

Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan Evidence Base Report

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6. Biodiversity and the natural environment

Biodiversity loss over the last 50-100 years is thought to have been greater in the East Midlands than in any other region, and Nottinghamshire's biodiversity has been one of the hardest hit, with rapid, widespread and sustained losses in species and habitats. Many species have become extinct, and areas of habitat have been reduced to isolated fragments. For example:

- 97% of Nottinghamshire's flower-rich meadows have been lost since the 1930s, and
- 90% of Nottinghamshire's heathland has been lost since 1920.

Such losses arose primarily as a result of agricultural intensification; intensive commercial forestry; and population growth and development. Many of the surviving habitat fragments receive some form of nature conservation designation, either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), or as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), although other areas of important habitat exist outside these sites.

6.1 Designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest

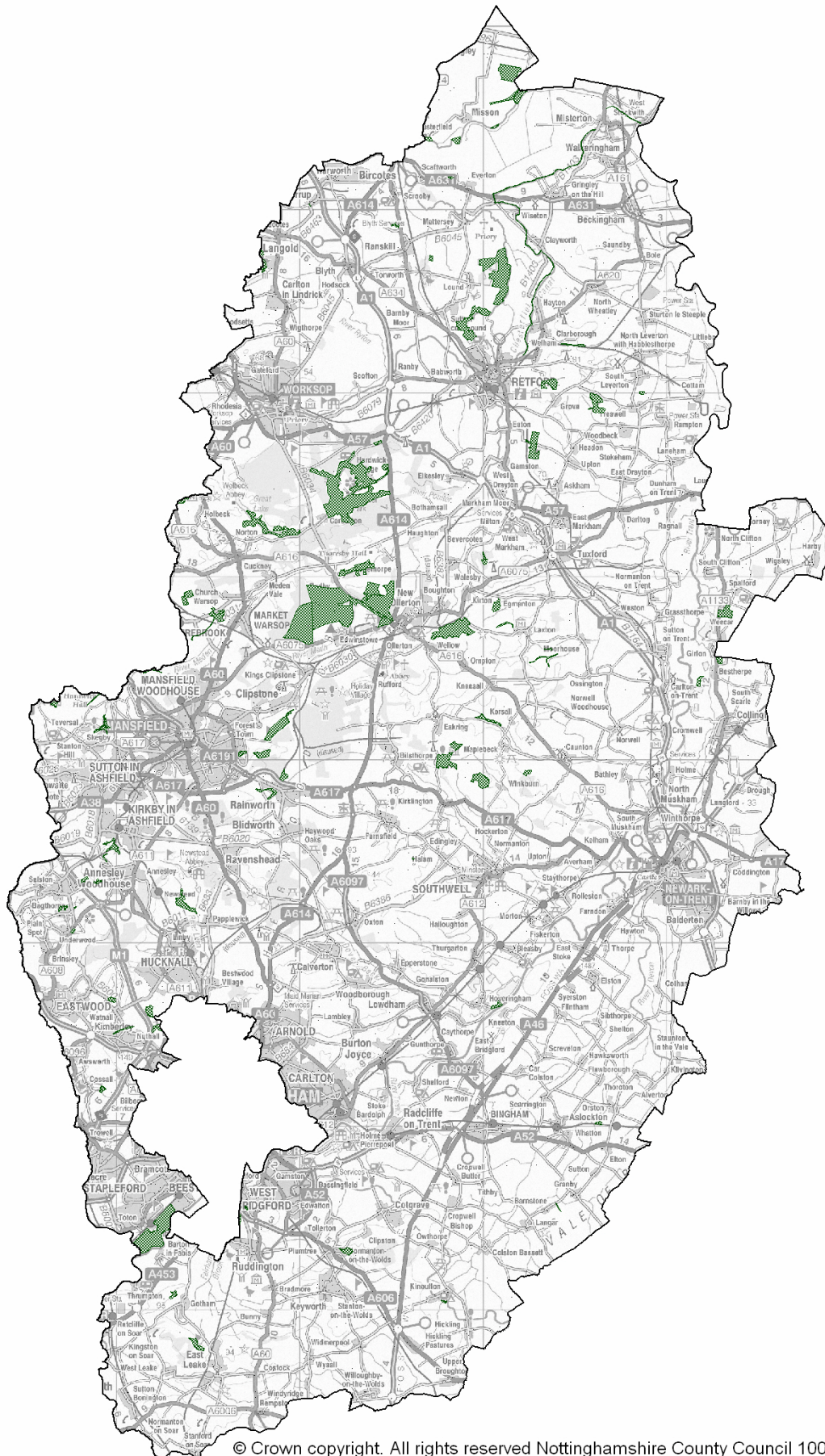
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are nationally important, legally protected sites, which are identified and designated by Natural England, and represent the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in Britain. As of 1 June 2010, there were 68 SSSIs wholly or partly in Nottinghamshire, covering 3,403 hectares, or approximately 1.6% of the land coverage of the county. This compares with a figure of 4.5% for the East Midlands, and approximately 7.5% for England as a whole. 93% of SSSIs in Nottinghamshire are in 'target condition', compared to 97.2% in the East Midlands and 93.2% nationally. Nottinghamshire has the lowest number of SSSIs designated for their geological or geomorphological importance in the East Midlands – four sites covering 11 hectares – but these four sites are in 'target condition'. Figure 42 below identifies the locations of SSSIs in the county and their proximity to the road network.

