

Wirral Borough Council

**Local Green Space
Designations
Review of Sites**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Wirral Borough Council

Local Green Space Designations
Review of Sites

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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 study will inform the Council's decision on whether to designate areas of Local Green Space

Assessment scope

1.5 The study considers the application of Local Green Space designations on 55 sites put forward during the Local Plan consultation. In total, 309 sites were received from consultees, however, 254 of these were duplicate applications for already suggested locations. Only 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 13 Heswall sites: 80 applications.
- St.Bridget's School playing fields, West Kirby: 46 applications.
- Horse paddock, Rectory Lane also known as Glebelands: 7 applications.
- Greenfields, West Kirby: 28 applications.
- Noctorum Field: 45 applications.
- Area north of Birkenhead Central Library: 4 applications.
- Balls Road East, Birkenhead: 4 applications.

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 June 2019, sets out the government's planning policies for England. Paragraphs 99 to 101 introduce a Local Green Space designation (LGS) to protect local green areas of special importance to local communities.

99. 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.

100. 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.

101. 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 100 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, a 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 Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) were 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 tranquility.

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

2.13 This report considers whether a site has met all four criteria for designation, namely:

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

If the site meets all four criteria, recommendations will be made with a view to the suitability of supporting a Local Green Space designation.

2.14 All sites protected by Green Belt designation are already offered the same level of protection offered by the Local Green Space designation.

Limitations

2.15 The assessment of the sites against the criterion set out within Para. 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*" - is considered outside of the scope of

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.

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?
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, 34 sites are recommended to meet the criteria for designation for Local Green Space.

3.4 Three 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.

3.5 Additionally, one site 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.

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									
	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									
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 Puddydale									
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									
	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									
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	Famland at Caldby Road, Caldby									
	Leasowe area									
LGSA53	Epsom Road/Cheltenham Crescent, Leasowe									
LGSA54	Epsom Road, Leasowe									
LGSA55	Ditton Lane Nature Reserve, Leasowe									

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. Three 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.
- 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.

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. 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.

