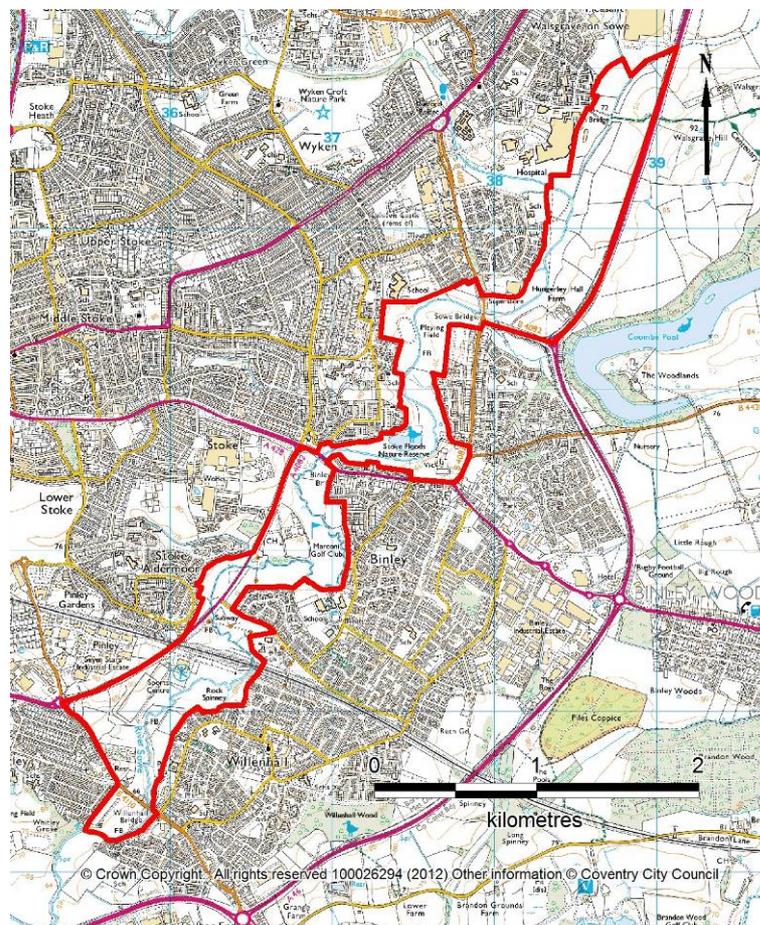


Location and Context

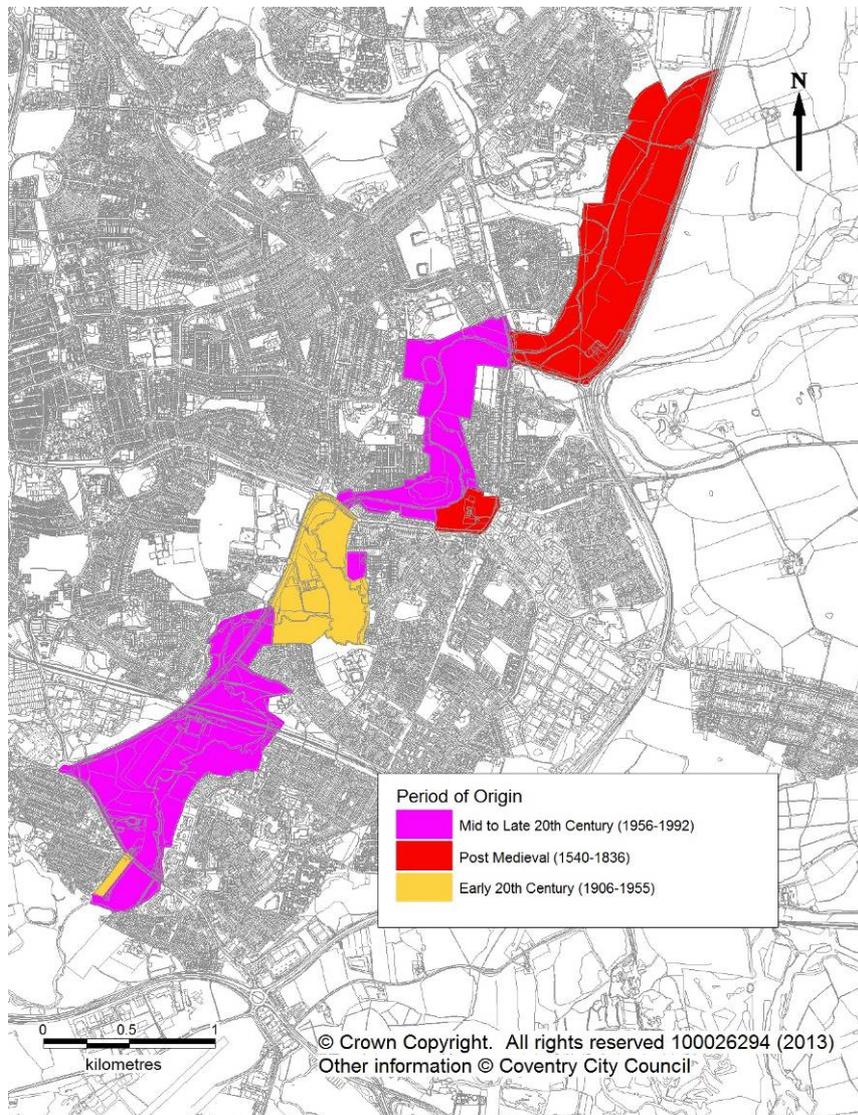
The Sowe River Valley is located in the east of Coventry. The Sowe Valley has been divided into two Character Areas because the complete course of the river runs all the way from Wyken Slough Nature Reserve in the north fringe of Coventry to the Stonebridge Highway to the south. South Sowe Character Area passes through Clifford Park, Wyken, Ernesford Grange, Binley, Stoke, Willenhall and Whitley. The Character Area is almost entirely surrounded by residential areas, with the exception of the north east boundary which borders on the A46 dual carriage way. The West Coast main railway line passes through the southern part of the Character Area.

**Heritage Designations in the Character Area**

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: 0
Archaeological Constraint Areas: 6
Listed Buildings: 5
Locally Listed Buildings: 1
Conservation Areas: 0
Registered Parks and Gardens: 0

