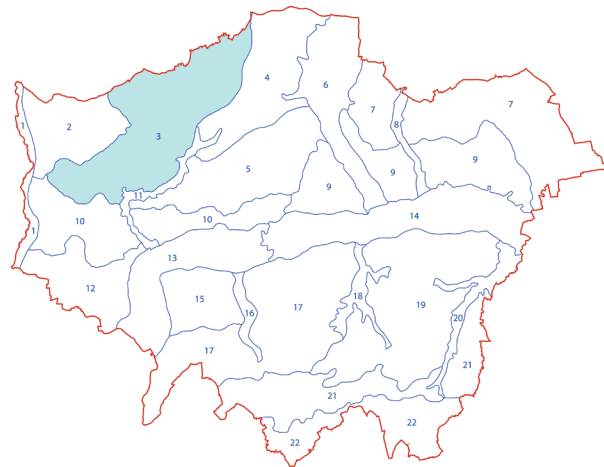


3. Barnet Plateau



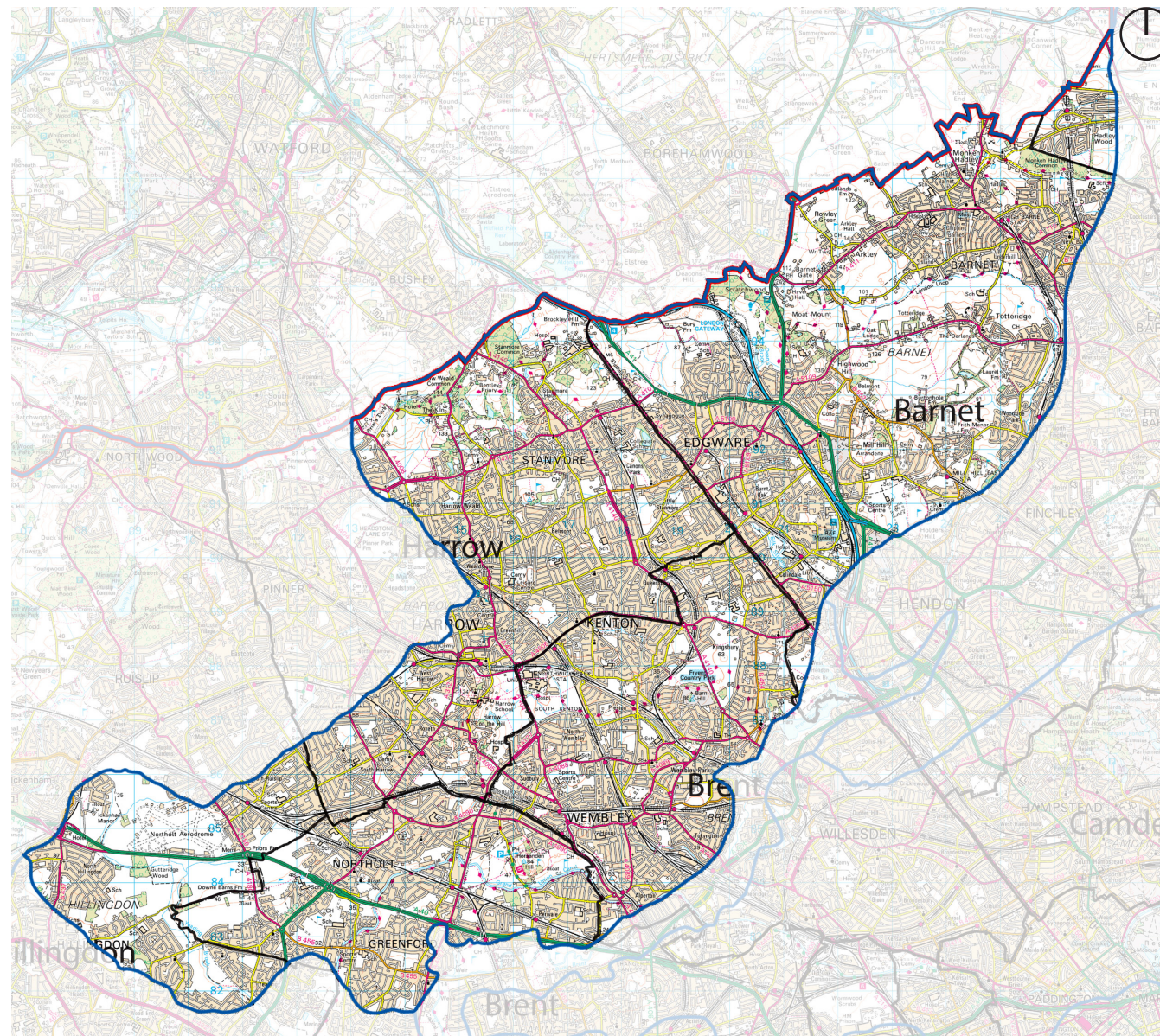
Key plan

Description

The Barnet Plateau Natural Landscape Area is part of a plateau of higher land on the north-west rim of the London Basin. The area extends eastwards to the Dollis Brook through East Barnet, southwards as far as the Brent Reservoir, and westwards to the River Crane. It covers a large and very varied area.

The underlying geology is dominated by London Clay, but in the northern (and higher) part of the Natural Landscape Area, the summits are defined by more coarse grained, younger rocks of the Claygate Member, and further south a couple of outlying hills are capped by the sandier rocks of the Bagshot Formation. The latter typically has steep convex slopes and is very free-draining; it tends to support heathland vegetation. Superficial deposits of Stanmore Gravels overlie the northern areas of this Landscape Area. These correspond with the underlying Claygate Member on the higher points of the plateau (e.g. High Barnet 134m OD). The plateau slopes within the northern part of the Landscape Area may have been shaped by periglacial erosion following the Anglian glacier advance in the Finchley area to the east.

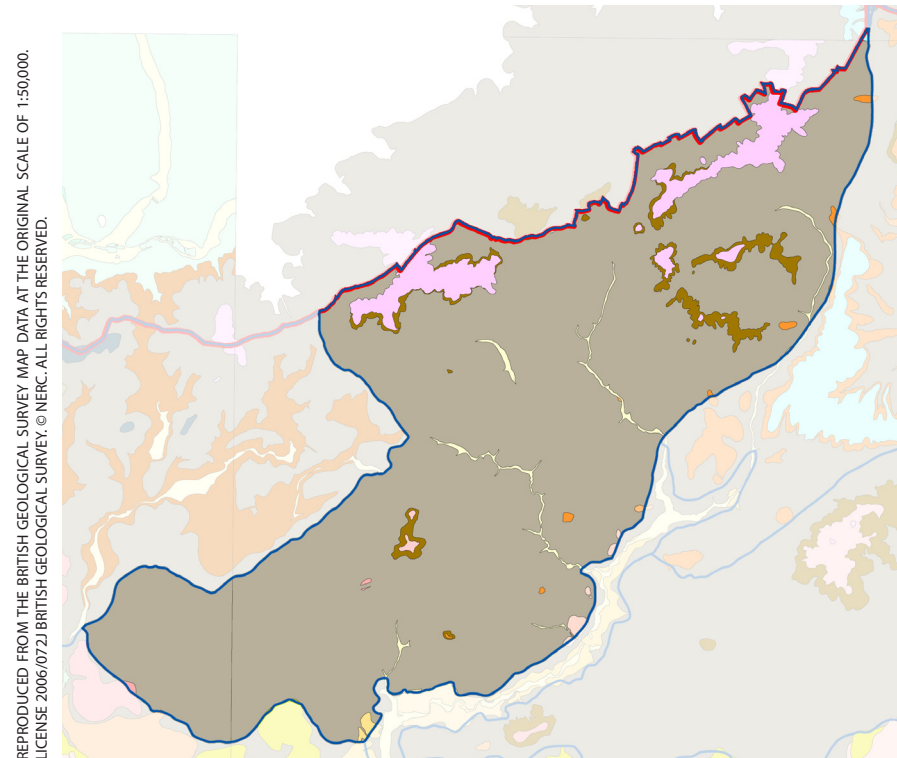
The early settlement cores (Stanmore, Harrow, Hadley and Horsenden) are linked by the extensive urban areas of Barnet, Edgware, Kenton, Wembley and Greenford. Parts of Harrow have late-Victorian/Edwardian housing, but the vast majority of settlement in this area dates from the interwar period. Several large roads (including a Roman road, the A5) and main line railways cut across the area on their way to the city centre. To the south, part of the Grand Union Canal, Northolt Aerodrome and patches of industrial site are sited on flatter land.



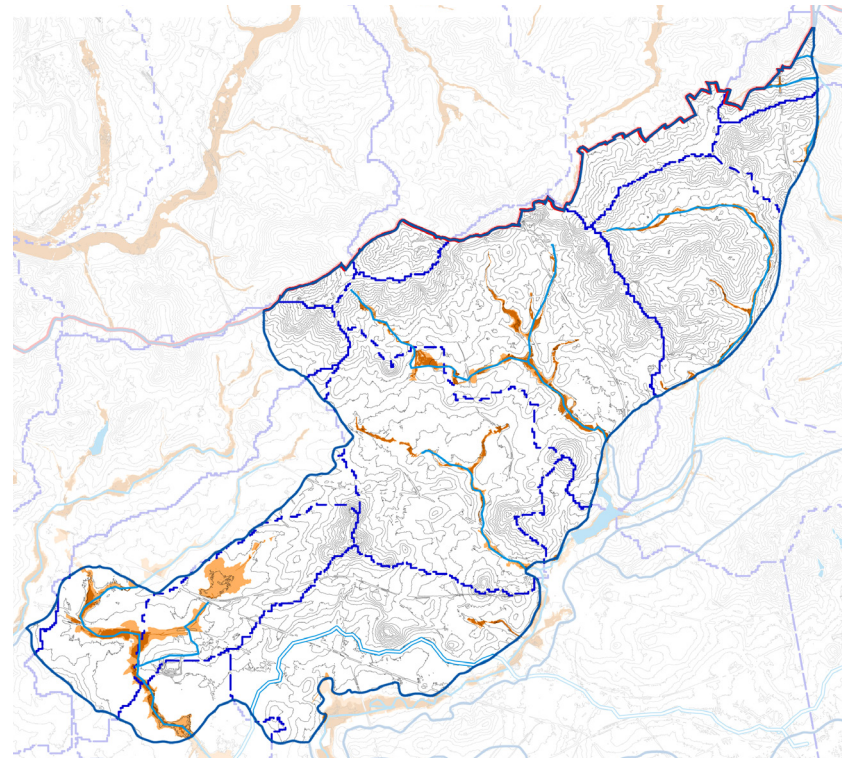
3. Barnet Plateau

To the north there are patches of farmland with rectangular fields enclosed by hedgerows. Blocks of native woodland are interspersed throughout and there are often golf courses towards the outer fringes of the farmland. To the north, where the underlying Claygate Beds have supported lowland heathland, there are commons (e.g. Stanmore and Harrow Weald) and several high, open spaces, such as Moat Mount Open Space and Totteridge Fields. Parts of the London Loop trail and the Dollis Valley Green Walk pass through these green areas.

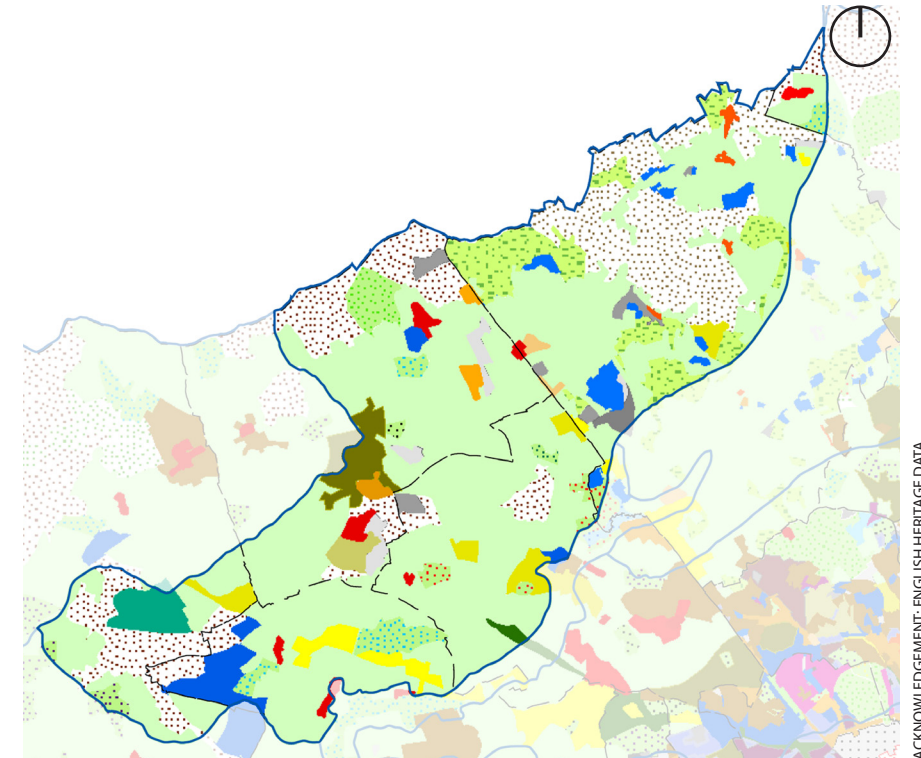
Further south, the built up areas are frequently punctuated by patches of farmland (e.g. Ruislip) cemeteries, golf courses and sports fields. The more elevated areas (when not built up) offer interesting and spectacular views (such as Harrow on the Hill and Fryent Country Park). Many streams support native woodland and damp meadows, with a diverse array of flora and fauna (e.g. Islip Manor Meadows, Yeading Brook Meadows). The latter is bisected by the A40 into the centre of London and many of the railway corridors also offer glimpsed views to the pattern of natural greenspaces.



Geology



Rivers and Topography



Historic Development

Natural Signature and natural landscape features

Natural Signature:
Barnet Plateau – Long views from remnant heathy commons.

The Barnet Plateau retains a field and farmland character to its natural spaces; pockets of traditional countryside remain within the urban fabric of London. Ancient woodland has been retained, as well as remnant heathland communities, and there are spectacular views from many high points along the plateau. Nature reserves and public paths (including the London Loop and Dollis Valley Green Walk) already take advantage of these elevated sites, but much is also to be seen from the major routes into London from the major roads (A5, M1, A40) and railway lines running across the Natural Landscape Area into the city centre.

Dollis Brook, Silk Stream, the River Brent and Yeading Brook form part of a wide network of streams and ponds throughout the area and, on the lower slopes, the floodplains have significant areas of wet vegetation and rare reedswamp.

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

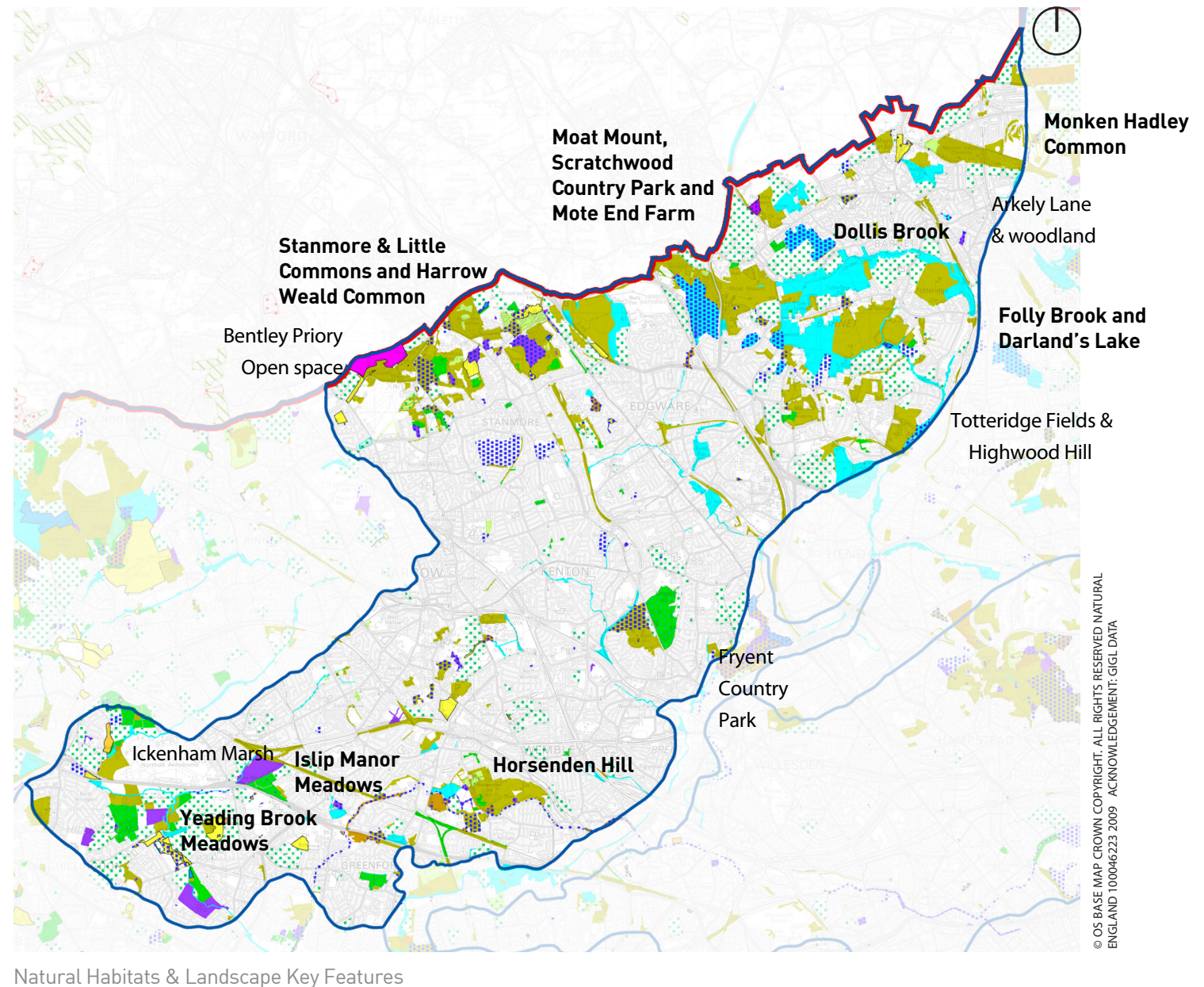
- **Monken Hadley Common** – This large common is the last remaining fragment of the historic former hunting forests of Enfield Chase. It is mostly wooded, with small areas of grassland, a large artificial lake and two ponds. The oak-hornbeam-beech woodland has a richly diverse ground flora and the mix of species suggests that fragments of the woodland have survived from before the time when the common was managed as wood-pasture. Several clearings support acid grassland, with typical and rare flora for acid soils. The two smaller ponds have a rich variety of flora, and support large populations of amphibians, which attract grass snakes.

These features are echoed in nearby King George's Fields and Arkley Lane and woodlands, where veteran trees, streams and ancient hedges enclose fields and provide a rural outlook. Here too, ditches and damp woodland support abundant wetland life.

- **Moat Mount Open Space, Scratchwood Countryside Park and Mote End Farm** – A large, elevated open space with a range of habitats, with magnificent views from the top of the hill. Barnet Gate Wood is a small ancient wood. The canopy is composed of oak and hornbeam. Wood anemone and bluebell occur in the ground flora. The Countryside Park contains a number of small woods, including Target Wood with coppiced hazel, and Nut Wood, which has ground flora including soft shield-fern, wood speedwell and bluebell, species usually associated with ancient woodland.

Most of the farm and Countryside Park is grassland, including examples of unimproved London clay grassland, with a diverse selection of wild flowers. Greater burnet-saxifrage, which is very rare in London, grows in some of the hedge bottoms. Wet ditches contain white water-lily and blue water-speedwell and support amphibians, grass snake, and a good diversity of invertebrates.

- **Folly Brook and Darland's Lake** – The Folly Brook flows through farmland and is lined for most of its length by narrow strips of woodland and scrub. The water quality is good enough for invertebrates of clean water to thrive. Darland's Lake, which is however about to be dredged, is very shallow, with an extensive reed bed at the western end and a fringe of marginal vegetation, including brooklime and marsh marigold. The carr of willows and alder currently make this a scarce habitat in London, especially wet woodland actively managed by coppicing and damp meadows alongside. The carr grades into drier woodland of oak, hornbeam and horse chestnut.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

- **Dollis Brook** – The northern part of Dollis Brook runs through farmland and playing fields between Arkley and Woodside Park. For much of its course it meanders between natural banks, with clear water and a clay or gravel bed, though some sections are restrained by concrete cladding or wooden toe-boards. The stream is largely fringed with a narrow strip of woodland, making it too shady for aquatic plants.

The lower reaches of the brook, between Woodside Park and Hendon, are less natural and ecologically rich than the upper part, but form a valuable green corridor through built-up areas. Towards the southern end of the site, the Mutton Brook joins the Dollis Brook, and the combined brooks become the River Brent. The brook follows a more or less natural, meandering course as far downstream as Finchley Golf Course. Stickleback live in the brook, and kingfisher nest in the steep clay banks.

- **Stanmore and Little Commons, Harrow Weald** – Stanmore Common is 134m OD and is the focus of a local walking project. It is an area of former heathland, now dominated by birch woodland with aspen and willow along springlines. The rich flora includes many regionally rare species, including London's only population of heath spotted-orchid and there are heathland species within clearings, including heather. The invertebrate fauna includes many nationally rare and scarce species, such as the jewel beetle, the solitary wasp and the crane fly. Little Common and several adjacent ponds provide additional habitat diversity and support further locally uncommon species.

Harrow Weald Common, featuring the historically important Grim's Dyke earthwork, is also noted for its diverse woodland and relict heathland communities.

- **Horsenden Hill** – Pastures and meadows divided by ancient hedges, reckoned to be of medieval origin. The top of the hill is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are several small areas of scrub and woodland, including the ancient Horsenden Wood, where wild service tree occurs. These support a strong population of the nationally scarce white-letter hairstreak butterfly. Several old field ponds have been restored and support amphibian populations, including the specially protected great crested newt. The site also includes two golf courses.
- **Islip Manor Meadows** – This local nature reserve is one of the richest grassland sites in London, with both wet and dry pastures and a wealth of plant life. This site contains many different grassland types; over 20 grass species and 10 leguminous species are among the diverse flora. Damp grassland and ephemeral ponds support a number of uncommon plant species, such as ragged-robin, lesser spearwort and marsh cudweed. Typical London clay grassland herbs include sneezewort and betony. Drier grassland supports saw-wort and narrow-leaved birds-foot trefoil. Permanent ponds support important populations of the protected great crested newt.
- **Yeading Brook Meadows** – The old floodplain of the Yeading Brook, so the grassland is liable to flooding, making the flora extremely diverse. The wettest fields contain meadowsweet, ragged-robin and numerous sedges and rushes. To the south of the site a series of damp hollows support further uncommon plants including the only London population of the nationally scarce narrow-leaved water-dropwort.

Underlining the natural signature of the Barnet Plateau

Key influences

- Remnant heathlands – heather, bracken, transitional, secondary birch woodland.
- Coppice woodland – on wet and dry land.
- Common land – traditional cultural links.
- Floodplain meadows alongside narrow streams.
- Lines of willow marking meandering alignment of streams.
- Veteran trees and ancient hedgerows.
- Traditional ‘patchwork’ of pastures and meadows – farmed countryside.

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.

- Blocks of silver birch within car parks or streetscapes.
- Hedgerows defining wildflower meadows within open spaces.
- Heather and acid grassland within courtyards and smaller formal spaces.
- Bracken verges.
- Specimen oak trees as landscape features – for viewpoints, seating, outdoor classrooms.
- Wet ditches and swales scraped out to allow wider areas of transitional damp grassland.
- Shallow attenuation basins with swathes of wet grassland habitat.
- Meandering lines of willow – even if paths/drainage ditches are straight.
- Planting of typical trees - hornbeam and oak.
- Planting of hazel coppice.

Barnet Plateau – Key environmental assets

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
Monken Hadley Common	Barnet	Ground flora are ancient woodland indicators. Woodland dominated by pedunculate oak, with hornbeam, beech, and some old field maples. Woodland provides valuable nesting grounds for birds. Several clearings support acid grassland. Ponds have a rich array of flora and fauna.
King George's Fields	Barnet	Small field network with veteran oak. Acid grassland and wet grassland. Ground flora are ancient woodland indicators.
Arkley Lane and woodland	Barnet	Thick hedges with the traditional bank and ditch. Ancient woodland. Old pedunculate oak. Rare grassland flora.
Moat Mount, Scratchwood Country Park and Mote End Farm	Barnet	Ancient woodland. Impressive views. Hedgerows supporting rare plant life. Examples of unimproved London clay grassland. Ditch and wetland supports rare flora and diverse fauna. The Countryside Park is a Local Nature Reserve. The London Loop and Dollis Valley Greenwalk pass through the site.
Folly Brook and Darland's Lake	Barnet	Brook supports life on banks and in water. Darland's Lake managed as a nature reserve by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. Wet woodland managed by coppicing. Rare examples of reed bed and carr. Wide variety of mammals recorded.
Totteridge Fields and Highwood Hill	Barnet	Very high, offering good viewpoints. London Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve. Rare beetles and spiders.
Dollis Brook	Barnet, Brent	London Loop walk and Dollis Valley Greenwalk follow the brook. Wet grasslands and fields. Rich hedgerow habitats.

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
Stanmore and Little Commons	Harrow	Ancient heathland. High lookout point – visible from far distance. Harrow Healthwalks project site. Heathland supports rare flora and fauna. Exceptional plants in wet areas of the woodland.
Harrow Weald Common	Harrow	Ancient woodland. Ancient Grim's Dyke earthworks. Relict heathland supporting rare fauna. High lookout point – visible from far distance.
Bentley Priory Open Space	Harrow	Damp grassland and wet areas. Coppiced areas.
Fryent Country Park	Brent	100-hectare site. Hedgerows. Replanted orchard. Unimproved neutral grassland – herb-rich grassland.
Horsenden Hill	Ealing	Ancient woodland. Medieval hedgerows. Diverse wet areas. Reed bed.
Perivale Wood	Ealing	Area of ancient oak woodland with some grazed pasture and scrub. The site is a memorial to naturalist Gilbert White.
Islip Manor meadows	Ealing, Hillingdon	Pond/lake; unimproved neutral grassland ; Wet grassland.
Ickenham Marsh	Hillingdon	Part managed by the London Wildlife Trust. Ancient woodland. Bracken, hedgerows and marsh/swamp land with diverse plant life. Reed bed. Wet woodland/carr.
Yeading Brook Meadows	Ealing, Hillingdon	Part of the site is a Local Nature Reserve; part is a London Wildlife Trust nature reserve. Wet grassland supporting varied wildlife.
Harrow Weald	Harrow	An important geological site showing an exposure of the Stanmore Gravel Formation (on private land)