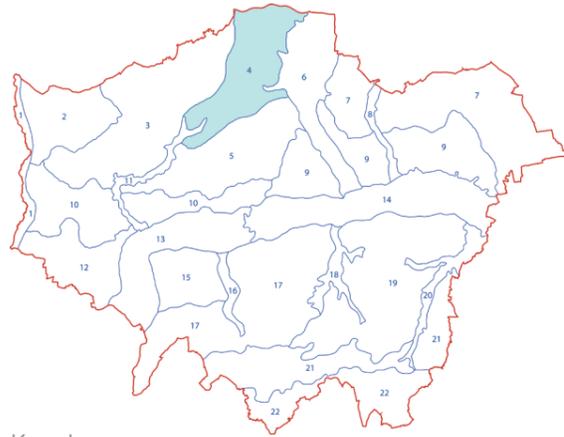


4. Finchley Ridge



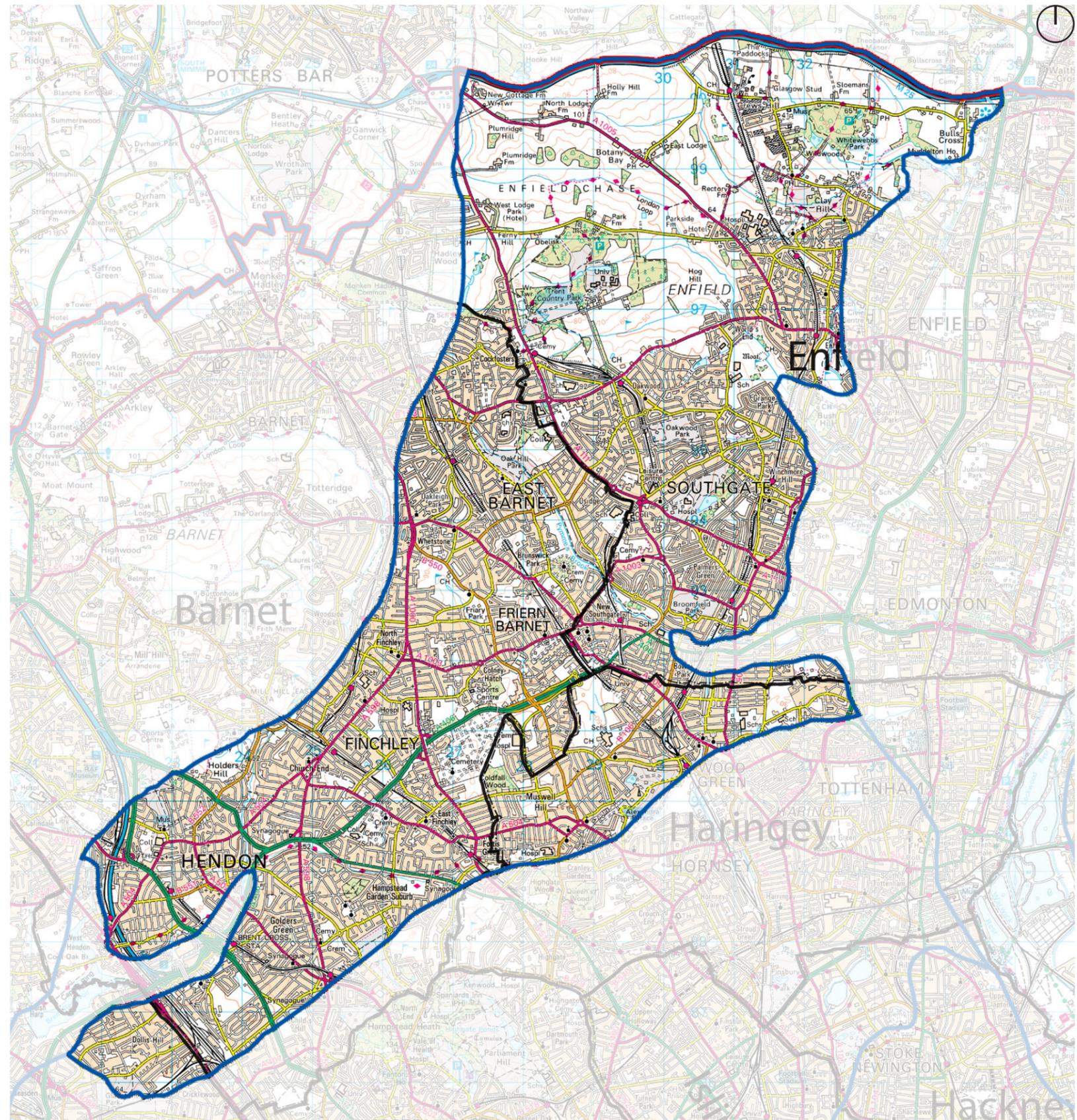
Key plan

Description

The Finchley Ridge Natural Landscape Area extends north-west from Dollis Hill to Finchley, East Barnet and to the fringes of Greater London at Enfield. It is underlain by London Clay, but outcrops of glacial till and gravel deposits form a broken ridge of higher land (Muswell Hill – 98m AOD, Oakleigh Park – 94m AOD and Ferny Hill – 102m AOD). The till is composed of pebbly, silty and sandy clay jumbled together. It was laid