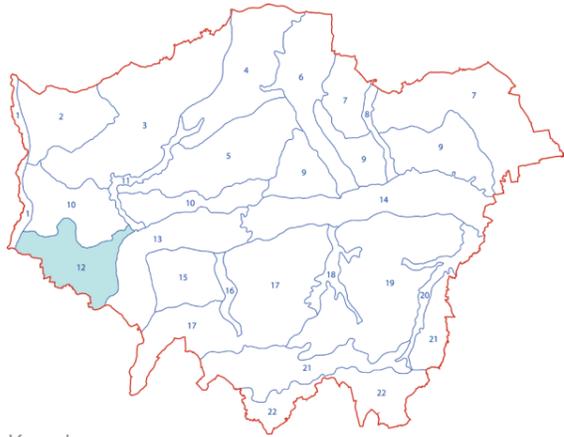


12. Hounslow Gravels



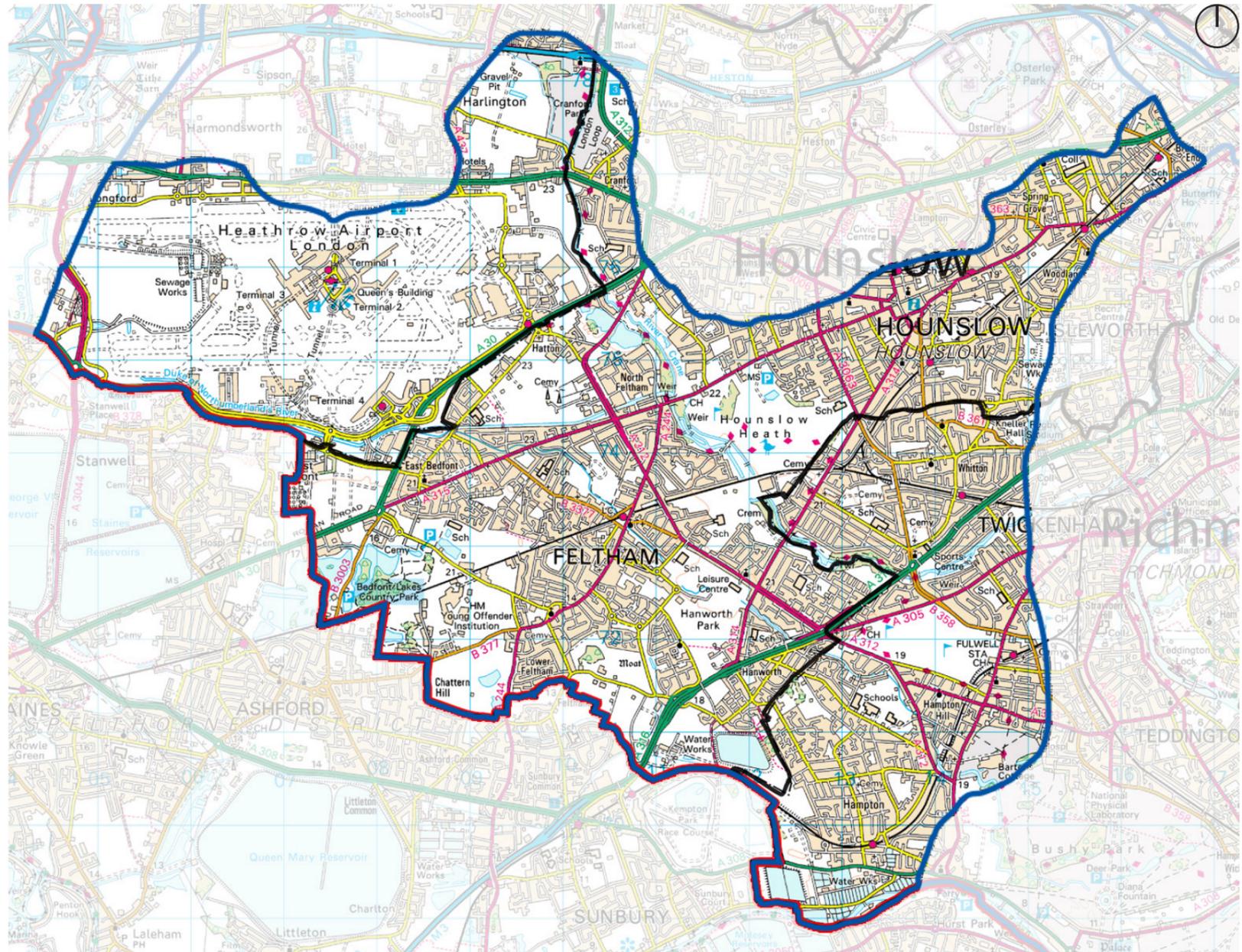
Key plan

Description

The Hounslow Gravels Natural Landscape Area extends from the south west fringes of Greater London to Hampton, meeting the confluence of the Rivers Brent and Thames. It is bordered by the Upper Thames (NLA 13) to the south and east and by the Hayes Gravels (NLA 10) to the north, and includes Heathrow Airport, Feltham, Hampton and parts of Hounslow. The shallow valley of the River Crane provides the only variation in topography across a wide flat landscape. Substantial areas have been quarried but many have been backfilled and remain unbuilt; others are reservoirs.

The bedrock is largely London Clay, overlaid with superficial gravel deposits (Taplow Gravel and Kempton Park Formation), areas of silt (Langley Silt Formation) and occasional outcrops of glacial till (formed during the glacial stages of the Pleistocene). A seam of alluvium follows the course of the River Crane. The majority of soils are seasonally wet deep loams, with deep loams on higher ground and patches of silt in the north around Harlington and Cranford.

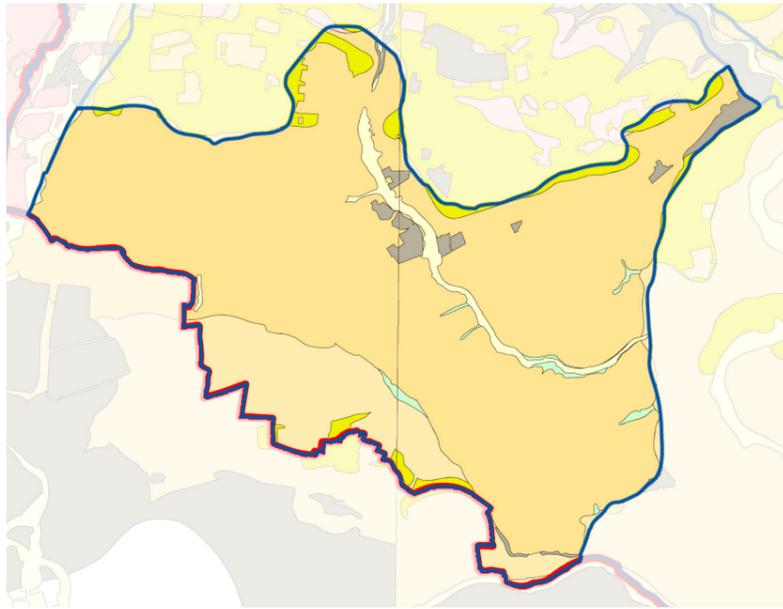
The area is characterised by recent industrial and interwar suburban development on flat land. Built development is interspersed by corridors and patches of open space along tributary streams. An example is the corridor of the River Crane, which runs from the east of Heathrow Airport, through Hounslow Heath to Twickenham. The whole area is dominated by Heathrow Airport, which covers 4.7 square miles (12.14km²).