6.2 Designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are sites that have been identified as being of at least county-level importance for their wildlife. Figure 43 below shows the locations of SINCs within the county and their proximity to the road network. They are a local, non-statutory designation, used throughout the UK principally in relation to land use planning and development, under various names. As of 31 March 2010, there were 1,387 SINCs in Nottinghamshire, covering 17,352.6 hectares, or 8% of the county. National Indicator (NI) 197 measures the proportion of SINCs that are under positive conservation management. In 2009/10, NI 197 figures for Nottinghamshire (excluding Nottingham City) were 21.2% of SINCs under positive conservation management, which was an improvement on the 2008/09 figures of 19.6%.

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Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in Nottinghamshire



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Figure 42: Locations of SSSIs in Nottinghamshire
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Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in Nottinghamshire

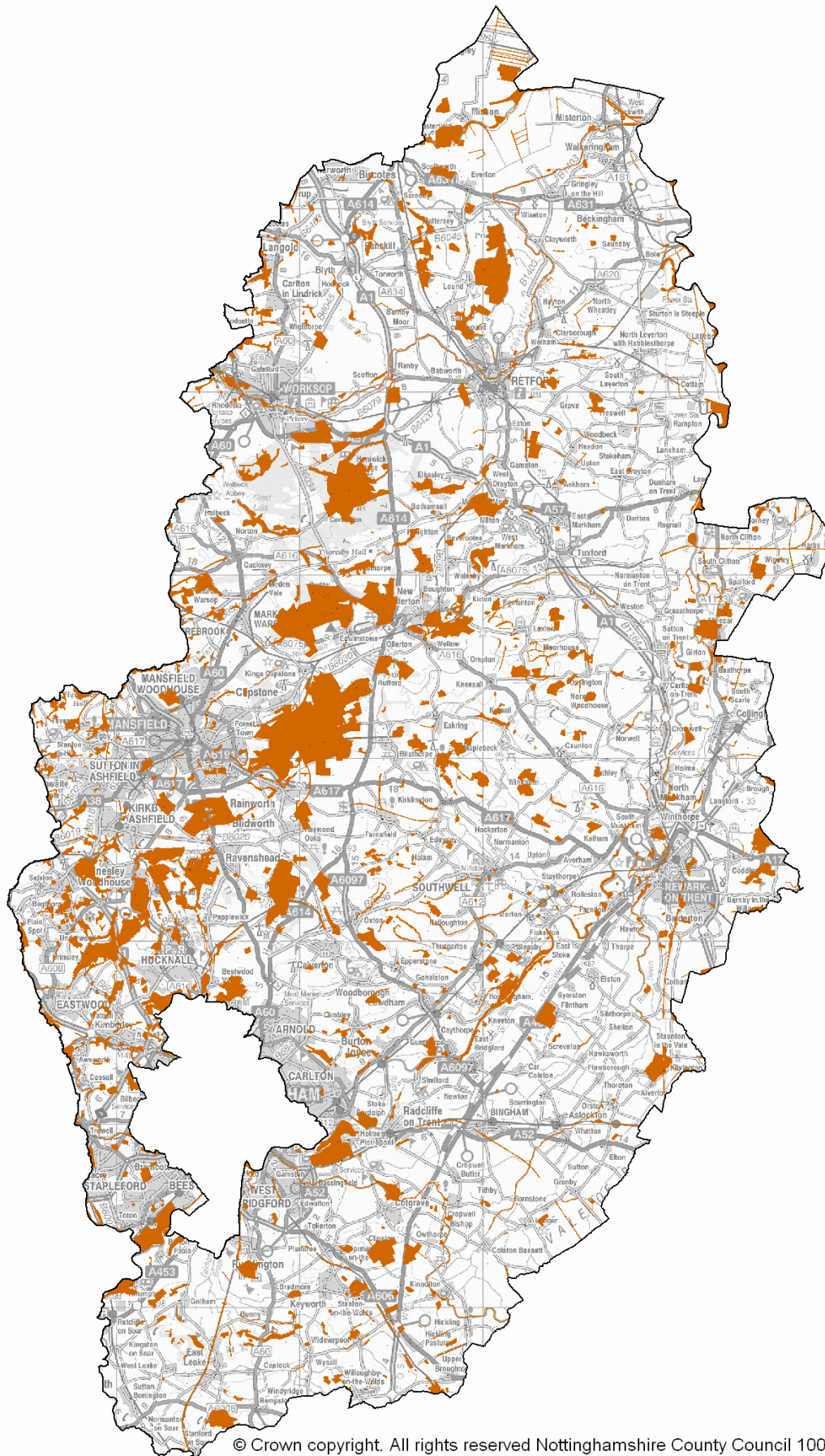


Figure 43: Locations of SINCs in Nottinghamshire

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6.3 Accessible greenspace

In recognition of its benefits to people and their communities, accessible green space has been mapped at a regional and national scale using Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). The maps are used to illustrate relative provision levels and to inform policy-making by showing broad trends and areas of search for green space provision and management.

