
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date:	17 January 2013
Report By:	Head of Environmental and Commercial Services	Report No:	SSC/ENV/IM/12.139
Contact Officer:	Willie Rennie	Contact No:	714761
Subject:	Play Area Investment		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of the Council's play area investment programme in respect of works in progress and proposed, and to seek approval as regards the next stage of the programme.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Inverclyde Council's play area strategy was approved in March 2010. Based on the approved strategy an initial programme of improvement works was approved in August 2010 and a further tranche in May 2011. With the exception of two community group projects all the approved play area upgrades are complete.

One of the two remaining community group projects, Larkfield, is included in the current programme and work is in progress and due to be completed in January 2013.

The second, Sir Michael St/Ann St, will be progressed in financial year 2013/14 following the award of lottery funding in November 2012, which together with the Council's earmarked investment of £75k will see a new £250k+ play area installed in central Greenock.

- 2.2 Funding of £300k was approved in the current financial year to progress the play area strategy. £50k has already been approved for the installation of an outdoor gym within Battery Park and at the time of writing the project is being progressed through the design and tender stage. The new outdoor gym will be in place by March 2013.

Approval in principle has been given for the installation of a new £175k skate park in Battery Park. This report seeks final approval to proceed with the project.

- 2.3 One priority 1 site from the initial assessment in 2010 remains to be dealt with, Jacob's Drive, Gourrock. The Environment & Regeneration Committee of August 2012, decided to continue consideration of a proposal to allocate £25,000 for the removal of the old play area and associated landscaping works pending submission of the report on gaps in play area provision across the district.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee approve the balance of the 2012/2013 play area investment budget of £250k to be spent on the two undernoted projects:
- £175k for the replacement of the existing skate park in Battery Park with a new one to be constructed on the same site.
 - £75k for the replacement of the old play area in Jacob's Drive, Gourrock.
- 3.2 That a new play area due to be constructed in Gibshill in partnership with the Gibshill Residents' Association is adopted for maintenance by Inverclyde Council on its completion.
- 3.3 That the Committee note the data associated with the gap in provision of play areas in certain neighbourhoods for the purposes of informing decisions on investment in new play areas in the future.

Ian Moffat
Head of Environmental & Commercial Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A programme of play area improvement works has been in progress over the last 3 years. The programme involved works to 23 sites across the district, including three sites put forward by community groups to have new play areas installed. With the exception of two community group projects all the planned play area upgrades are complete.
- 4.2 Funding of £300k is allocated in the current financial year to further progress the play area strategy.
- 4.3 The Environment & Regeneration Committee of August 2012 agreed spend of this year's £300k budget as undernoted:
- in principle, the allocation of £175,000 from the play area investment budget for the construction of a new skate park within Battery Park, but continued final approval pending consultation with the park users and ward councillors;
 - the installation of an £50k outdoor gym within Battery Park;
 - to allocate £50,000 to the investment in new play area provision at a site yet to be determined, subject to a further report to the Committee focusing on the gaps in play area provision across the District;
 - continue consideration of a proposal to allocate £25,000 for the removal of the old play area in Jacob's Drive, Gourock and associated landscaping works pending submission of the report on gaps in play area provision across the District.

5.0 OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY GROUP PROJECTS

- 5.1 Larkfield, Braeside & Branchton Community Council (LBCC) was awarded Council funding of £100k as a contribution towards the installation of a play area at Burns Square. A further £75k was made available for the project through planning gain associated with the planning application of River Clyde Homes to build new houses in the Larkfield area.

Work on the play area is underway and due to be completed in January 2013.

- 5.2 Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRAG) was awarded Council funding of £75k as a contribution towards the installation of a play area on a site located between Ann Street and Sir Michael Street. GCRAG has also been awarded funding of £193k from the Big Lottery to progress the project.

It should be noted that there are lease issues still to be resolved with Network Rail and the Big Lottery Fund. Ownership of the site is split between Inverclyde Council and Network Rail and both parties have agreed to lease their respective land to GCRAG to permit the play area to be constructed. However, the conditions of the proposed lease fall short of the requirements of the Big Lottery Fund. At the time of writing negotiations are ongoing to try to conclude the matter.

