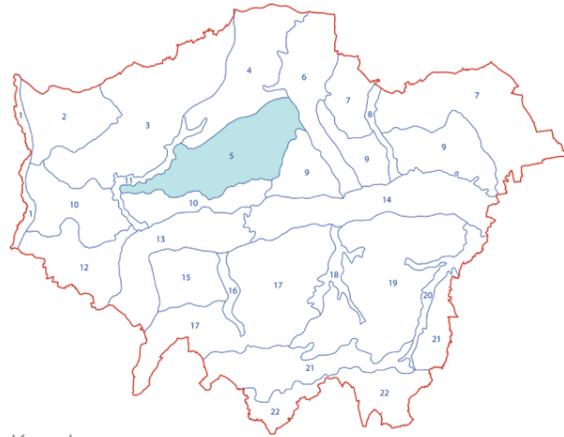


# 5. Hampstead Ridge



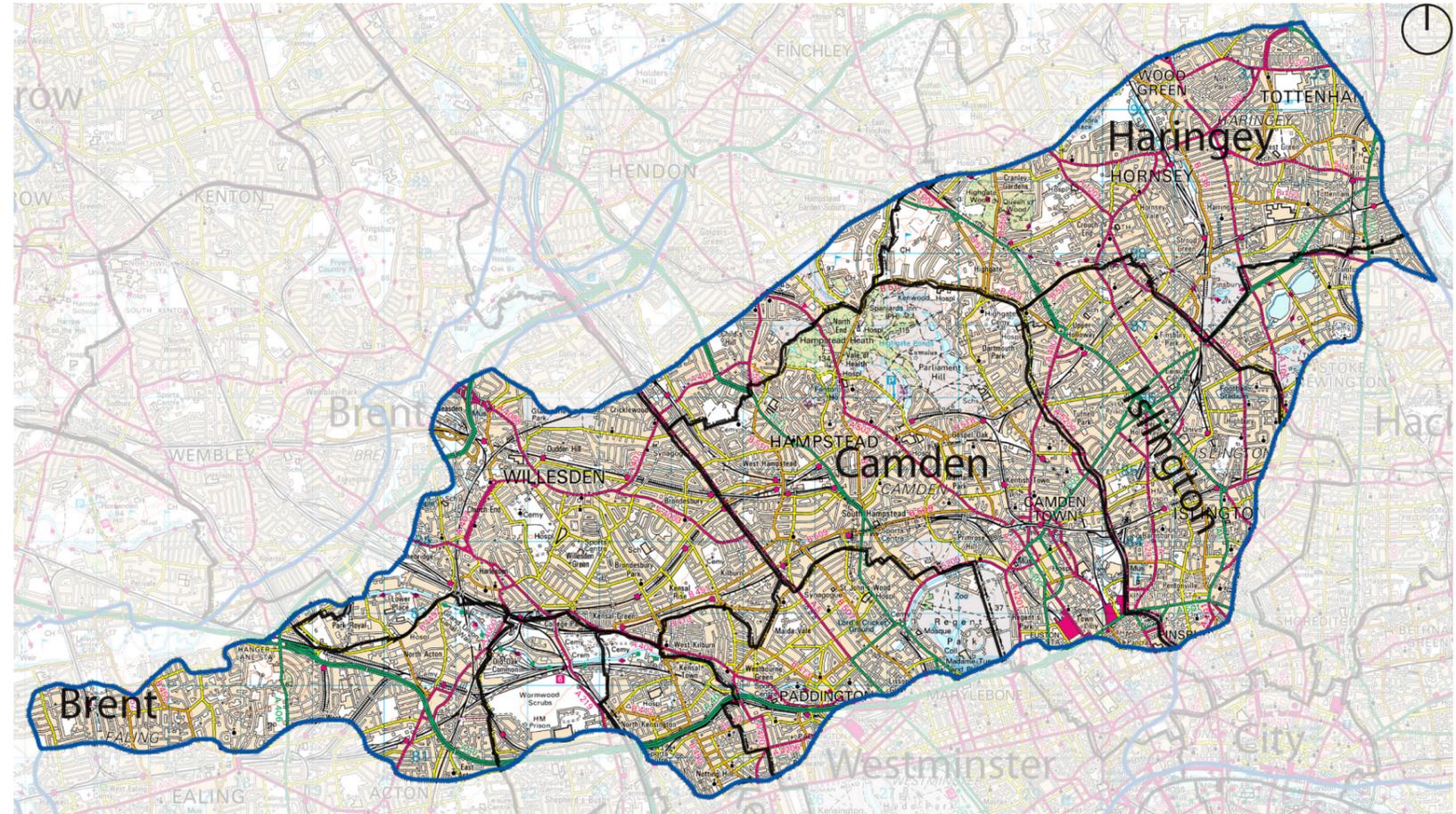
Key plan

## Description

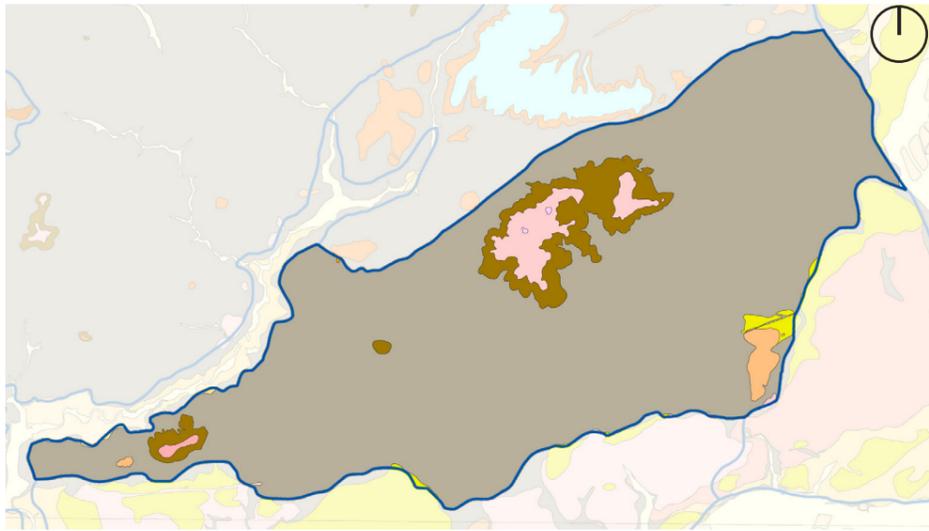
The Hampstead Ridge Natural Landscape Area extends north east from Ealing towards Finsbury and West Green in Tottenham, comprising areas of North Acton, Shepherd's Bush, Paddington, Hampstead, Camden Town and Hornsey. A series of summits at Hanger Lane (65m AOD), Willesden Green Cemetery (55m AOD) and Parliament Hill (95m AOD) build the ridge, which is bordered by the Brent River to the north and the west, and the Grand Union Canal to the south.

The dominant bedrock within the Landscape Area is London Clay. The key exception to this is the area around Hampstead Heath, an area of loam over sandstone which lies over an outcrop of the Bagshot Formation and the Claygate Member.

The majority of the urban framework comprises Victorian terracing surrounding the conserved historic cores of Stonebridge, Willesden, Bowes Park and Camden which date from Saxon times and are recorded in the Domesday Book (1086). There is extensive industrial and modern residential development (most notably at Park Royal) along the main rail and road infrastructure. The principal open spaces extend across the summits of the ridge, with large parks at Wormwood Scrubs, Regents Park and Hampstead Heath and numerous cemeteries. The open space matrix is a combination of semi-natural woodland habitats, open grassland, scrub and linear corridors along railway lines and the Grand Union Canal.

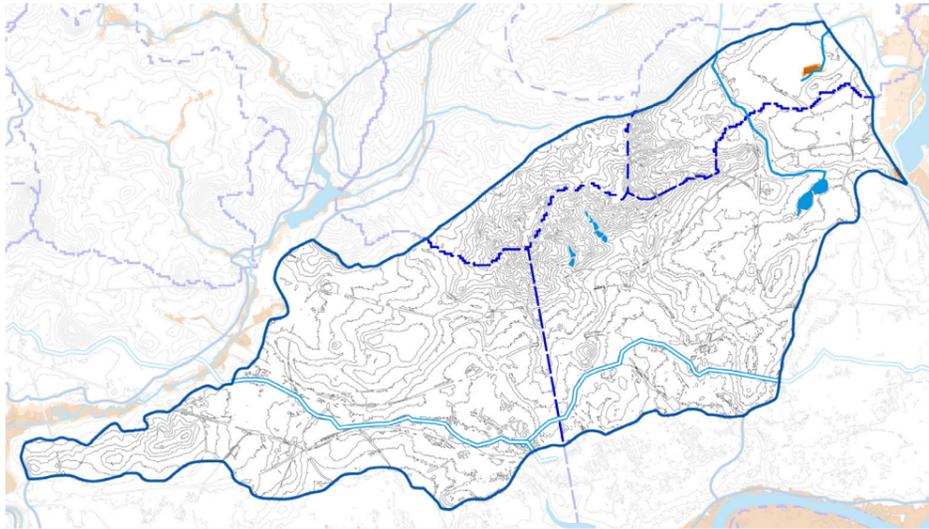


5. Hampstead Ridge



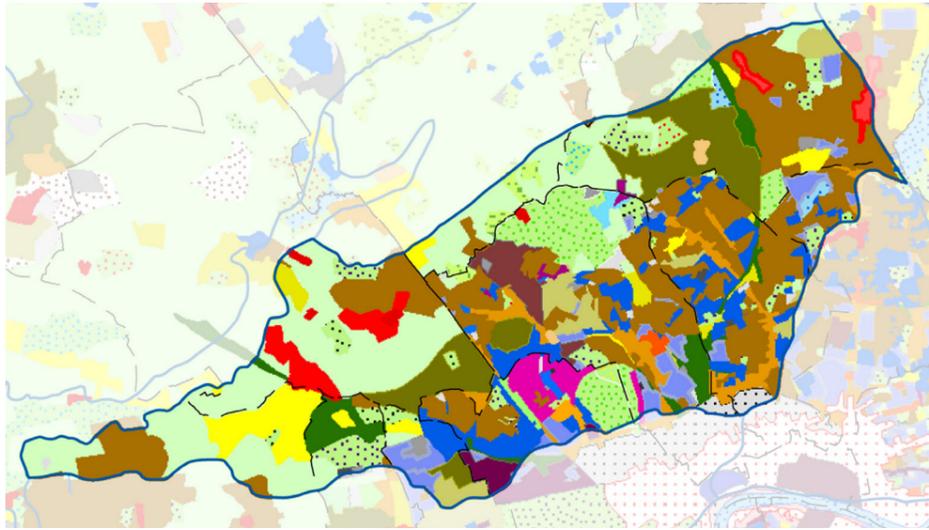
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Geology



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Rivers and Topography



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENGLISH HERITAGE DATA

Historic Development

### Natural Signature and natural landscape features

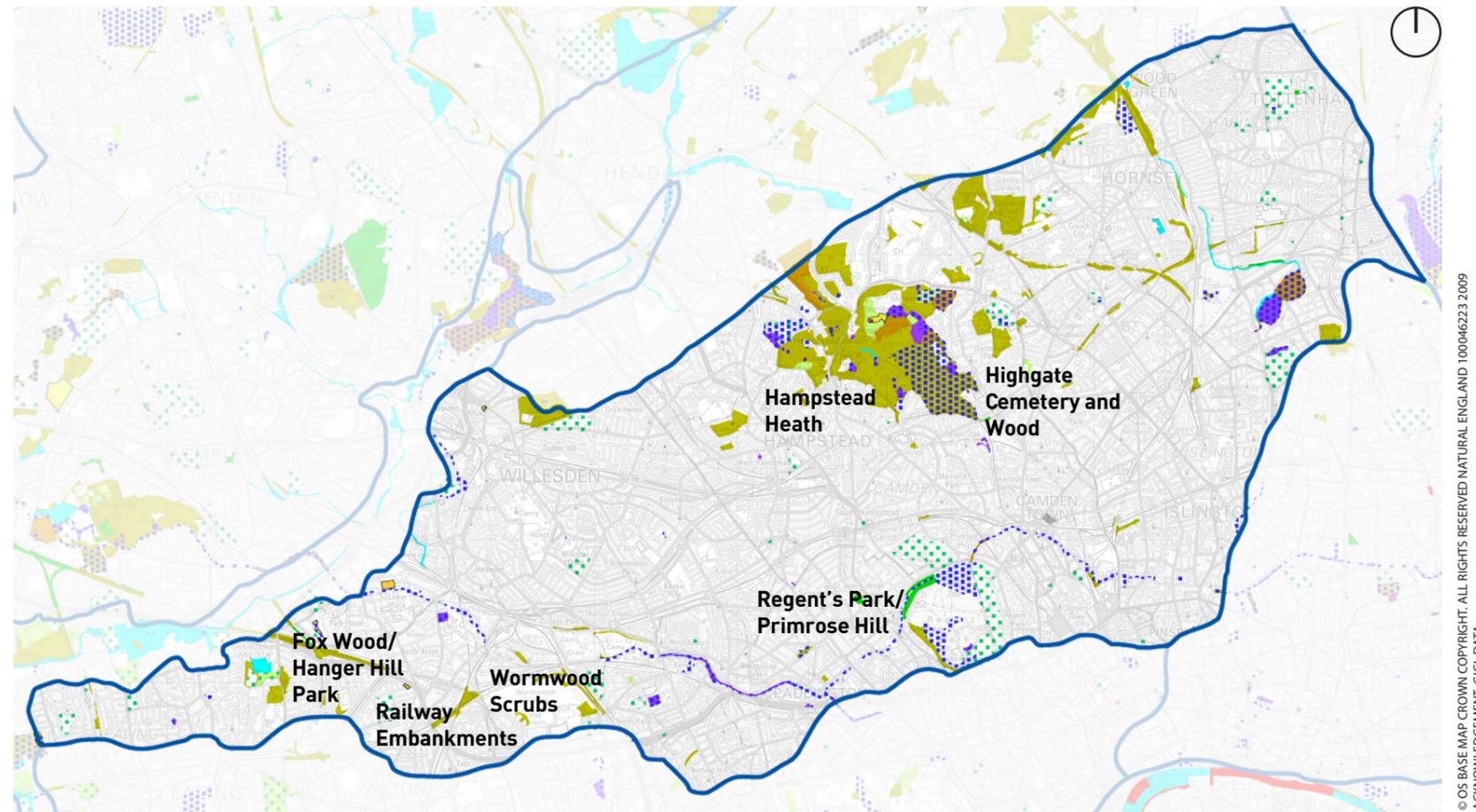
**Natural Signature:**  
**Hampstead Ridge – A mosaic of ancient woodland, scrub and acid grasslands along ridgetop summits with panoramic views.**

