

Wirral Borough Council

Local Green Space Designations Review of Sites

Final report

Prepared by LUC

October 2021





Wirral Borough Council

Local Green Space Designations Review of Sites

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Land Use Consultants Ltd
Registered in England
Registered number 2549296
Registered office:
250 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8RD

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Contents

Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
Purpose of the study	1
Assessment scope	1

Chapter 2	
Methodology	2
The legislative framework	2
Defining a robust assessment	3

Chapter 3	
Summary of outcome	6

Chapter 4	
Next steps	10

Appendix A	
Consultation summary	A-1

Table of Figures

- 1.1. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Bebington and Bromborough
- 1.2. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry
- 1.3. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Caldy, Greasby and West Kirby
- 1.4. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Heswall
- 1.5. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Irby and Pensby
- 1.6. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Leasowe
- 1.7. Proposed Local Green Space application sites in Wallasey

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC was commissioned in April 2020 to review sites put forward for Local Green Space designation during a period of Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan.

Purpose of the study

1.2 The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of the extent to which the sites would meet the criteria for designation as Local Green Space, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.3 This study forms part of the evidence base to support Wirral's emerging Local Plan.

1.4 The outputs of this work will be used by the Council to designate areas of Local Green Space.

Assessment scope

1.5 The study considers the application of Local Green Space designations on 78 sites put forward during the Local Plan consultation. In total, 332 sites were received from consultees, however, 256 of these were duplicate applications for already suggested locations. A small number of consultees submitted detailed information as to why the sites should be designated, with an area plan.

1.6 The following sites received multiple applications:

- All 15 Heswall sites: 80 recommendations.
- St.Bridget's School playing fields, West Kirby: 46 recommendations.
- Horse paddock, Rectory Lane also known as Glebelands: 7 recommendations.
- Greenfields, West Kirby: 28 recommendations.
- Noctorum Field: 45 recommendations.
- Area north of Birkenhead Central Library: 4 recommendations.
- Balls Road East, Birkenhead: 4 recommendations.

1.7 All suggested sites are shown and labelled on **Figures 1.1 to 1.7**.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 This section sets out the methodology for the assessment. This includes information on approach, the assessment criteria and process followed.

The legislative framework

2.2 The National Planning Framework (NPPF), published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in August 2021, sets out the government's planning policies for England. Paragraphs 101 to 103 introduce a Local Green Space designation (LGS) to protect local green areas of special importance to local communities.

101. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

102. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

103. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

2.3 Planning Practice Guidance provides some additional detail, including:

- Provided land can meet the criteria at paragraph 102 of the NPPF, there is no lower size limit for a Local Green Space.¹
- Designating a green area as Local Green Space would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, but otherwise there are no new restrictions or obligations on landowners.²
- Management of land designated as Local Green Space will remain the responsibility of its owner.³
- Some areas that may be considered for designation as Local Green Space may already have largely unrestricted public access. However, other land could be considered for designation even if there is no public access.⁴
- Blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate.⁵
- Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented⁶.

Defining a robust assessment

2.4 In order to establish a framework for analysis, a sequence of questions have been generated related to each of the criteria required by the NPPF for designating a Local Green Space site. Guidance from other local authorities has informed the content of the questions.⁷

2.5 The sequence of questions is shown in **Table 2.1**.

2.6 For most criteria for designation, there are four corresponding questions for analysis. In order to achieve an overall indication that the site meets each criteria, on balance there need to be a greater number of 'Yes' answers recorded.

2.7 Where there is found to be an equal balance of 'Yes' and 'No' answers recorded within a criteria, professional judgement has determined whether the affirmative answers carry sufficient strength to outweigh the negative answers. Similar judgements are required by Landscape Architects during the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment process.

2.8 GLVIA3 recognises that "professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters

much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements⁸ undertaken by a landscape consultant or a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).

2.9 To gain a thorough understanding of each site, desktop study has been undertaken using relevant GIS data sets and a review of the Landscape Character Area Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment.

2.10 It is proposed that Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) are used to define the likely size of a suitable Local Green Space and its distance from the local community. A site of 2ha (5 acres) or less should be located within 300m (325 yards) (or 5 minutes' walk) of the community it serves.

2.11 Each site has been visited by a Landscape Architect. Field survey has been undertaken in order to understand aspects of the site's character that align with perceptual and aesthetic associations such as tranquillity.

2.12 If a site has not met all four criteria for designation set out in the bulleted list below, recommendations have been made with a view to the suitability of supporting a Local Green Space designation:

- Reasonable proximity
- Demonstrably special to the local community
- Local in character
- Not an extensive tract of land

2.13 Determining whether the site is an extensive tract of land has been determined in the field based on a survey of openness, aspect and definable edges.

