

REPORT FROM: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER

TO: COLNE AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

DATE: 9 AUGUST 2018

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**ALKINCOATS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE:
POSSIBLE FURTHER EXTENSION**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To respond to an issue raised during Public Question Time at the 8 March 2018 meeting of this Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That this matter be brought back to this Committee when the outcome of the Local Plan Land Allocations is known.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Possible increased green space provision and biodiversity.
- (2) Possible improved access and better quality paths for visitors to the local nature reserve.

ISSUE

1. At the meeting of Colne and District Committee on 7 January 2016, members granted permission for the extension of Alkincoats Local Nature Reserve for the remainder of the Council-owned field they had previously approved on 12 March 2015. (The formal designation "adoption" process is underway.)
2. A great deal of work (Phase 1) has taken place in the lower section of the extension, mainly around tree planting (420 trees from the Woodland Trust) and the installation of a new fence line along the extension boundary by the Alkincoats Nature Reserve Group (ANRG) with the assistance of the Environmental Action Group (EAG). Plans are in place for the development of Phase 2 of the extension, which will include a wetland area, wildflower meadow, circular path and additional tree planting (see Appendix 1).

3. The ANRG has approached the Council informally about seeking permission to extend further the nature reserve for the remainder of the field from the dry-stone wall to Red Lane (see area edged red in Appendix 2 for details).
4. The field is currently used by Great House Farm on a grazing licence. As with the previous attainment of land close to this for the extension of the local nature reserve (which came under the same grazing licence), we would (through Liberata Property Services) need to inform the grazing licence holder of the reduction in grazing land and subsequently update the grazing licence.
5. The initial proposal for this new extension (Phase 3) would be upgrading the concessionary bridleway that runs through this land from Red Lane to the wooded area to make it more suitable for wheelchairs, buggies, etc. This would link in with the new circular path contained within the Phase 2 plan. Further improvement works to existing paths within the original local nature reserve would also be needed.
6. No decision has been made about what other work would be done in this section of the extension, although proposals around car parking provision have been suggested. (This would of course be a “material change of use” and would require planning permission.) For the time being, the land would remain in its present state and use.
7. It is also worth noting that the land in question (in addition to most of the rest of the local nature reserve) has been designated by Lancashire County Council as an Ecological Standing Advice Consultation Zone. This designation highlights areas within the county that have a high ecological value that could be adversely affected by development.
8. The development of Phase 2 and the upgrading of the concessionary bridleway are dependent on securing the requisite funding. Neighbourhood Services will be working with the ANRG to source future funding.
9. Neighbourhood Services is currently working with the ANRG to update the Local Nature Reserve Management Plan, which will incorporate the extended areas already approved and this new area if approval is granted.
10. The possible Phase 3 extension was discussed at the Management Team meeting on 14 March 2017. It was agreed that the ANRG request be considered as part of the Local Plan (Part 2) Land Allocations.

(The only formal submission relating to this land, which lies within the Green Belt, is a long-standing proposal from Liberata Property Services to consider it as possible housing land allocation.)

11. Minute 158 of the Colne and District Committee meeting on 8 March 2018 reads:

“Carol Riley, a representative from Alkincoats Woodland Nature Reserve, asked if the Council would consider a request to extend the Nature Reserve into some adjoining land. In principle, the Committee supported the idea but asked that a report of the feasibility of the request be submitted to the next meeting.”
12. At the meeting, members suggested that the ANRG might take on the remaining two fields marked in green in Appendix 3.

DISCUSSION

13. In the past, Pendle's EAG has been able to support the ANRG at minimal cost. This is no longer the case now that the EAG has become increasingly commercially focussed in order to meet its (increased) income target.
14. The budget for maintenance of the existing local nature reserve is only £520 per annum.
15. We are unaware of any grants available for supporting maintenance works.
16. In addition, Pendle's officer resource to deal with parks, local nature reserves, etc has reduced.
17. It can be seen therefore that there is little Council resource for further development of the Alkincoats Local Nature Reserve.
18. Regarding paragraph 4 above, it should be noted that there would be a loss of grazing licence income.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: Approving the extension of the local nature reserve would be in accordance with the Replacement Pendle Local Plan and be supported by Policy ENV1 in the Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (December 2015) which seeks to protect biodiversity (paragraph 8.41); create and/or restore habitats(paragraph 8.39); and designate new areas for their conservation value (paragraph 8.42).

Financial: As set out in the report.

Legal: If an extension is granted, the area would need to be added to the rest of the nature reserve by agreement and formally designated as such through the local nature reserve process. A new agreement with the grazing licence holder will also need sorting, taking into consideration the reduction in land.

Risk Management: None arising directly from the report.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Sustainability: Improved sustainable management of Council-owned land.

Community Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Equality and Diversity: Potential improvement of existing concessionary bridleway to enable wheelchairs, buggies, etc to access the local nature reserve. Improved footpath network.

APPENDICES

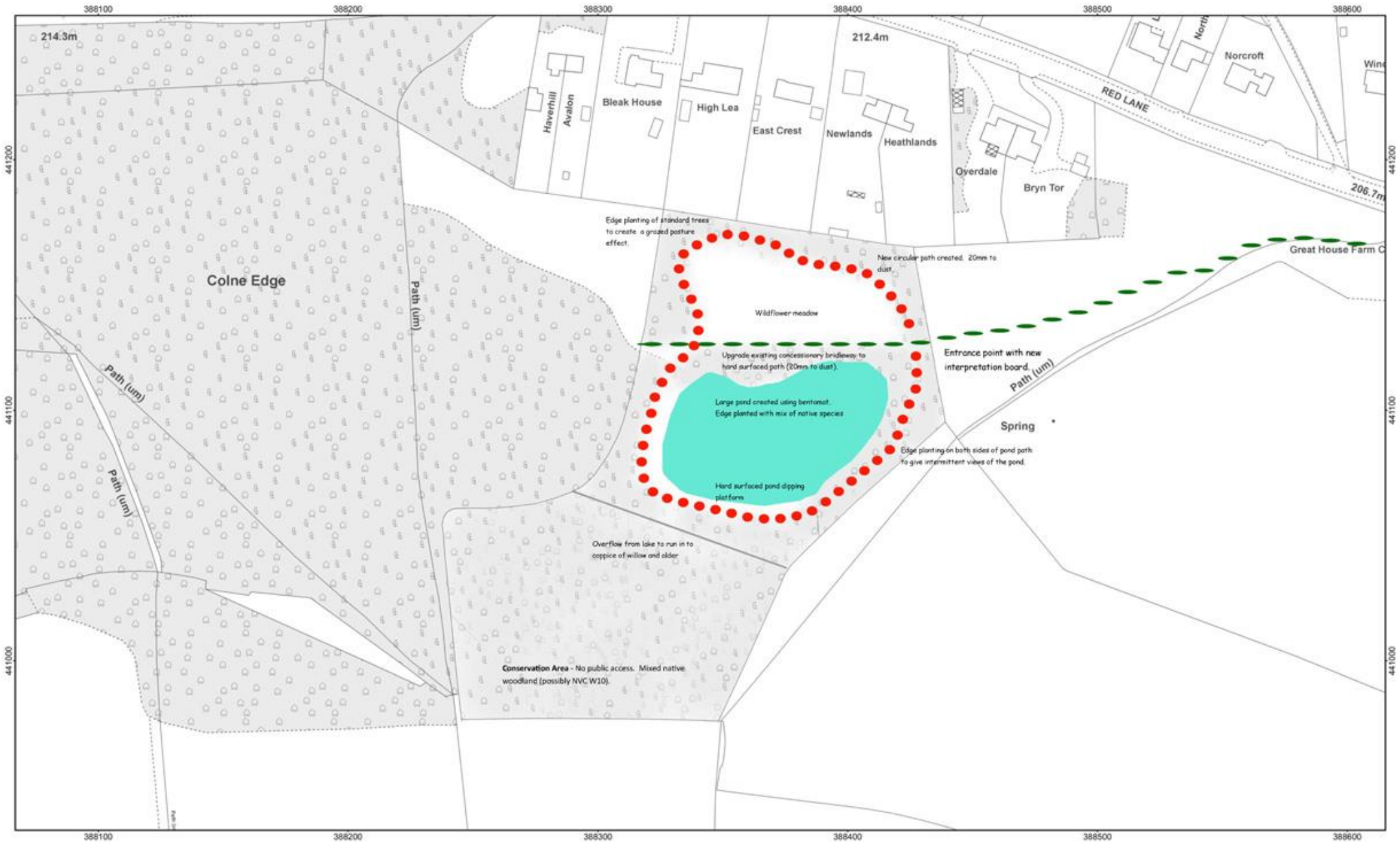
Appendix 1: Phases 1 and 2 Extension Plans.

