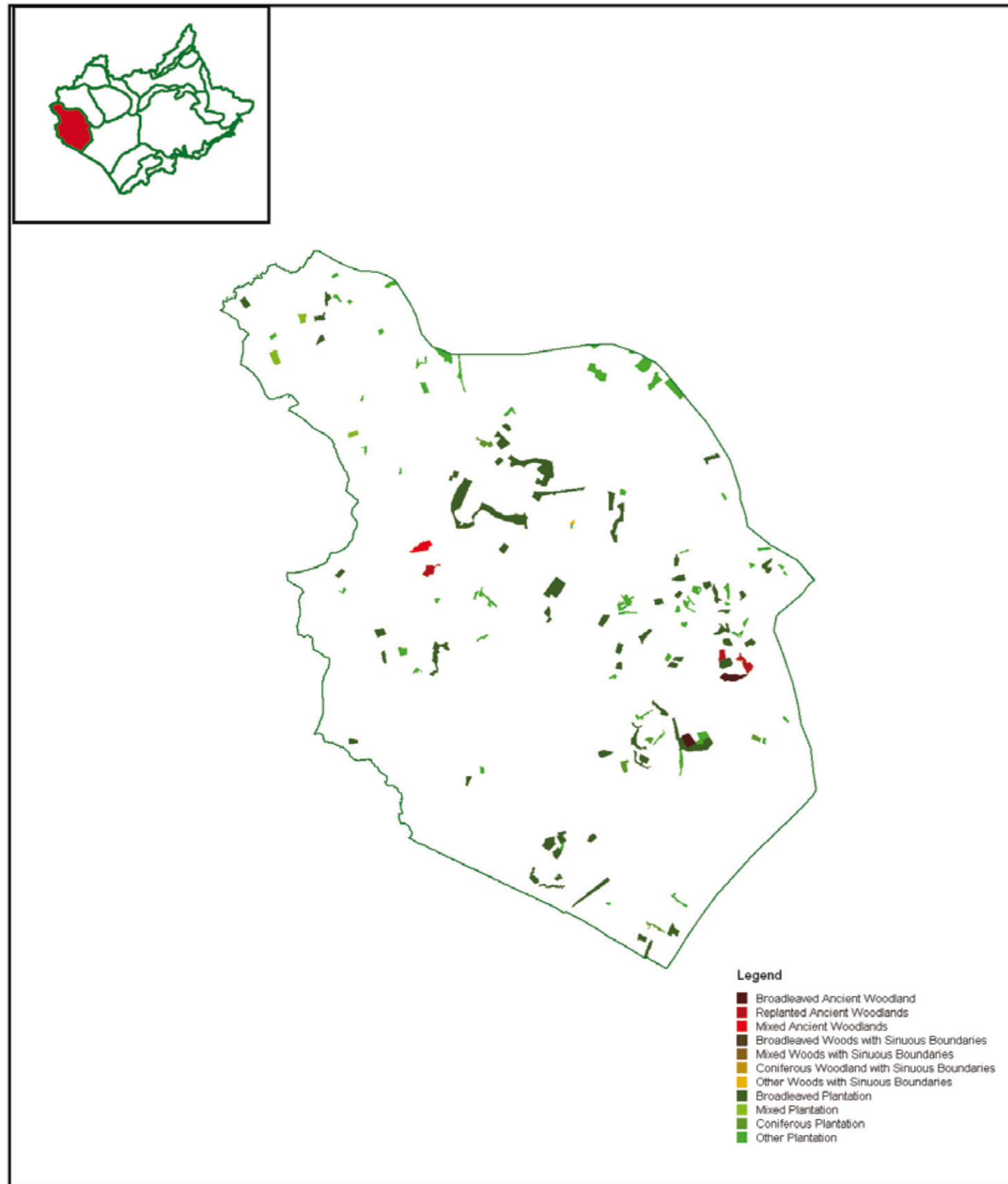


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



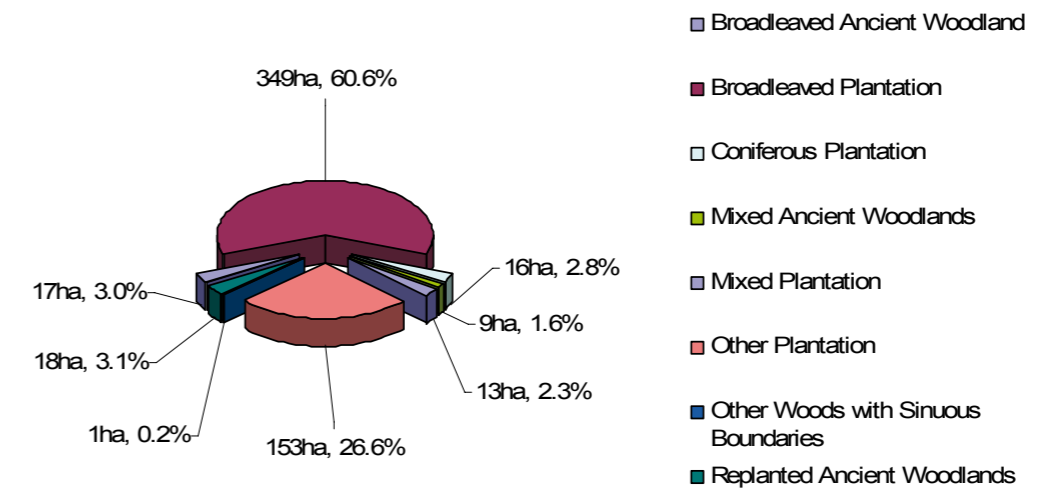
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	3.1%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.49%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	185