down along the southern margins of the Anglian ice sheet, which extended northwards across East Anglia and the North Sea.

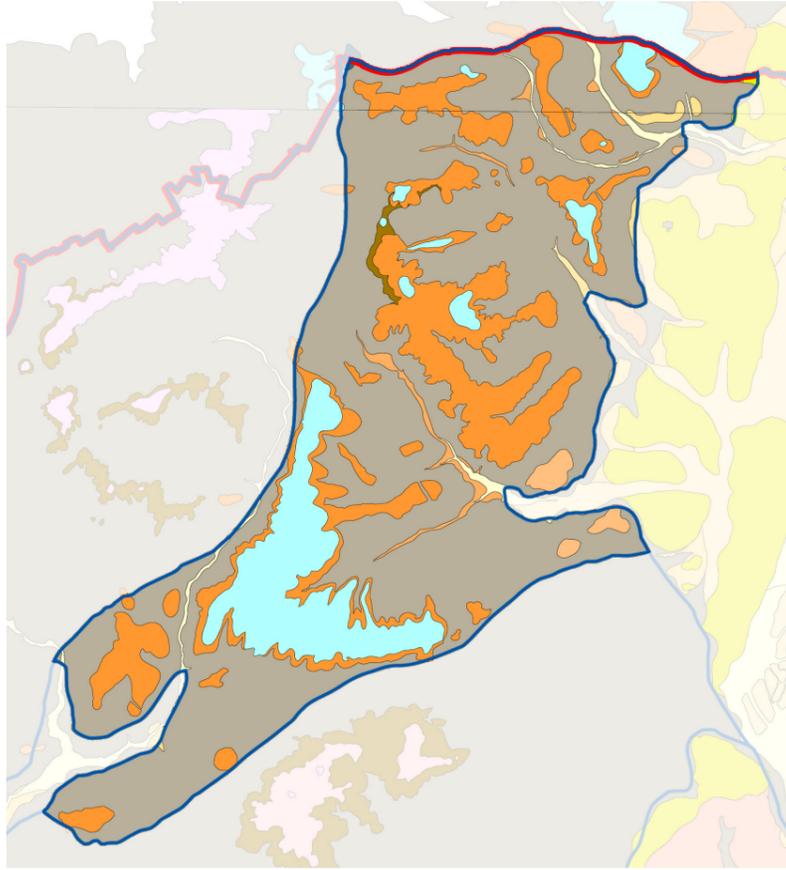
The hills and ridges are separated by streams flowing south to the Brent River (Dollis Brook and Silk Stream) and east to the River Lea (Pymme's Brook and Salmon Brook). The majority of the urban areas date from the interwar period, with older Victorian terraces centred on the principal railway lines and connecting the dense older core settlements of Southgate, Whetstone and Friern Barnet.