The combination of acid grasslands and patches of ancient and semi-natural woodlands along an elevated ridge is the natural signature for the Hampstead Ridge. Wet flushes occur at spring-lines and there are ancient hedgerows, wildflower meadows, orchards and secondary woodland on the slopes of the ridge. Panoramic views from the ridgetop summits of Hampstead Heath and Primrose Hill are well known throughout London.

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

- **Hampstead Heath** – Is well known for its unique mix of semi-natural and formal habitats. The ancient woodlands contain an exceptional number of old and over-mature trees, providing dead wood habitat for a range of specialist invertebrates, including the nationally rare jewel beetle. Another important habitat is the small wet flush (or bog) containing several species of bog-mosses and water horsetail, which is very rare in London. Acid grassland occurs on the upper slopes, supporting heath bedstraw, pill sedge, pignut and other characteristic plants. In several places heathland restoration is taking place. The many ponds and watercourses on the site are of further botanical, entomological and ornithological interest. Other rare plants include creeping willow, lemon-scented fern and hard fern.

- **Fox Wood/Hanger Hill Park** – A fine ancient wood on a slope, with additional wildlife habitats in the adjacent Hanger Hill Park. The main wildlife interest of this site is in Fox Wood itself. This is mixed woodland with a good variety of structure and species composition. Wood anemone has been recorded along with other woodland herbs. Whilst some of Hanger Hill is managed as a pitch and putt course, there are ancient hedges along the west and mature oaks in the middle which may have been part of a historic hedge line. Evidence suggests that there has been woodland here since at least the 14th century, although the site was much modified in the 18th century with several exotic species planted. The woodland has a wide variety of trees and shrubs with a well developed shrub layer, making it suitable nesting habitat for several species of woodland birds.
- **Various railway embankments** – Including the railway junction to west of Wormwood Scrubs, and from Upper Holloway to Finsbury Park - These sites are composed of rail embankments, an old orchard at Medley Gardens, and Westbere Copse in West Hampstead. The majority of Westbere Copse is woodland composed of sycamore, oak, ash and aspen. There is an understorey of snowberry, elder, elm, blackthorn and hawthorn, along with diverse ground flora. The Medley Orchard is an old orchard, immediately adjacent to the railway behind the gardens of Medley Road. Old orchards are a rare habitat in London, and the fruit trees can support important communities of invertebrates. Medley Orchard is now largely secondary woodland of ash, but a few old fruit trees survive. The network of railway lines by Wormwood Scrubs provides some of the Landscape Type's most important wildlife habitats, cloaked in woodland with a good structure. Ash is the dominant canopy tree, with a good variety of other trees, both native and exotic, mixed in. The understorey includes hawthorn, willow, elm and guelder-rose, with traveller's-joy climbing through the trees and shrubs.
- **The south and east edges of Wormwood Scrubs** – Substantial areas of Wormwood Scrubs are managed for nature conservation. While large parts of the park are occupied by sports pitches, other areas of grassland are managed as meadows. These vary from dry, acid grassland, with typical species such as sheep's sorrel, in the north-east of the Scrubs, to damp grassland with tufted hair-grass in the west. The meadows support good populations of common butterfly, including small, large and Essex skippers. The park as a whole is good for birds. The park is also home to a good population of common lizard, rescued from Scrubs Wood (now a Eurostar maintenance depot) and reintroduced here in the 1990s.