The 'State of the Environment in the East Midlands' report (Natural England, 2010) contains an assessment of the amount of accessible greenspace in the East Midlands. Nottinghamshire compares favourably with the rest of the East Midlands (only Derbyshire does better, with large areas of access land in the Peak District National Park). There are, however, relatively low levels of access in the more rural districts – Rushcliffe and the eastern parts of Newark & Sherwood and Bassetlaw in particular all have significant areas in the bottom 25% regionally for accessible greenspace. In addition, Natural England's ANGSt standards recommend that there should be 1 hectare of local nature reserve (LNR) per 1000 of population.

6.3.1 Local nature reserves

Local nature reserves (LNRs) are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally, and offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature, or simply to enjoy it. As of 8 July 2010, there were 42 LNRs in the county (excluding Nottingham City) covering 703 hectares, equating to 0.90 hectares of LNR per 1000 of population. Figure 44 below identifies the locations of local nature reserves in the county and their proximity to the road network.

6.4 Ancient woodland

Ancient woodland is woodland which has existed since at least 1600. It is a finite resource and cannot be recreated. Most ancient woodland sites receive some level of protection through the planning system, and some are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). As of August 2010, there were approximately 3449 hectares of ancient woodland in the county. Most ancient woodland can now be found in the central claylands, Sherwood, and along the western fringes of the county. Very little ancient woodland remains in the intensively farmed southern, eastern and northern parts of the county, or around the major population centres. Figure 45 below details ancient woodland mapped to show its location to the transport network.

