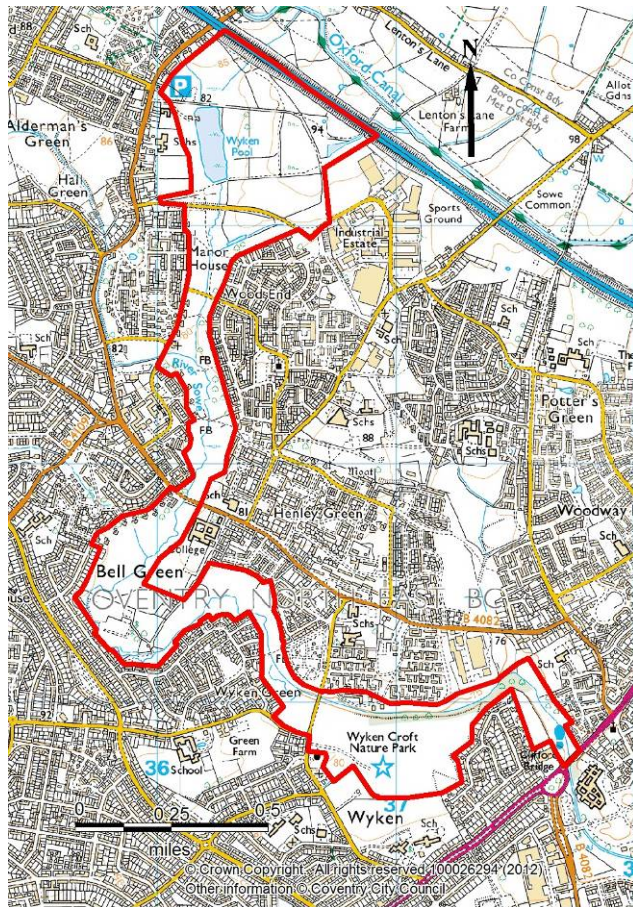


Location and Context



The Sowe River Valley is located to the east of Coventry. It has been divided into two Character Areas as the complete course of the river runs all the way from Wyken Slough Nature Reserve in the northern fringe of Coventry to the Stonebridge Highway in the south. North Sowe Character Area passes through Aldermans Green, Wood End, Bell Green, Henley Green and Walsgrave. The Character Area is almost completely surrounded by residential properties. To the north, it is bordered by the M6.

Heritage Designations in the Character Area

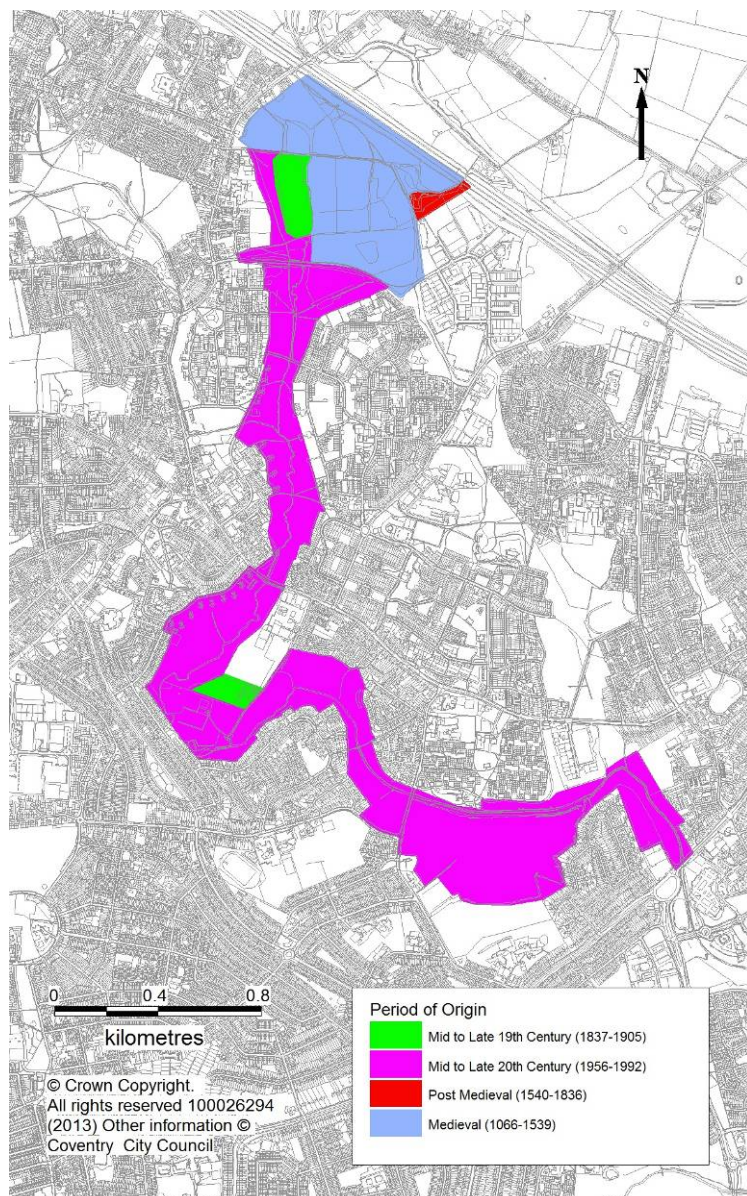
Scheduled Ancient Monuments: 0
 Archaeological Constraint Areas: 14
 Listed Buildings: 0
 Locally Listed Buildings: 0
 Conservation Areas: 0
 Registered Parks and Gardens: 0