Figure 1.1: Local green spaces in Bebington and Bromborough





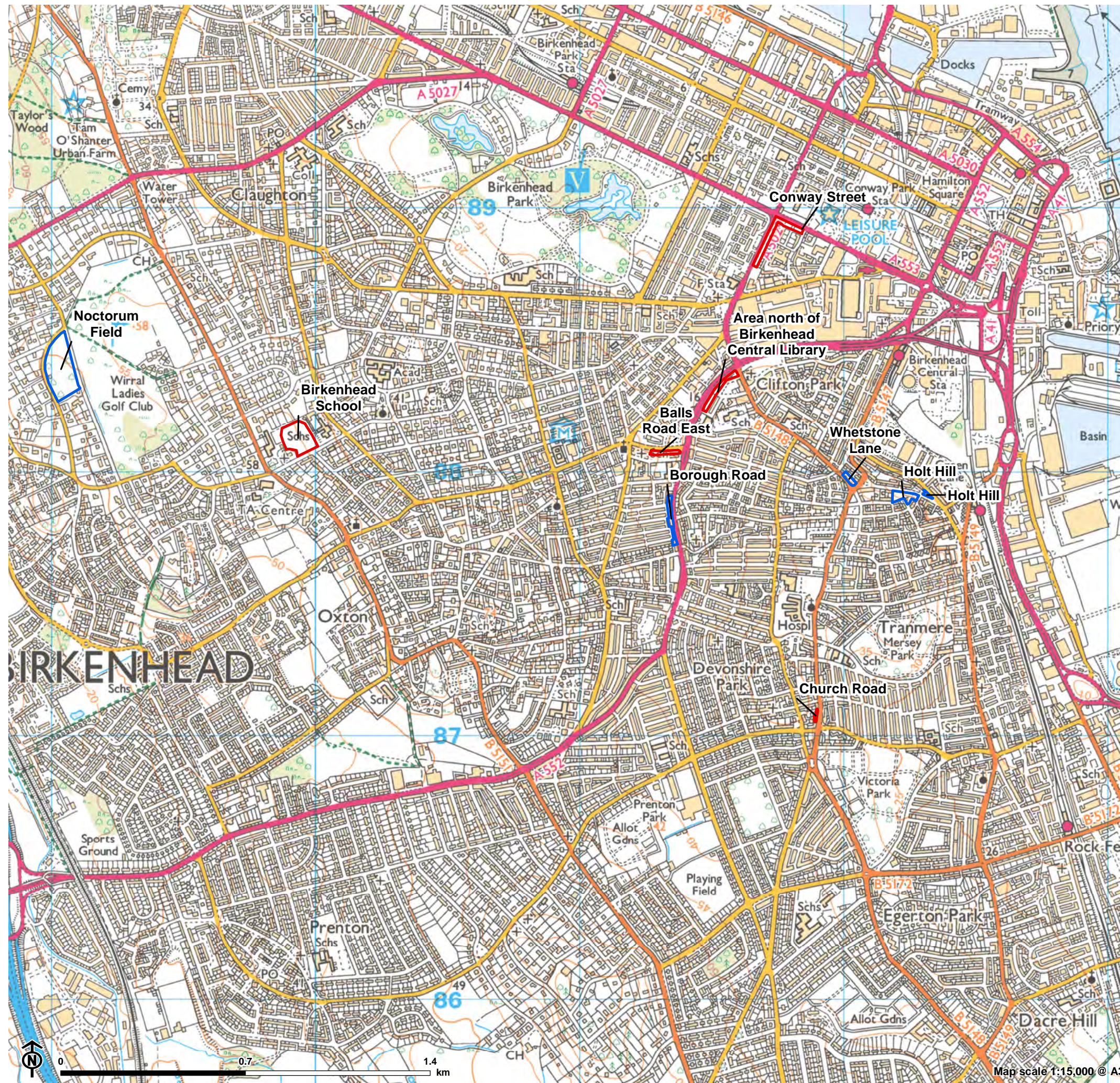
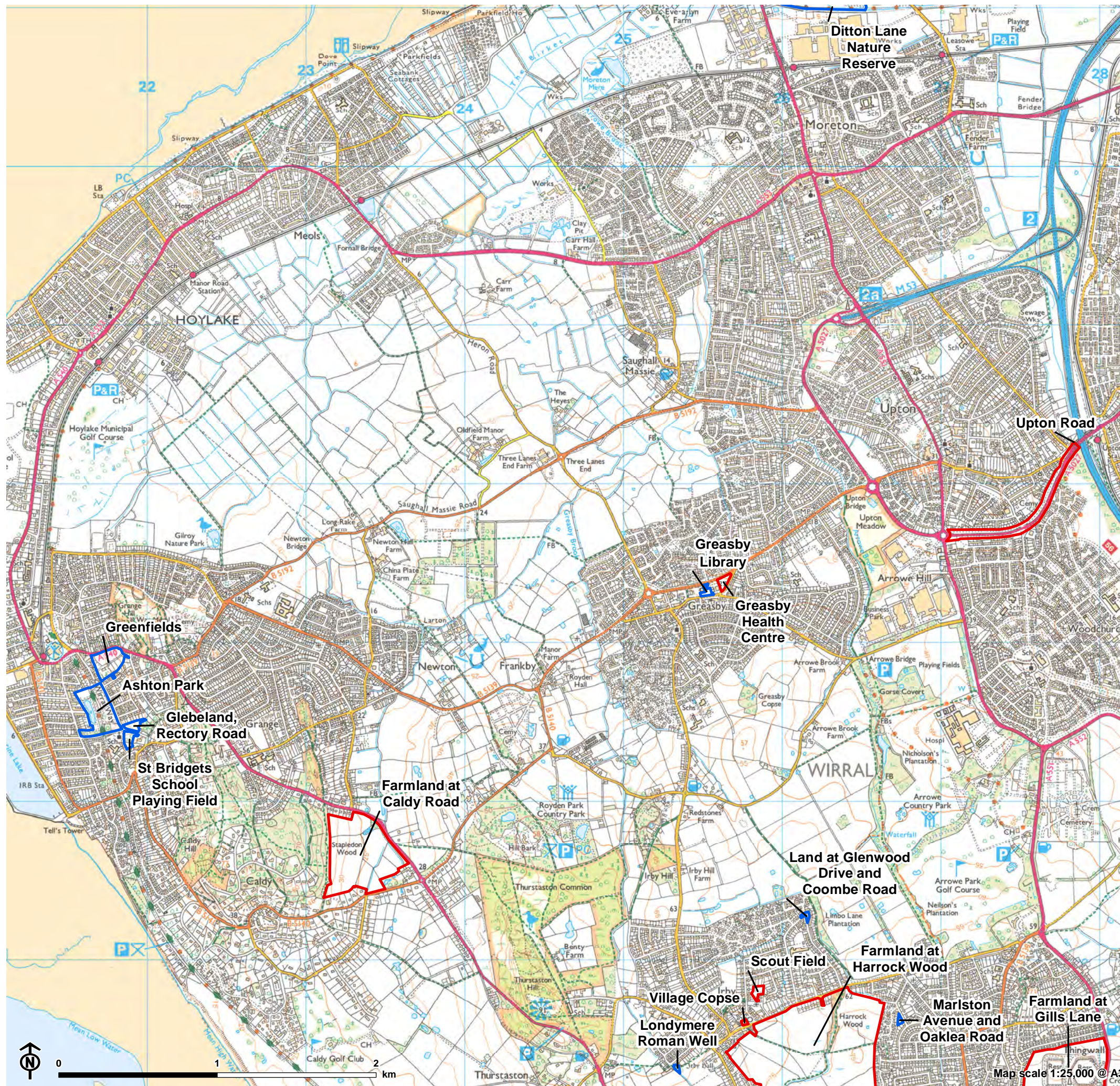
-  Local green space application site recommended for designation
-  Local green space application site not recommended for designation