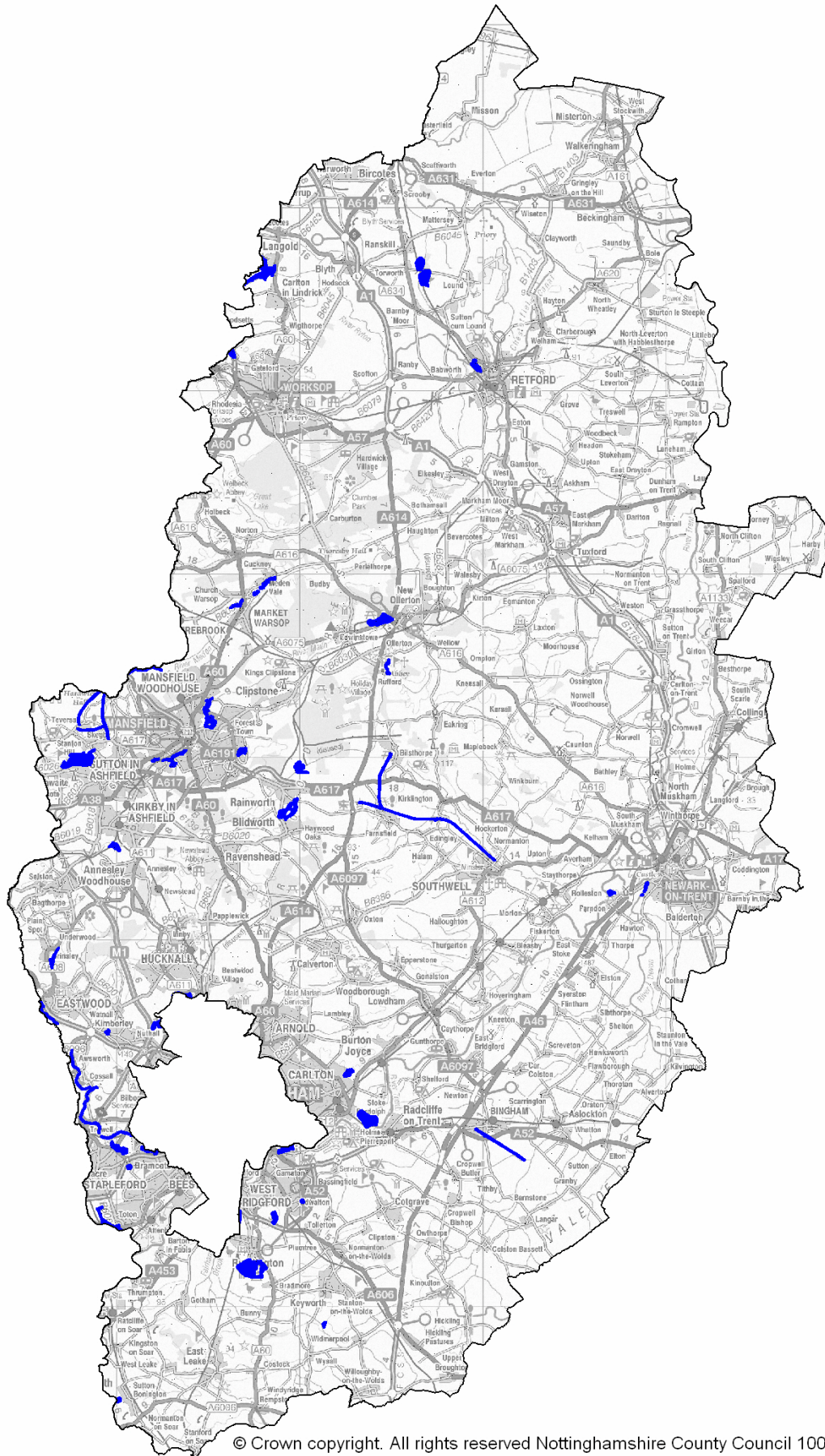
6.5 Tourism and the natural environment

In the East Midlands, tourism supports 25,000 businesses, 80 million visits and annually generates £4.8 billion (SSFF, 2001 figures) or 3.5% of the Region's GDP. The natural environment is identified as a key element in the success of the tourism industry by The East Midlands Tourism Strategy 2003-2010 (Destination East Midlands) and *emda*.

'Destination East Midlands' states that preserving and enhancing the quality of the environment is critical to future success as a destination. One of its aims was the conservation and improvement of natural habitats to create top quality wildlife destinations. Although Nottinghamshire does not have any designated National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sherwood Forest, Clumber Park and Rufford Abbey together attract almost 1.5 million visits per year. Sherwood Forest is both a major recreational resource, and a National Nature Reserve, subject to the strictest of protection regimes.