Historic Development

The earliest archaeological evidence in the Character Area comes from two medieval moated sites. Hawkesbury Moat is located in the north of the Character Area and has partially surviving earthworks. Another medieval moated site is located to the east of Henley Mill Lane. No documentary evidence for this site has yet come to light but the feature is clearly visible as a cropmark on a 2005 aerial photograph and survives as a substantial earthwork. To the north of Parry Road is the location of Henley Mill, first recorded in the early 14th century. The mill ceased use in 1884 and was subsequently demolished but a building to its north of late 19th Century date still survives.

St. Mary's Priory Cartulary of 1410-11 records the Hawkesbury Estate in the north of the Character Area. This comprised the moated manor house already mentioned, a wood and several large enclosed fields whose boundaries still survive as hedgerows, preserving this medieval field pattern. Immediately to the south was Lady Lane, which survived into the 20th Century but can now only be discerned by two parallel hedgerows.

16th Century changes to the landscape saw the opening of Wyken Colliery in the north east of the Character Area. The Wyken Colliery Branch Line which ran through the north of the



Character Area was opened in 1848. The colliery had become disused by 1905 and the branch line was eventually removed by the mid-1930s. Wyken Pool in the north of the Character Area is believed to have been formed in about 1860 as a result of mining subsidence. The 1775 enclosure award and late 18th century estate surveys record that at this time the Character Area comprised entirely of small, enclosed fields. The enclosure award also records Henley Mill Lane as a Toll Road and an unnamed road which follows the alignment of the current Henley Road. The 1925 Ordnance Survey Map records a sewage works located to the east of Henley Mill Lane but by 1967 it had been replaced by allotment gardens which are still present today.

Overall, very little change takes place in the Character Area in the 20th century. In the north the M6 was built in the early 1970s. Wyken Croft Nature Park was

landscaped in the 1980s to provide a nature park and habitat for wildlife and the river valley took on its present recreational land use around the same time as the surrounding housing estates were built.

Modern Character

The Character Area includes two reserves known as Wyken Slough Local Nature Reserve to the north, and Wyken Croft Nature Park to the south. Both these areas comprise large open green spaces with trees and have good footpath access. Wyken Pool located in the Wyken Slough Local Nature Reserve is the largest expanse of water in Coventry. This is an important area for nature conservation as the rough grassland, scrub and marsh near the Pool supports a variety of wildlife.

In addition, this area contains the archaeological remains of Hawkesbury Moat and the remains it's surrounding medieval field pattern created by ancient hedgerows. In Wyken Croft Nature Park, areas of hawthorn have been planted to attract and support wildlife. The

two reserves are joined by a narrow, green corridor created by the river floodplain and the whole of the Character Area can be accessed by a continuous river side walk called the Sowe Valley Footpath. Housing, including areas of tower blocks, and amenities including schools and allotment gardens impinge along both sides of the river floodplain. Consequently, this area of large open green space is active and noisy.

Geology and Topography

The Character Area overlies sandstone with alluvium and river terrace deposits of sand with clay and gravel. Coal deposits are present in the north. The majority of the Character Area lies at 80m above sea level. There is a gradual rise to the north of the Character Area from 80m above sea level to 95m.