2.14 'Not an extensive tract of land' means that it is not considered a large open space. Feelings of openness are affected by vegetation, topography, views and location. In order to understand this fully, all sites have been assessed in the field.

2.15 All sites protected by Green Belt designation are already offered the same level of protection proposed by the Local Green Space designation. Land designated as Green Belt tends to be situated on the outer edges of towns, potentially within open countryside and serving to form a gap between settlements. These locations contravene the designation of Local Green Space as they often form extensive tracts of land.

¹ Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 37-016-20140306.

² PPG Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 37-020-20140306.

³ PPG Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 37-021-20140306.

⁴ PPG Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 37-017-20140306.

⁵ PPG Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306.

⁶ PPG Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 37-008-20140306.

⁷ Cheshire West and Chester Council, Guidance note on justifying local greenspace designation in neighbourhood plans.

⁸ Landscape Institute and IEMA, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third edition, 2013, para. 2.23.

Limitations

2.16 The assessment of the sites against the criterion set out within Para. 101 of the NPPF - *“Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period”* - is considered outside of the scope of this review. The Local Planning Authority will be required to make further judgement on these matters in each case.

Table 2.1: Methodology for assessment

Criteria for Designation	Questions
Reasonable Proximity	Is the site within walking distance from local community?
	Does the site have good pedestrian and cycle access/links?
	Is the site used locally?
	Is the site accessible (physically, socially) from surrounding areas?
Demonstrably Special to the Local Community (Yes to one of more of the following aspects)	
Beauty	Is there good visibility of the site?
	On balance, is there an absence of detracting features?
	Is the site covered by any designations that reflect its aesthetic value?
	Is the site covered by landscape character/sensitivity assessment?
Historic Significance	Does the site form the setting for historic structures/buildings or contain historic landscape features?
	Is the site covered by historic designations?
	Does the site play a role in the historic development of the nearby settlement?
	Did or do any historic events/rituals take place on the site?
Recreational Value	Is the site crossed by PRow, bridleways, cycleways, etc?
	Is the site used for sports uses?
	Is the site used for informal recreation?
	Is the site used for community events/schools, etc?
Tranquility	Is the site minimally affected by sources of nearby noise pollution?
	Is the site recognised as tranquil on the CPRE Tranquil map?
	Are there natural features on the site that contribute to visual tranquility?
	Are there natural features adjacent to the site that contribute to visual tranquility?
Richness in wildlife	Are any specific or locally representative habitats or mosaic found on the site?
	Are any specific or locally representative species or assemblage found on the site?
	Is the site being studied for wildlife by local interest groups?
	Does the site form part of a wildlife corridor or stepping stone network?
Local in Character	Is the site contained by clearly defined edges?
	Is the site physically, visually and socially connected to the local area?
	Is the site characteristic of the local area?
	Does the site convey local distinctiveness and sense of place?
Not an Extensive tract of land	Is the site of a sufficient size to not be considered 'an extensive tract of land'?

Chapter 3

Summary of outcome

3.1 A summary of the overall ratings for each of the suggested sites across each of the criteria is provided in Table 3.1.

3.2 The table is colour coded, with green signifying that the site meets the criteria and red signifying that the site does not meet the criteria. Amber indicates that the site does not strongly meet the criteria and that boundary changes would be required before designation is recommended.

3.3 In summary, 51 sites are recommended to meet the criteria for designation for Local Green Space.

3.4 Six of these sites are below the 2ha criteria set by Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards outlined in para. 2.10 and therefore, discretion lies with Wirral Council as to whether the sites should be designated. These comprise:

- Monk's Way, Bebington
- Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead
- Land at Marlston Avenue, Pensby
- Little Arno, Oxton
- Village Copse, Irby
- Land at Glenwood Drive and Coombe Road, Irby.

3.5 Additionally, two sites could meet the criteria if boundary changes were considered, notably:

- Holt Hill: this application site is across two parcels of land separated by a road. It is considered that removal of triangular area of land between Hinderton Road and Holt Hill is required as that site did not meet the 'Demonstrably Special' criteria on its own merit.
- Harrock Wood woodland: Although the wider area is considered too extensive a tract of land, demonstrating feelings of openness and forming a gap between settlements (demonstrating its Green Belt designation), the woodland would meet criteria for designation.