The urban centres of Hendon, Finchley, Friern Barnet, Southgate and East Barnet extend along the valley sides and across ridgetops, with linear open space corridors along some of the streams and railway tracks and larger open spaces (amenity grass and trees), golf courses and cemeteries on the valley sides. There are also some small but prominent blocks of woodland (e.g. Coppett's Wood, Big Wood and Coldfall Wood). Towards the outer (Green Belt) fringes of London, there is an undulating large-scale farmland landscape with a geometric pattern of large rectangular arable fields enclosed by hedgerows. The farmland has an open character, but isolated blocks of woodland are prominent features and there is extensive woodland within the grounds of Trent Park (now Middlesex University) and Trent Country Park.

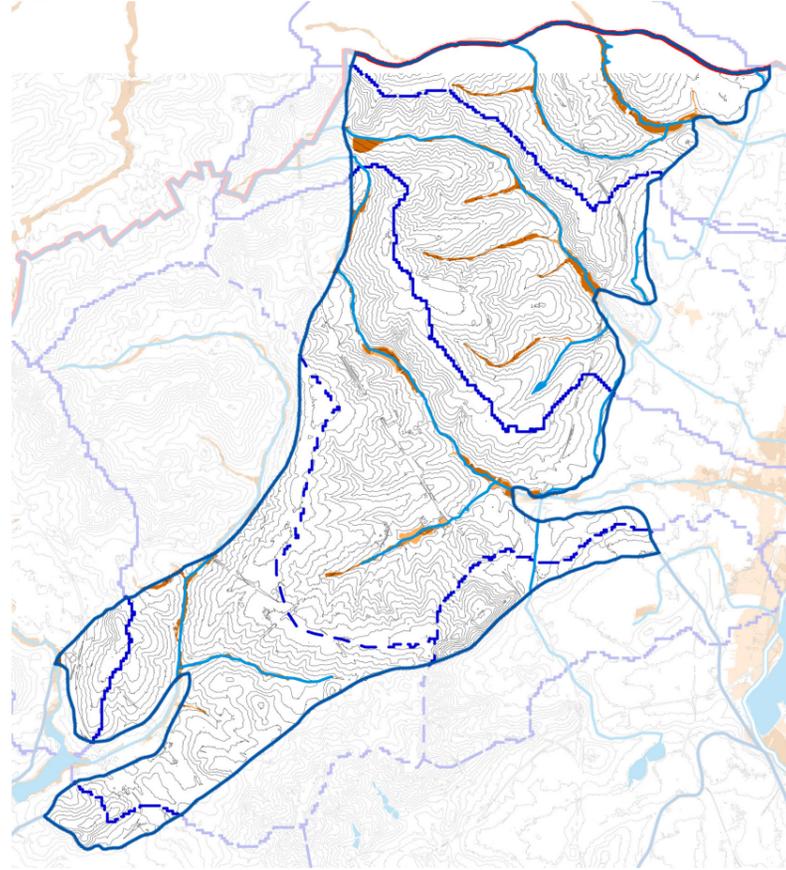


4. Finchley Ridge

REPRODUCED FROM THE BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAP DATA AT THE ORIGINAL SCALE OF 1:50,000. LICENSE 2006/072J BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY. © NERC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