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Location of Local Nature Reserves in Nottinghamshire



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Figure 44: Locations of local nature reserves in Nottinghamshire
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Location of Ancient Woodland in Nottinghamshire

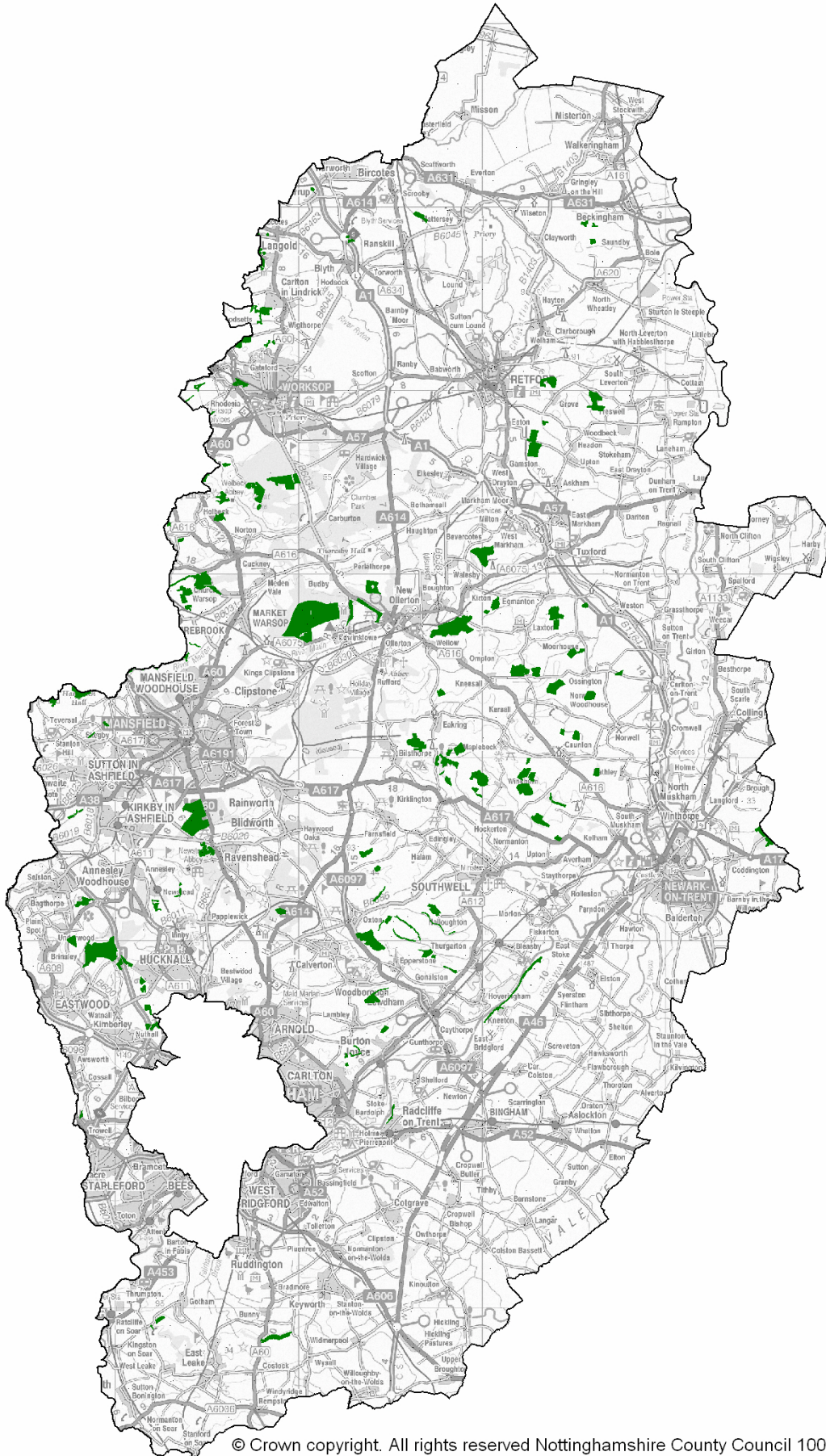


Figure 45: Ancient woodland sites in Nottinghamshire
October 2010