



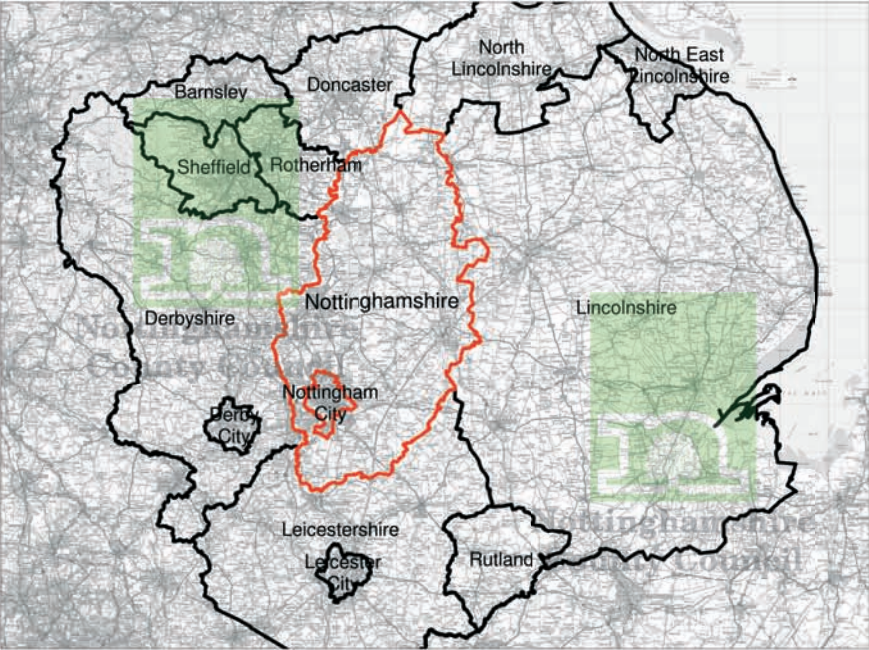
2. Scene setting

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2.1 The Plan Area - Nottinghamshire

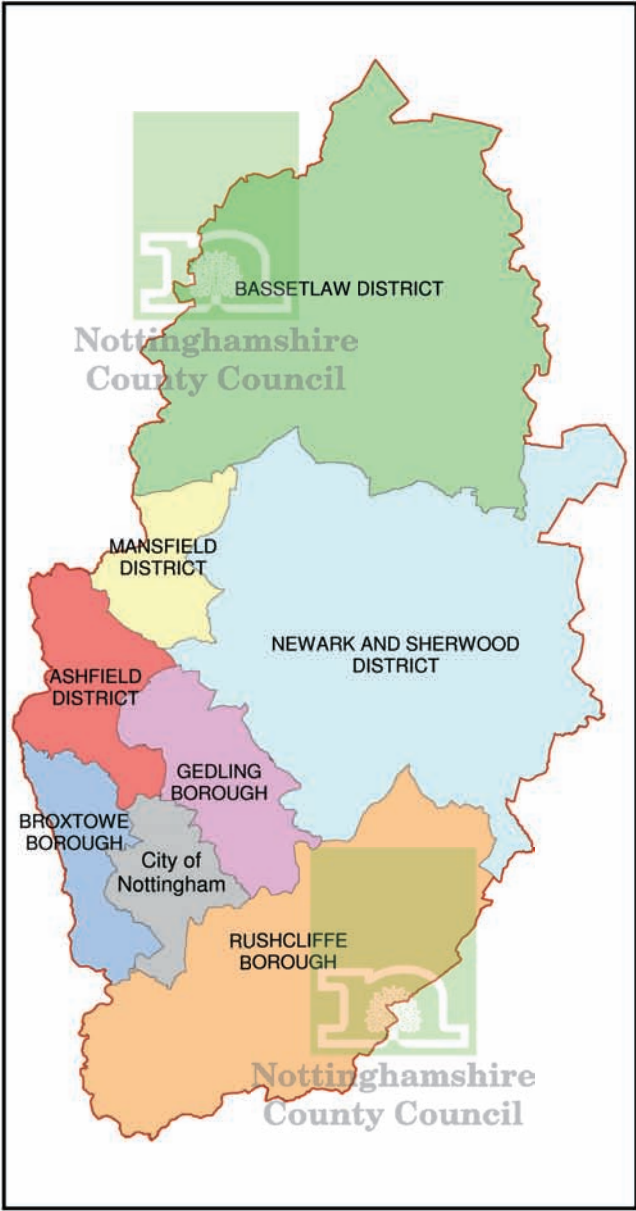
- 2.1.1 Nottinghamshire is situated in the heart of England and is located in the East Midlands region of the country. The shire and unitary authorities of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Doncaster, Rotherham and Derbyshire, as well as Nottingham City border the county.
- 2.1.2 The ROWIP area covers the County Council's administrative area shown in Map 1. Nottingham City Council is required to produce its own ROWIP although the county and city council produce a joint Local Transport Plan (Greater Nottingham area). The county is made up of seven districts - Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Newark and Sherwood, Mansfield and Rushcliffe.
- 2.1.3 The shire county of Nottinghamshire covers an area of 208,000 hectares with a population of nearly 760,000 people. The largest concentration of people is found in the 'Greater Nottingham' conurbation (Broxtowe, Hucknall, Gedling and Rushcliffe districts).
- 2.1.4 Other heavily populated areas of the county include the market towns of Mansfield, Kirkby in Ashfield, Sutton in Ashfield, Newark on Trent, Worksop and Retford. In general terms, these areas place substantial pressure on the surrounding countryside through, for example, land take and associated 'anti-social' problems for landowners and managers.
- 2.1.5 In contrast, approximately a fifth of the population live in the smaller rural towns and villages in the county. In essence Nottinghamshire's rural countryside is made up of a low density population making some areas very remote.