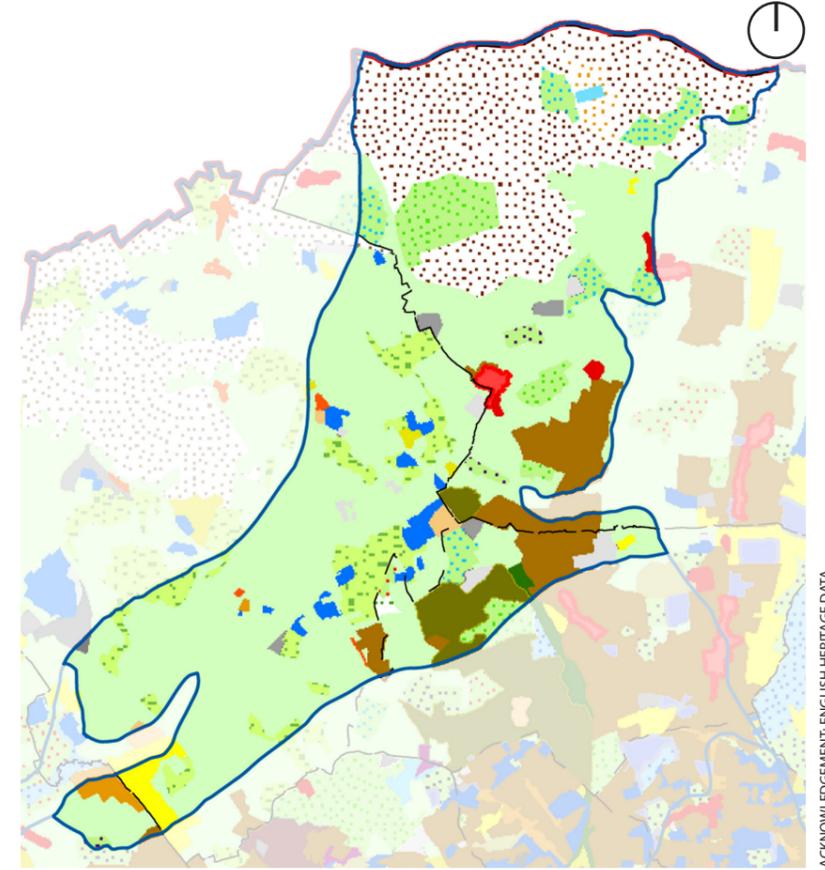


Geology



Rivers and Topography

© OS BASE MAP. CROWN COPYRIGHT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NATURAL ENGLAND 100046223 2009. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY DATA



Historic Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENGLISH HERITAGE DATA

Natural Signature and natural landscape features

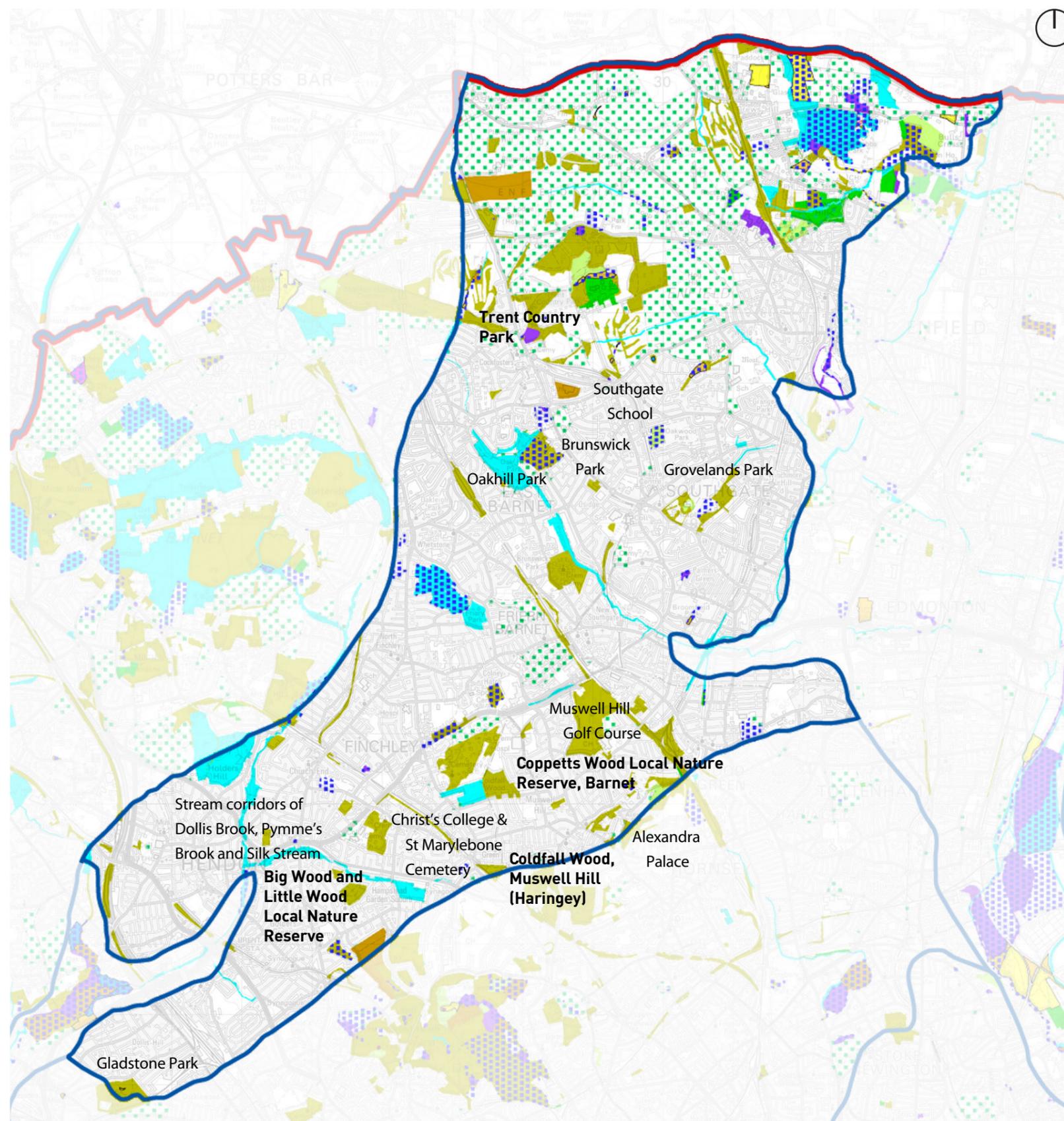
Natural Signature:
Finchley Ridge – Ridgetop blocks of ancient woodland on former commonland.

Remnant semi-natural habitats are concentrated along the minor water courses (Dollis Brook and Pymme’s Brook) and railway tracks. These corridors of open space form the principal functional ecological network through the area. The key natural landscape features are the isolated blocks of native woodland within parks, cemeteries and local nature reserves. The most significant are the remnant blocks of semi-

natural ancient woodland, particularly those which are surrounded by ‘soft’ land uses such as parks, recreational areas, allotments and cemeteries where there are opportunities for extensive wildlife habitats. The underlying sticky, infertile glacial boulder clay (till) was unsuited to agriculture and would have been left as wasteland, commons or woodland between local settlements – some remnant blocks of these ancient woodlands survive today. Landscapes which have an undulating landform and/or elevated viewpoints are particularly valuable because they often provide opportunities to understand the local geography.

Examples of natural landscape features within the Finchley Ridge Natural Landscape Area are:

- **Big Wood and Little Wood Local Nature Reserve, Barnet** – Native woodlands which are remnants of more extensive woods that used to cover the area thousands of years ago. There is a nature trail within the Wood and the Dollis Valley Greenwalk passes through the site.
- **Coppetts Wood Local Nature Reserve, Barnet** – Includes ancient woodland and a mosaic of dry grassland, scrubland, damp scrub and wetland habitats. The hilltop site is prominent and is also highly visible from the adjacent North Circular and Tesco store. The woodland contains irregular lines of horse chestnut and sweet chestnut. The area used to be part of former Finchley Common and the boundaries of the woodland were planted as hawthorn hedgerows in about 1814. There are superb views to the south (and Alexandra Palace) from the slopes of the more open scrubland areas. The adjacent Glebelands Local Nature Reserve, which borders the North Circular Road, has damp grassland, scrub, meadow, wetland and ancient woodland habitats.
- **Coldfall Wood, Muswell Hill (Haringey)** – A 14 ha ancient wood which is adjacent to St Pancras and Islington cemetery and the East Finchley public allotments. The western boundary of the wood is demarcated by the remains of an ancient woodbank with a ditch on the outer side. This would have prevented grazing animals from the former Finchley Common from entering the wood and destroying the young coppice. Like the other local ancient woodlands in the area, the wood is dominated by oak standards, but the understorey is much less diverse and consists of almost pure stands of multi-stemmed, overgrown hornbeam coppice. There are also some fine wild service tree specimens.
- **Trent Country Park, Enfield** – One of the few surviving remnants of the once extensive Royal Hunting Forest of Enfield Chase formed in the 12th and 13th centuries and which survived until 1777. The 400ha Country Park includes extensive meadows and woodlands and a chain of lakes. The London Loop promoted walk passes through the centre of the park.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

Underlining the natural signature of the Finchley Ridge

Key influences

- Ancient woodlands with subtle variations in woodland structure – some areas with rich ground flora and an open structure (below canopy views); others with dense understorey; and others under coppice management.
- Hornbeam coppice.
- Ancient woodbanks and ditches.
- Open scrubby slopes with long views.
- Ridgetop woodland as a focus for views.

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.

- Extensive woodland as a feature for new development and as a framework for open spaces/play areas i.e. take woodland as close to built development as possible and cut glades within woodland for play areas and activities rather than grassland as a buffer.
- Groups of multi-stem trees as gateway features within a formal setting.
- Linear banks and ditches/swales to define routes and edges – reflecting ancient woodbanks that defined historic commons, woodlands and territories.
- Lines of sweet chestnut and horse chestnut.
- Blocks of woodland (rather than individual trees) within streetscapes. Design car parks to allow space for substantial belts of trees, instead of a standard, scattered spacing.
- Linear bands of trees defining greenway corridors to link woodland habitats – take advantage of any opportunity to link stream corridors/wetland areas to woodland.
- Wet woodland within and on the fringes of flood attenuation areas
- Areas of scrub interspersed with grassland as a component of open space, particularly on sloping land.

Finchley Ridge – Key environmental assets

Environmental asset	Relevant borough	Notes
Big Wood and Little Wood Local Nature Reserve	Barnet	Native woodlands which are remnants of more extensive woods that covered the area thousands of years ago. ‘Squeezed’ within urban areas. Nature trail within the Wood. Dollis Valley Greenwalk passes through the site.
Stream corridors of Dollis Brook, Pymme’s Brook and Silk Stream	Barnet, Haringey, Enfield, Camden,	Dissect the glacial ridges and hills. Parts of the stream corridors are generally enclosed by native trees.
Fields to the north-west of Hampstead Heath	Barnet	Contain a network of ancient hedgerows and remnant acid grassland.
Coppetts Wood Local Nature Reserve	Barnet	Includes ancient woodland and a mosaic of dry grassland, scrubland, damp scrub and wetland habitats. The woodland contains irregular lines of horse chestnut and sweet chestnut.
Coldfall Wood, Muswell Hill	Haringey	14 ha ancient wood. The wood area is dominated by oak standards, the understorey is much less diverse and consists of almost pure stands of multi-stemmed, overgrown hornbeam coppice.
Christ’s College & St Marylebone Cemetery	Barnet	Areas of native woodland. Part of the mosaic of grassland and trees on this highly accessible site.
Oakhill Park	Barnet	Large informal landscaped park. Open aspect and outstanding views. Pymme’s Brook runs through the centre of the park. 5.5 ha semi-natural ancient woodland (Oakhill Wood).
Brunswick Park	Barnet	Formal public park – includes small areas of native woodland on a former pit mound. Panoramic views from the top of this ‘mount’. Pymme’s Brook flows within a wooded corridor through the northern part of the park.
Southgate School	Barnet	Patches of acid grassland within school grounds.
Alexandra Palace	Haringey	196 acre park is one of the most important ecological sites in the borough of Haringey. Prominent in views from the mainline railway. Grounds include secondary woodland, meadow, a pond and various areas of scrub.
Muswell Hill Golf Course & Bluebell Wood	Haringey	Golf course has an undulating landform. Native woodland and a small ancient woodland (Bluebell Wood).
Grovelands Park, Enfield	Enfield	Originally a heavily wooded area, close to the southern border of Enfield Chase. Grovelands Park was developed in the Repton designed grounds of the Grovelands Estate. Includes a mosaic of native woodland, meadow, veteran trees and riparian habitats around the formal lake.
Trent Country Park	Enfield	One of the few surviving remnants of the once extensive Royal Hunting Forest of Enfield Chase.
Gladstone Park	Brent	Contains areas of ancient woodland within formal grounds of Dollis Hill House.