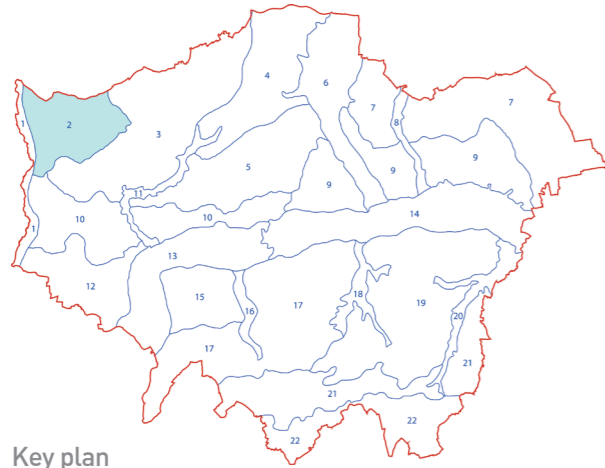


2. Ruislip Plateau



Key plan

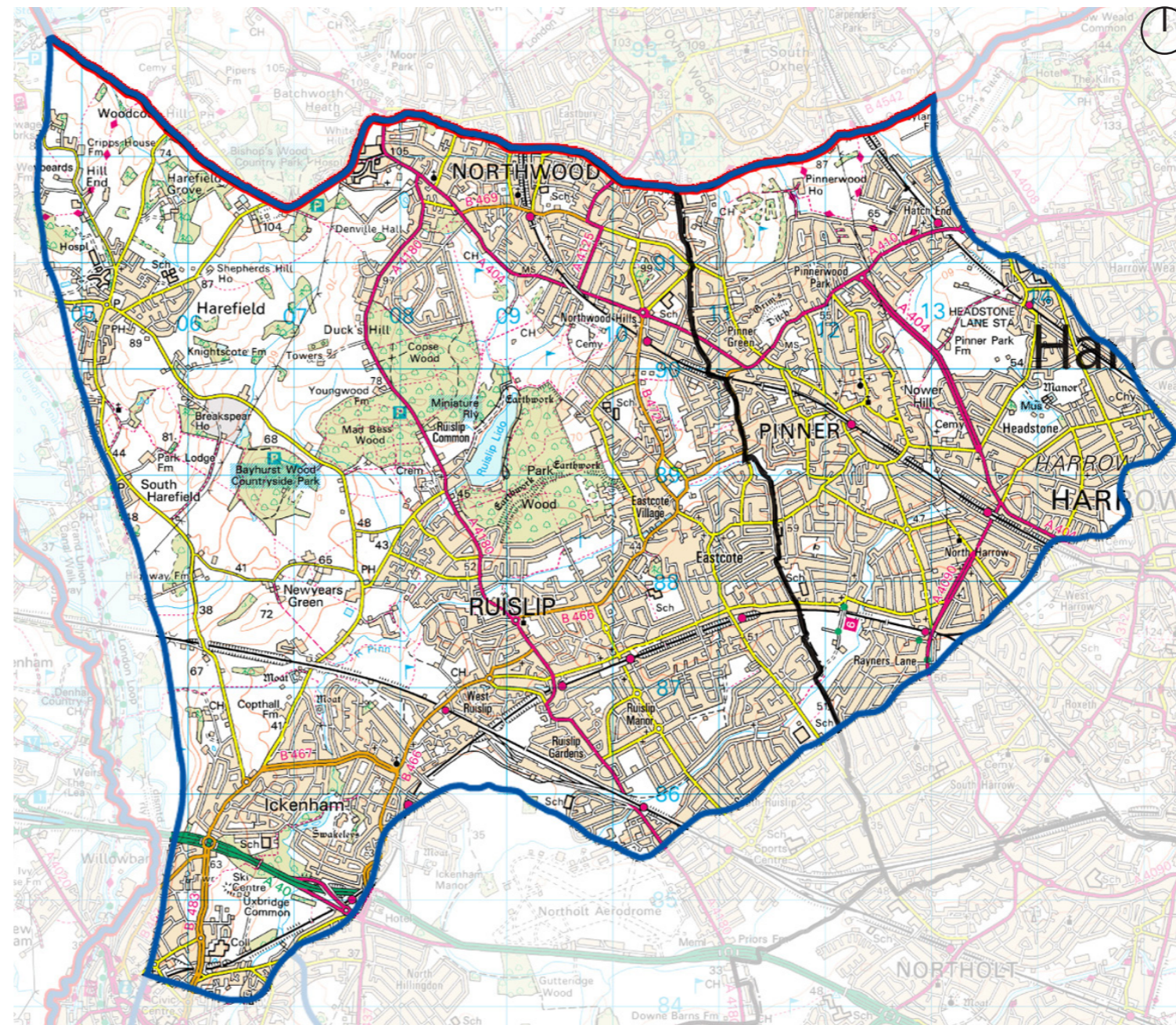
Description

The Ruislip Plateau is in the north-west corner of London, bordered by the Barnet Plateau (NLA 3) to the east and the Colne Valley (NLA 1) to the west. The southern boundary of the Area runs from Uxbridge up to Harrow, roughly following the path of the Yeading Brook.

This elevated plateau is partially underlain by London Clays, but an extensive foundation of rocks from the Lambeth Group ensures this landscape is strikingly different from those around it. Lambeth Group rocks were laid down in coastal or estuarine conditions and include mottled clays and sands, with some pebbly beds and masses of fine sand. Superficial layers of gravel and river terrace deposits cover the north-western part of the Ruislip Plateau, with bands of alluvium following the paths of two streams that dissect the elevated land, the Yeading Brook and the River Pinn.