Figure 1.2: Local green spaces in Birkenhead and Tranmere



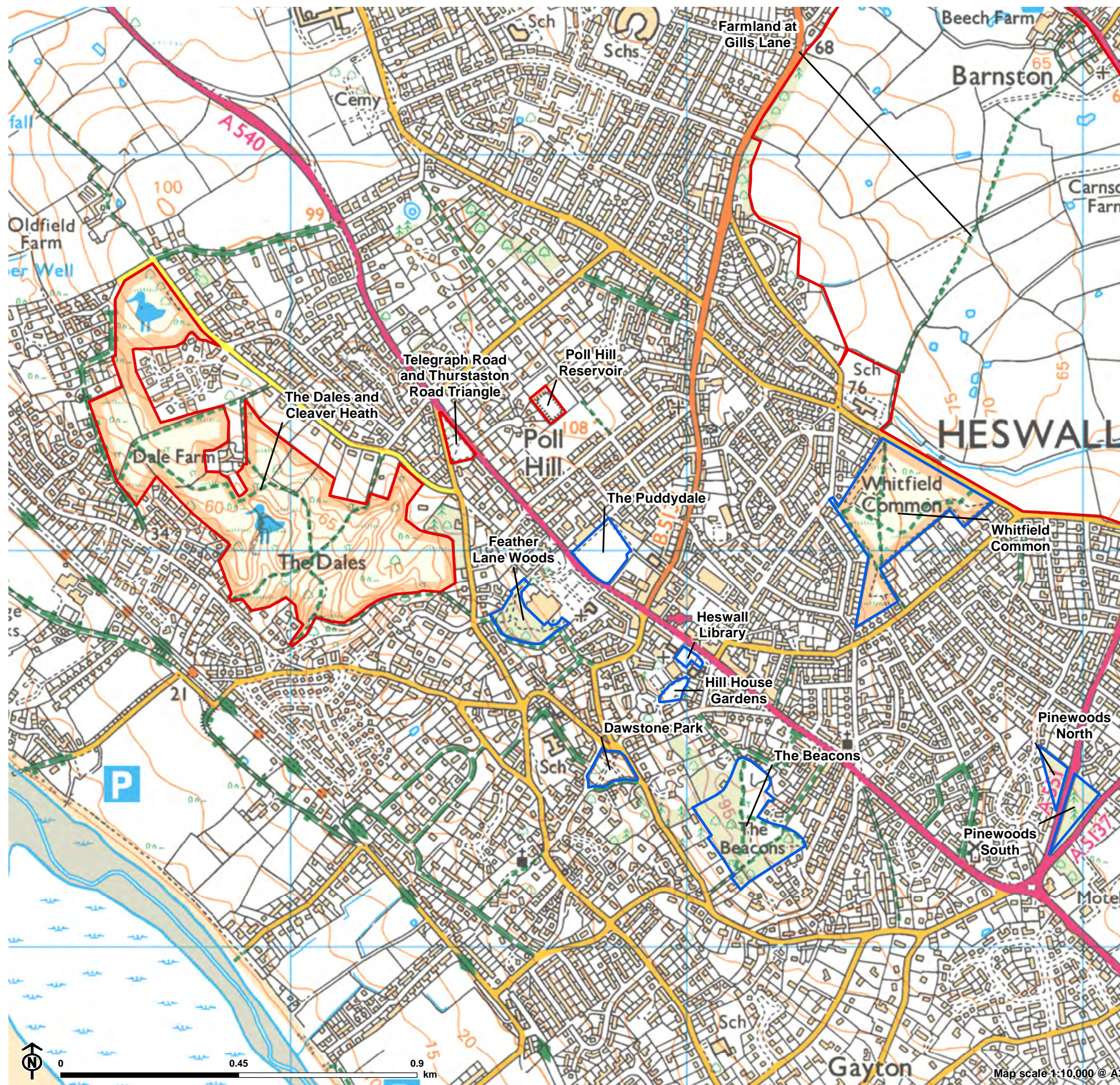
- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

Figure 1.3: Local green spaces in Caldy, Greasby and West Kirby



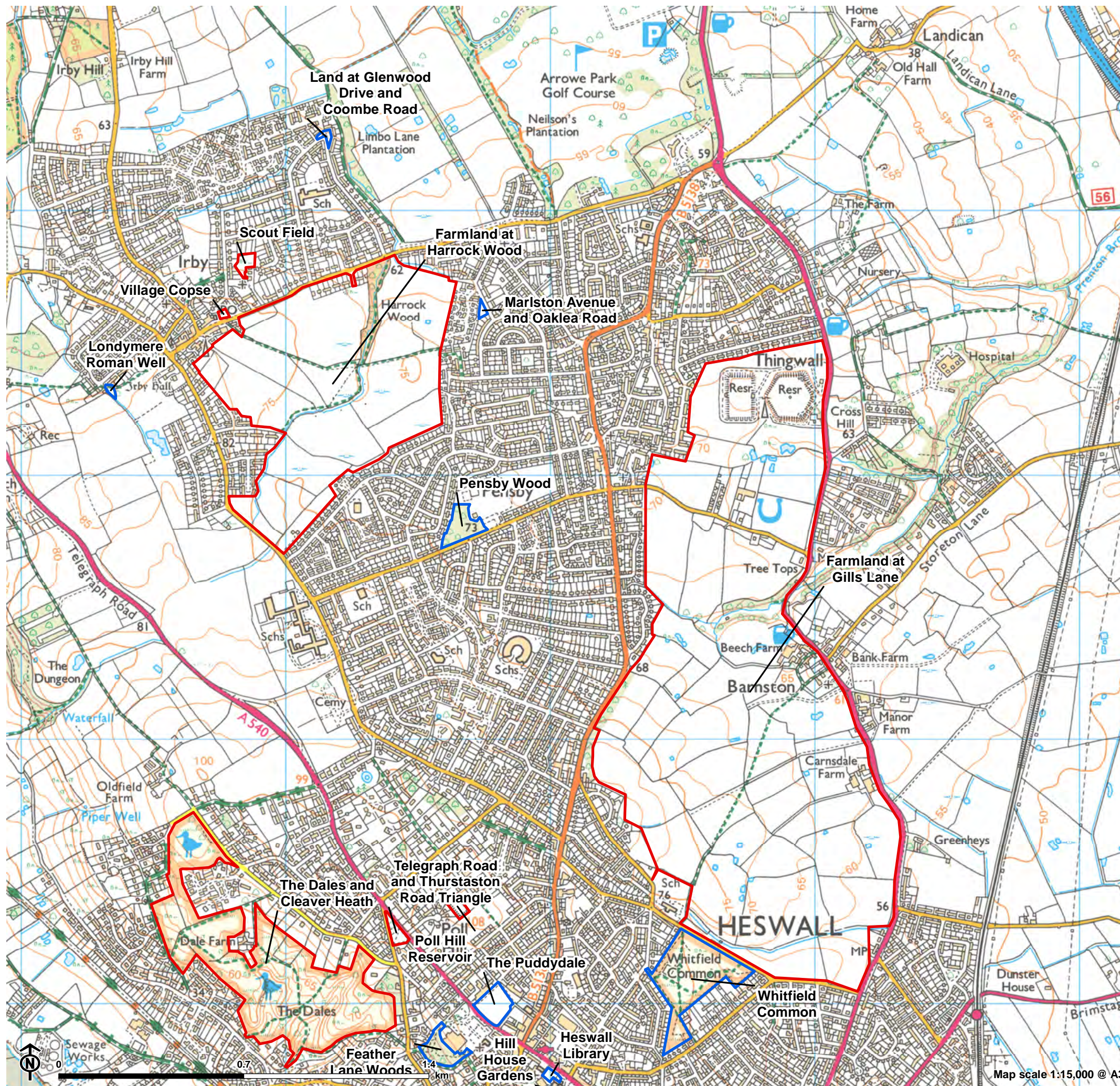
- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

Figure 1.4: Local green spaces in Heswall



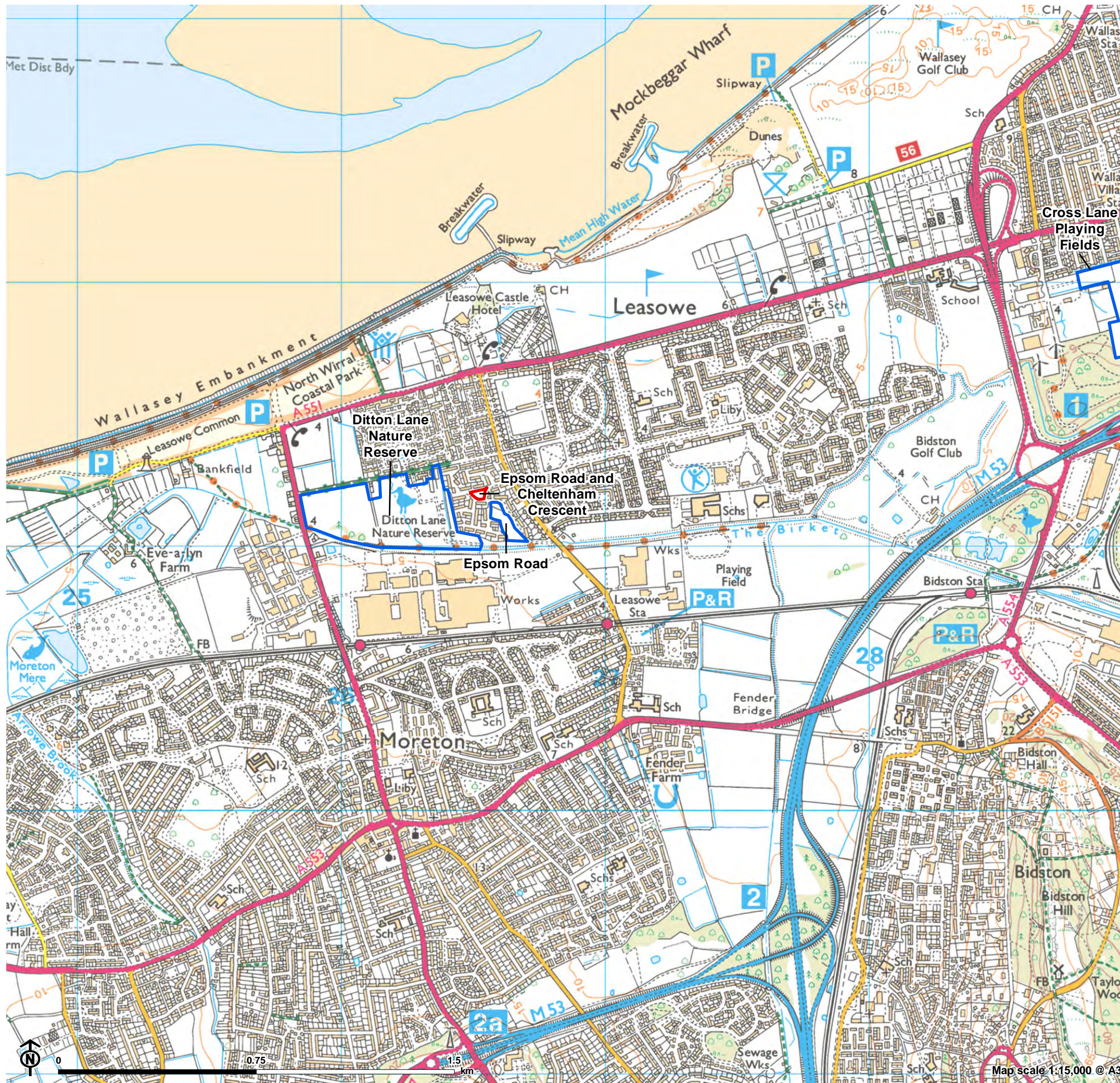
- Local green space application site recommended for designation
- Local green space application site not recommended for designation

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

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