Table 3.1: Summary of findings from analysis of Local Green Space application sites

Ref	Local Green Space application sites	YES	YES TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE CRITERIA					YES	YES	Meets criteria for LGS designation
		Reasonable Proximity	Demonstrably Special					Local in Character	Not an Extensive Tract of Land	
			Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational value	Tranquility	Richness in wildlife			
West Kirby area										
LGSA1	St Bridget's School playing field, West Kirby									
LGSA2	Horse field, Rectory Road, West Kirby									
LGSA3	Ashton Park, West Kirby									
LGSA4	Greenfields, West Kirby									
Bebington / Bromborough area										
LGSA5	Monk's Way, Bebington									
LGSA6	Riverside Park, Bromborough									
Wallasey area										
LGSA7	Tower Grounds, Wallasey									
LGSA8	Elleray Park, Wallasey									
LGSA9	The Grange, Wallasey									
LGSA10	Flynn's Piece, Wallasey									
LGSA11	Harrison Park, Wallasey									
LGSA12	Land at Mossland Drive, Wallasey									
LGSA13	The Dips, Wallasey									
LGSA14	Wallasey Cricket Oval									
LGSA15	Belvedere Fields									
LGSA16	The Breck and Bluebell Woods									
LGSA17	Cross Lane Playing Fields									
LGSA18	Wallacre Playing Fields									
LGSA19	Wallacre Play Area									
LGSA59	Wellington Road green space									
Irby/Pensby area										
LGSA20	Land at Glenwood Drive and Coombe Road, Irby									
LGSA21	Scout Field, Irby									
LGSA22	Village copse, Irby									
LGSA23	Londymere Roman Well, Irby									
LGSA24	Farmland at Harrock Wood* * Potential for designation if boundary changed to Harrock Wood woodland									
LGSA25	Land at Marlston Avenue, Pensby									
LGSA26	Pensby Wood, Pensby									
LGSA27	Farmland at Gills Lane, Barnston									

Ref	Local Green Space application sites	YES	YES TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE CRITERIA					YES	YES	Meets criteria for LGS designation
		Reasonable Proximity	Demonstrably Special					Local in Character	Not an Extensive Tract of Land	
			Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational value	Tranquility	Richness in wildlife			
	Heswall area									
LGSA28	Pinewoods North									
LGSA29	Pinewoods South									
LGSA30	Poll Hill Reservoir									
LGSA31	The Puddyle									
LGSA32	Whitfield Common									
LGSA33	Heswall Library									
LGSA34	The Beacons									
LGSA35	Dawstone Park									
LGSA36	Hill House Gardens									
LGSA37	Feather Lane Woods									
LGSA38	The Dales and Cleaver Heath									
LGSA39	Telegraph Road / Thurstaston Road triangle									
LGSA57	Land by Boundary Lane									
LGSA58	Land at Poll Hill									
LGSA62	Castle Buildings frontage									
	Birkenhead/Tranmere area									
LGSA40	Balls Road East									
LGSA41	Area north of Birkenhead Central Library									
LGSA42	Birkenhead School									
LGSA43	Church Road									
LGSA44	Conway Street									
LGSA45	Holt Hill* Potential for designation if area between Hinderton Rd and Holt Hill omitted									
LGSA46	Whetstone Lane									
LGSA47	Borough Road									
LGSA48	Noctorum Fields									
	Woodchurch/Greasby/Caldy area									
LGSA49	Upton Road, Woodchurch									
LGSA50	Greasby Health Centre, Greasby									
LGSA51	Greasby Library, Greasby									
LGSA52	Farmland at Caldby Road, Caldby									
LGSA63	Land at Frankby Road and Pump Lane									
LGSA64	Landican Allotments									
LGSA65	Arrowe Park									
LGSA66	Stapledon Wood									
	Leasowe area									
LGSA53	Epsom Road/Cheltenham Crescent, Leasowe									
LGSA54	Epsom Road, Leasowe									
LGSA55	Ditton Lane Nature Reserve, Leasowe									

Ref	Local Green Space application sites	YES	YES TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE CRITERIA					YES	YES	Meets criteria for LGS designation
		Reasonable Proximity	Demonstrably Special					Local in Character	Not an Extensive Tract of Land	
			Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational value	Tranquility	Richness in wildlife			
	Rock Ferry area									
LGSA56	Former Rock Ferry High School playing fields									
LGSA67	Bedford Place Play area									
LGSA68	New Chester Road									
LGSA69	Land at Mersey Road									
	Oxton area									
LGSA70	Slaty Road									
LGSA71	Oulton Way									
LGSA72	Kelsall Close									
LGSA73	Tabley Close									
LGSA74	Little Arno, Mill Hill									
LGSA75	Arno Road									
	Thurstaston/Frankby									
LGSA76	Thurstaston common									
LGSA77	Dawpool Primary School									
LGSA78	Royden Park									

Chapter 4

Next steps

4.1 It is advised that Wirral Council undertake a review of the proposed application sites that are recommended for designation (with and without boundary changes) in order to determine the following:

- As detailed earlier, Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards state that when determining whether a site is considered suitable greenspace, a site of 2ha (5 acres) or less should be located within 300m (325 yards) (or 5 minutes' walk) of the community it serves. Six of the proposed Local Green Space sites do not currently meet this criterion as identified in para. 3.4.
- It will not be considered appropriate to designate a Local Green Space site where planning permissions are already in place or where it the designation would be considered inappropriate or inconsistent with the Local Plan.
- It may not be considered appropriate to designate existing Green Belt sites as Local Green Space due to the similarities between the designations.
- Land ownership, where the proposed Local Green Space sites are privately owned:
 - Rectory Road, West Kirby (Glebelands)
 - Greenfields, West Kirby
 - Londymere Roman Well, Irby
 - Ditton Lane Nature Reserve, Leasowe
 - Noctorum Field, Birkenhead
 - Wallasey Cricket Oval
 - Epsom Road, Leasowe.
- Sport England has recommended through statutory consultation that playing fields should not be designated if it means there will be restrictions on future development of on-site ancillary sports facilities.

4.2 As stated in paragraph 2.15, the scope of this report does not include an assessment of the sites against the criterion set out within Paragraph 99 of the NPPF - *“Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and*

complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.” The Local Planning Authority will be required to make further judgement on these matters in each case.

4.3 Consultation will be required with landowners if any of the sites are on private land, to agree a way forward. In essence, the Local Green Space designation will inhibit development in the same way that Green Belt designation limits urban sprawl.

4.4 For those sites failing to meet the Local Green Space criteria or not considered appropriate for designation due to the above list, it is recommended that efforts are made to designate via another appropriate method such as an Asset of Community Value or Village Green.

Appendix A

Consultation summary

A.1 The Local Green Space report was consulted on during a period of Local Plan consultation in early-mid 2021.

A.2 262 responses were received through the Options and Issues consultation process:

- By Objective, Wirral Council's planning portal: 152 responses.
- By email: 100 responses.
- Via Reg 18 consultation: 10 sites put forward.

A.3 The following matrix presents a summary of the feedback received and corresponding actions. Feedback included additional evidence to support sites already submitted and assessed, statements of support or against proposed LGS designation, responses from statutory consultees and suggestions for new applications sites.

A.4 The report has been amended to reflect feedback received:

Table A.1: Summary of consultation responses

Type of comment	LGSA no.	Volume of comments received	Is the site now recommended for designation?	Actions / notes
Additional evidence provided to support existing LGSA sites not initially recommended for designation.	21	3	Y	
	22	3	Y	
	24	7	Partial – woodland only	Scoring updated to reflect historic significance. Unfortunately, the site is still considered an extensive tract of land is not suitable for designation.
	27	11	N	LGSA 27 does not meet the criteria for LGS designation as it is an extensive tract of land.
	38	2	N	LGSA 38 is does not meet the criteria for designation as it is an extensive tract of land. It is also offered more appropriate protection by SSSI designation.
	39	2	N	LGSA 39 is not recommended for designation as it is not considered to be local in character.
	50	5	Y	
	52	5	N	LGSA 52 does not meet the criteria for LGS designation as it is an extensive tract of land.

Type of comment	LGSA no.	Volume of comments received	Is the site now recommended for designation?	Actions / notes
	53	1	N	LGSA 53 does not meet the criteria for designation.
Challenging non-designation of an existing site without providing new information	24	1	N/A	The site is still considered an extensive tract of land is not suitable for designation.
Change to existing LGSA boundary	36	4	N/A	The boundary has not been updated to reflect additional information provided.
New sites suggested by consultees	57 58	3	Y	Heswall Society provided further detail on 2 sites previously mooted but without evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poll Hill woodland - Land at Boundary Lane
	59			Wellington Road Conservation Advisory Committee put forward justification for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wellington Road green space
	56 67 68 69	1	3Y / 1N	Sites put forward by Elected Member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former Rock Ferry High School playing fields - Land at Mersey Road - Bedford Place Park - Land at New Chester Road
	70 71 72 73 74 75	1	3Y / 3N	Sites put forward by Elected Member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land at Slatey Road - Land at Oulton Way - Land at Kelsall Close - Land at Tabley Close - Little Arno, Mill Hill - Land at Arno Road
	60 61 62 63 64 65 66	-	5Y / 5N	Other sites put forward as part of Reg 18 consultation period.