The core settlements of Ruislip and Pinner have developed in the centre of the Ruislip Plateau. The extensive group of ancient woodlands, known as Ruislip Woods, are a remnant of extensive ancient woodlands, which were cleared for settlement in medieval times. Ruislip Woods fringe the former canal reservoir of Ruislip Lido and provide a major focal point for the settlements around it, which include the interwar terraces and semi-detached housing of Harrow, Northwood and Ickenham. These settlements extend across the majority of the Ruislip Plateau NLA, with the exception of an area of countryside to the north-west. Here, patchworks of fields are bordered by abundant native hedges and are interspersed by ponds, lakes and watercourses.

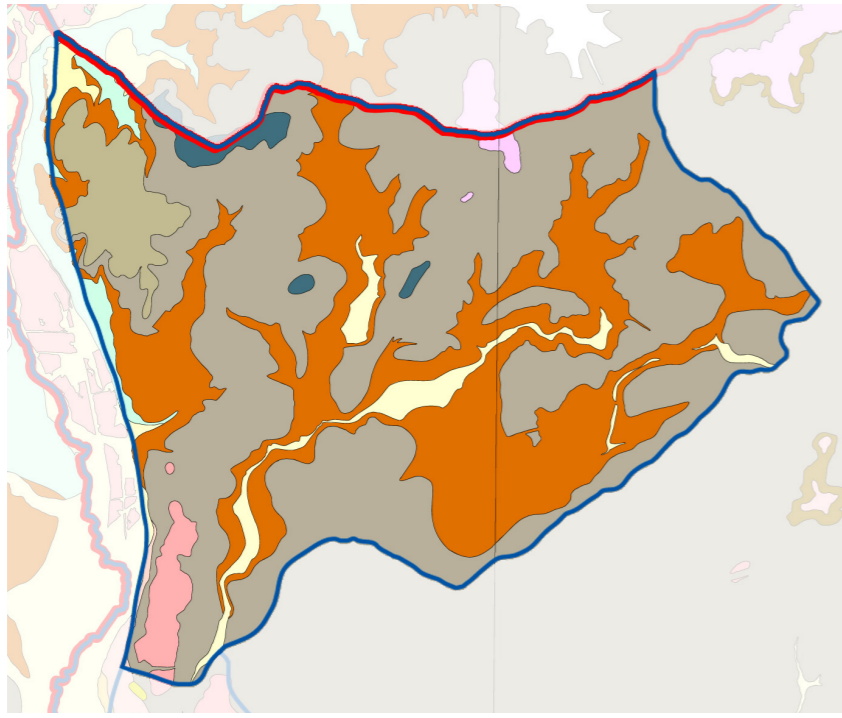
Many golf courses and open spaces punctuate the northern stretch of the Ruislip Plateau, and the two river corridors and railway cuttings offer some linear open space corridors further south.