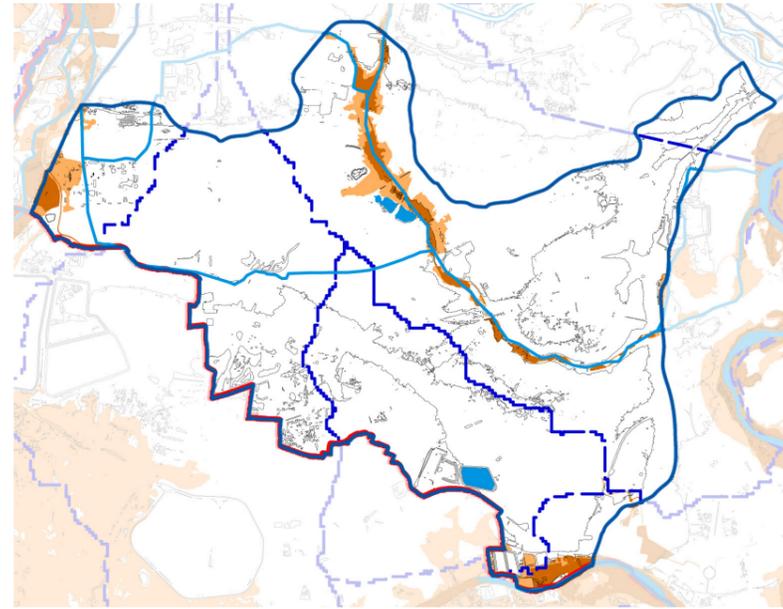
12. Hounslow Gravels

© OS BASE MAP CROWN COPYRIGHT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED NATURAL ENGLAND 100046223 2009

REPRODUCED FROM THE BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAP DATA AT THE ORIGINAL SCALE OF 1:50,000. LICENSE 2006/0721 BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY. © NERC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

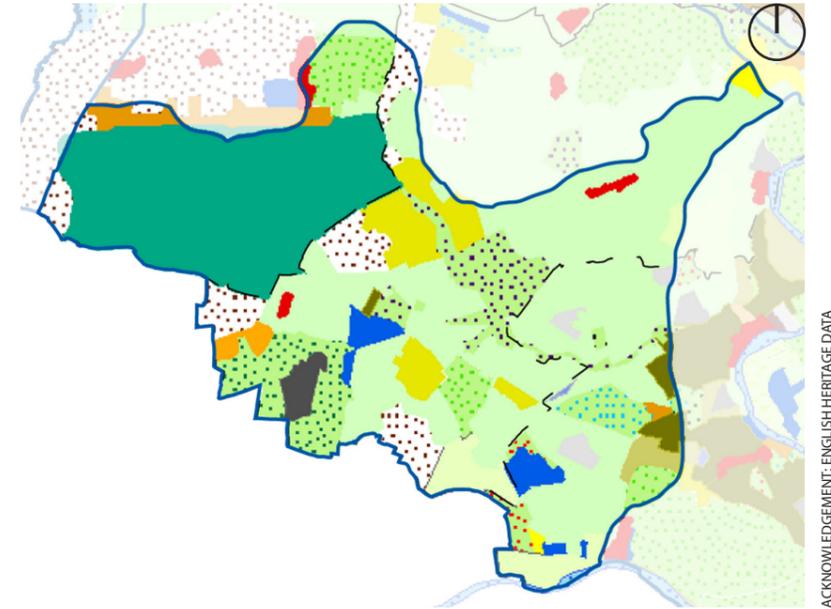


Geology



Rivers and Topography

© OS BASE MAP. CROWN COPYRIGHT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NATURAL ENGLAND 10004623.2009
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY DATA



Historic Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: ENGLISH HERITAGE DATA