Local Green Space Designations
October 2021

Type of comment	LGSA no.	Volume of comments received	Is the site now recommended for designation?	Actions / notes
	76 77 78			
	N/A	3	N	Insufficient information provided.
Support for existing LGSA sites recommended for designation	1	6	N/A	N/A
	2	32	N/A	N/A
	3	6	N/A	N/A
	4	36	N/A	N/A
	8	7	N/A	N/A
	10	7	N/A	N/A
	11	7	N/A	N/A
	13	7	N/A	N/A
	14	7	N/A	N/A
	15	12	N/A	N/A
	17	11	N/A	N/A
	18	4	N/A	N/A
	19	1	N/A	N/A
	20	2	N/A	N/A
	23	2	N/A	N/A
	25	2	N/A	N/A
	26	2	N/A	N/A
	28	1	N/A	N/A
	29	1	N/A	N/A
	31	1	N/A	N/A
32	1	N/A	N/A	
33	1	N/A	N/A	
34	1	N/A	N/A	

Type of comment	LGSA no.	Volume of comments received	Is the site now recommended for designation?	Actions / notes
	35	1	N/A	N/A
	36	2	N/A	N/A
	37	1	N/A	N/A
	48	70	N/A	N/A
	51	7	N/A	N/A
	54	1	N/A	N/A
	55	1	N/A	N/A
	56	1	N/A	N/A
	General	7	N/A	N/A
Support for not recommending designation of site	27	1	N/A	N/A
Contesting recommendation for LGS designation.	48	3	N/A	The report has recommended these sites fit the criteria for designation. Wirral Council will now review the sites to determine appropriateness with the objectives of the Local Plan.
	1	1	N/A	
	2	1	N/A	
	3	1	N/A	
	4	1	N/A	
Confusion regarding criteria for designation – what is an extensive tract of land.	24	1	N	LGSA 52 does not meet the criteria for LGS designation as it is an extensive tract of land.
	38	2	N	LGSA 38 is does not meet the criteria for designation as it is an extensive tract of land. It is also offered more appropriate protection by SSSI designation.
	52	4	N	LGSA 52 does not meet the criteria for LGS designation as it is an extensive tract of land.
	General	2	N	N/A
Request to remove minimum size for LGS designation	N/A	1	N/A	Those sites falling under 2ha have been recommended for designation in the report.

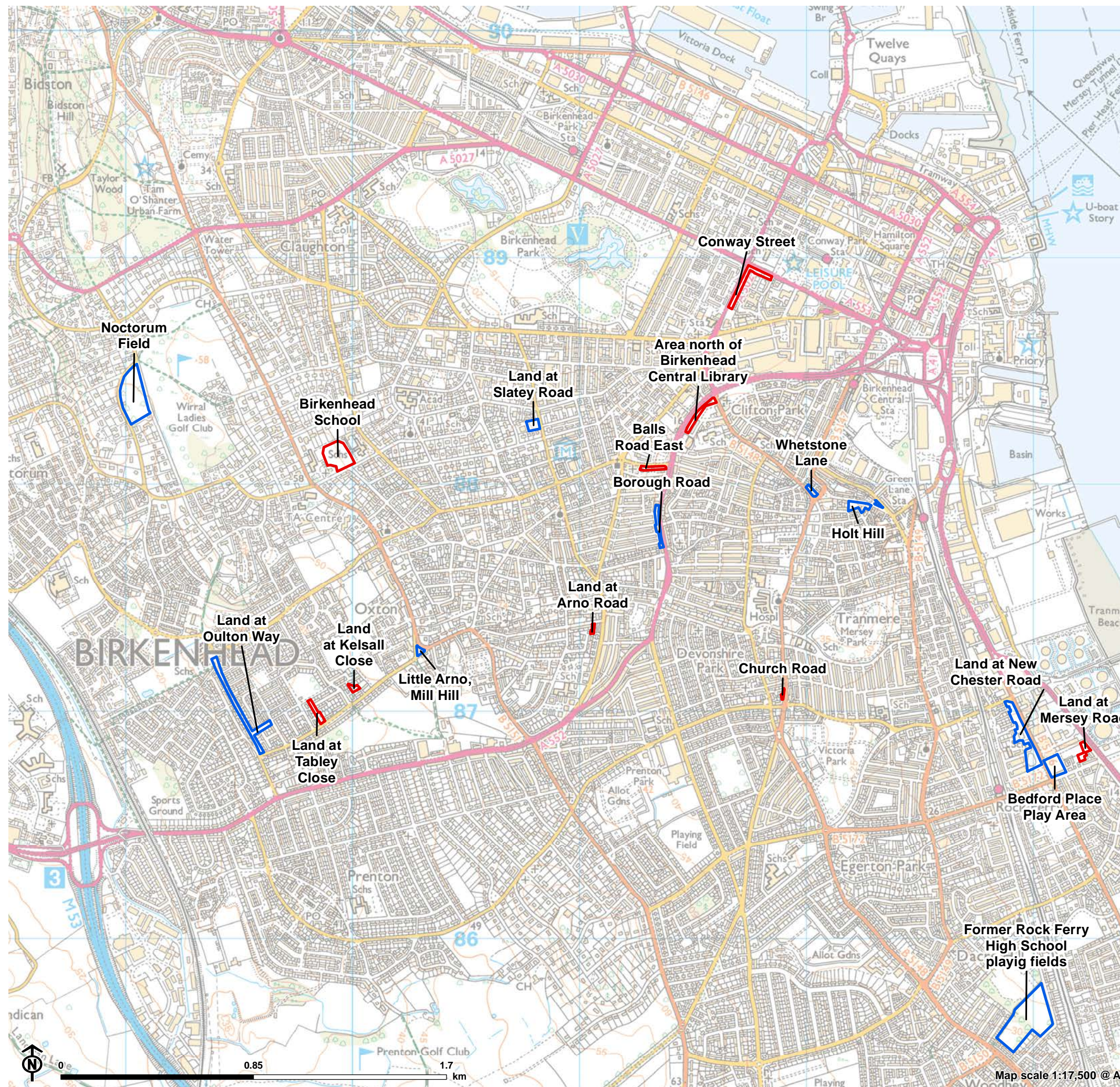
Type of comment	LGSA no.	Volume of comments received	Is the site now recommended for designation?	Actions / notes
General comments around green belt, housing, importance of green space and fears of over-development in Wirral.	N/A	14	N/A	N/A
Statutory consultee general comments	N/A	7	N/A	N/A
Alternative assessment on behalf of housebuilder	N/A	1	N/A	N/A