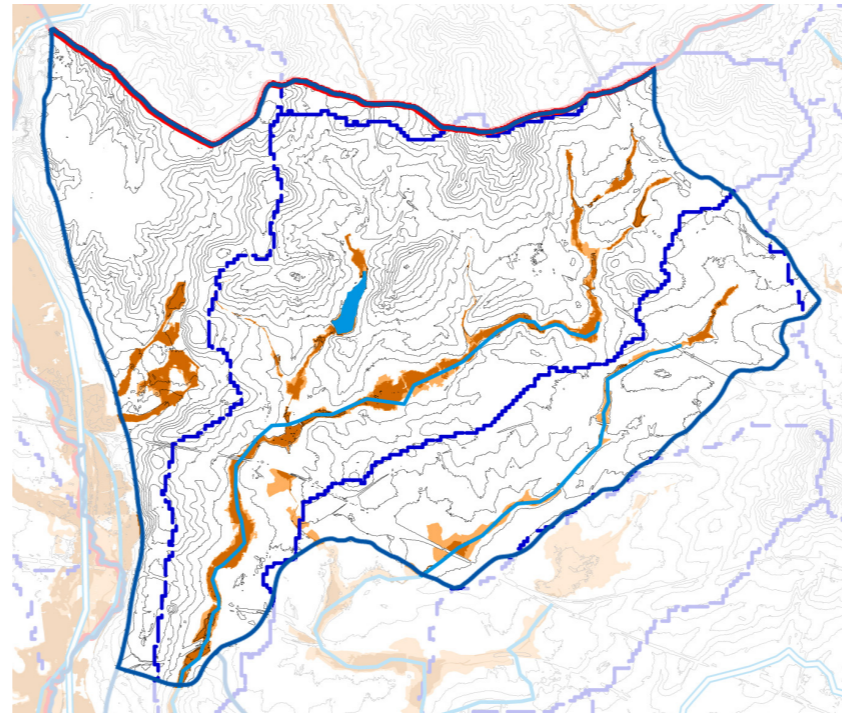
2. Ruislip Plateau

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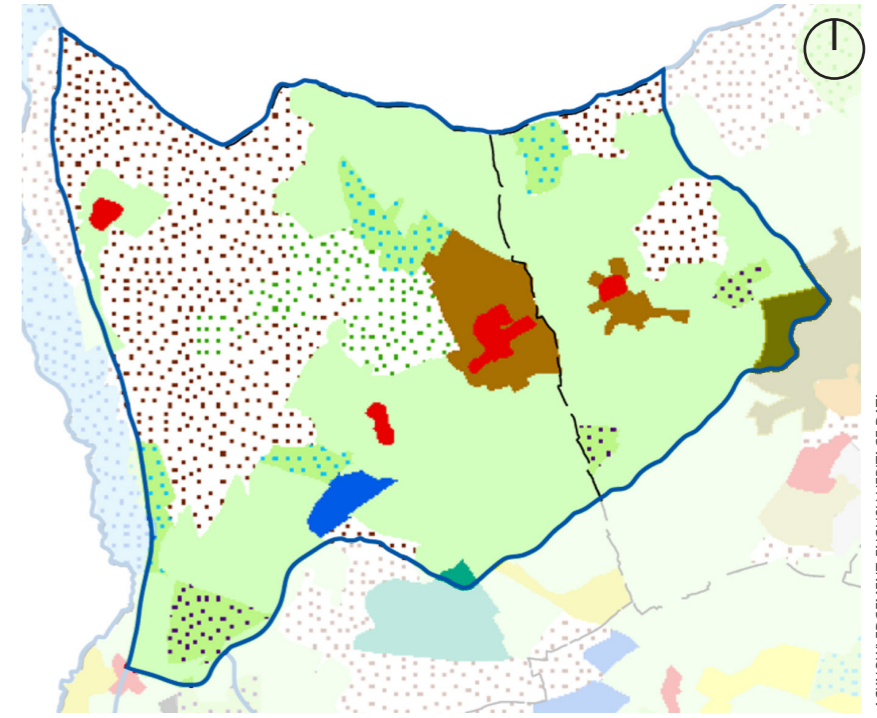


Geology



Rivers and Topography

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Historic Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENGLISH HERITAGE DATA

Natural Signature and natural landscape features

Natural Signature:

Ruislip Plateau – Field hedgerows dotted with oaks and bluebells beneath hornbeam coppice echoing the ancient trees of Ruislip Woods.