Appendix 2: Alkincoats Local Nature Reserve Plan with Proposed (Phase 3) Extension.

Appendix 3: Alkincoats Local Nature Reserve Plan with Remaining Two Fields.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Replacement Pendle Local Plan (<https://bit.ly/2v57tUU>).



Scale 1:1000

Map Ref: 91745

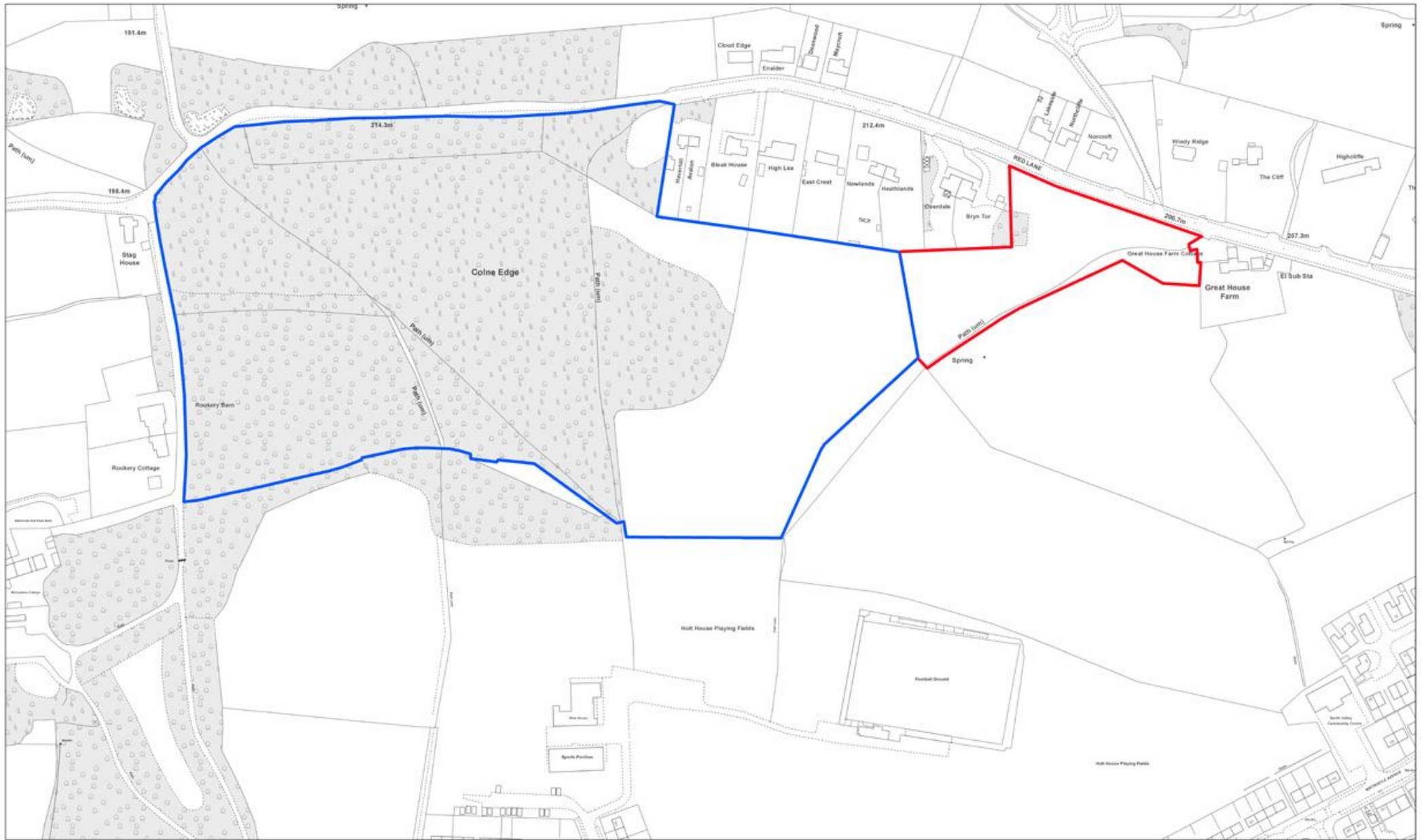
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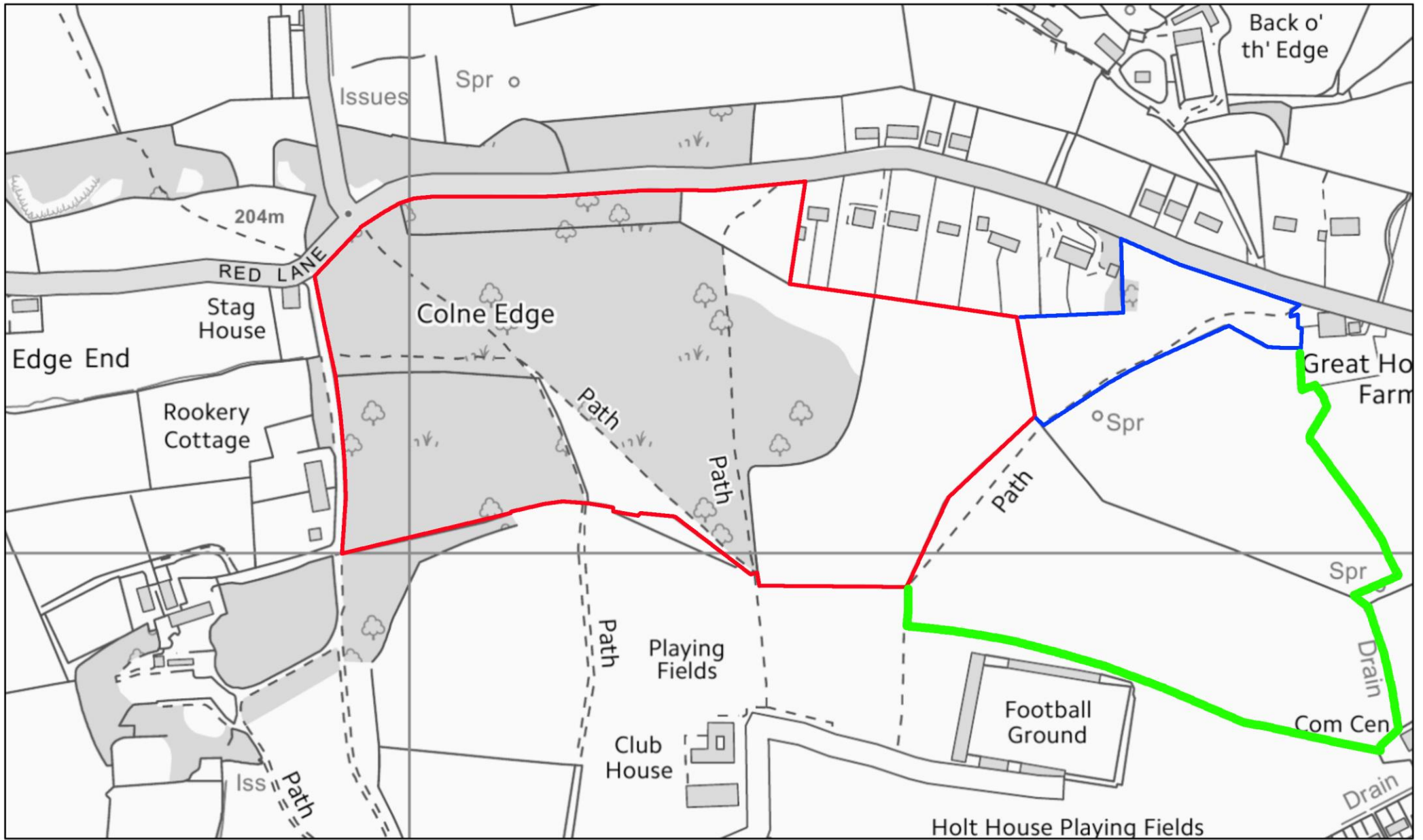
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