Subject to the lease issue being concluded, installation of the play area will take place in financial year 2013/14.

6.0 CURRENT PROPOSALS

- 6.1 **Battery Park Skate Park:** In the previous report to committee on the subject it was suggested that the new skate park could be located on the site of the old helipad. However, in consultation with ward councillors, the local Community Council and park users the ex helipad site was unanimously rejected as a location for new the skate park. The preferred option of the majority of those consulted was to locate the new facility on the site of the existing skate park. In the circumstances the recommendation is to situate the new skate park on the site of the old one and for it to be a multi use facility catering for bmx riders and skateboarders alike.

- 6.2 **Jacob's Drive:** This site has six play units, of which three swing units are at least 40 years old and the other three play units are at least 20 years old. None of the swing units have safety surface installed around them. The majority of the play area surface is made up of cracked and broken tarmac or concrete and needs to be replaced in the very short term.

It is the only outstanding priority 1 site from the initial assessment in 2010 still to be dealt with – priority 1 sites are sites that give rise to health and safety concerns. The play area will now either have to be replaced, or the play units removed and the site landscaped at a cost of £25k. The cost of removal of the old and installation of a new play area of comparable size would require more funds than are available in the remaining play area budget. In the circumstances, it was proposed to undertake an initial phase of works this year, to remove all the old play units and landscape the site, said landscaping to be carried out in such a fashion that a new play area could be easily installed in the future. The Environment & Regeneration Committee of August 2012, decided to continue consideration of the proposal to allocate £25,000 for the removal of the old play area and associated landscaping works pending submission of the report on gaps in play area provision across the district. The district wide play area gap analysis is covered later in this report, however given the outstanding remit to deal with this particular site the available options are discussed here.

There is a pronounced gap in play provision in south west Gourock, said gap is highlighted on the maps on pages 10, 11 and 14 of the neighbourhood maps binder which forms appendix 1 of this report. For the purposes of the gap assessment the existing play area at Jacob's Drive has been discounted as it is programmed for removal. The removal of the Jacob's Drive play area has further exacerbated the already notable gap in provision in this locale. In order to try to bridge the gap consideration was given to the availability of Council owned plots within the Midton, Trumpethill, and Castle Levan areas on which a play area could be located, there is only one obvious plot and it is located to the east of Taymouth Drive in the Castle Levan estate. The plot in question previously housed a Council play area, but it was removed circa 15 years ago due to persistent drainage problems on the site. The drainage problems continue to be an issue today and new drainage infrastructure would have to be installed as part of any scheme to install a new play area. Construction of a new, albeit smaller, play area on the Jacob's Drive site would be an alternative of sorts, as it would serve to reduce the gap in provision for older children in Midton and some of Trumpethill. It would not however address the gap within Castle Levan.

The options for the Jacob's Drive site are:

- a) remove all the play units and landscape the site at an estimated cost of £25k.
- b) replace the play area with a smaller one at a cost of £75k, which would address to some extent the gap in provision in this locale, but would exhaust the balance of funds available for play area investment this year.

It is recommended that option b) is approved.

- 6.3 **Battery Park Outdoor Gym:** procurement is underway and the gym will be in place by the end of March 2013.
- 6.4 **Gibshill Residents' Association:** this item relates to a proposal to construct a new play area on a site within Gibshill to be funded via money already allocated to Gibshill Residents' Association (GRA) and which is in addition to the £300k play area investment budget. A budget of £50k has been earmarked by GRA for the project. The proposed site is on land currently owned by River Clyde Homes and discussion is therefore ongoing re the transfer of the land to Council ownership. The play area gap analysis discussed later in this report identifies a gap in play area provision in the west of Gibshill, which this new site will serve to address. That being the case, it is recommended that Inverclyde Council adopt the new play area following its installation.