Natural Habitats &amp; Landscape Key Features

- **Highgate Cemetery and Highgate Wood** – This site comprises the paired Victorian cemeteries at Highgate, of great historic and cultural interest. Secondary woodland of ash and sycamore has become established amongst the ornate tombs and mausolea, and the stonework supports a diversity of lichens, ferns and mosses. There is a rich assemblage of plants, invertebrates and birds in the woodland and glades, including many unusual species for this central location.
- **Regent's Park/Primrose Hill** – This area of Regent's Park consists mostly of mown amenity grassland with scattered groups of mature trees located around the hill itself and at the park's perimeter. There are fine views from Primrose Hill and the grassland beneath the trees is mown less often and retains some of the original fine leaved species including red fescue and creeping bent. The trees of the parkland are mostly London plane but common lime, hawthorn, horse-chestnut and young whitebeam are also present.

## Underlining the natural signature of the Hampstead Ridge

### Key influences

- Ancient woodland, with transitions to woodland and scrub and more open scrub.
- Veteran trees, within woodland, hedgerows and individual specimens.
- Acid grassland and lowland heath with carpets of heather.
- Wet flushes, bogs and small streams at springlines.
- Panoramic views from ridgetops with a wild, natural heathy character.
- Wildflower meadows.
- Orchards on lower slopes.

### 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.

- Highlight the transitional changes in landscape patterns and character on the slopes of the ridge – blocks of woodland, scrub, acid grassland and heath on a series of terraces or along cross-slope routes.
- Create ‘wild’ areas with natural patterns of heathland vegetation – scrub, woodland, grassland and areas of open heather – within public open spaces and verges, especially gateways.
- Sculpt the landform of flood attenuation areas so that there are shallow areas where bog habitats can be created – decking and boardwalks can provide public access.
- Create acid grassland as a feature within small formal spaces/ courtyards where the soil structure can be imported and controlled.
- Use mature specimen trees, hedgerows and wildflower meadows as features to define and divide open spaces – even narrow bands of woodland and scrub or hedgerows with clumped groups of hedgerow trees can create a seemingly wooded backdrop to built development.
- Plant orchards within housing developments.

## Hampstead Ridge – Key environmental assets

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
<b>Fox Wood/Hanger Hill Park</b>		Ancient mixed woodland dating from 14th century.
<b>Railway Embankments</b>	Camden	Various railway embankments, managed as nature reserves and ash woodlands; inaccessible to public.
<b>Wormwood Scrubs south/east fringes</b>	Hammersmith & Fulham	Managed as acidic grassland; noted ornithological interest.
<b>Highgate Cemetery and Highgate Wood</b>	Islington	Secondary ash and sycamore woodland has established in both cemeteries amongst mausolea and graves; nationally scarce groundcover plants recorded.
<b>Regent’s Park/Primrose Hill</b>	Camden	Mature trees located on fringes of park and on the hill itself; some areas managed as acidic grassland.
Hampstead Heath	Camden	Complex matrix of ancient and semi-natural woodlands, acidic grasslands and riparian habitats; heathland restoration programme in place in some areas; includes Kenwood SSSI.
Finsbury Park	Haringey	Parkland with some natural grasslands and woodland.
Highgate Wood	Haringey	Ancient woodland remnant with high ecological value veteran trees supporting many species.
Queens Wood	Haringey	Ancient woodland.
Stoke Newington East and West Reservoirs	Hackney	Open water bodies. Haven for wild fowl and amphibians.
Railway Embankments	Haringey, Hackney, Islington	Largely inaccessible wildlife areas with tall herbs and bracken.
New River Valley	Hackney	Chalk stream originating in Hertfordshire supporting a wide range of aquatic flora and fauna.
Parkland Walk	Haringey	Woodland walk from Finsbury Park to Alexandra Palace. Predominantly birch and sycamore with scrub and grassland also.
Waterlow Park	Camden	Spring-fed ponds with overhanging trees and shrubs. Damp grassland and marshy meadows. Some waste ground with good colonising ruderals.