Natural Signature and natural landscape features

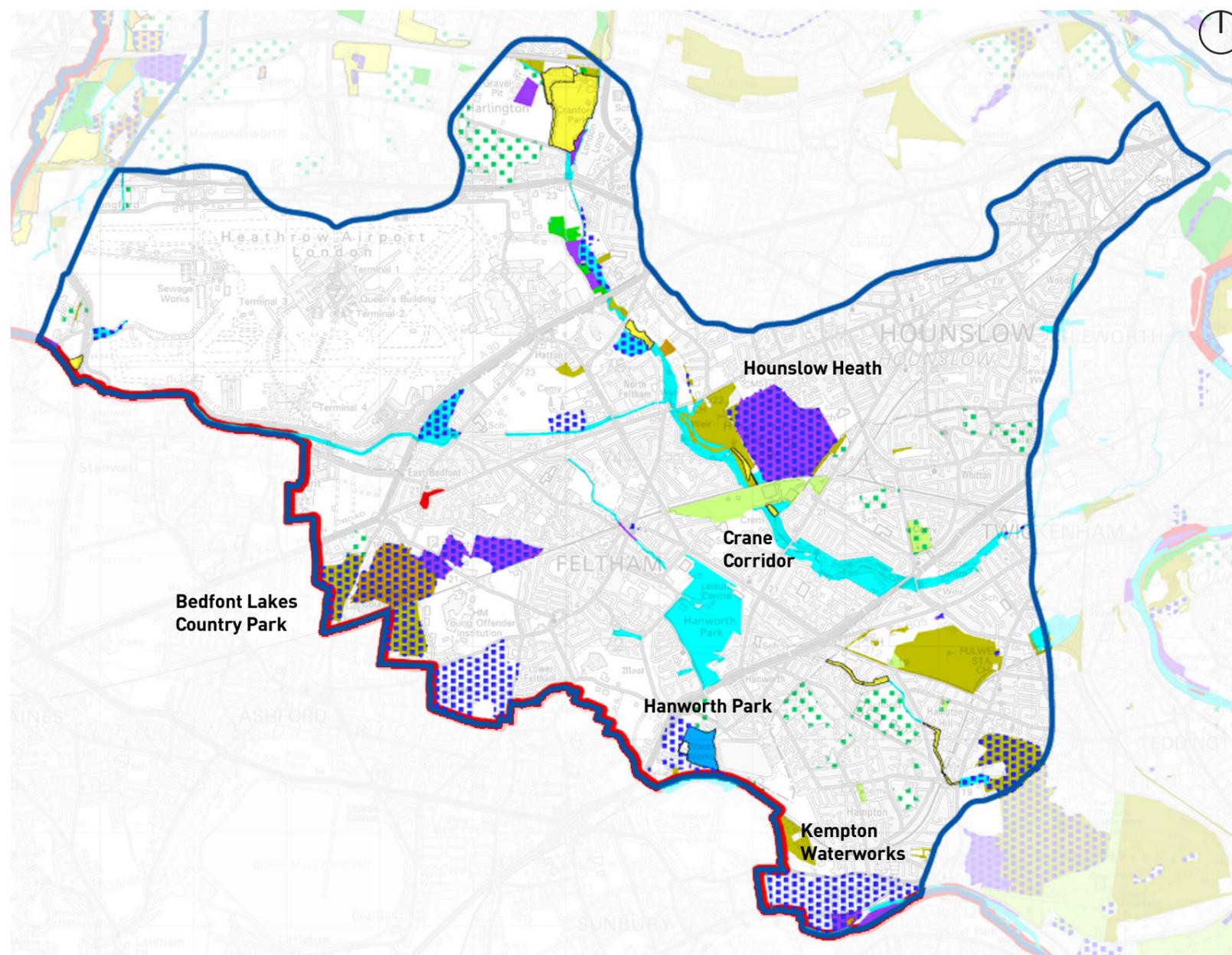
Natural Signature:
Hounslow Gravels – A flat large scale mosaic of heathy grassland, scrub and secondary woodland, traversed by narrow, lush stream corridors.

The clue to the Natural Signature of the Hounslow Gravels is the name of 'Heathrow'. The area's Natural Signature is a large scale mosaic of heathy, acid grassland, with transitions to scrub and secondary woodland. This relatively large scale landscape pattern contrasts with the much smaller scale corridors of the rivers and streams crossing the low gravelly plateau. These wetland corridors support a varied sequence of lush water meadows with ponds, ditches and marginal wet woodlands. They form valuable ecological corridors through a fragmented, urban landscape.

Examples of natural landscape features within the Hounslow Gravels Natural Landscape Area are:

- **River Crane Corridor** – For over 5 km, the River Crane is bordered by habitats of high diversity, including woodland, pasture and areas of open water. The river itself is a stronghold for uncommon aquatic plants. Various damp pastures, old water meadows and associated oxbow ponds also support a rich flora of regionally uncommon plants, including water-purslane, nodding bur-marigold and bog stitchwort. Willow-alder woodland occurs in several places, which is a rare habitat in London. The breeding avifauna includes kingfisher, grey wagtail and reed warbler. The specially protected water vole is also present.

- **Hounslow Heath** – An extensive area of acid and neutral grassland, with developing heathland where restoration has encouraged natural regeneration of heather. Rare plants of heathland and acid grassland include bell heather and dwarf gorse and there are also valuable moss and lichen communities. This is also an important site for reptiles (four protected species are present) and invertebrates. There are several ponds supporting typical wetland plants and animals, and small areas of marginal scrub and woodland. Although Hounslow Heath Golf Course is also included in the site, the Heath is currently one of London's few sites managed through a conservation grazing programme. The remainder is a Local Nature Reserve, and an important site for environmental education.
- **Bedfont Lakes Country Park** – This relatively new country park is composed of a series of lakes, woodlands and rolling meadows created from a former waste tip that now houses over 330 plant and 160 bird species. The two former gravel pits, Bedfont Lake and Princes Lake, are important for wintering and passage wildfowl and waders, including regular nationally scarce species such as bittern and smew. The lakes support a good assemblage of dragon/damselflies and moths, while created wildflower meadows support strong populations of butterflies, including common blue, small heath and brown argus. Bats roost in the wet woodlands.
- **Bedfont Pits** – This former gravel pit is now a lake, fringed with reeds, with areas of willow woodland. The site supports a good range of birds, including common waterfowl and kingfisher on the lake, and several species of warbler in the reeds and woodland. Large numbers of frogs and toads breed in the pit and in a wet ditch which leads east from the pit and widens into a pond. Goat moth is also breeding here. Rough grassland surrounding the lake is characteristic of the area, and holds interesting plants such as bee orchid.
- **Kempton Waterworks** – Alder-willow woodland borders the Portlane Brook, and the site also includes a herb-rich damp meadow supporting the London rarity early marsh-orchid. The site is important for feeding bats, newt, grass snake and water vole.



Natural Habitats & Landscape Key Features

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

Underlining the natural signature of the Hounslow Gravels

Key influences

- Mosaics of acid grassland and lowland heath.
- Scrub and secondary woodland.
- Subtle changes in topography.
- Large scale landscape pattern contrasts with diverse floodplain corridors of the River Crane and smaller tributary streams.
- Flooded gravel pits surrounded by marginal reedbeds, water meadows and alder/willow woodlands.
- Smaller ponds scattered throughout the area.
- Richly diverse narrow floodplains of water courses, with water meadows, ponds, ditches and sinuous wet woodlands.

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.

- Minimal topsoil on extensive areas of open space to create acidic meadows and heathland as a focus for development.
- Belts and areas of native woodland as a backdrop to meadows.
- Tree belts and stands of Scot's Pine, oak, holly and silver birch.
- Shallow flood attenuation basins with marginal reeds and wet grassland – grading to scrub and marginal willow or alder woodland.
- Wherever possible, create connections between newly created habitats and existing woodland/wetland corridors.

Hounslow Gravels – Key environmental assets

Environmental Asset	Relevant borough	Notes
Crane Corridor	Hillingdon, Hounslow & Richmond Upon Thames	Bordered by mixed habitats for over 5km; stronghold for rare aquatic plants.
Hounslow Heath	Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow	Extensive neutral and acidic grassland; recovering heathland; Local Nature Reserve.
Bedfont Lakes County Park	Hounslow	New country park of lakes, woodlands and meadows created from former waste tips.
Bedfont Pits	Hounslow	Former gravel pit; fringed with typha and willow woodlands.
Kempton Waterworks	Hounslow	Alder and willow woodlands; herb rich damp meadows.
Harlington Gravel Pit	Hounslow	Pond with some fringe vegetation and nearby coniferous woodland.
Hanworth Park	Hounslow	Lost many trees in WWII. Currently undergoing a re-planting project. Also some good flower meadows.