

A summary of access to natural greenspace in the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area

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NENE VALLEY

Nature • Improvement • Area

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Accessible natural greenspace in the NIA

The Nene Valley NIA is home to approximately 208,780 people spread over nine local authorities (Table 1)¹

Table 1 Population residing within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area, by local authority area

Local authority	NIA population (approx.)
Corby	13,389
Daventry	7925
East Northamptonshire	22,427
Huntingdonshire	450
Kettering	40,751
Northampton	64,314
Peterborough	25,372
South Northamptonshire	8878
Wellingborough	25,277
Total	208,783

Paragraph 73 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies 'should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space...[which] should be used to determine what open space...provision is required.' (DCLG 2012). Natural England has provided guidance on accessibility standards for natural areas. The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) recommends that everyone should have an accessible natural area:

- Of at least 2ha in size, no more than 300m from home
- At least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of home
- One accessible 100ha site within 5km of home, and
- One accessible 500ha site within 10km of home (Natural England 2010).

In this context, accessible is defined as

...places that are available for the general public to use free of charge and without time restrictions (although some sites may be closed to the public overnight and there may be fees for parking a vehicle)...

ANGSt is not the only national greenspace standard: the Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard comprises similar thresholds for public access to woodlands (Woodland Trust 2004).

Naturalness can be difficult to define. ANGSt does not require that natural areas be rare or designated, but simply 'places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a

¹ Average number of residents per household multiplied by the number of households located in the NIA. Number of residents per household = population/number of households by local authority (Office for National Statistics 2012 and 2012a). Number of households in the NIA per National Land and Property Gazetteer December 2012.

feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate' (Natural England 2010). To map naturalness, ANGSt uses a proxy measure which considers the following types of areas as 'natural':

Nature conservation areas, including SSSIs	Formal and informal open space
Local sites (including LWS, LGS)	Unimproved farmland
LNRs	Rivers and canals
NNRs	Unimproved grassland
Woodland	Country parks
Remnant countryside (urban and urban fringe)	Open access land
	Disused/derelict land, mosaics of formal and informal areas, scrub etc

Under this measure, allotments, churchyards, cemeteries, improved farmland and formal recreation space (e.g. playing pitches, recreation grounds) do not qualify.

Current AGS provision

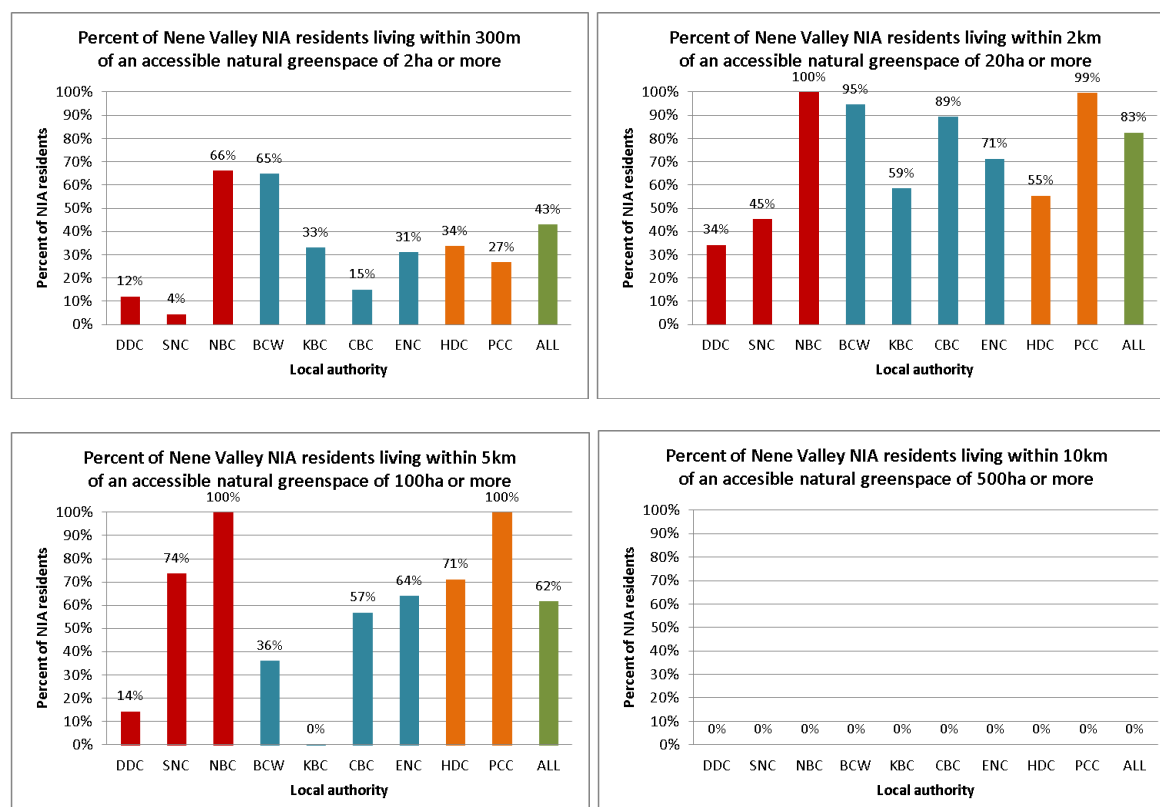
Accessible natural greenspaces larger than 2ha total 2461ha, or 5.9% of the NIA which covers 41,350ha.

Within the NIA, access to natural greenspace varies with site size and local authority. Most settlements are better served at some scales of natural area than others (Figures 3-6). Peterborough is perhaps the town best served by natural greenspace, with Northampton and Wellingborough also enjoying good levels of provision. Overall, the percentage of NIA residents with access to natural greenspace of various sizes is:

- 2ha (300m radius) 43%
- 20ha (2km radius) 83%
- 100ha (5km radius) 62%
- 500ha (10km radius) 0%

Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of these figures by local authority:

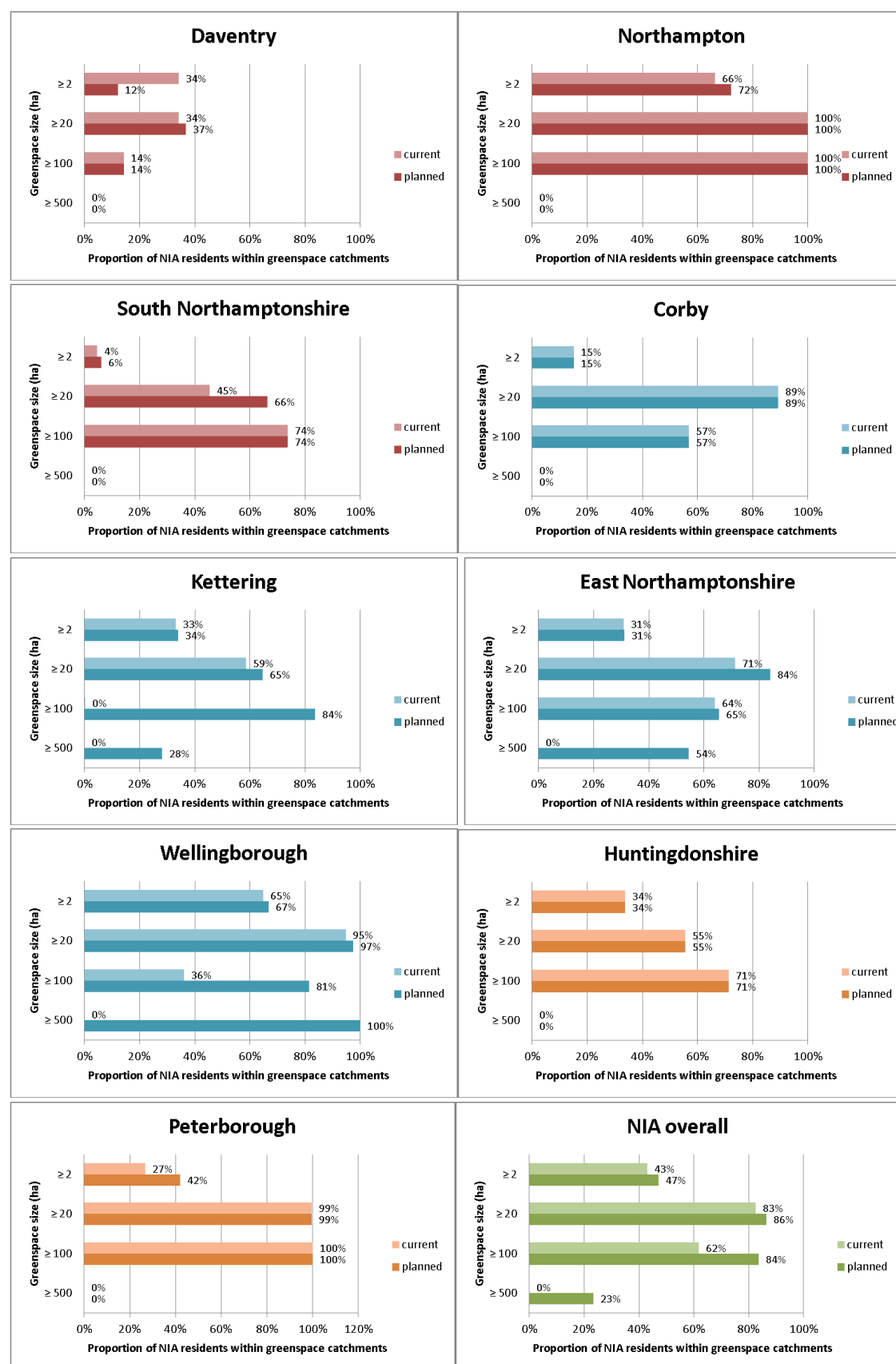
Figure 1 Percent of Nene Valley NIA residents living within the catchment of accessible natural greenspaces of various sizes, by local authority area



Future AGS provision

New AGS will be created through a variety of means, primarily the large Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) planned throughout Northamptonshire. Preliminary plans already exist for some of these, and show the general extent and location of greenspace within the SUEs. Other new AGS is planned to be delivered through local authority and third sector initiatives. Together these new accessible areas will link existing catchments, create provision in areas currently lacking and expand the catchment of existing sites. A notable example of this is work taking place around the Stanwick Lakes complex on the River Nene. New AGS creation will link several medium sized sites into a single meta-site of 500ha, the catchment of which will include most of Wellingborough and part of East Northamptonshire. The effects of new AGS creation on the proportion of NIA residents with AGS access are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Percent of Nene Valley NIA residents living within the current and planned catchments of accessible natural greenspaces of various sizes



Gaps in AGS provision

Despite the planned increase in AGS across the NIA, gaps will still exist at all scales of provision, especially at the 500ha level. Assuming all the planned new AGS (APPENDIX?) is created, the most significant gaps will be (Table 2):

Table 2 Projected gaps in various sizes of accessible natural greenspace within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area

2ha (300m)	Weedon Bec to Bugbrooke (DDC) Earls Barton (WBC) Burton Latimer east (KBC) Central Kettering (KBC) Thrapston south (ENC) Sudborough to Brigstock (ENC) Stanion (CBC) Deenethorpe (ENC) Woodnewton-Fotheringhay-Warmington (ENC) Stibbington (HDC) Ailsworth and Castor (PCC)
20ha (2km)	Weedon Bec to Bugbrooke (DDC) Earls Barton east (WBC) Burton Latimer central and south (KBC) West Kettering (KBC) Rothwell (KBC) Geddington (KBC) Sudborough (ENC) Deenethorpe (ENC) Woodnewton-Fotheringhay-Warmington (ENC)
100ha (5km)	Daventry District west of Kislingbury (DDC)* Earls Barton (WBC) Rothwell (KBC) Desborough (KBC) Thrapston (ENC) Oundle-Barnwell-Polebrook (ENC) Warmington and Fotheringhay (ENC)
500ha (10km)	Daventry District (DDC) South Northamptonshire (SNC) Northampton (NBC) Kettering, Rothwell, Desborough and Geddington (KBC) Corby and Willow Brook to Warmington (CBC, ENC) Oundle (ENC) Huntingdonshire District (HDC) Peterborough (PCC)

* The extension of Daventry Country Park will increase its area to approximately 94ha. Enlarging it further or adding contiguous AGS to 100ha would increase its catchment to cover the settlements in the NIA north of Daventry but would not include the Weedon Bec to Bugbrooke corridor.

Table 2 highlights several key areas with multiple scales of AGS deficiency:

- The River Nene from Weedon Bec to Bugbrooke

- South and west Kettering
- The area around the confluence of Willow Brook and the River Nene, including Woodnewton, Fotheringhay and Warmington
- Rothwell and south Desborough

Despite the availability of sites like Rutland Water and the developing Stanwick Lakes complex most NIA residents will still lack a site over 500ha within 10km of home. The Rutland Water catchment ends just outside the NIA boundary although some NIA residents no doubt use the site for recreation. Sites of this size are difficult and costly to establish, especially from scratch and the best opportunities for increasing provision of large AGS sites may lie in increasing access or building on existing medium sized sites. Pitsford Reservoir for example is approximately 394ha, with a 5km catchment area. Were it possible to add 106ha of contiguous accessible greenspace – bringing the total to 500ha – the catchment would increase to include most of Northampton and Wellingborough, southwest Kettering and much of Rothwell, all well populated areas currently without ready access to such large sites. The Ferry Meadows Country Park complex in Peterborough is currently around 470ha. Adding 30ha of AGS to this area would increase its catchment to cover the NIA between Peterborough and Fotheringhay. At 493ha Salcey Forest is just under the 500ha threshold and in practice probably serves most of the surrounding 10km zone that includes south Northampton.

Overall NIA residents are fairly well provided with AGS at intermediate scales (20ha and 100ha). Neighbourhood scale sites of 2ha and above are particularly lacking in rural settlements across the NIA. While many villages have recreation grounds and children's play areas, these are generally well manicured and do not achieve a sufficient degree of naturalness to qualify under the naturalness proxy described above. The absence of very large sites (>500ha) will likely continue to be an issue for most of the NIA.

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Figure 3

Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area: current accessible natural greenspaces >2ha, with 300m buffer

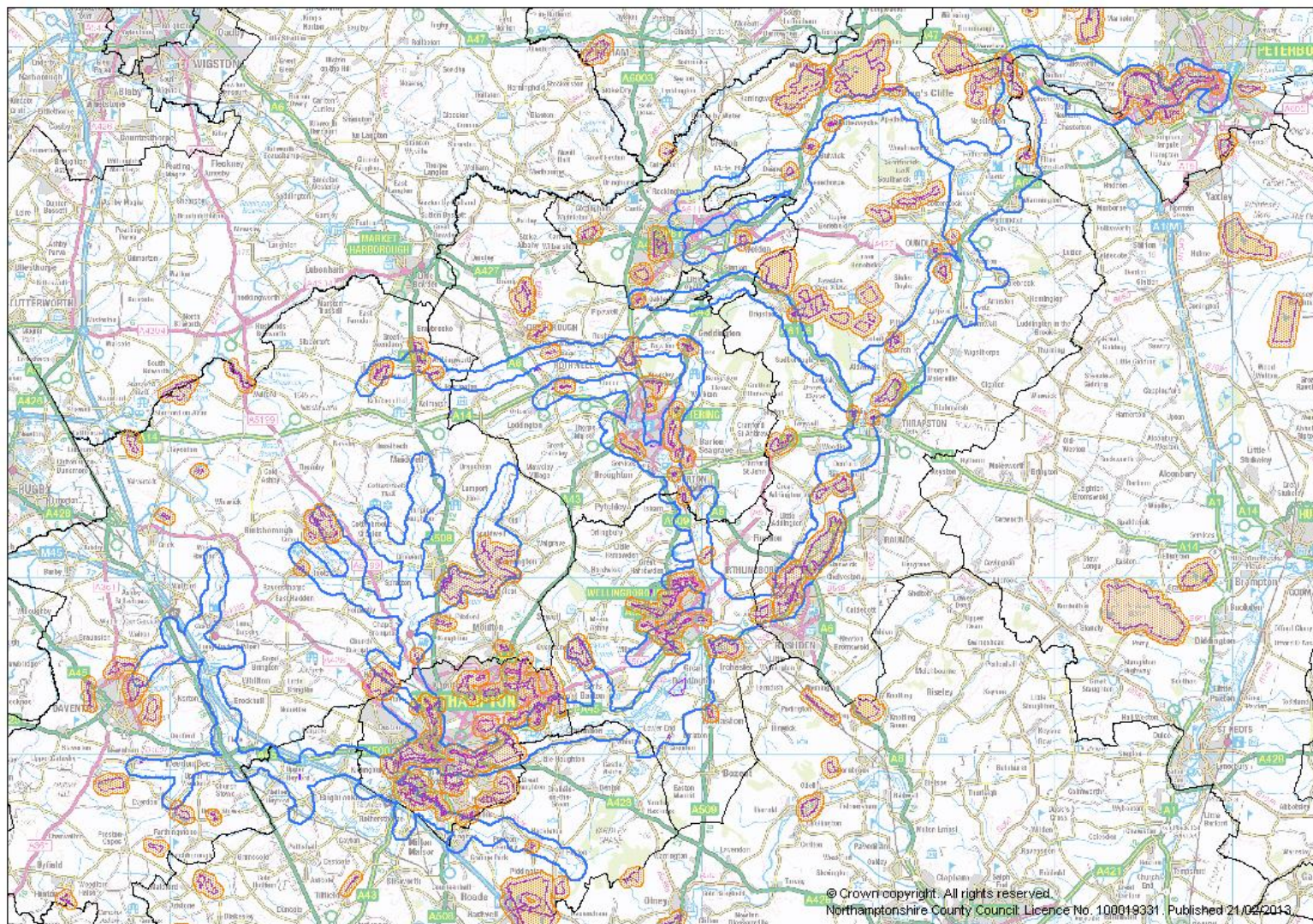


Figure 4

Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area: current accessible natural greenspaces >20ha, with 2km buffer

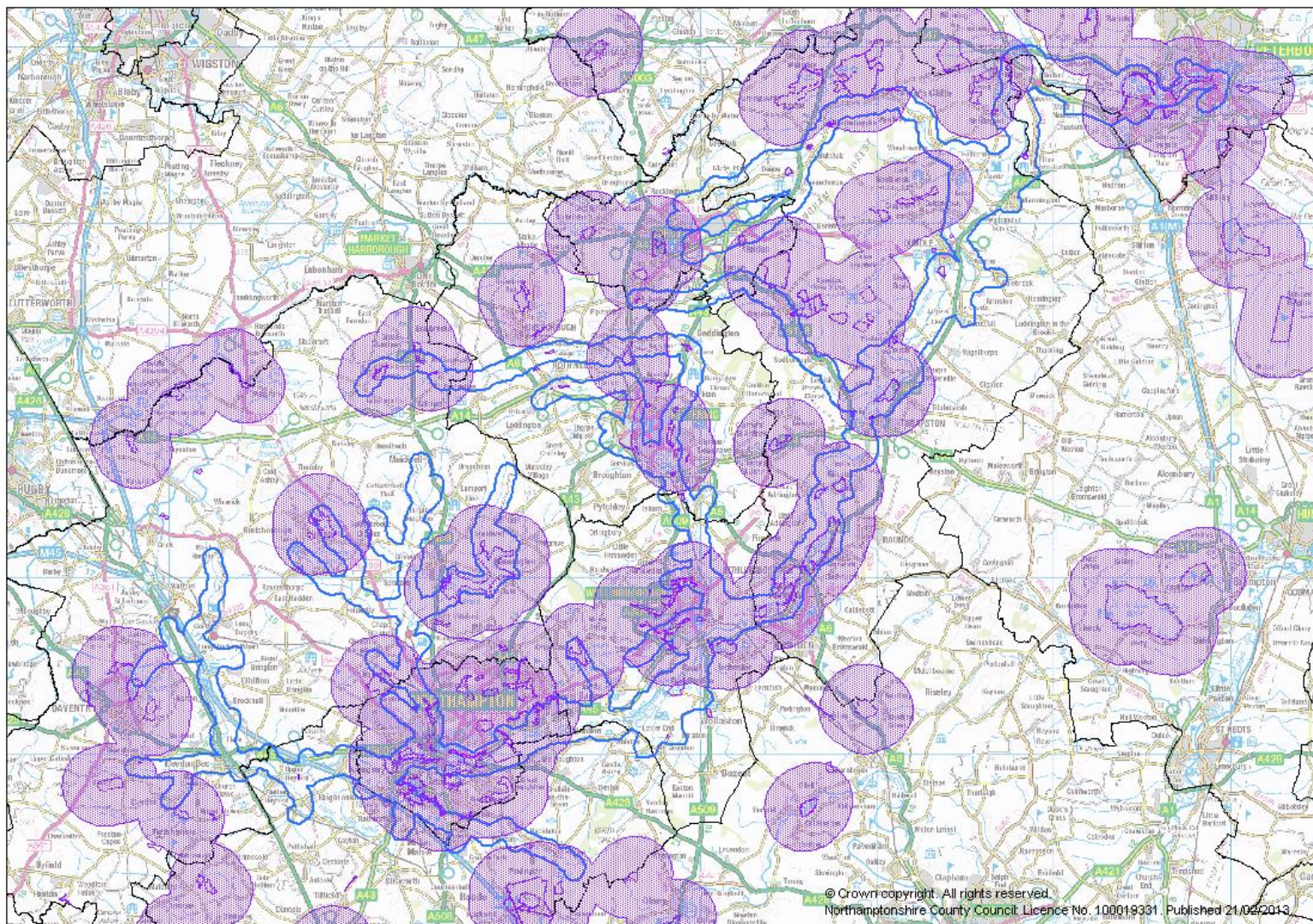


Figure 5

Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area: current accessible natural greenspaces >100ha, with 5km buffer

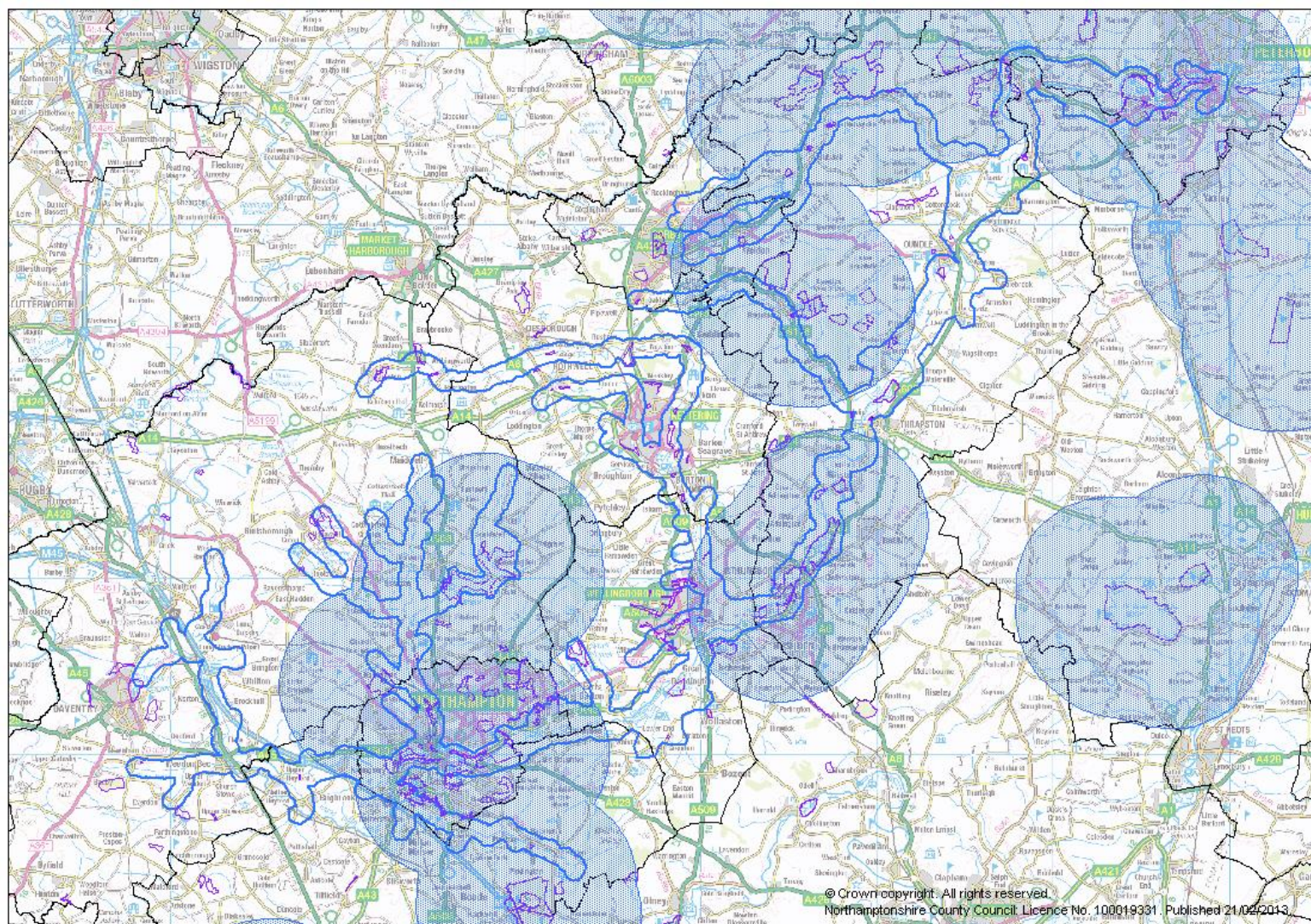


Figure 6

North Northamptonshire: current accessible natural greenspaces >500ha, with 10km buffer

