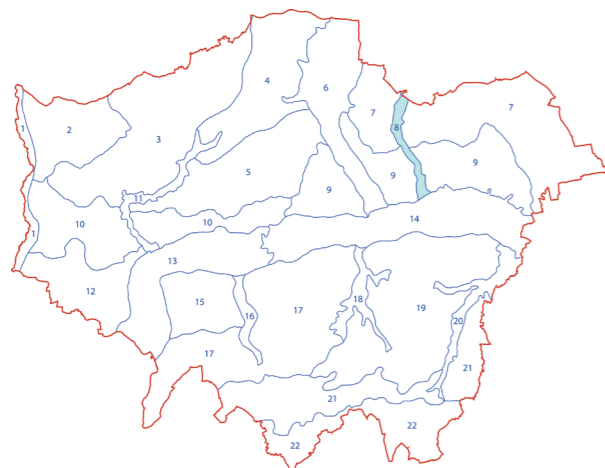


8. Roding River Valley

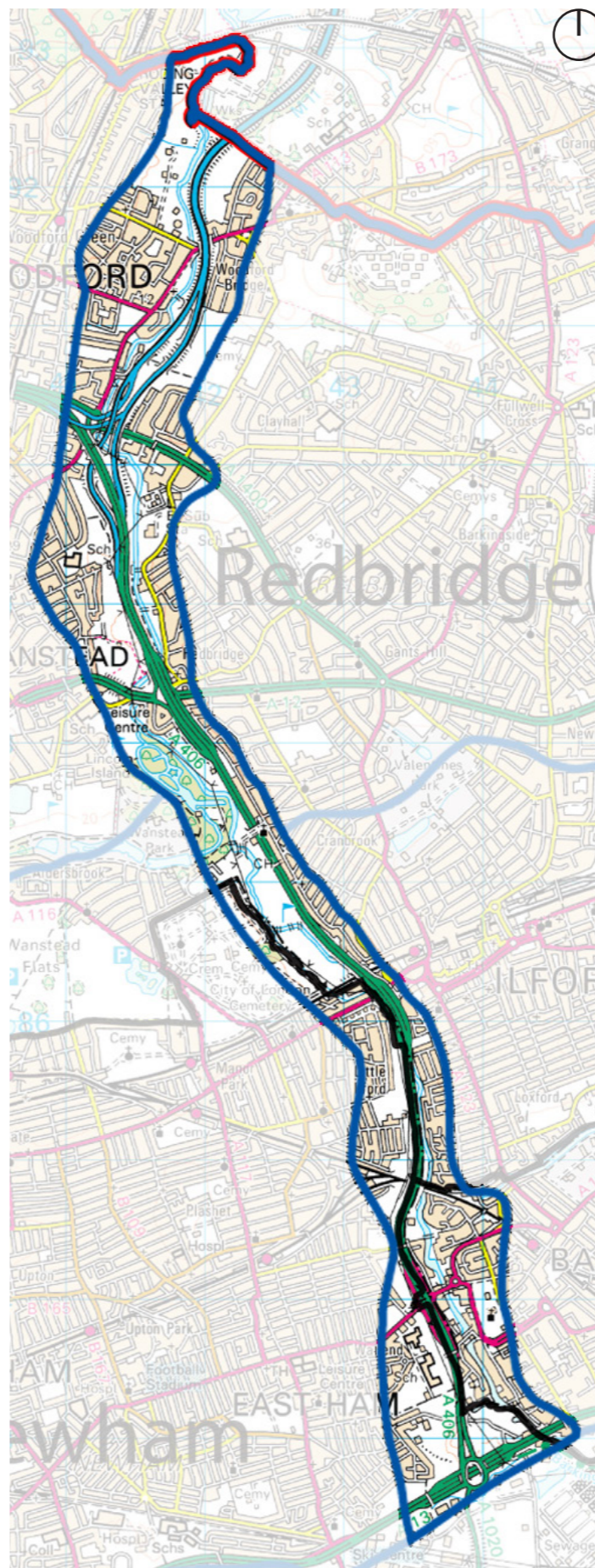


Key plan

Description

The River Roding rises near Molehill Green in Essex. It is a small stream and its valley, generally narrow but never particularly deep, cuts through the Bagshot Sands and Claygate Beds deposits of the Essex Plateau, creating the visually distinctive Chingford/Woodford ridge between it and the River Lea, and carving down 20 or 30m. Its northern reaches have a semi-agrarian character with naturalised river banks and weeping willow. Its valley becomes less distinct when it enters the North Thames Terraces (LCT 9) where it passes through some canalised sections around Wanstead before ultimately flowing into the Thames at Barking Creek.