The National Nature Reserve of Ruislip Woods is the dominant landscape feature and ecological resource. It forms the landscape setting for the settlements of Harrow, Northwood and Ickenham. The urban areas wrap around these ancient woodlands, which are criss-crossed with local paths and provide a popular recreational destination for residents. The woods have high levels (e.g. Copse Wood, 90mOD) that provide both views and reference points for the locality.

Variations in the mix of tree species within the woodland reflect subtle changes in soil type (and the underlying bedrock). This theme is echoed throughout the Ruislip Plateau NLA in the patterns of woodland, scrub and meadow within the greenspaces, river corridors, small woods and open spaces which thread through urban areas and throughout the more extensive farmland to the north and west.

Within the farmed parts of the plateau there are areas where thick native hedgerows, dotted with ancient hedgerow trees, form an interconnected patchwork, enclosing pastures with field ponds. The two

main waterways, the River Pinn and Yeading Brook, are also influential. The waterways thread through shady corridors of wet woodland, damp meadow, scrub and grasslands and provide ecological networks which connect more extensive woodland and farmland habitats.

Examples of natural landscape features within the Ruislip Plateau Natural Landscape Area are:

- **Ruislip Woods** – Four extensive woodlands (295 ha) – Park Wood, Copse Wood, Mad Bess Wood and Bayhurst Wood – together form a structurally diverse area known as the Ruislip Woods, the largest block of ancient semi-natural woodland in Greater London and a National Nature Reserve.

Ruislip Woods are the remnant of ancient woodland after land was cleared for settlement and crops in medieval times. They include extensive oak/hornbeam coppice, as well as acid and neutral grassland, ponds, streams and marshland. The woodland is predominantly hornbeam coppice with standards of both pedunculate oak and sessile oak. The pedunculate oak gives way to the sessile oak on sandy or gravelly surfaces, reflecting precise variations in the underlying bedrock (the mix of rocks from the London Clay Formation and Lambeth Group). The mixture of hornbeam and beech in Bayhurst Wood is unusual and wild service trees can be found dotted throughout the woodland.

Several tributaries of the River Pinn flow through the woods in natural meandering courses. The wooded streams, scrub, ponds and an area of grass-heath mosaic contribute to the diversity of the site, which includes a number of plant species that are scarce or locally rare.

- **Pinner Park Farm** – This large dairy farm is largely surrounded by suburban development. The old field boundary hedges with ancient emergent oaks are valuable wildlife habitats, especially for birds. Breeding birds in the hedgerows include tawny owl, kestrel, yellowhammer, and whitethroat. The farm has four old field ponds. These support a fairly diverse wetland flora and are a breeding ground for frogs. The River Pinn runs through the western part of the farm, and a narrow belt of woodland, dominated by hornbeam, lines the river.
- **Bishops Wood** – This small wood is dominated by pedunculate oak and hazel. Silver birch and beech are common in the wood, along with occasional downy birch. Much of the woodland floor is shaded and broad-buckler fern and lords-and-ladies grow among bluebell and moss carpets. There is extensive standing and fallen decaying timber, and the shady moist leaf litter is likely to provide habitat for a range of fungi. There are ditches with seasonal drainage in the wood and on its west margin.

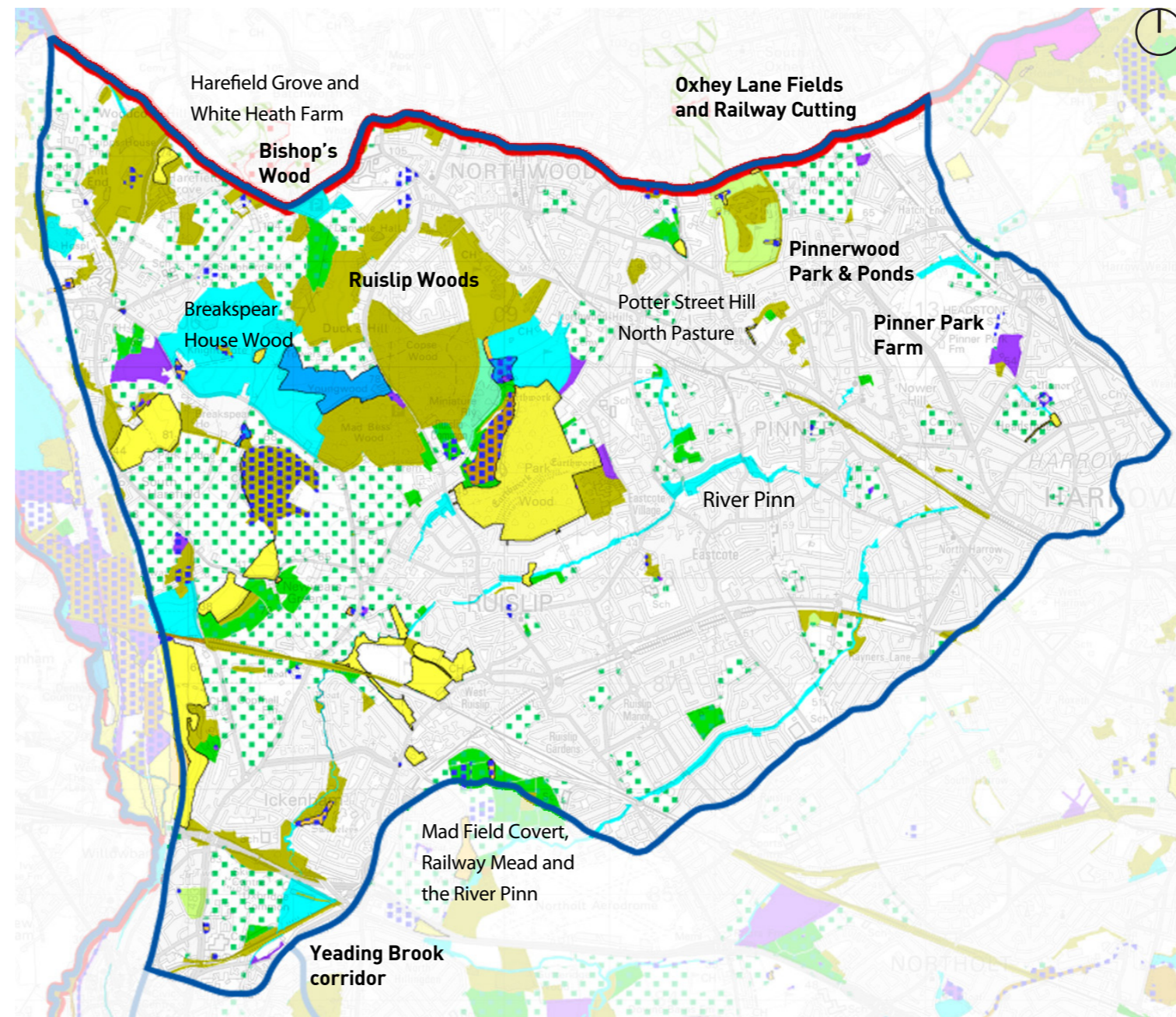
- **Oxhey Lane Fields and Railway Cutting** – an area of traditional farmland with meadows and thick, species-rich hedgerows. The hedges appear to be ancient, and offer habitat for a wide range of animals. There are numerous mature trees, especially large emergent oaks. After many years without chemical treatment, the meadows have retained much botanical diversity - one particularly wet field in the west of the site is dominated by sedges, and there is a strong population of crow-garlic in the drier fields.

The railway cutting which marks the western edge of Oxhey Lane Farm contains a mixture of developing woodland, scrub and grassland. The grassland is quite rich in common wild flowers. To the west of the railway is Sylvia Avenue Open Space, an area of secondary woodland and scrub of hawthorn and blackthorn, with rough grassland around the edges. Parts of the woodland are seasonally wet and dominated by willow.

- **Pinnerwood Park and Ponds (Golf Course)** – This large golf course contains a wide variety of habitats, including the two-hectare ancient Pinner Wood. Oak and ash dominate the canopy in the east, while further west hornbeam becomes the dominant tree. The ground flora includes broad buckler-fern, violet and field rose. The roughs contain some rich acid grassland, with remnants of heather. There are also a number of ponds, including wetlands associated with a recent flood-alleviation scheme. Great crested newt and grass snake have been recorded in recent years.
- **Yeading Brook corridor** – Much of the open space within the river corridor is a mix of rough scrub and woodland; elsewhere there is amenity greenspace, with more formal planting, paths and grassland. The river passes alongside areas of rough grassland bordered by native hedgerow containing emergent trees.

From Roxbourne Park to Ruislip Gardens, the Yeading Brook riverside walk is very accessible, with adjacent areas of rough grassland and native hedgerow. Field End recreation ground has extensive meadows which are partially enclosed by native trees and scrub. Aspen, crack willow and pedunculate oak grow along the river banks and decaying crack willow trunks offer habitats for many invertebrates, including solitary bees and hoverflies.

The River Pinn forms a valuable green corridor through the urban areas. Its banks are lined in parts by alder and willow interspersed with bands of ash-elm and oak-hornbeam-cherry woodland. The river is often shaded, but wooded areas are interspersed with a sequence of open meadows and amenity grassland. Kingfisher, mallard, moorhen and coot are also present, along with a range of butterflies and dragonflies.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

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Underlining the Natural Signature of the Ruislip Plateau

Key influences

- Remnant ancient woodlands with subtle variations in the mix of species and woodland structure which echo the underlying geology and history of the area.
- Hornbeam coppice, glades and bluebell – the product of years of traditional woodland management – reflecting links between local culture and economy.
- Wildflower meadows enclosed by species-rich hedgerows.
- Field ponds.
- Ancient gnarled hedgerow oak trees.
- Shady woodland paths, with carpets of moss.
- Decaying fallen trees – a reminder of slow, gradual natural change.

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.

- Timber as a dominant material throughout the public realm – for path margins, fencing, seats, signs, screens – willow walks.
- Logs converted to sculpture – for seats, decorative carving, signs etc.
- Hedgerows and oak trees, as a means for defining and dividing open spaces, car parks and routes.
- Specimen trees, planted individually and in groups, clumps of multi-stem trees to echo the ancient woodland species, as feature planting.
- More substantial blocks of woodland planting – enough to create a sense of passing from light to shade along roads and footpaths (so the routes pass through the trees, not just alongside them).
- Hornbeam, hazel and both native oaks in appropriate planting of hedgerows, boundary features and woodland.
- Wildflower meadows on verges and embankments at key gateways into area.

Ruislip Plateau – Key environmental assets

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
Ruislip Woods	Hillingdon	Ancient woodland, including interesting mixture of oaks and hornbeam coppicing. Grass and heath land support native and rare plant species. Impressive views to and from the higher ground, eg Copse Wood. Numerous walks (including Hillingdon Trail).
Harefield Grove and White Heath Farm	Hillingdon	Ancient hedgerows. Abundant native trees such as oak, beech and ash. Wet woodland.
Potter Street Hill North Pasture	Hillingdon	Herb-rich grassland. The site is owned by a school but site can still be viewed from footpath.
Mad Field Covert, Railway Mead and the River Pinn	Hillingdon	Herb-rich grassland. Abundant native trees such as oak, beech and ash. Wet woodland, riparian flora and varied wildlife.
Bishops Wood	Hillingdon	Tall herb population. Fallen trees offer habitat for fungi. Secondary woodland.
Brackenbury Railway Cutting	Hillingdon	Rural viewpoint for travellers. Tall herb population. Mixture of oak trees. Secondary woodland.
Breakspear House Wood	Hillingdon	Ancient woodland.
Common Plantation and Park Wood	Hillingdon	Ancient woodland. Ash and wych elm canopy.
Oxhey Lane Fields and Railway Cuttings	Harrow	Viewpoint for travellers. Ancient hedgerows. London Loop passes through site. Wet and dry grassland.
Pinnerwood Park and Ponds	Harrow	High point, bridle path offering good views. Ancient woodland. Acid grassland. Heathland with heather. Wet ditches and wet grassland.
Yeading Brook	Harrow, Hillingdon	Riparian habitat for much flora and fauna. Native hedgerows and some woodland. High insect diversity.
Pinner Park Farm	Harrow	Part of Harrow Healthwalks project. Old hedges with emergent oaks. Wide variety of birdlife. Ponds offering wildlife habitats.
River Pinn	Harrow, Hillingdon	Part of the designated Celandine Route walk. Good insect and bird diversity. Decaying timber habitat for wildlife.
Harefield Pit	Hillingdon	An important geological site (in private land), a disused chalk quarry showing a sequence through the Upper Chalk and Reading Formation