Figure 1.1: Local green spaces in Bebington and Bromborough



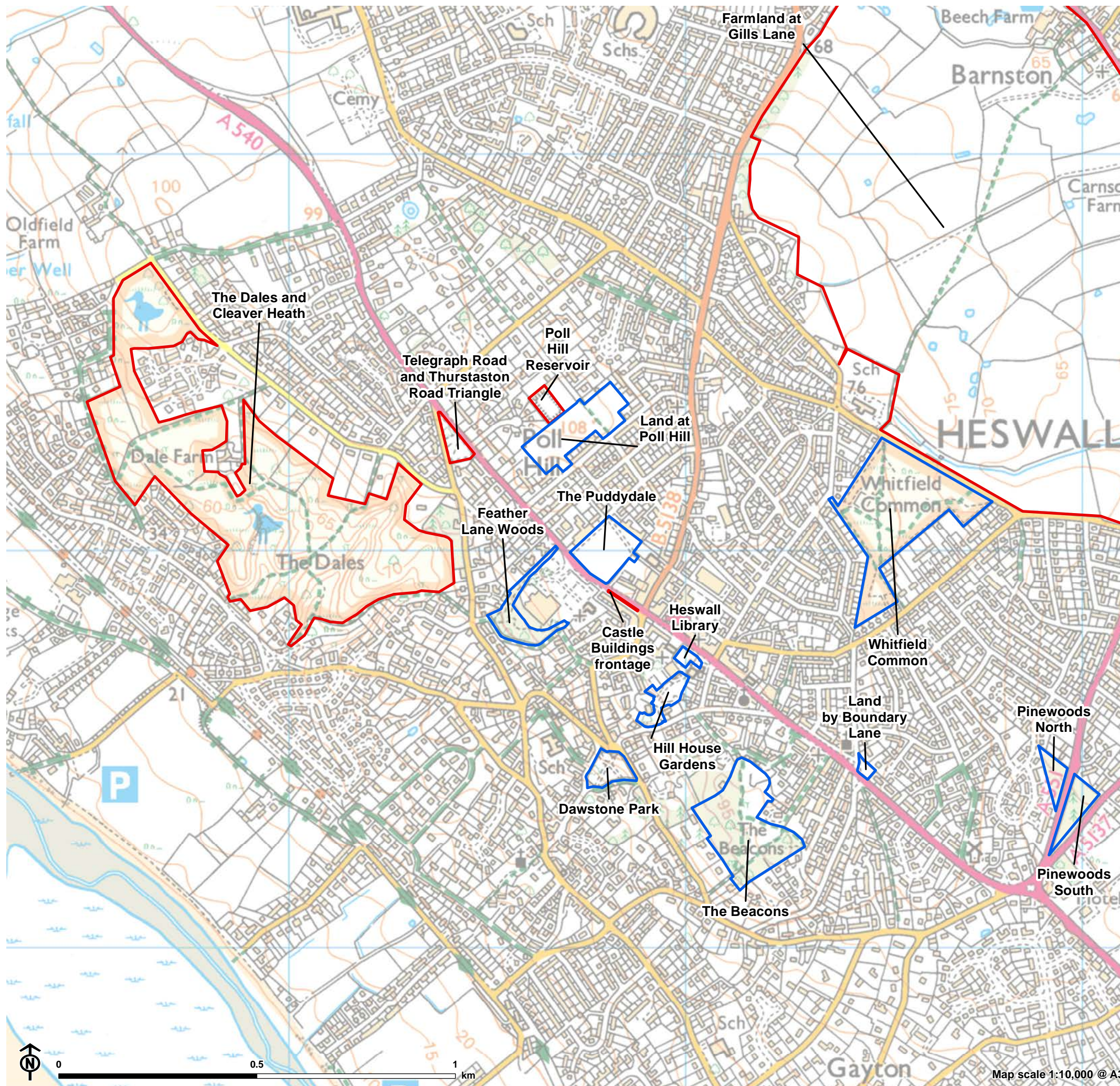
- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