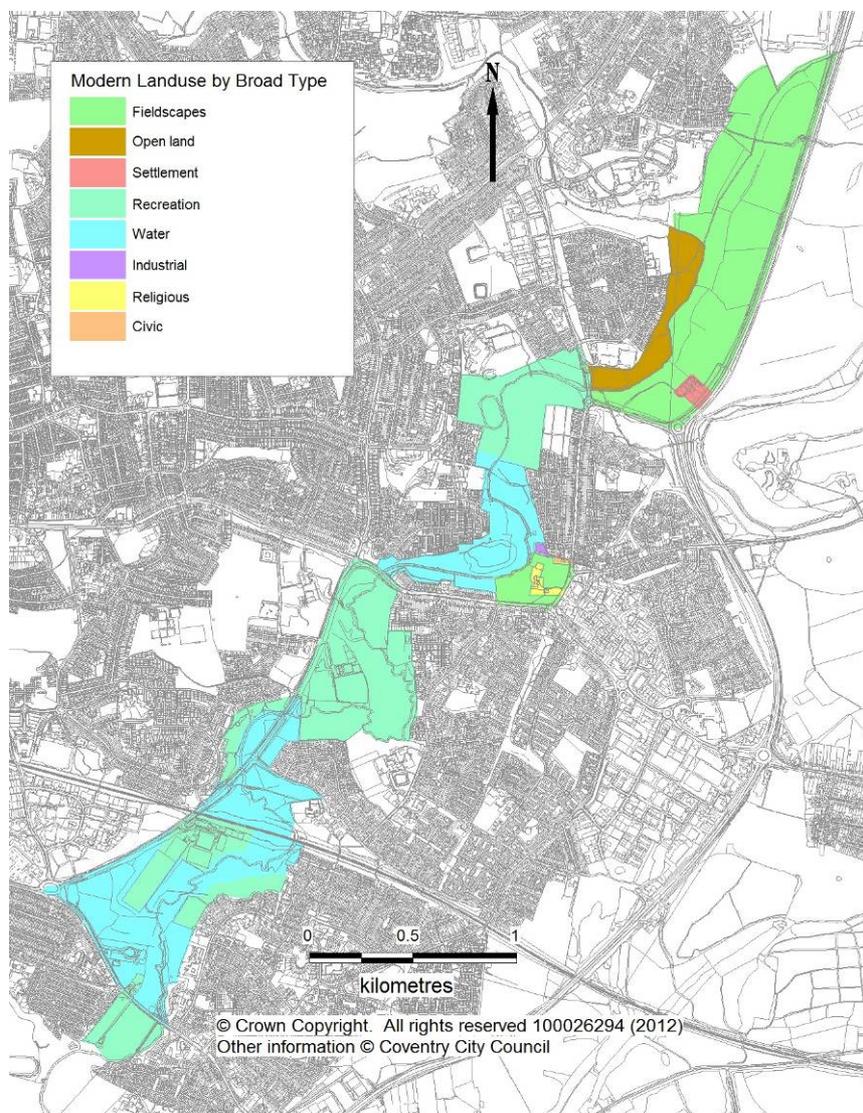
Historic Development

This area of land has, as far as it is possible to tell, always largely been open in character. Documentary evidence indicates that in the medieval period, much of the Character Area was part of the Sowe and Stoke open field systems and common meadows. The open fields were enclosed in the south of the Character Area in 1655 and to the north in 1756 and, as well as the Inclosure Awards, estate maps indicate that by the late 18th century the majority of the Character Area comprised small, enclosed fields. Towards the middle of the Character Area archaeological evidence indicates the shrunken medieval village of Binley north of St Bartholomew's Church. There is no associated documentary evidence to support this, but earthworks were noted during a 2005 site visit and are probably the precursor to the area of settlement that is recorded here on the Craven Estate map of 1746. The same map records a road called Red Lane which follows the same alignment as the current Farber Road. Binley Corn Mill, to the north of St Bartholomew's Church is recorded in 1746 but was probably of medieval origin. The mill was disused by 1925 and last recorded on the 1967 Ordnance Survey. Other notable buildings in the Character Area include the Church of St. Bartholomew and the associated vicarage which date to the late 18th century.



Following the enclosure of the open fields there were relatively few changes to the landscape until the London North Western Railway cut through the southern part of the Character Area in 1838. In the 20th century large areas of the remaining agricultural land were converted to leisure facilities and playing fields and these are still present. In 1925 sports grounds to the east of Second Avenue were developed which, by 1955, had expanded to include a golf course. Allotment gardens are also recorded on the 1955 Ordnance Survey in the south of the Character Area. Another sports ground located to the east of Quinn Close had been created by 1967. Other 20th Century development included Whitley Pumping Station which was developed by 1905 to the north of Seven Stars Farm. It was decommissioned in the late 20th century. A sewage works was also built by 1925 to the east of Yew Close and demolished in the late 20th century. The most recent significant development was the building of the A46 in the late 20th Century, which runs alongside the northern part of the Character Area.