Figure 274. The Coalfield LCA Woodland Distribution

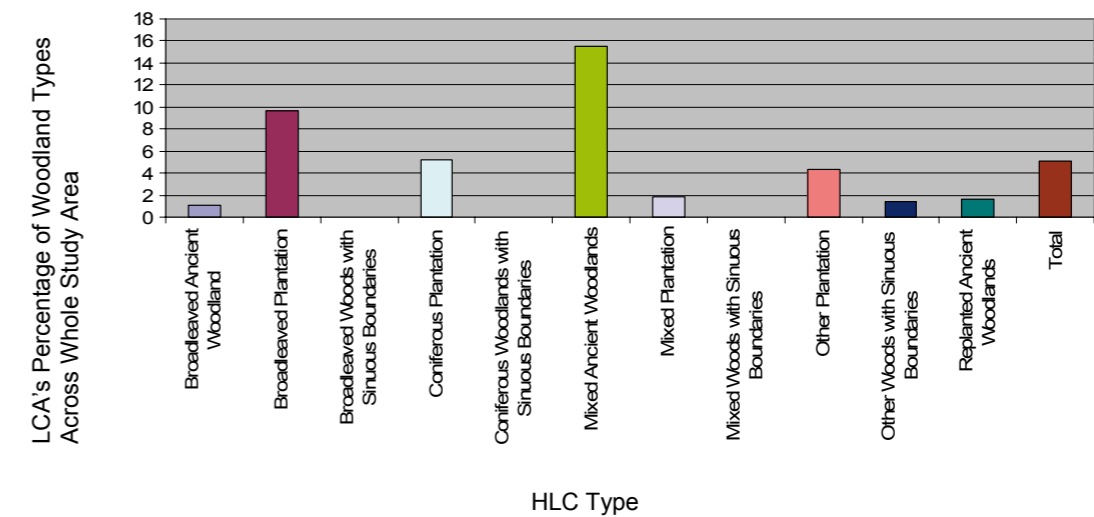


Mease/Sence Lowlands Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area

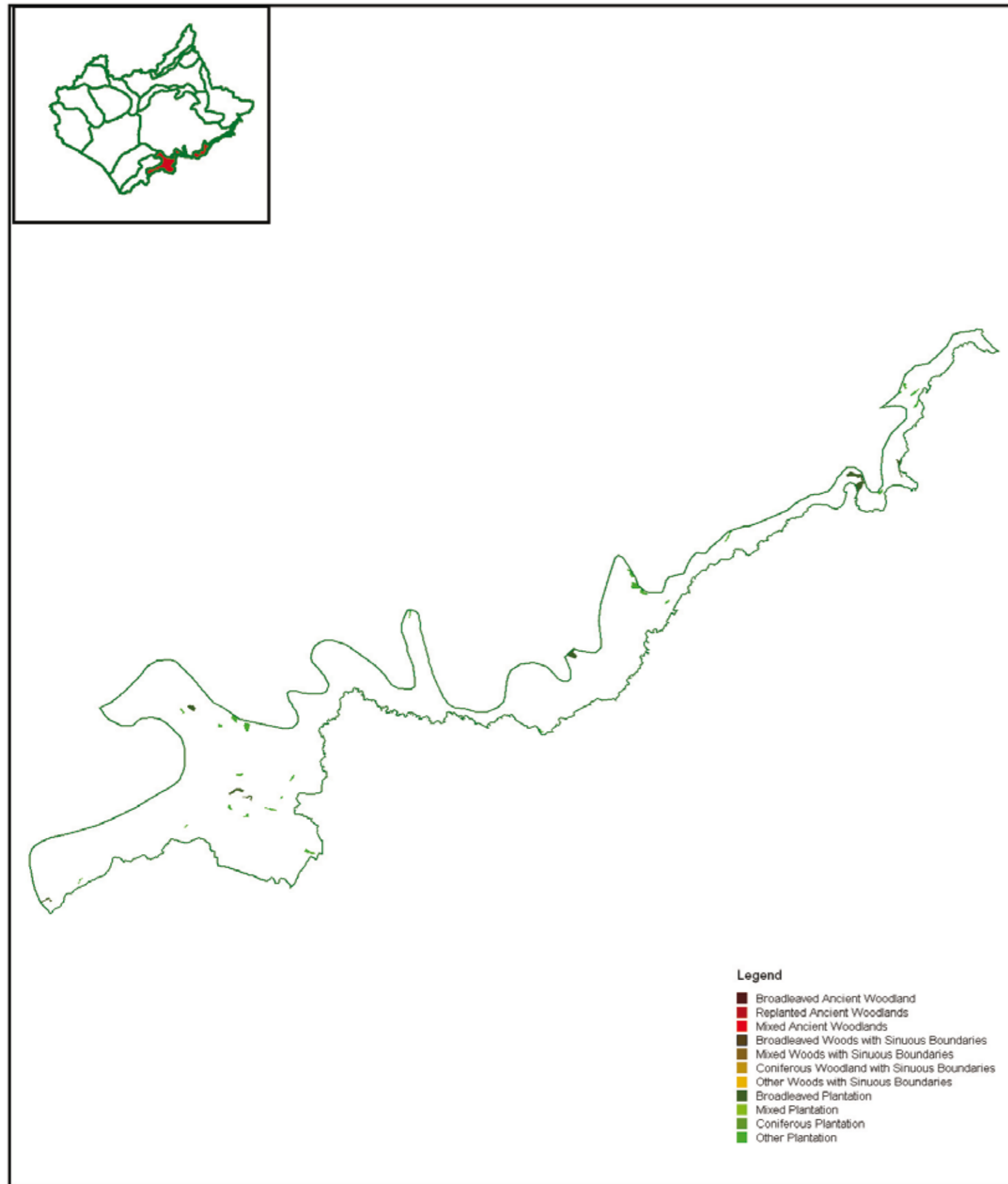


Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



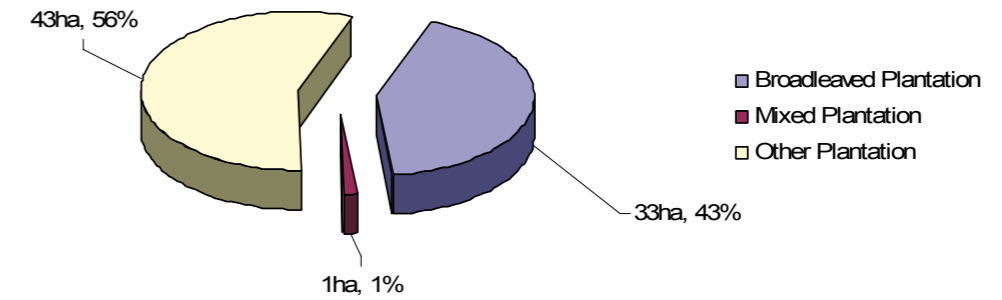
Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	3.1%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.23%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	145

Figure 275. Mease/Sence Lowlands LCA Woodland Distribution

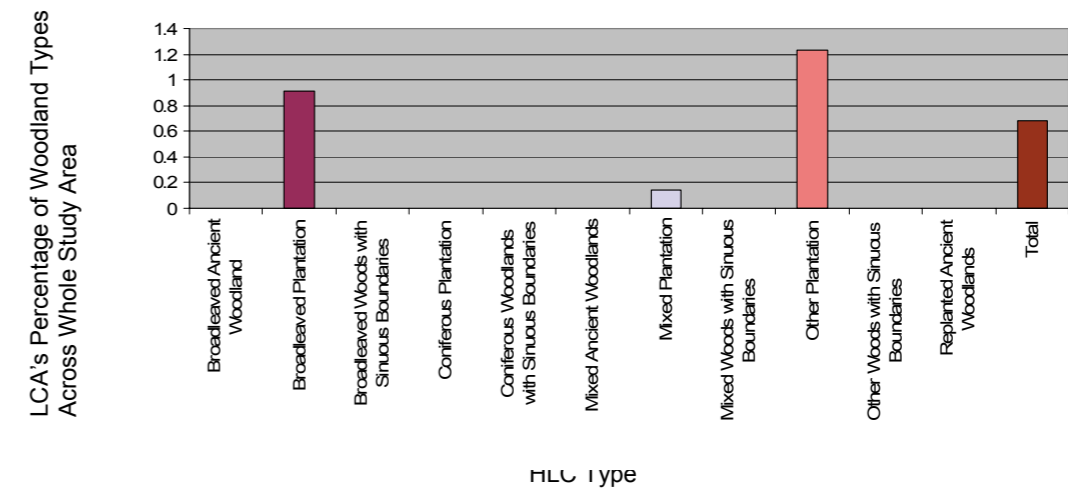


Welland Valley Landscape Character Area: Woodland HLC Types

Composition of Woodland HLC Types in Character Area



Woodland HLC Types within LCA expressed as a percentage of that woodland Type across the whole study area



Percentage of LCA Characterised as Woodland	0.8%
Woodland in LCA as a Percentage of Study Area	0.03%
Number of Woodland Polygons in LCA	29

Figure 276. Welland Valley LCA Woodland Distribution