

ENGLISH CONSERVATION AREAS - AN UPDATED SPATIAL REVIEW



Ian Hall

February 2021

Cover photographs (clockwise from top left):

Bedford Park Conservation Area, Chiswick, London, from <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/normanshaw/8e.jpg>

Kelham Island Industrial Conservation Area, Sheffield, from <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/51c46e68e4b0e3594ecae79f/55546a22e4b01e4ec4b85089/55546a28e4b01e4ec4b8519b/1365680269000/martyn-mai-mai-3-of-334.jpg?format=original>

Original copyright Rachel Jones Photography

Brick Lane/Fournier Street Conservation Area, Tower Hamlets, London, from <https://dutchgirlinlondondotcom.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/east-london-street-art-shoreditch-roa-hanbury-street-brick-lane.jpg?w=610>

Corfe Castle Conservation Area, Dorset, from <http://www.britainexpress.com/images/attractions/editor3/Corfe-Castle-3456.jpg>

INTRODUCTION

[Conservation area](#) (CA) status underpins heritage protection for more properties than any other scheme in the UK or Europe, yet analysis of this important measure has been stymied by the continued absence of a comprehensive national dataset. Unlike [listed buildings](#), CAs have no national designation, but are [created and managed by local planning authorities](#) (LPAs), leading to a fragmentation of the data. Although most LPAs periodically submit CA spatial data (including names and attributes) to Historic England (HE), only around 75% have granted HE permission to publish, while the HE dataset also includes duplicates and lacks timestamps, making it hard to use for any systematic country-wide analysis.

In September 2017, as an initial step towards resolution of this problem, my son Leo published the first comprehensive [inventory of English Conservation Areas](#), accompanied by a range of preliminary spatial analysis. However, although this provided an improved measure of CA distribution, the overall picture of boundaries and spatial extents remained opaque. In October 2020, I decided to revisit this problem, and discovered that the publicly available HE INSPIRE dataset had only expanded marginally since 2017. I consequently embarked on the construction of an improved comprehensive consolidated spatial dataset for English CAs, which was completed and [published as open data](#) in February 2020.

This short note provides an updated spatial analysis of English CAs based on this dataset, as an introduction for those with an interest in the topic. Now that the dataset is available, it is hoped that others will find useful applications for it in other contexts. The dataset covers all 9,779 primary CAs in England, plus 139 disaggregated component parts which overlap, and are managed by, secondary LPAs. In aggregate, England's CAs are found to cover around 2.3% of land area and around 10.3% of property addresses, underlining the importance of this form of designation.

Page 1 of the CA maps shows the distribution of CAs by LPA, covering both the data source used and the total number of CAs.

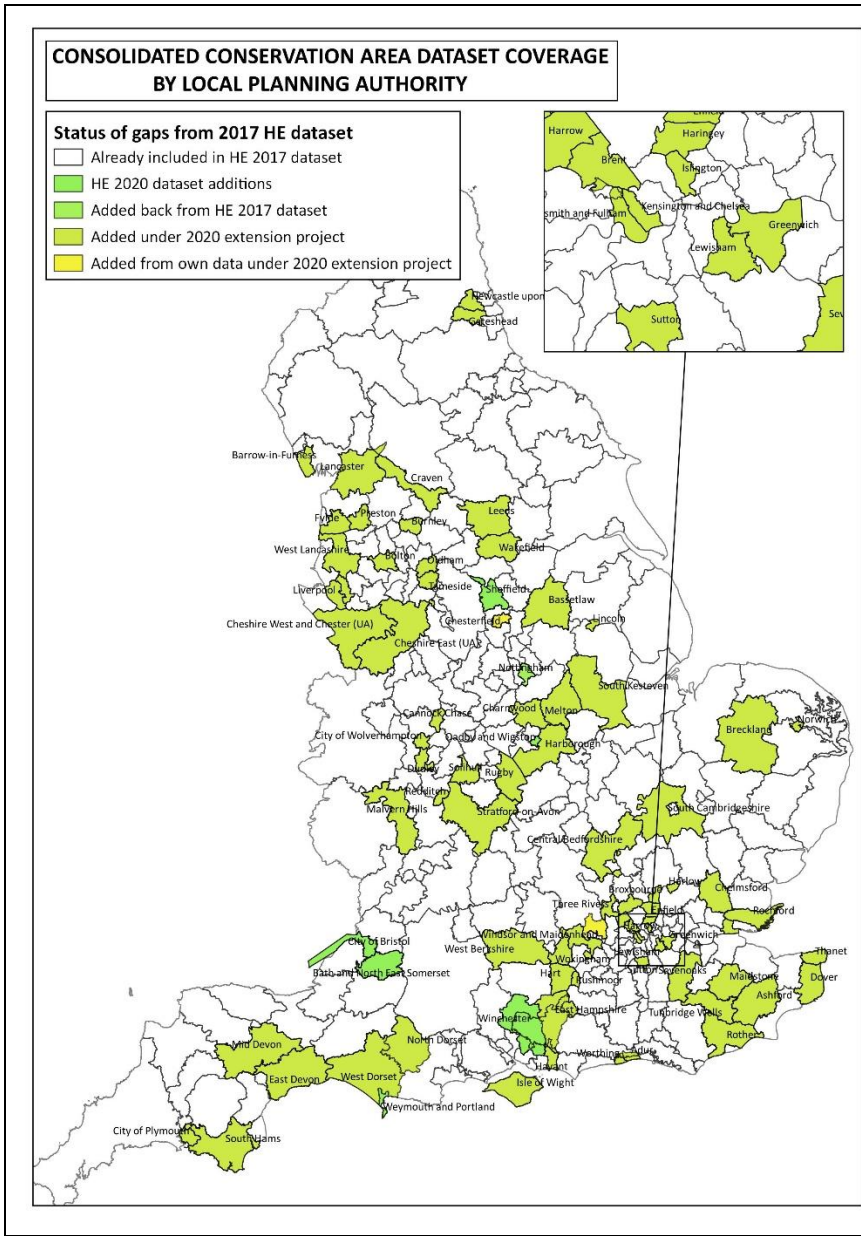
Page 2 of the CA maps shows the relative impact of CAs by LPA, showing the share of local properties and land area incorporated in CAs.

Page 3 of the CA maps shows the absolute impact of CAs by LPA, illustrating the total number of properties and total land area affected.

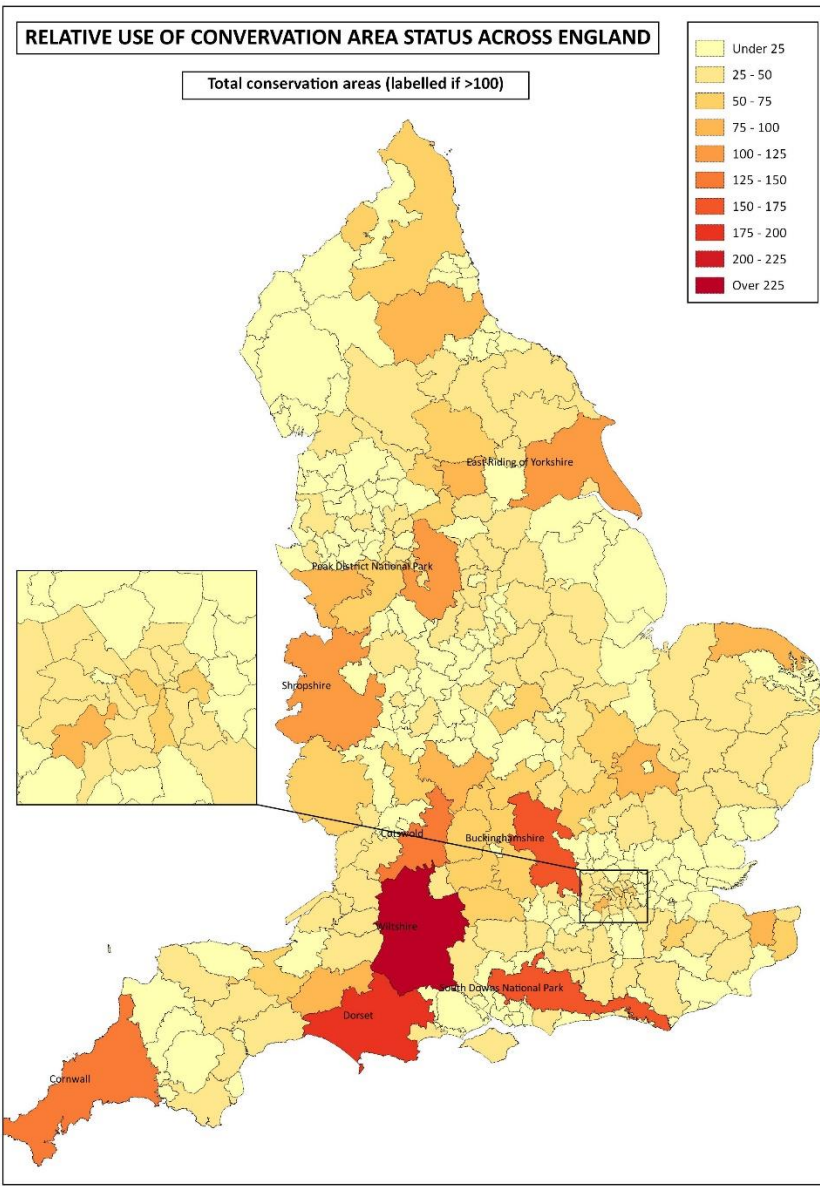
Page 4 of the CA maps shows the relative importance of CAs versus listed buildings as the primary mode of heritage protection in an area.

There is then a table of summary statistics for the top 38 LPAs by share of addresses in CAs, and a page of notes and observations.

CONSERVATION AREA MAPS 1

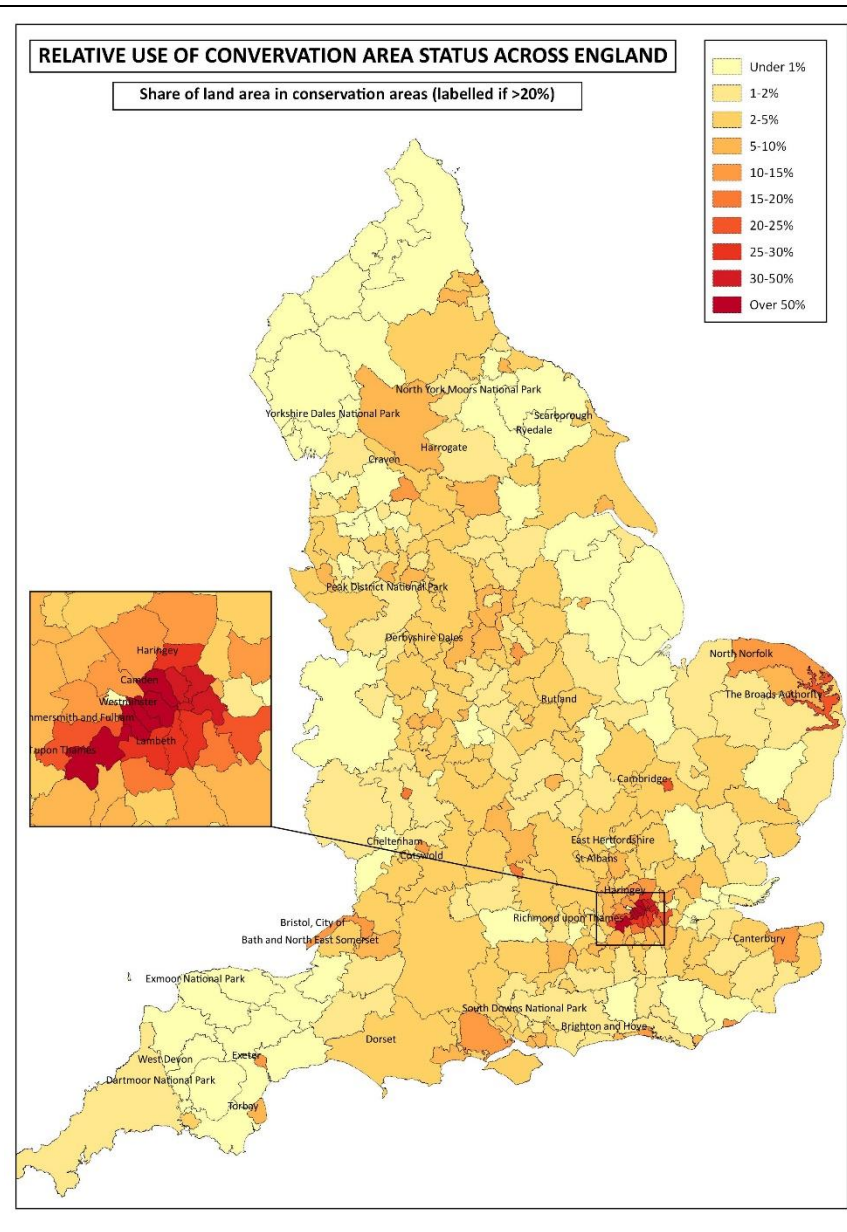
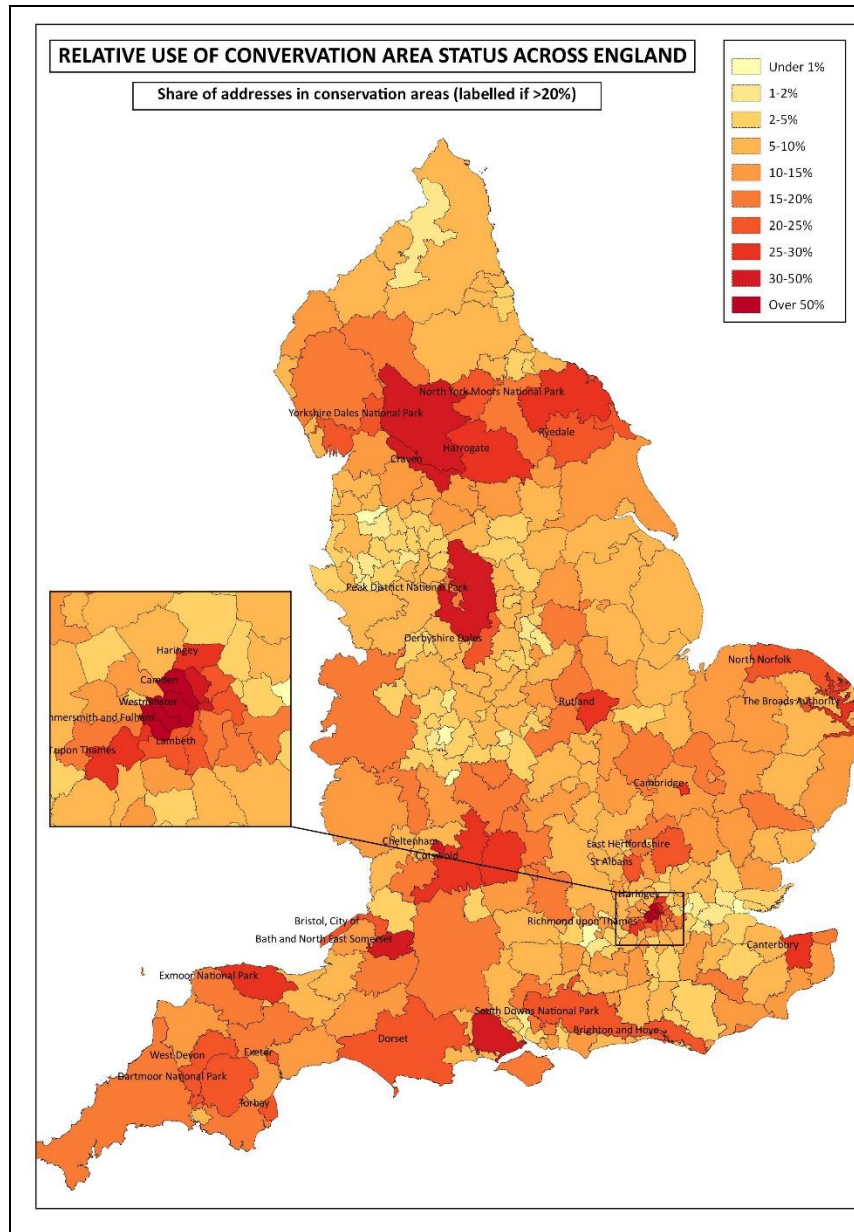


THE DISTRIBUTION OF CONSERVATION AREAS



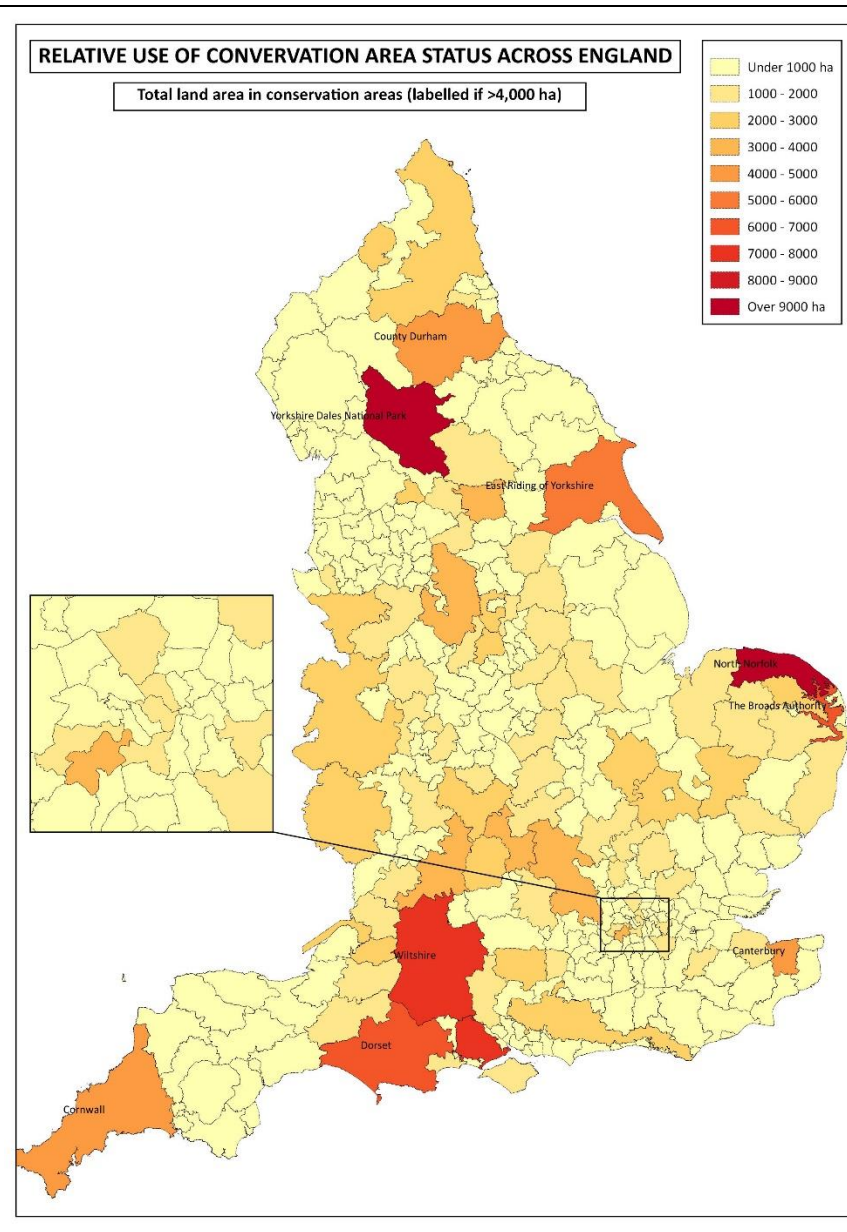
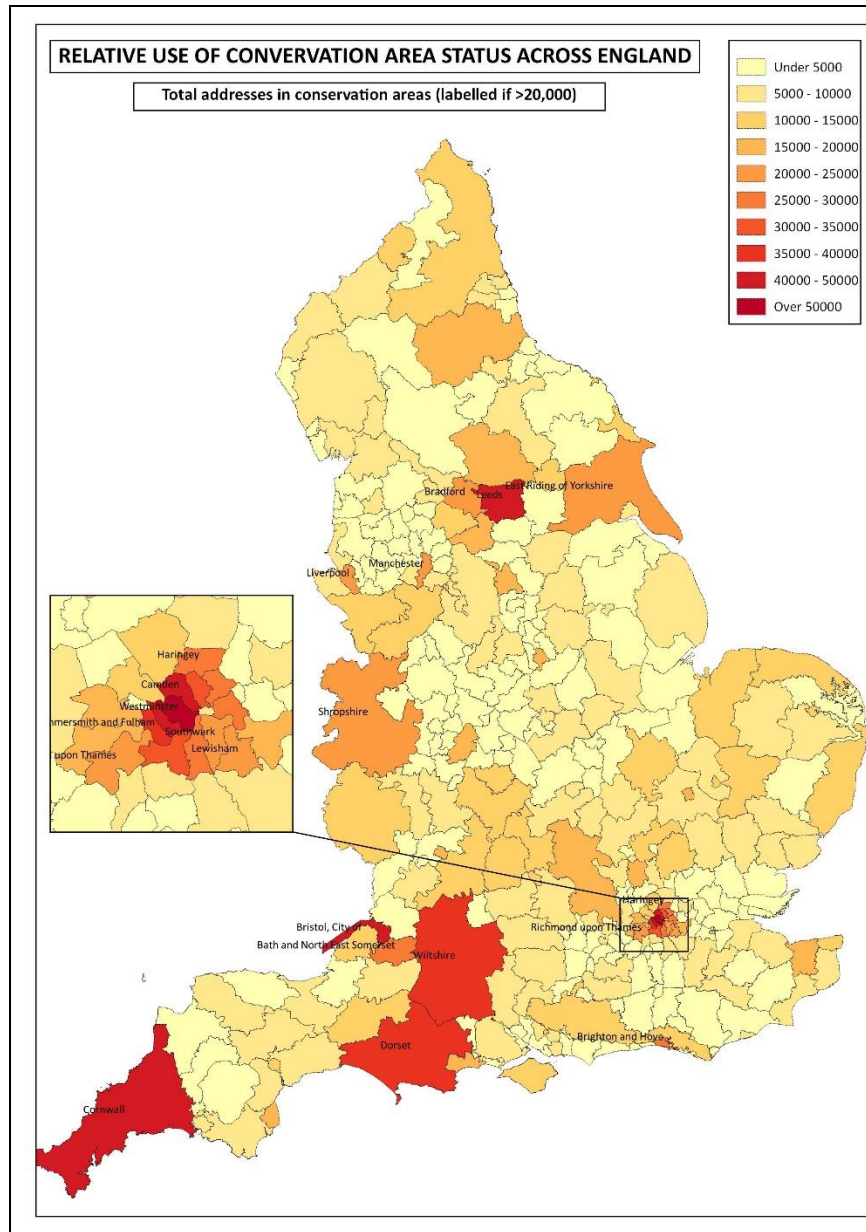
CONSERVATION AREA MAPS 2

THE RELATIVE IMPACT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

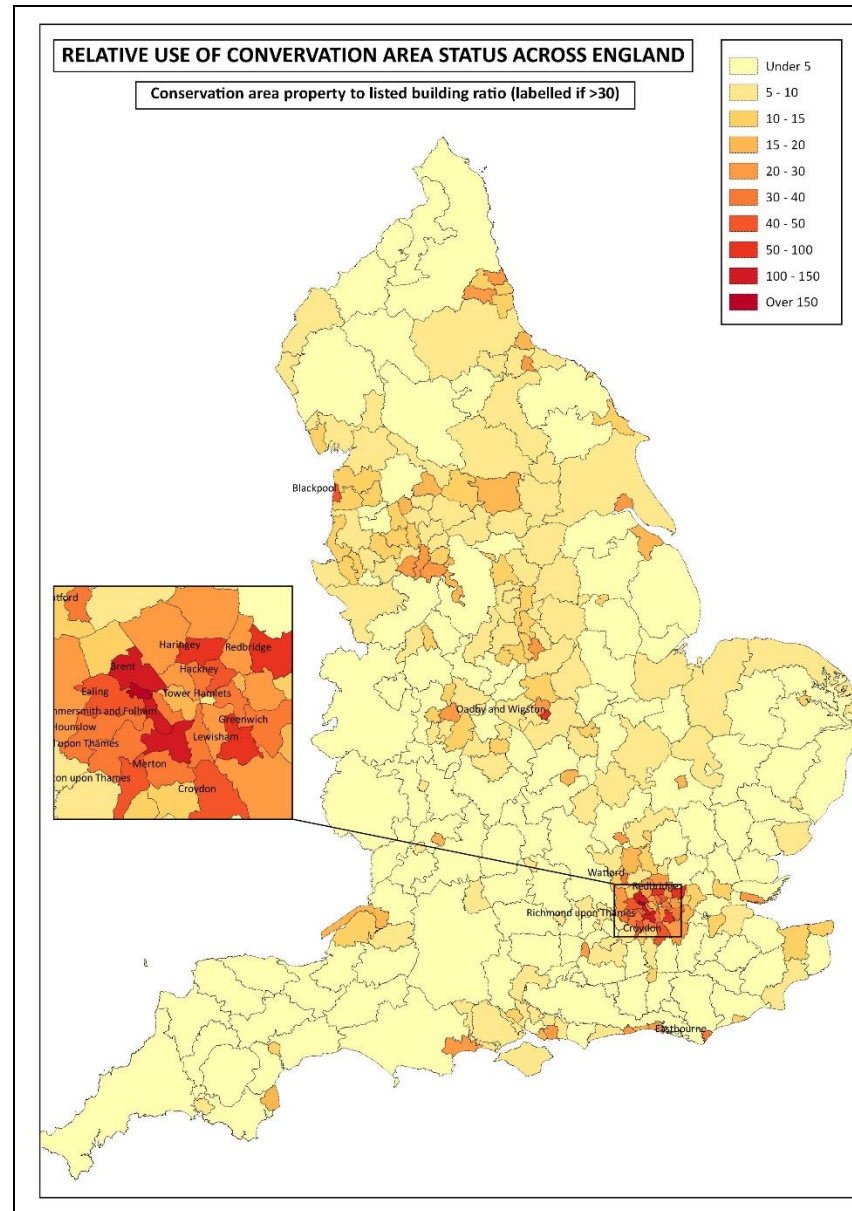


CONSERVATION AREA MAPS 3

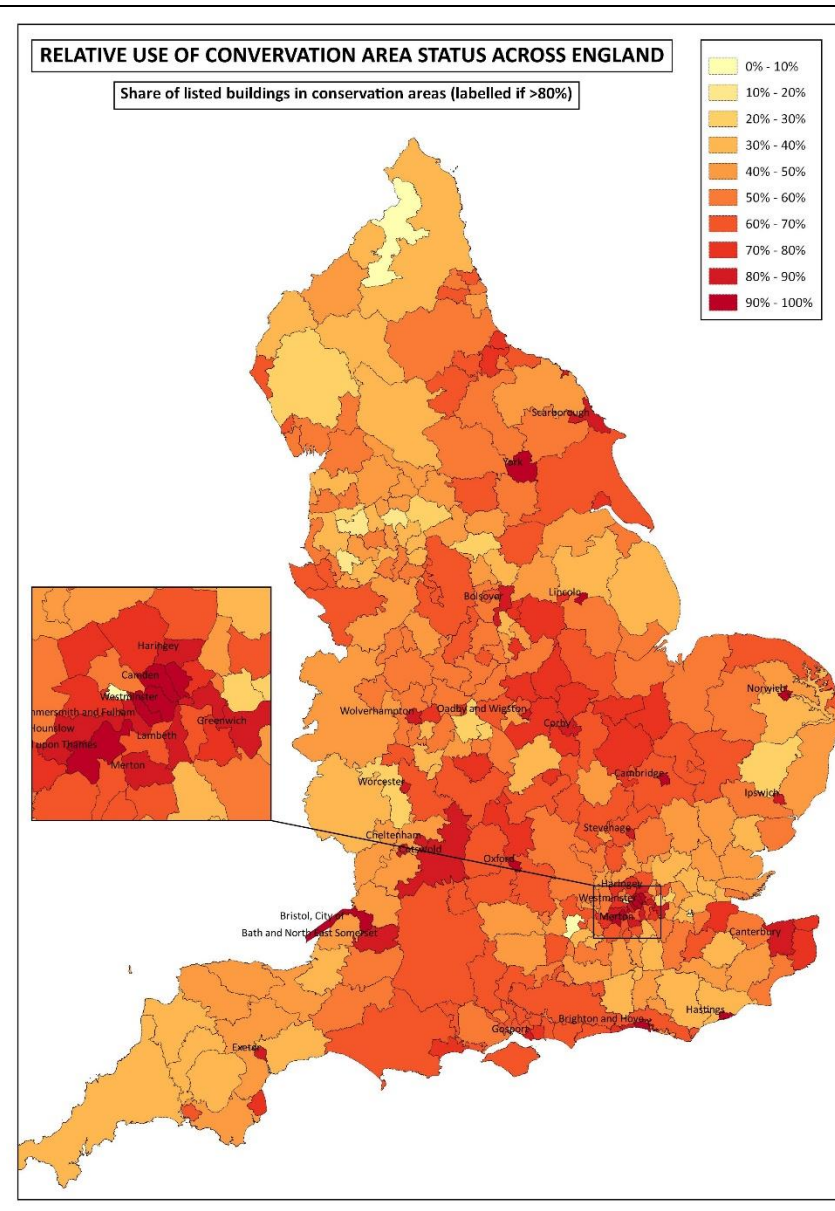
THE ABSOLUTE IMPACT OF CONSERVATION AREAS



CONSERVATION AREA MAPS 4



THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION AREAS



STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR THE 38 LPAs WITH THE HIGHEST CONSERVATION AREA ADDRESS SHARE

| SUMMARY OF KEY CONSERVATION AREA STATISTICS BY LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|------------|----------|--------|-------|--------|------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|------------------|--------|-------|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|---------|
| LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY | LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY TOTALS | | | | | | 327, o/w 11% in London | | | | | CONSERVATION AREA TOTALS | | | | | 9,779 unique CAs | | | | | CONSERVATION AREA SHARE | | | | | | | HE data |
| | Addresses | Area (ha) | LB count | Add/ha | LB/ha | LB/Add | Count | Parts | Addresses | Area (ha) | LB count | Address | Area | LB tot | Add/CA | Area/CA | LB/CA | Add/LB | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 24,644,118 | 13,301,536 | 379,082 | 1.85 | 0.03 | 1.5% | 9,918 | 139 | 2,533,857 | 303,529 | 214,726 | 10.3% | 2.3% | 56.6% | 256 | 31 | 22 | 12 | 7,319 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mean | 75,364 | 40,677 | 1,159 | 7.39 | 0.06 | 2.1% | 30 | 0 | 7,749 | 928 | 657 | 11.1% | 5.5% | 56.4% | 275 | 36 | 20 | 20 | 22 | | | | | | | | | | |
| London total | 3,488,408 | 160,554 | 19,259 | 21.73 | 0.12 | 0.6% | 1,060 | 16 | 598,550 | 24,861 | 16,103 | 17.2% | 15.5% | 83.6% | 565 | 23 | 15 | 37 | 738 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Isles of Scilly | 1,345 | 2,281 | 129 | 0.59 | 0.06 | 9.6% | 1 | - | 1,345 | 2,281 | 129 | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 1,345 | 2,281 | 129 | 10 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| City of Westminster | 108,813 | 2,204 | 3,944 | 49.37 | 1.79 | 3.6% | 56 | - | 68,426 | 1,699 | 3,845 | 62.9% | 77.1% | 97.5% | 1,222 | 30 | 69 | 18 | 56 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 67,713 | 1,239 | 1,337 | 54.66 | 1.08 | 2.0% | 39 | - | 42,365 | 913 | 1,292 | 62.6% | 73.7% | 96.6% | 1,086 | 23 | 33 | 33 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| Camden | 93,238 | 2,180 | 1,958 | 42.77 | 0.90 | 2.1% | 40 | 3 | 49,966 | 1,141 | 1,794 | 53.6% | 52.4% | 91.6% | 1,249 | 29 | 45 | 28 | 37 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 77,195 | 1,535 | 269 | 50.28 | 0.18 | 0.3% | 44 | - | 38,721 | 881 | 242 | 50.2% | 57.4% | 90.0% | 880 | 20 | 6 | 160 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peak District NPA | 19,045 | 143,897 | 2,141 | 0.13 | 0.01 | 11.2% | 110 | 6 | 8,155 | 3,665 | 1,291 | 42.8% | 2.5% | 60.3% | 74 | 33 | 12 | 6 | 104 | | | | | | | | | | |
| City of London | 12,515 | 315 | 612 | 39.72 | 1.94 | 4.9% | 26 | 1 | 5,131 | 118 | 492 | 41.0% | 37.4% | 80.4% | 197 | 5 | 19 | 10 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Islington | 95,399 | 1,486 | 1,047 | 64.19 | 0.70 | 1.1% | 41 | 2 | 33,634 | 589 | 988 | 35.3% | 39.6% | 94.4% | 820 | 14 | 24 | 34 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Forest NPA | 16,152 | 56,696 | 631 | 0.28 | 0.01 | 3.9% | 20 | 2 | 5,684 | 7,196 | 370 | 35.2% | 12.7% | 58.6% | 284 | 360 | 19 | 15 | 18 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Craven | 23,795 | 37,214 | 870 | 0.64 | 0.02 | 3.7% | 26 | 1 | 8,169 | 954 | 408 | 34.3% | 2.6% | 46.9% | 314 | 37 | 16 | 20 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yorkshire Dales NPA | 13,026 | 218,657 | 2,139 | 0.06 | 0.01 | 16.4% | 46 | 8 | 4,361 | 11,059 | 691 | 33.5% | 5.1% | 32.3% | 95 | 240 | 15 | 6 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cheltenham | 56,658 | 4,663 | 1,135 | 12.15 | 0.24 | 2.0% | 7 | - | 18,444 | 684 | 999 | 32.6% | 14.7% | 88.0% | 2,635 | 98 | 143 | 18 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bath and North East Somerset | 80,835 | 35,139 | 3,733 | 2.30 | 0.11 | 4.6% | 35 | - | 25,763 | 2,407 | 3,080 | 31.9% | 6.9% | 82.5% | 736 | 69 | 88 | 8 | 35 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Richmond upon Thames | 84,572 | 5,879 | 818 | 14.39 | 0.14 | 1.0% | 85 | - | 24,872 | 3,196 | 775 | 29.4% | 54.4% | 94.7% | 293 | 38 | 9 | 32 | 85 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cotswold | 44,816 | 116,545 | 5,000 | 0.38 | 0.04 | 11.2% | 144 | - | 13,131 | 3,373 | 4,017 | 29.3% | 2.9% | 80.3% | 91 | 23 | 28 | 3 | 144 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cambridge | 56,432 | 4,071 | 829 | 13.86 | 0.20 | 1.5% | 17 | - | 16,340 | 965 | 797 | 29.0% | 23.7% | 96.1% | 961 | 57 | 47 | 21 | 17 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Canterbury | 69,372 | 32,078 | 1,881 | 2.16 | 0.06 | 2.7% | 97 | - | 19,502 | 4,391 | 1,665 | 28.1% | 13.7% | 88.5% | 201 | 45 | 17 | 12 | 97 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rutland | 18,002 | 39,398 | 1,416 | 0.46 | 0.04 | 7.9% | 34 | - | 5,020 | 905 | 1,094 | 27.9% | 2.3% | 77.3% | 148 | 27 | 32 | 5 | 34 | | | | | | | | | | |
| West Oxfordshire | 49,720 | 71,497 | 3,202 | 0.70 | 0.04 | 6.4% | 51 | - | 13,656 | 2,825 | 2,180 | 27.5% | 4.0% | 68.1% | 268 | 55 | 43 | 6 | 51 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Haringey | 94,931 | 2,961 | 283 | 32.06 | 0.10 | 0.3% | 28 | - | 25,966 | 883 | 245 | 27.4% | 29.8% | 86.6% | 927 | 32 | 9 | 106 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| North York Moors NPA | 12,458 | 144,202 | 1,771 | 0.09 | 0.01 | 14.2% | 42 | 3 | 3,397 | 682 | 751 | 27.3% | 0.5% | 42.4% | 81 | 16 | 18 | 5 | 39 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Exmoor NPA | 5,965 | 69,345 | 743 | 0.09 | 0.01 | 12.5% | 16 | - | 1,569 | 237 | 300 | 26.3% | 0.3% | 40.4% | 98 | 15 | 19 | 5 | 16 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broads Authority | 3,974 | 30,132 | 265 | 0.13 | 0.01 | 6.7% | 20 | 10 | 1,022 | 6,194 | 92 | 25.7% | 20.6% | 34.7% | 51 | 310 | 5 | 11 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harrogate | 74,206 | 131,014 | 2,278 | 0.57 | 0.02 | 3.1% | 53 | - | 18,829 | 1,926 | 1,175 | 25.4% | 1.5% | 51.6% | 355 | 36 | 22 | 16 | 53 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hackney | 103,556 | 1,827 | 546 | 56.68 | 0.30 | 0.5% | 31 | 2 | 25,768 | 549 | 409 | 24.9% | 30.1% | 74.9% | 831 | 18 | 13 | 63 | 29 | | | | | | | | | | |
| St. Albans | 62,859 | 16,128 | 835 | 3.90 | 0.05 | 1.3% | 19 | 1 | 15,398 | 1,288 | 584 | 24.5% | 8.0% | 69.9% | 810 | 68 | 31 | 26 | 18 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Derbyshire Dales | 23,315 | 33,647 | 1,015 | 0.69 | 0.03 | 4.4% | 33 | - | 5,617 | 1,710 | 651 | 24.1% | 5.1% | 64.1% | 170 | 52 | 20 | 9 | 33 | | | | | | | | | | |
| South Downs NPA | 53,566 | 165,361 | 5,204 | 0.32 | 0.03 | 9.7% | 154 | 5 | 12,797 | 2,249 | 3,129 | 23.9% | 1.4% | 60.1% | 83 | 15 | 20 | 4 | 131 | | | | | | | | | | |
| North Norfolk | 55,612 | 92,954 | 2,267 | 0.60 | 0.02 | 4.1% | 82 | 4 | 13,204 | 10,191 | 1,460 | 23.7% | 11.0% | 64.4% | 161 | 124 | 18 | 9 | 78 | | | | | | | | | | |
| The City of Brighton and Hove | 118,564 | 4,795 | 1,192 | 24.73 | 0.25 | 1.0% | 33 | - | 27,909 | 665 | 1,089 | 23.5% | 13.9% | 91.4% | 846 | 20 | 33 | 26 | 33 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wandsworth | 135,795 | 3,523 | 308 | 38.54 | 0.09 | 0.2% | 45 | - | 31,817 | 1,055 | 205 | 23.4% | 29.9% | 66.6% | 707 | 23 | 5 | 155 | 45 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Torbay | 67,333 | 11,953 | 865 | 5.63 | 0.07 | 1.3% | 24 | - | 15,599 | 814 | 683 | 23.2% | 6.8% | 79.0% | 650 | 34 | 28 | 23 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tower Hamlets | 130,295 | 2,080 | 913 | 62.64 | 0.44 | 0.7% | 56 | 1 | 29,801 | 653 | 787 | 22.9% | 31.4% | 86.2% | 532 | 12 | 14 | 38 | 55 | | | | | | | | | | |
| East Hertfordshire | 64,266 | 47,583 | 3,023 | 1.35 | 0.06 | 4.7% | 42 | - | 14,692 | 1,476 | 1,676 | 22.9% | 3.1% | 55.4% | 350 | 35 | 40 | 9 | 42 | | | | | | | | | | |
| West Devon | 20,145 | 63,383 | 1,418 | 0.32 | 0.02 | 7.0% | 24 | - | 4,526 | 358 | 521 | 22.5% | 0.6% | 36.7% | 189 | 15 | 22 | 9 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lambeth | 126,824 | 2,726 | 943 | 46.52 | 0.35 | 0.7% | 62 | - | 28,439 | 810 | 800 | 22.4% | 29.7% | 84.8% | 459 | 13 | 13 | 36 | 62 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Scarborough | 49,818 | 22,308 | 1,048 | 2.23 | 0.05 | 2.1% | 27 | 3 | 10,886 | 713 | 932 | 21.9% | 3.2% | 88.9% | 403 | 26 | 35 | 12 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Richmondshire | 20,134 | 57,118 | 1,290 | 0.35 | 0.02 | 6.4% | 41 | - | 4,299 | 680 | 890 | 21.4% | 1.2% | 69.0% | 105 | 17 | 22 | 5 | 41 | | | | | | | | | | |

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

On the preceding page, the columns **Add/ha** and **LB/ha** show the density of addresses and buildings per hectare across the LPA area, while **LB/Add** denotes the share of listed buildings among all local addresses. In the conservation area statistics, **Count** shows the number of separately enumerated CAs with a material component of their area (over 15%) or properties (over 10) in a given LPA area, while **Parts** shows how many of these are secondary components of a larger CA falling mostly within a different LPA area. The other columns should be self-explanatory.

CAs vary significantly in size around the country, with a relatively small number of spatially large or densely populated CAs skewing the overall coverage numbers. The median **area** is 550 ha (lower and upper quartiles 253 ha and 1,022 ha), but the mean is 926 ha, with the skew driven by both smaller shares of large county-wide LPAs (such as Wiltshire, Dorset, East Yorkshire and Cornwall) and much larger shares of areas with a high concentration of historic buildings (such as some of the National Parks, Canterbury and Richmond upon Thames). For **property addresses**, the median is around 4,800 (quartiles around 2,700 and 8,900), with the mean around 7,700. Again, some of the larger county-wide LPAs play an important role, but higher density cities feature most strongly, with many of London's boroughs above 25,000 (Westminster heads the table with 68,400) and Bristol (41,400), Leeds (40,500), Brighton & Hove (28,000) and Bath & North East Somerset (25,800) all prominent. Viewed on a proportional basis (as in the table), the median **share of addresses** in CAs is 8.2% (quartiles 4.4% - 14.6%), relative to a mean of 10.3%, with significant concentrations in the Isles of Scilly, several areas of London, some National Parks, Bath and the Cotswolds. For spatial extent, the median **share of land area** is 2.3% (quartiles 1.2% - 4.9%), the mean 5.5%, and London plays a critical role in the skew with 15.5% of its total land area covered by CAs and concentrations above 50% in several boroughs. Apart from London, Cambridge (23.7%), the Broads Authority (20.6%), Oxford (18.3%) and other historic cities all feature heavily. In terms of the **local role of CAs relative to listed buildings**, the median CA address to LB ratio is 12 (quartiles 8 – 23), the mean 20, and CAs also play a particularly important role in London (where the overall average is 37) alongside places like Blackpool (112), Watford (77), Oadby & Wigston (76) and Eastbourne (58).

Ian Hall, February 2020