Modern Character



The Character Area includes Stoke Floods Local Nature Reserve. The lake at the Reserve is the second largest expanse of water in Coventry formed by mining subsidence due to workings at the former Binley Colliery. The lake is surrounded by managed reed beds which support important wildlife habitats. The north of the Character Area comprises large, irregular-shaped agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows creating a field pattern that was laid out at the time of the Sowe Inclosure in the mid-18th Century. In the south of the Character Area some of the hedgerow boundaries date to the mid-17th Century. Playing fields associated with Caludon Castle School are located to the west of Clifford Bridge Road. Further south the landscape changes to scrubland in the nature reserve. Numerous leisure facilities are located to the south of the nature reserve including a golf course and two sports centres with

with Caludon Castle School are located to the west of Clifford Bridge Road. Further south the landscape changes to scrubland in the nature reserve. Numerous leisure facilities are located to the south of the nature reserve including a golf course and two sports centres with

football pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens and allotment gardens. The length of the Character Area can be accessed by the Sowe Valley Footpath. Despite being an area of large, open, green space, this is an area of great activity due to the proximity of residential areas, including schools, and access to popular leisure facilities.



Open green space along the Sowe Valley footpath

Geology and Topography

The Character Area overlies mudstone to the north and sandstone to the south. Throughout there are alluvium and terrace deposits of sand and gravel. There are also coal deposits in the area, which lies between 70m and 75m above sea level.