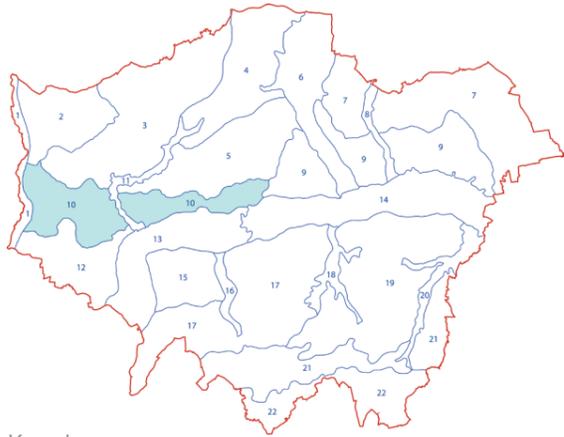


10. Hayes Gravels

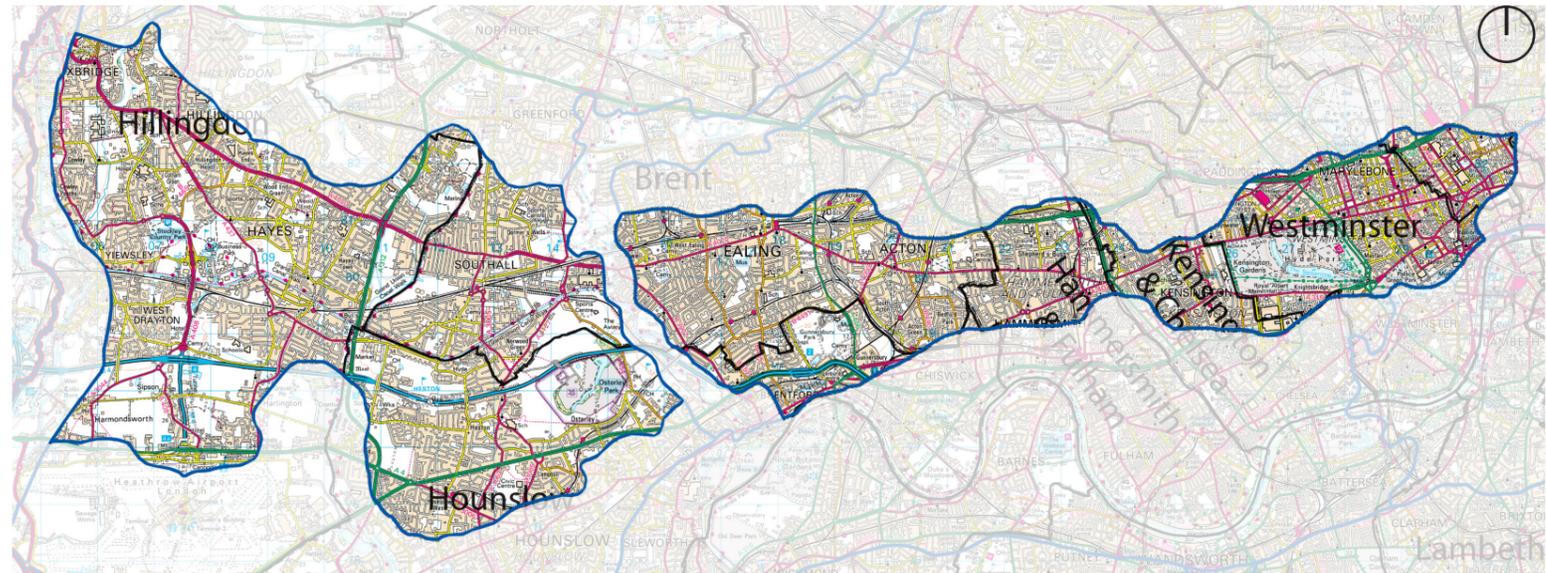


Key plan

Description

The Hayes Gravels are split in two sections, divided by the Brent Valley (NLA 11). They are gravel terraces to the north of the Thames which run east–west from Hillingdon to Southall and north Hounslow, and then from Ealing and Brentford to Finsbury, sandwiched between the Barnet Plateau (NLA 3) and Hampstead Ridge (NLA 5) to the north and the Upper Thames Valley (NLA 13) to the south. The alignment of the area follows the broad flightpath of planes coming in to land at Heathrow Airport. The topography is a gradual but fairly constant slope from north to south – there are shallow summits at Hillingdon, to the north of the Serpentine (25m AOD) and in the west at Ealing Common (30m AOD).

London Clay is the dominant bedrock, with deposits of the Boyn Hill Gravel Member near Hillingdon, Langley Silt Member cropping out extensively westwards from Kensington, Lynch Hill Gravel Member through Ealing, Kensington and Westminster, Taplow Gravel Member to the south east (Kensington) and an arm of alluvium extending north through Mayfair. Many areas of the Langley Silts have been worked out around Hammersmith and Hayes for bricks; the quarries were generally not backfilled and houses were built on many of them. Sand and gravel in the west have been extensively worked. These quarries were largely backfilled and were generally not built over.

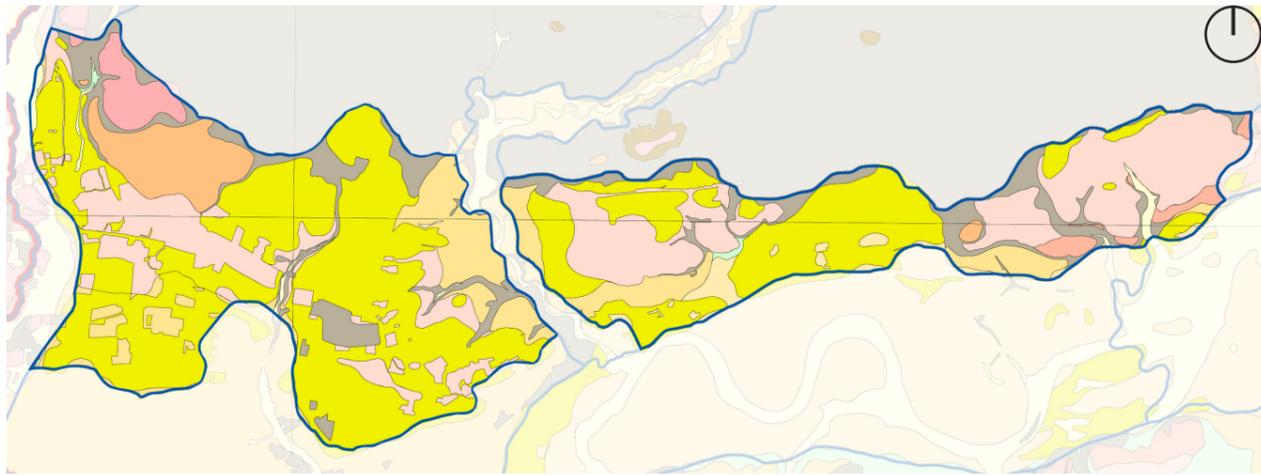


10. Hayes Gravels

The soils are principally deep loam, with occasional areas of deep silt and seasonally wet loams and silts which are focused along shallow valleys. This is most evident at the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park.

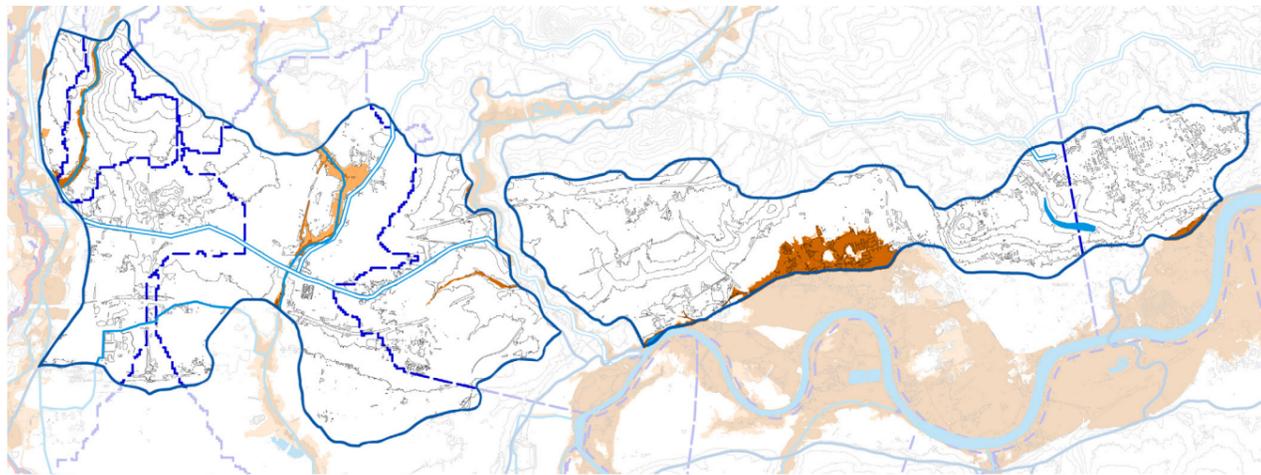
The historic centres of settlement (at Ealing, Gunnersbury Park and Shepherd's Bush) developed along the ancient roads from the west leading to the Anglo Saxon trading settlement of Lundenwic. These areas are predominantly Victorian terraces, interspersed by much smaller interwar suburbs. Extensive public open spaces in the east (Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens) are surrounded by Georgian residential buildings in Kensington, Mayfair and Chelsea. In the far west the dominant built form is of recent residential and commercial development, particularly around Hillingdon, Hayes Town and along the A4020.

Few areas of natural landscape remain within this built up area. Overland rail and road infrastructure do not serve as corridors of natural vegetation. However, there are strips of native woodland along the railway embankments in Ealing and in Holland Park, cemeteries and in small patches of Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens. Further west, small areas of semi-natural habitats build up a fragmented ecological network.



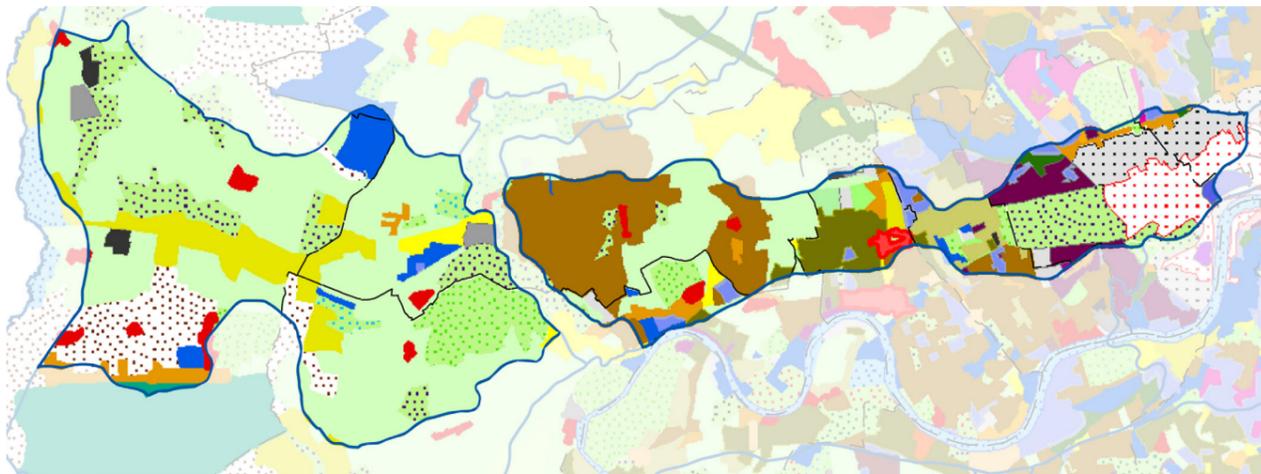
Geology

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Rivers and Topography

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY DATA



Historic Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENGLISH HERITAGE DATA

Natural signature and natural landscape features

Natural signature:
Hayes Gravels – Small-scale, enclosed landscape of meadows bordered by tall hedgerows, with woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees.

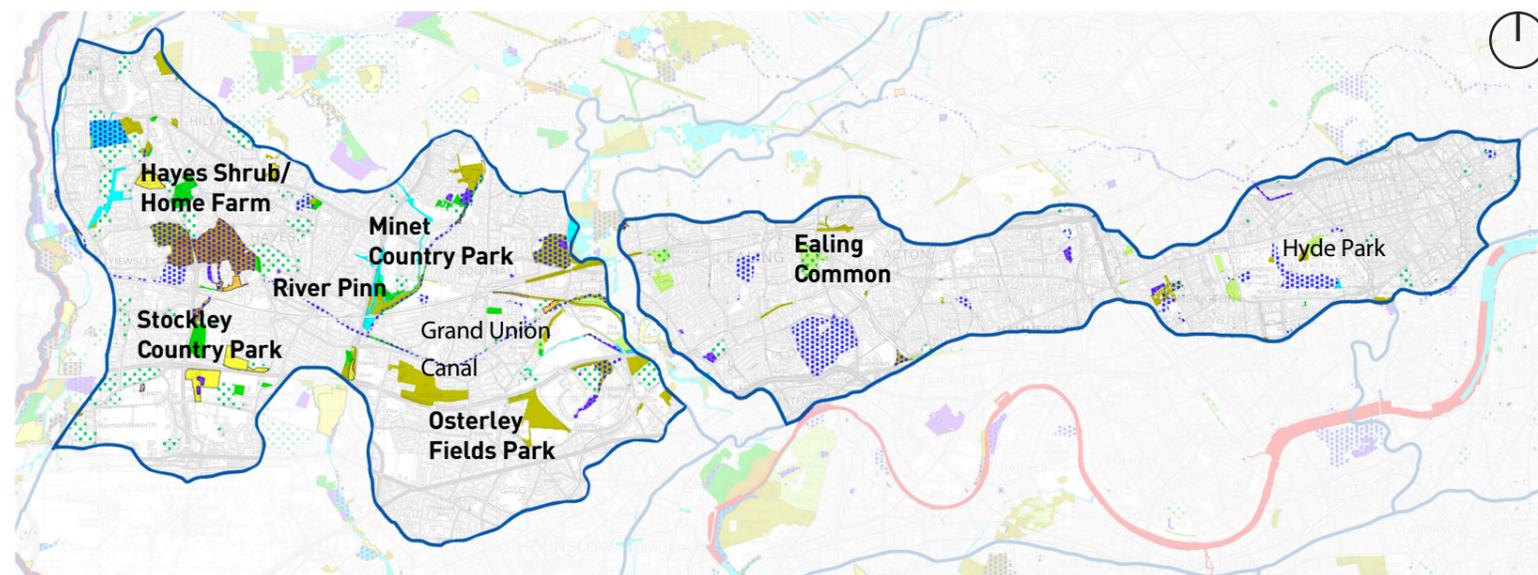
Given the intense built structure of the majority of the Natural Landscape Area, the Natural Signature is of designed or recovered semi-natural landscapes. This is due to the settlement history of the Landscape Area, where growth has followed natural transport and habitat corridors extending west from central London.

The remnant natural landscape features provide clues for the natural landscape signature of the area and suggest that this is a relatively small scale, enclosed landscape of meadows bordered by tall hedgerows, with woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees. The streams winding across the river terraces are typically enclosed by winding lines of trees and strips of damp woodland. The low hills are significant features, which offer rare opportunities for views.

Examples of natural landscape features within the Hayes Gravels Natural Landscape Area are:

- **Minet Country Park/Grand Union Canal** – Minet Country Park partly comprises reclaimed derelict land- it was opened in 2003. Much of the country park is recently-created rough grassland, with areas of older, more natural meadow. The scrubby pits and hillocks support a rich flora and diverse birdlife. To the north-east of the country park the banks of the Yeading Brook are clothed in scrub and small trees. A small stream with largely natural banks runs eastwards through Hitherbroom Park to meet the Yeading Brook in the Country Park. The stream is largely lined with large crack willow and there is abundant wetland flora.

- **Hayes Shrub/Home Farm** – this woodland lies within Hayes Business Park, and comprises a mixture of native and exotic tree species, and appears to have some ancient woodland characteristics. Mature and regenerating pedunculate oak is widespread, while hornbeam is more localised. Hazels within the wood show evidence of former coppicing and violets grow abundantly on the woodland floor. The woodland incorporates a seasonal marshy pond (formerly ornamental, now naturalised) and various seasonal ditches. Flora of the damper areas includes locally abundant remote sedge, water starwort, soft rush, yellow flag and common water plantain. Roe deer have been reported at the site in recent years. The woodland is within a security fence surrounding Hayes Business Park, and is inaccessible to the general public.
- **River Pinn** – The River Pinn is bordered on both sides by open grassland, much of which comprises rank grasses and tall herbs with scattered scrub, although some of it is managed as sports fields. The river is generally lined by trees and shrubs such as alder, crack willow, ash, hawthorn and blackthorn but open areas of the banks are smothered in bramble and nettle. The heavy shade and competition has led to a dearth of aquatic and wetland plants except for the invasive species, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and Indian balsam. The area between Church Road and Nursery Lane comprises rough horse-grazed pasture with scrub to the west and roughland to the east, separated by the River Pinn, along with native hedges and scattered trees. Pedunculate oak, hornbeam and ash are present. There is no public access to this area. To the north, there is a well-structured patchwork of grassland, tall herbs, ruderals and hedgerow remnants with trees. There is public access, generally restricted to footpaths, across most of the site, except for the fenced former nursery to the north.
- **Stockley Country Park** – This large, hilly country park contains extensive grassland and other habitats including tall herbs, scrub, trees and hedgerows, much of which has been planted. Copses of planted silver birch, wild cherry, lime and white willow are present with other woody species as hedges including hazel, dogwood and blackthorn with scattered London plane and horse chestnut. In spite of its artificial beginnings, the site is important for its number of birds and invertebrates, probably due to the variety of plant species present.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

- **Osterley Fields & Park** – These two large fields are bounded by fine old hedgerows and contain some large mature trees and arable land. The grassland is not of any great botanical interest, but in combination with the hedges and trees, the fields support a good range of birds, including skylark, meadow pipit and little owl. The large landscaped park has numerous features of nature conservation interest, including veteran trees, areas of woodland and several water bodies. The parkland trees include some very fine old oaks, which are likely to be of considerable importance for invertebrates, fungi and cavity-nesting birds. There are several areas of woodland which contain a wide variety of trees and shrubs (native and exotic) and support good populations of common woodland birds. There are two lakes and a few smaller water bodies.
- **Ealing Common** – Although most of the Common is kept as amenity grassland, there are extensive areas of acid grassland and wildflower meadows in the centre, which are allowed to flower, with rough neutral grasses to the south. Semi-natural woody vegetation occurs in two places in the north of the common where remnant ancient hedgerows have survived with a mix of native species of trees and shrubs including hawthorn, holly, English elm and elder.

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Underlining the natural signature of the Hayes Gravels

Key influences

- Oak-ash-hornbeam woodland and copses.
- Hazel coppice.
- Small pastures enclosed by native hedgerows, with hedgerow trees.
- Meadows with tall grasses and herbs.
- Small wet meadows and damp woodlands alongside winding streams with narrow floodplains.

Design clues

Ideas for place making and shaping future design decisions - how the Natural Signatures for each natural landscape area might be expressed within the wider public realm, through new development and landscape management projects.

- Small native woodlands and copses, in combination with wildflower meadows.
- Curving wildflower meadows contrasting with areas of mown grass alongside paths and as a focus within open spaces.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees to divide and define public spaces and routes.
- Lines of willow trees along swales and wet ditches.
- Community gardens as part of a small-scale landscape pattern.

Hayes Gravels – Key environmental assets

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
Hayes Shrub/Home Farm	Hillingdon	Gated mixed woodland within Hayes Business Park, appears to have some ancient woodland characteristics; includes exotic species; contains deer population; some areas of wetland.
River Pinn	Hillingdon	Bordered for the majority of its course on both sides by grassland; large populations of invasive species, eg Indian Balsam and Japanese Knotweed.
Stockley Country Park	Hillingdon	Contains extensive grassland and tall herbs; planted woodlands and hedgerows, much of which is based on native mixes.
Osterley Fields and Park	Hillingdon	Bounded by old hedgerows with some mature trees; grassland of limited botanical interest; includes two lakes and some smaller water bodies.
Minet Country Park/ Grand Union Canal	Hillingdon	Comprises largely reclaimed derelict land; pits and hillocks support diverse flora and fauna; much of the watercourses lined with crack willow; limited public access.
Ealing Common	Brent	Open parkland with scattered trees and ponds
Gunnersbury Park	Hounslow	Large park with scattered trees and ponds and grasslands
Hyde Park	Westminster	Royal Park with many fine specimen trees and ancient trees. Serpentine lake with some aquatic vegetation.