Figure 1.2: Local green spaces in Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry



- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

Figure 1.4: Local green spaces in Heswall



- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

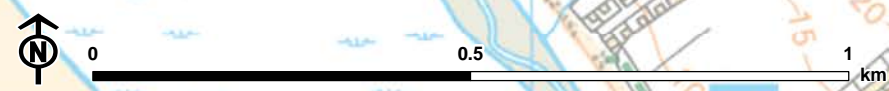
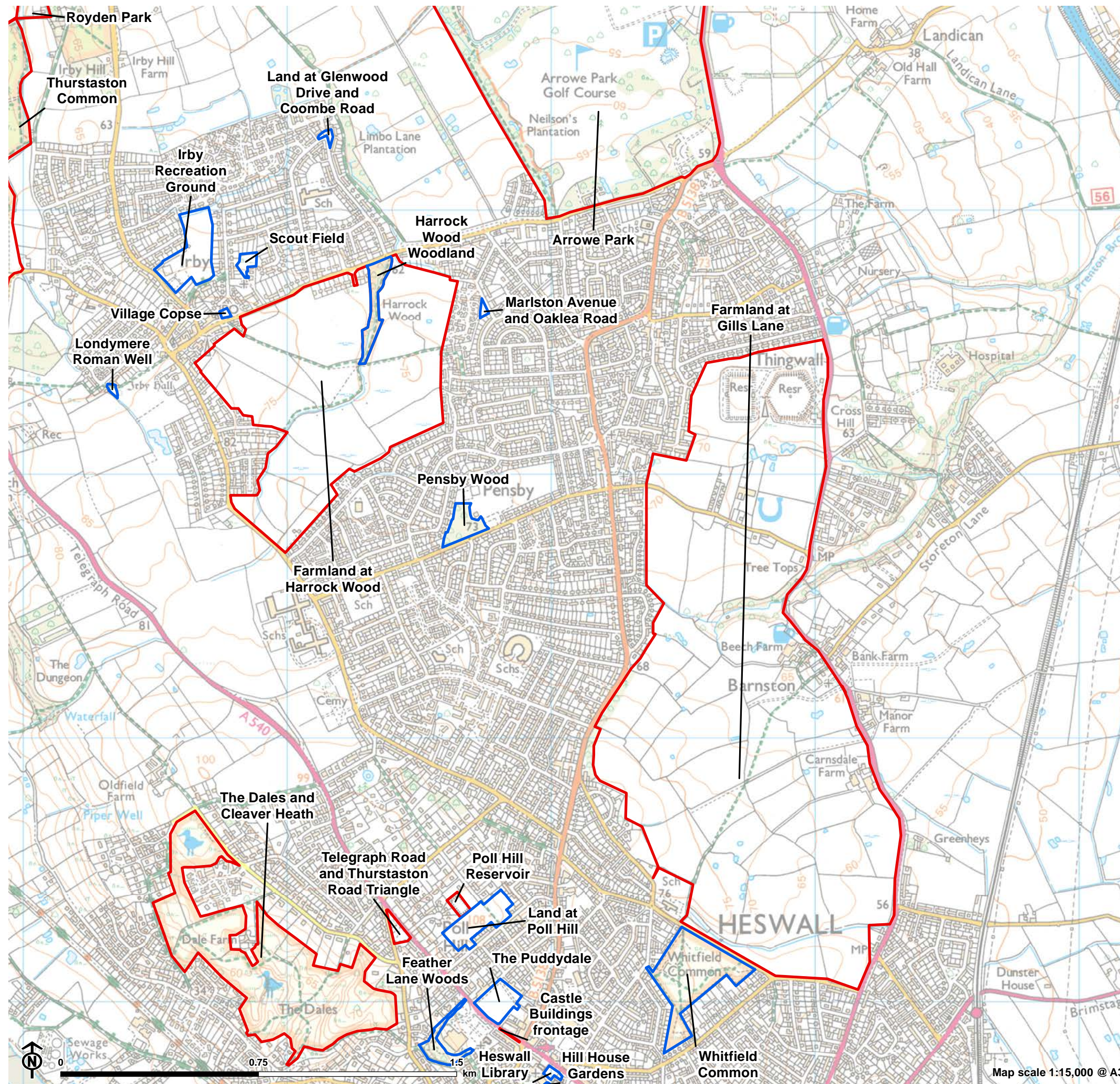
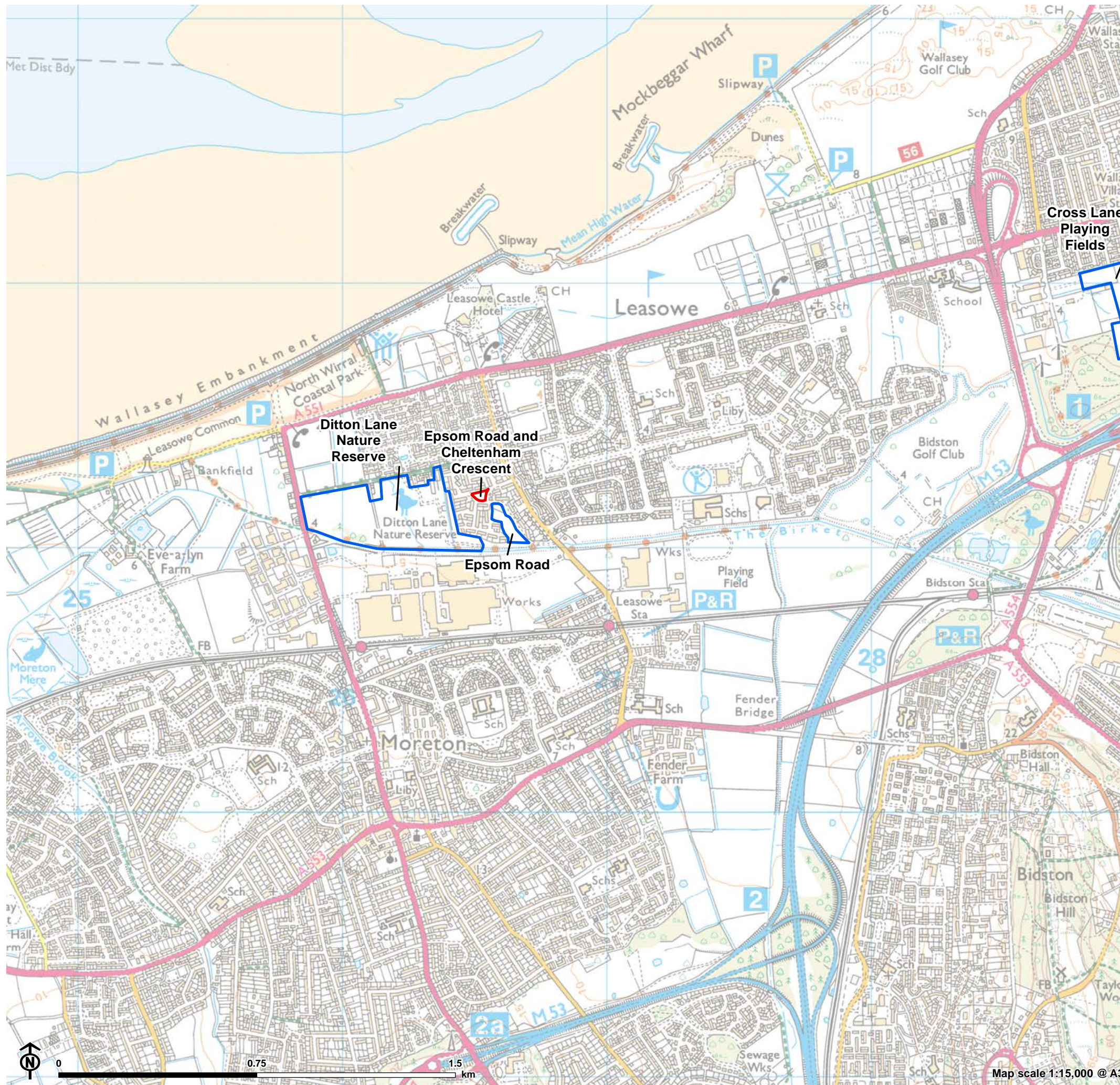


Figure 1.5: Local green spaces in Irby and Pensby



- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

Figure 1.6: Local green spaces in Leasowe



- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation



Map scale 1:15,000 @ A3

Figure 1.7: Local green spaces in Wallasey



- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation