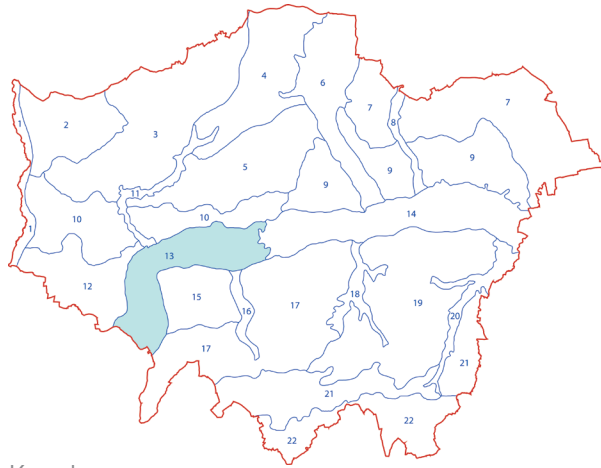


13. Upper Thames



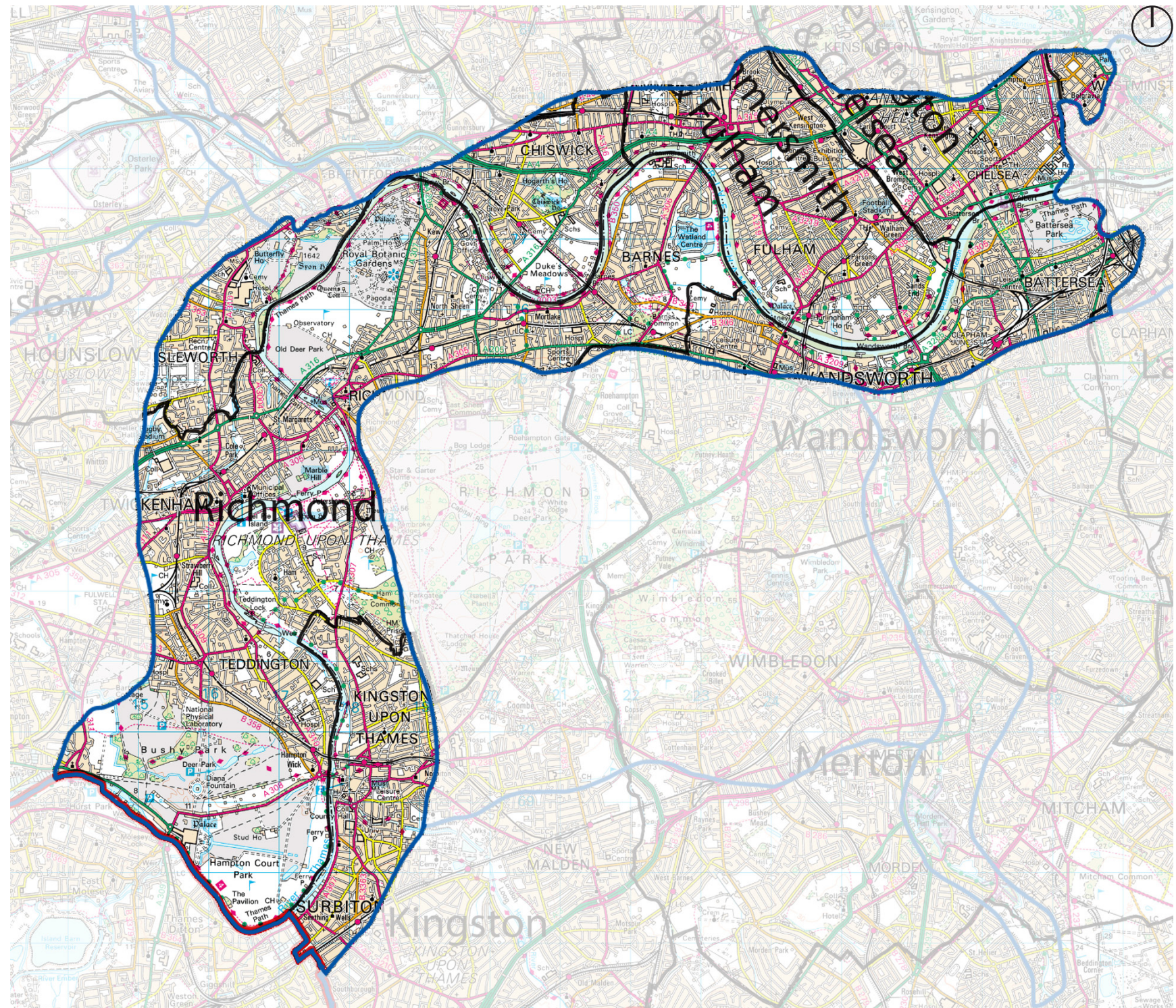
Key plan

Description

The Upper Thames Natural Landscape Area follows the upper reaches of the Thames within Greater London, from Hampton Court and Bushy Park, through Richmond Park and Kew, Dukes Meadow, Barnes and Fulham to Battersea Park. The landform is flat and the whole area is within the largely still tidal Thames floodplain, with the exception of minor outcrops at Dukes Meadows and Putney. However, a slight slope between Fulham and Chelsea follows the overground railway line to Clapham Junction.

The Upper Thames area is underlain by London Clay, with superficial deposits of river gravels (Kempton Park Gravel Formation), silts (Langley Silt Members) at Richmond, Hounslow and Battersea, and alluvium along the bed of the River Thames. The soils are generally deep loams, with seasonally wet deep clay along the banks of the River Thames from Teddington to Barnes.

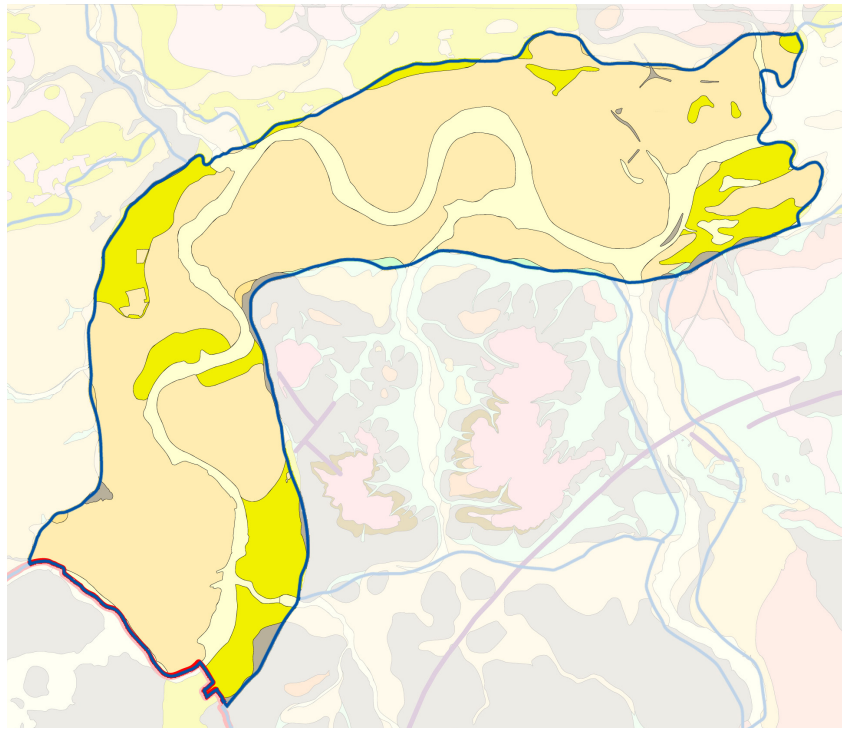
This attractive, meandering section of the Thames was historically a popular site for royal palaces and their associated parks. Those that remain are Hampton Court Palace, Bushy Park, Syon House and Park, Old Deer Park Gardens at Richmond and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Together they form a chain of high quality parks along the banks of the Thames. The formal parks are supplemented by a range of informal open spaces including Dukes Meadows at Chiswick, the London Wetland Centre in Barnes, Ham Common, the Ham Lands Nature Reserve and further east, Battersea Park. The sequence of open spaces is interspersed with the relatively dense historic settlements of Kingston upon Thames, Twickenham, Isleworth, Richmond upon Thames, Chiswick, Barnes, Putney, Wandsworth, Battersea, Fulham and Chelsea. Each settlement has an attractive river frontage, often with Victorian or Georgian terraces forming a backdrop to views along the river.



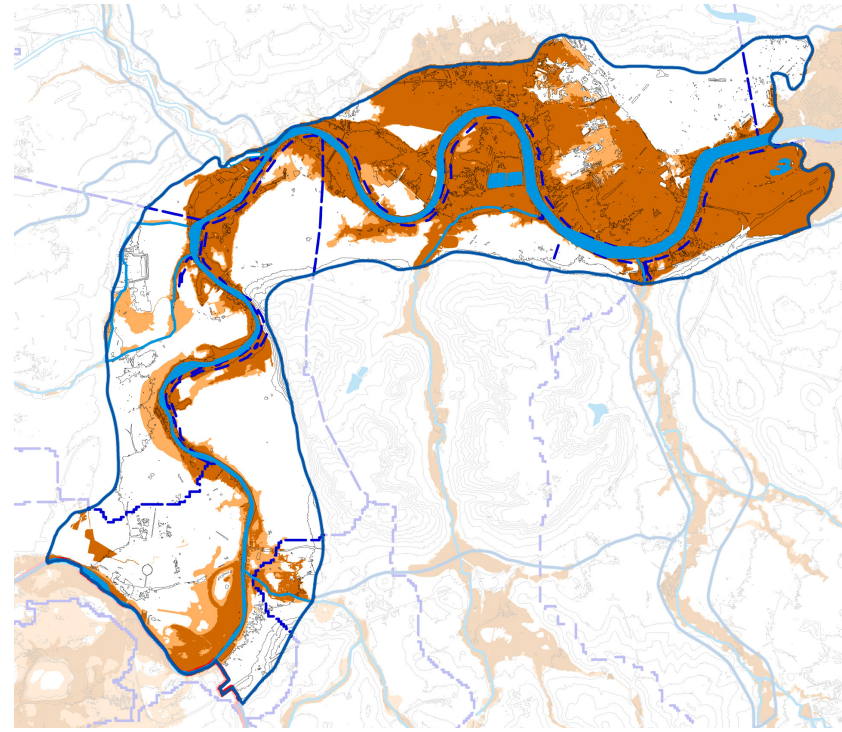
13. Upper Thames

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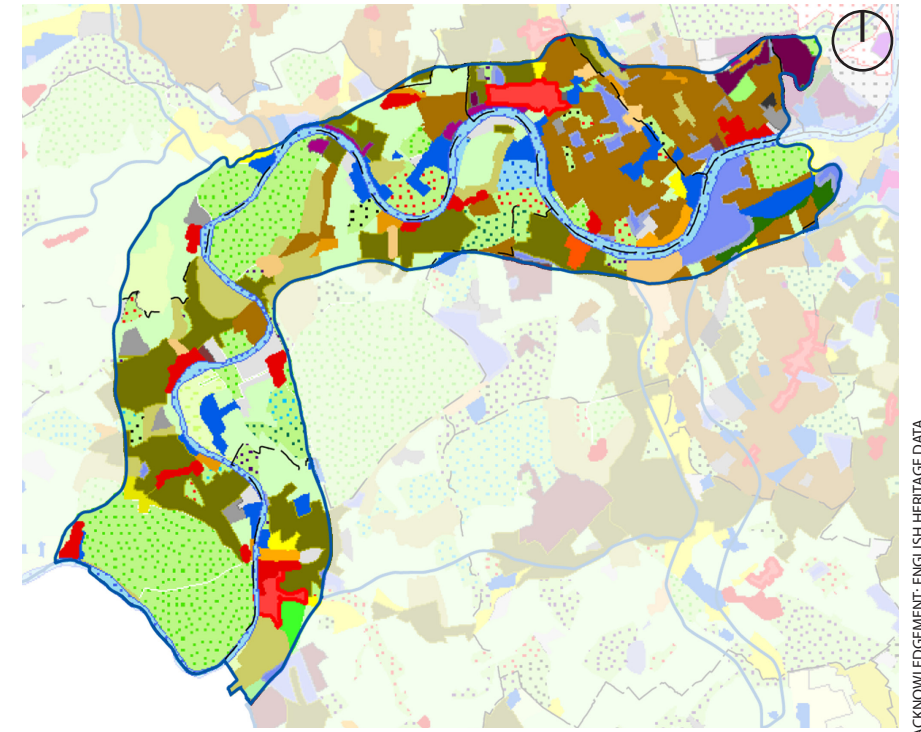
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Geology



Rivers and Topography



Historic Development

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY DATA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENGLISH HERITAGE DATA

Natural Signature and natural landscape features

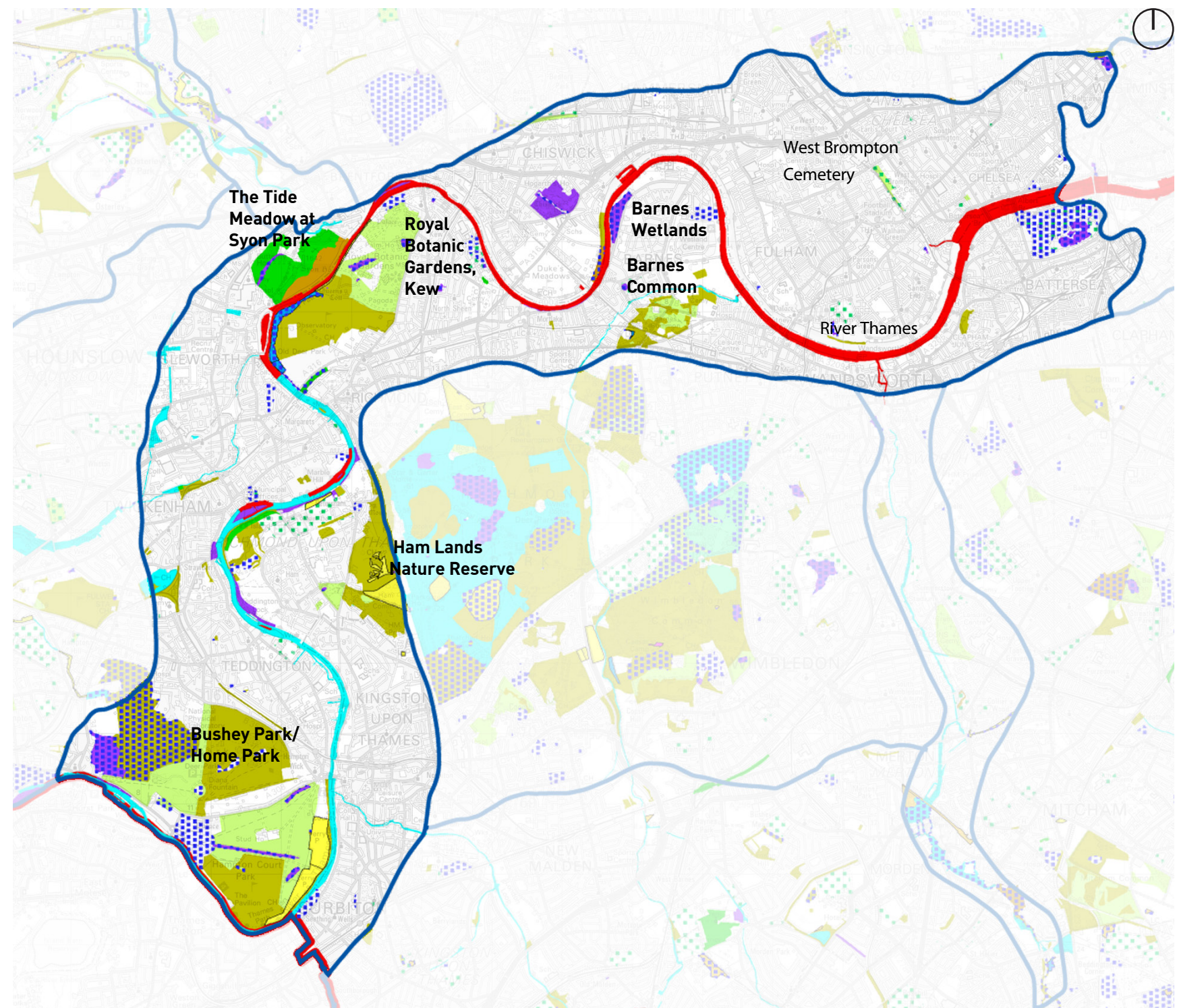
Natural Signature:
Upper Thames – The meandering River Thames, together with the transitional mud-flats, shingle beaches, islands and flood meadows alongside.

The River Thames and its bordering wetland landscapes are the focus for views and activities throughout the area. A typical natural transition is from the open water of the river channel to mudflats or shingle beach, to an open flood meadow with ditches, ponds and wetland scrapes, backed by a drier mosaic of acid grassland and scrub, which eventually becomes a backdrop of woodland. In reality only isolated components – examples from this ‘typical’ landscape transition – exist as it is interrupted by a variety of flood defences and the sequence of designed parklands and built development alongside.

Examples of natural landscape features within the Upper Thames Natural Landscape Area are:

- **Bushy Park/Home Park** – These two adjacent Royal Parks comprise a large area of old parkland habitats, including some of the best acid grassland in London and a variety of interesting wetlands. The numerous ponds and ditches are also home to rare plants, including the only London population of the nationally scarce mudwort, a declining plant which grows at the edges of Heron Pond in Bushy Park. The Longford River feeds Bushy Park’s wetlands with water from the River Colne.
- **Ham Lands Nature Reserve** – This area of restored gravel pits beside the River Thames contains a mosaic of habitats, including herb-rich grassland, scrub and woodland. To the north-west there is a low-lying area of original flood meadow, though this floods only rarely. The rest of the site has been raised by landfill. Open areas support a grassland community of remarkable diversity, with numerous London rarities, both native and exotic. The grassland is fast losing ground to scrub, an important habitat, supporting a diversity of birds and mammals.

- **Barnes Common** – A large common with some acid grassland, although secondary oak-birch woodland and scrub are becoming increasingly dominant. A high diversity of typical acid grassland plants includes the London rarities creeping willow, mat-grass and slender St John's Wort, as well as a small population of heather. Areas of scrub are dominated by gorse and broom. Most of the woodland is fairly recent, but there are several ancient oak pollards. Old Barnes Cemetery, which contains a mix of rough grassland and woodland, and Barnes Old Goods Yard, a small wasteland site, abut the Common.
- **Barnes Wetlands** – A wide range of wetland habitats have been created, including two lakes, several smaller ponds, mud and shingle scrapes, reedbeds and an area of grazing marsh intersected by ditches. A wide diversity of wildfowl and waders use the site year-round. A wildlife pond to the north of the main site is also included.
- **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** – The gardens contain some valuable semi-natural habitats, including woodland, grassland and wetlands, supporting a good diversity of birds and other animals. The largest 'wild' area is the woodland surrounding the Queen's Cottage. The canopy is dominated by pedunculate oak, with an understorey of rhododendron. While some of the grassland within the gardens has been fertilised and re-seeded, much retains its original acid character. Some areas are managed as meadows, while others are cut short as lawns, providing a range of conditions for a good diversity of plants.
- **The Tide Meadow at Syon Park** – One of the few remaining Thames-side wetlands, and particularly unusual in being regularly inundated by the tide. The site is also one of few unimproved grasslands in London grazed by cattle. The grassland, willow woodland and dykes support a rich wetland flora, with numerous species which are scarce in London.
- **Disused track-bed west of Hammersmith station** – The network of railway lines which crosses Hammersmith and Fulham provides some important wildlife habitats. A length of disused track-bed on the elevated viaduct section of a line on the western approach to Hammersmith station is dominated by colourful ornamental shrubs, such as butterfly-bush and Spanish broom. These are very attractive to bees, butterflies and other nectar-feeding insects. There is no public access, but the site can be viewed from passing Underground trains.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

Underlining the natural signature of the Upper Thames

Key influences

- Daily tidal ebb and flow.
- Meandering river channels, tributary creeks and islands.
- Mudflats etched with winding creeks.
- Shifting shingle beaches.
- Transition from open acid grasslands to wet floodplain meadows, with ponds, ditches and flushes.
- Grazing cattle on the floodplain meadows.
- Heathy scrub and secondary woodland as a backdrop to the floodplain.
- Ancient pollarded trees.

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.

- Strong sinuous forms – echoing the meandering river channel.
- Ponds, ditches, swales and wide wetland scrapes surrounded by open meadows.
- Shingle banks on fringes of flood attenuation basins, which will gradually become vegetated.
- Wide, shallow swales, with an open, marshy character.
- Shallow terraces stepping down towards the river, with a mosaic of grassland and locally sourced gravel.
- Pollarded trees.

Upper Thames – Key environmental assets

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
River Thames	Richmond, Hounslow, Wandsworth, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster	Includes mudflats, shingle beach, inter tidal vegetation and islands; supports diverse flora and fauna species.
Bushy Park/Home Park	Richmond upon Thames	Old parkland habitats; some of the best acid grassland in Greater London and a variety of wetlands.
Ham Lands Nature Reserve	Richmond upon Thames	Restored gravel pits supporting herb-rich grassland, scrub and woodland.
Barnes Common	Richmond upon Thames	Large common with some acid grassland; majority consists of secondary woodland.
Barnes Wetlands	Richmond upon Thames	Created wetland habitats including two lakes and several ponds; area of grazing marsh.
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew	Richmond upon Thames	Some valuable semi-natural habitats, including grassland, woodlands and wetlands; much of it retains original acid character.
The Tide Meadow at Syon Park	Hounslow	One of the few Thames-side wetlands, regularly inundated by the tide.
Disused trackbed west of Hammersmith station	Hammersmith & Fulham	Habitats tend to be undisturbed with infrequent management.
West Brompton Cemetery	Kensington & Chelsea	Good variety of wildflowers.
Hampton Court Park	Richmond upon Thames	Historic Palace Grounds, designed gardens of great heritage value including maze.
Dukes Meadow	Richmond upon Thames	Golf Course, also wild flower gardens run by community conservation group.
Dukes Hollow	Richmond upon Thames	Inundated partially twice a day by the tide, this area holds a high ecological value. Herbaceous communities, alder and willow.
Battersea Park	Wandsworth	Victorian park including woodland and lake.
Ham Common	Richmond upon Thames	Remaining common land with historic lake, Ham Pond.