The Roding Valley is the site of a string of historic settlements - Ilford and Barking to the east, and East-Ham to the west - along with heavy industrial uses. The valley bottom is largely alluvial and poorly drained, so that it remained largely free from human settlement. For this reason, it was chosen as the route of the A406 North Circular/M11, which follows its entire length. The roads are often elevated and dominate the character of this small river valley; the River Roding seems marginalised and inconspicuous within the context of such large scale transport infrastructure. Despite, or perhaps because of these roads, areas of open ground (with some herb-rich grassland and native wood) survive. The river, though clearly straightened in many places, most particularly as it approaches the Thames, often retains its natural course in its upper parts. Its waters are particularly clean and support a diverse fish community.

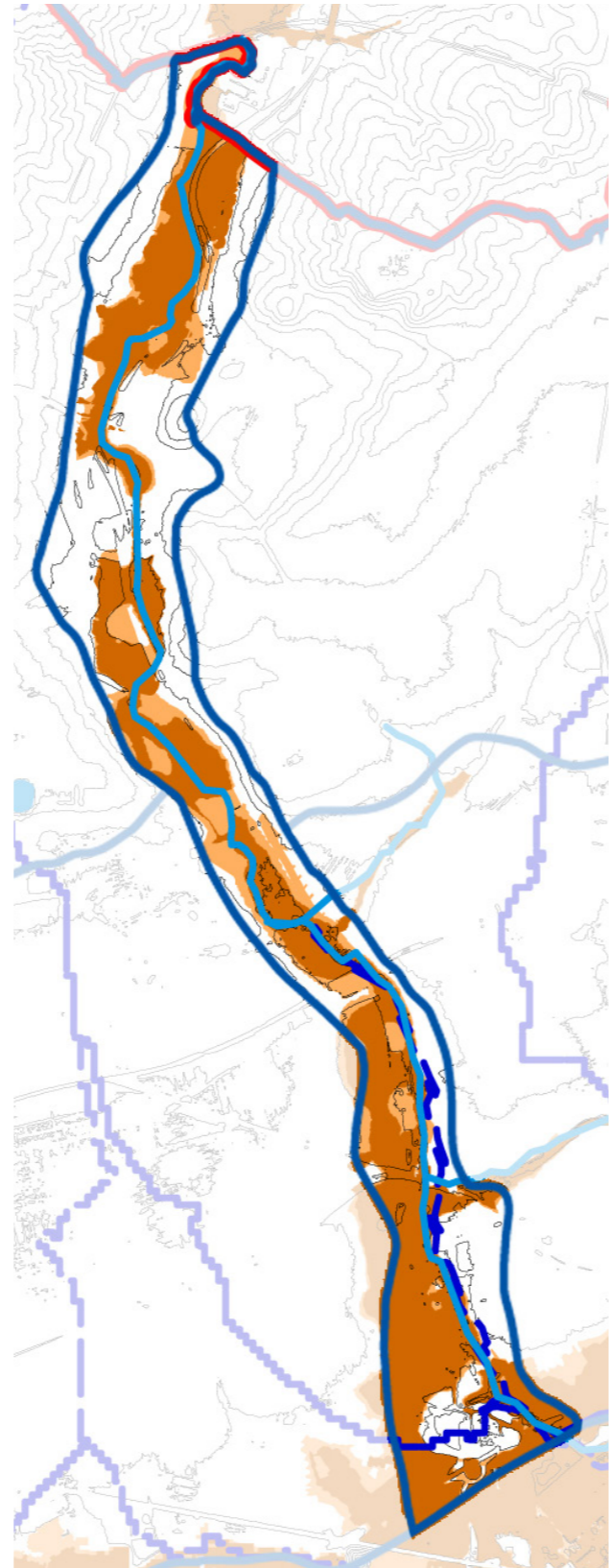


8. Roding Valley

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Geology



Rivers and Topography



Historic Development

Natural signature and natural landscape features

Natural signature:

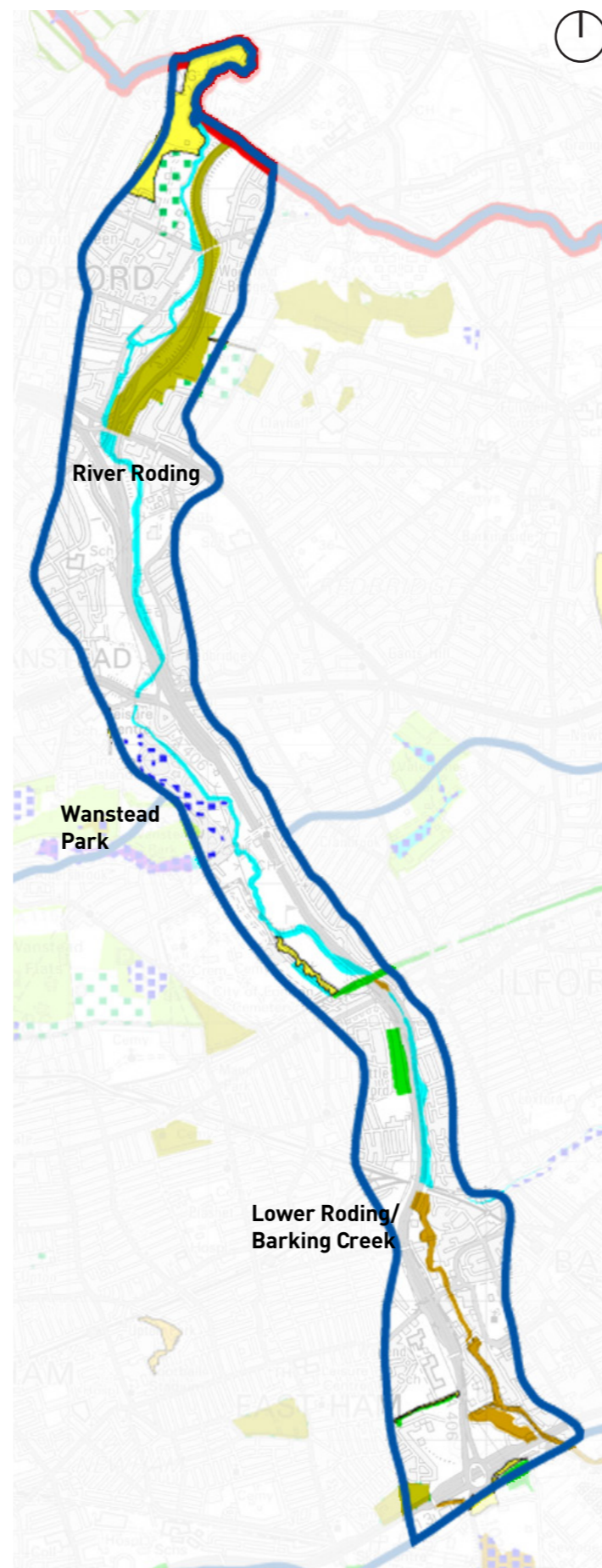
Roding River Valley – The narrow, sinuous course of the upper Roding where the riverbanks are lined with willows.

The River Roding is initially narrow and naturally sinuous in its valley, gradually changing its character as the valley widens out. The river becomes tidal and canalised as it approaches the Thames. It is unfortunate that, because of the current road infrastructure, this is largely obscured so that – despite the thousands who travel along it every day – the Roding River Valley has virtually disappeared from public consciousness.

There are also areas of mud flat reedswamp in its lower, tidal reaches, in the Barking area.

Examples of natural landscape features within the Roding River Valley Natural Landscape Area are:

- **Roding Valley Park (northern section)** – A narrow green strip of rough grassland with small pockets of wood and scrub, some of it associated with the M11, alongside the river which in this area generally retains its original course.
- **River Roding and Wanstead Park** – A rare place where it is possible to appreciate the Roding in the wider context of (half of) its valley. The park, although landscaped and with ornamental ponds (themselves created from a small tributary of the Roding), stretches from the Roding up the western side of the valley, and links to Wanstead Flats (NLA 9), allowing an understanding of the relationship between these two Landscape Areas.
- **Lower Roding/Barking Creek** – Although completely canalised, the semi-tidal river has exposed mud banks at low tide, and reed beds. Along with kingfisher and reed warbler, birds are more of the estuary type (duck and waders) demonstrating the change from freshwater river to tidal creek.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

Underlining the natural signature of the Roding River Valley

Key influences

- Narrow sinuous stream of the Upper Roding.
- Farmland alongside the riverbanks.
- Lines of willow trees marking the alignment of the stream.
- The transition in character from the natural freshwater stream of the Upper Roding to the heavily engineered tidal creek of the Thames (Lower Roding).
- Mudflats and reedswamp on the wider floodplain of Lower Roding.

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.

- Wetlands as a focus for new development – open water and wetlands as part of flood attenuation areas.
- Curving swales, with reeds and damp grassland habitat within and on fringes of roads, pathways and car parks – and as gateway features.
- Boardwalks and decks jutting out onto wetland areas – so that they are a focus within the public realm.
- Create interconnected wetlands alongside roads, with reedbeds where possible, to give the Roding valley more prominence in views from the road.

Roding River Valley – Key environmental assets

Environmental asset	Relevant borough	Notes
River Roding (becoming Barking Creek)	Redbridge, Newham, Barking and Dagenham	Running water, main course travelling south through Redbridge, and into other boroughs before meeting the Thames. Bordered by areas of native woodland, semi-improved grassland and scrub in some parts. Areas of reedswamp as it becomes tidal. Retains much of its natural course in its upper section, but increasingly canalised as it approaches the Thames. Herb-rich grasslands.
Wanstead Park (overlap into area 7)	Redbridge	Park includes stretch of the Roding, and stretches back up the valley side.
Alder's Brook	Newham	Small tributary of the Roding, adjacent to the City of London Cemetery. Slow-running stream surrounded by herb-rich grassland and ditch.
Little Ilford Park and Webster's Land	Newham	Recently relandscaped park with special emphasis on nature conservation. Separated from Roding by North Circular.
Lower Roding/Barking Creek	Newham	Semi-tidal river valley with mud banks and extensive reed beds.