Map 1 Nottinghamshire regional context and district boundaries



Nottinghamshire

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2.2 Coalfields

- 2.2.1 The former coalfields of Nottinghamshire have largely disappeared. However, the impact of their existence still survives both positively and negatively. Direct negative impact on employment and health are particularly noticeable in the north of the county whilst the former 'pit tips' are now a haven for recreation and biodiversity. There are also disused railway lines serving the former collieries which are now valuable green corridors reaching into both urban and rural areas. A few of these have been developed into useful linear access links. Other 'mothballed' railway lines still exist and potentially have an important role to play in improved countryside access.

2.3 Farming

- 2.3.1 As with much of the East Midlands, Nottinghamshire's rural countryside is predominantly made up of arable-farmed land with the notable exception of forestry in the centre of the county. Nottinghamshire's landscape has evolved significantly over the last couple of hundred years, the inclosure process of the 18th and 19th centuries perhaps having the largest impact. The landscape changed dramatically with the loss of medieval open fields and commons to the enclosed and private fields we see today. The inclosure process not only allotted land to private individuals but also involved the setting out of many of Nottinghamshire's present-day public carriageways, bridleways and footpaths. More recently, particularly the period following the Second World War, Government policy of the day increased subsidies to farm production which saw the removal of many hedgerows. This created larger fields and changed the county's landscape.

2.4 Forestry and heathland

- 2.4.1 Forestry continues to play an important role in Nottinghamshire. The former ancient forests and heathland of Sherwood Forest have mostly given way to non-native coniferous plantations. However, the harvesting of timber has now taken second place to recreational forestry sites such as Sherwood Pines and other large tracts of Forest Enterprise managed land. To further bolster these recreational areas much of this land has been dedicated as Open Access Land under section 16 of the CROW Act 2000.
- 2.4.2 Nottinghamshire is also famous for the 'Dukeries' estates in the north of the county. These five large 'man made' estates have also shaped the county and the ROW network with a distinct sparse network of definitive paths in these areas. The exception is the former estate of the Duke of Newcastle at Clumber which is owned and managed by the National Trust and offers excellent recreational facilities for all.

2.5 Natural and man-made barriers

- 2.5.1 Natural and man-made corridors create a variety of linear components in Nottinghamshire's landscape, including roads, rivers, canals and railways. These corridors offer both access opportunities and real problems; the River Trent in the county offers some superb access and tourism opportunities along its banks but conversely creates significant severance for communities accessing services and recreation with only a handful of river crossing points in the county.
- 2.5.2 Moreover, the county's road network again offers great opportunities and problems. The road network has enabled Nottinghamshire to prosper economically with excellent links within the county and beyond, such as the M1 motorway and A1 trunk road. However, these roads can restrict access for non-motorised users i.e. walkers, cyclists and riders through either making it impossible to cross due to the physical barrier, safety (real and / or perceived) and generally being an unpleasant experience to cross.

- 2.5.3 Although a shadow of its former self the railway network still has a large presence in the county with the major mainline routes of the East Coast Mainline, and the Midland Mainline. Even the former Great Central Railway partly survives in the county. Added to this are the Gainsborough, Grantham, Lincoln and Worksop branch lines and the surviving freight only lines. Once again these lines offer opportunities and problems to the PROW network; railways can contribute to social inclusion and sustainable transport but they can also create barriers for the network.
- 2.5.4 As with the road network railways can offer a physical barrier and a safety issue, for example, there are 19 definitive bridleways (and many more footpaths) crossing the county's railways by 'at grade' level crossings. There is also increasing pressure to close unstaffed railway crossings and in the 1950's and 60's many crossings were closed or downgraded to exclude higher rights users such as horse riders and vehicles. Examples do exist in this county of rights of way being severed by railways creating two potential cul-de-sac paths.

2.6 Nottinghamshire's landscape and geology

- 2.6.1 The popular image of Nottinghamshire is often of forestry and sandstone. However, the county benefits from a diverse range of landscape types from limestone to heavy clay. This local distinctiveness influences both the use and maintenance of public rights of way.
- 2.6.2 These landscapes provide a variety of backdrops and areas in which to walk and ride and often influence people's decisions on where to go. For example, the Sherwood area obviously attracts a large number of users due to its character (and the provision of facilities) but can cause problems through the erosion of paths. This can be due both to the large number of visitors and the geology of this area – well drained sandy soils.
- 2.6.3 The heavy clays of the Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands can also cause problems to the surface of rights of way in this area. The dark clay soils have poor drainage and as a result can cause heavy waterlogging making walking and riding difficult in places. Expensive localised surfacing and drainage work can sometimes help but is ultimately confounded by the area's geology.
- 2.6.4 For further information on the county's landscape character areas refer to the County Council's Countryside Appraisal summarised in Appendix 2 and 3.