7.0 GAP ANALYSIS

7.1 Assessment of Current Provision by Distance from Home

The Council's policy on determining the adequacy of play area provision is based on the time it takes for a child to walk to a suitably equipped local or neighbourhood play area. Local play areas have a catchment radial of quarter of a mile and the larger neighbourhood play areas a catchment radial of half a mile. This data is then used to produce radial catchment zones which are displayed on 13 neighbourhood maps and 1 overview map (Appendix 1) to show the distribution of play areas in Inverclyde and the homes they serve:

- Local play areas = quarter of a mile radius (yellow circles)
- Neighbourhood play areas = half a mile radius (orange circles)
- Other existing sites which do not meet the minimum LEAP standard (see table below) = quarter of a mile radius (blue circles).

Play area type	Min. size equipped play area	Min. no. of play units	Radial straight-line distance from play area
LEAP = Local	400m ²	5	¼ mile – 400m
NEAP = Neighbourhood	465m ²	8	½ mile – 800m

- orange areas = adequate provision for children of all ages.
- yellow areas = gap in provision for older children.
- blue areas = gap in provision for all ages. A local play area exists but is too small to meet the minimum desired standard.
- No colour = gap in provision for all ages.

7.2 Summary of Gap Analysis in Relation to Available Funds

Appendix 1 is a visual summary of the gaps in play area provision across the district. It should be noted that both Council owned and maintained play areas and privately owned and maintained play areas are included in the assessment. The Council has two main approaches to play area provision, by in-house installation of play areas on Council owned land and through the Planning process which requires developers to contribute to play area provision in the locality of their developments (subject to certain criteria).

The main purpose of this analysis is to identify gaps in provision so that available funds are prioritised to fill the gaps. Available funds at present amount to £50k.

As can be seen from the overview map on Page 14 of Appendix 1 there are obvious gaps in provision across the district, but the most stark gap is in south west Gourrock. For the reasons detailed in paragraph 6.2 of this report it is suggested that the most appropriate investment of the available £50k funds would be to replace the Jacob's Drive play area.

7.3 Summary of Gap Analysis in Relation to Future Investment

The final priority 1 site will be dealt with as part of the current programme. Future investment should therefore focus on the other two priorities of the play area strategy, which are (subject to the availability of funding):

- An annual budget of at least £100k for the modernisation of existing play areas;
- A separate play area investment budget of £150k to increase the number of facilities. The decision as to where to locate the new play areas to be informed by gap analysis data, but the decision as to which areas to invest in first to be open to consideration by Elected Members.

The overview map on page 14 of Appendix 1 points to 16 neighbourhoods where there is a shortage of play areas (there are actually 17 sites listed, but plans are in place to construct a new play area within Gibshill, as referred to elsewhere in this report). Not all of the neighbourhoods will have suitable public realm land available for a new play area and other factors over and above the distance from home criterion should perhaps be considered in prioritising where new play areas should be located e.g. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

By way of example, some of the neighbourhoods with a shortage of play area provision have open space land which is owned by the Council and which on the face of it would be suitable for a new play area if funding were available:

- **Devol, Port Glasgow:** the site in question is to the east of Barrs Brae and south of Moray Road.
- **Braeside (Drumillan Hill), Greenock:** the potential site is on land which previously housed a play area several years ago (15+), located to the south east of Braeside Road, adjacent to the site of the old St Gabriel's school.
- **Castle Levan/Cloch Rd/Trumpethill, Gourock:** at Taymouth Drive on land which previously housed a play area several years ago.

Other potential sites are being investigated at present and it is proposed to compile a register of possible sites on which new play areas could in the future be located, to assist Members in deciding where future investment should take place.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

There are no immediate revenue implications as regards the proposals and recommendations set out in this report. However, if the establishment of play areas increases, a minimum annual revenue of £520 per annum will immediately attach to each site. In the same circumstances the recommended £100k per annum for the modernisation of existing play areas would also require to be increased.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report £'000	Virement From	Other Comments
Carried Forward Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Investment	2012/2013	£100		Larkfield
Planning Gain	Play Area Investment	2012/2013	£75		Specific to Larkfield. Carried forward from 2011/2012
Carried Forward Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Investment	2013/2014	£75		Sir Michael Street £75k to be carried forward to 2013/2014
Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Investment	2012/2013	£300		Battery Park Skate Park and Outdoor Gym & Jacob's Drive replacement.

8.2 Human Resources, Legal and Equalities

None

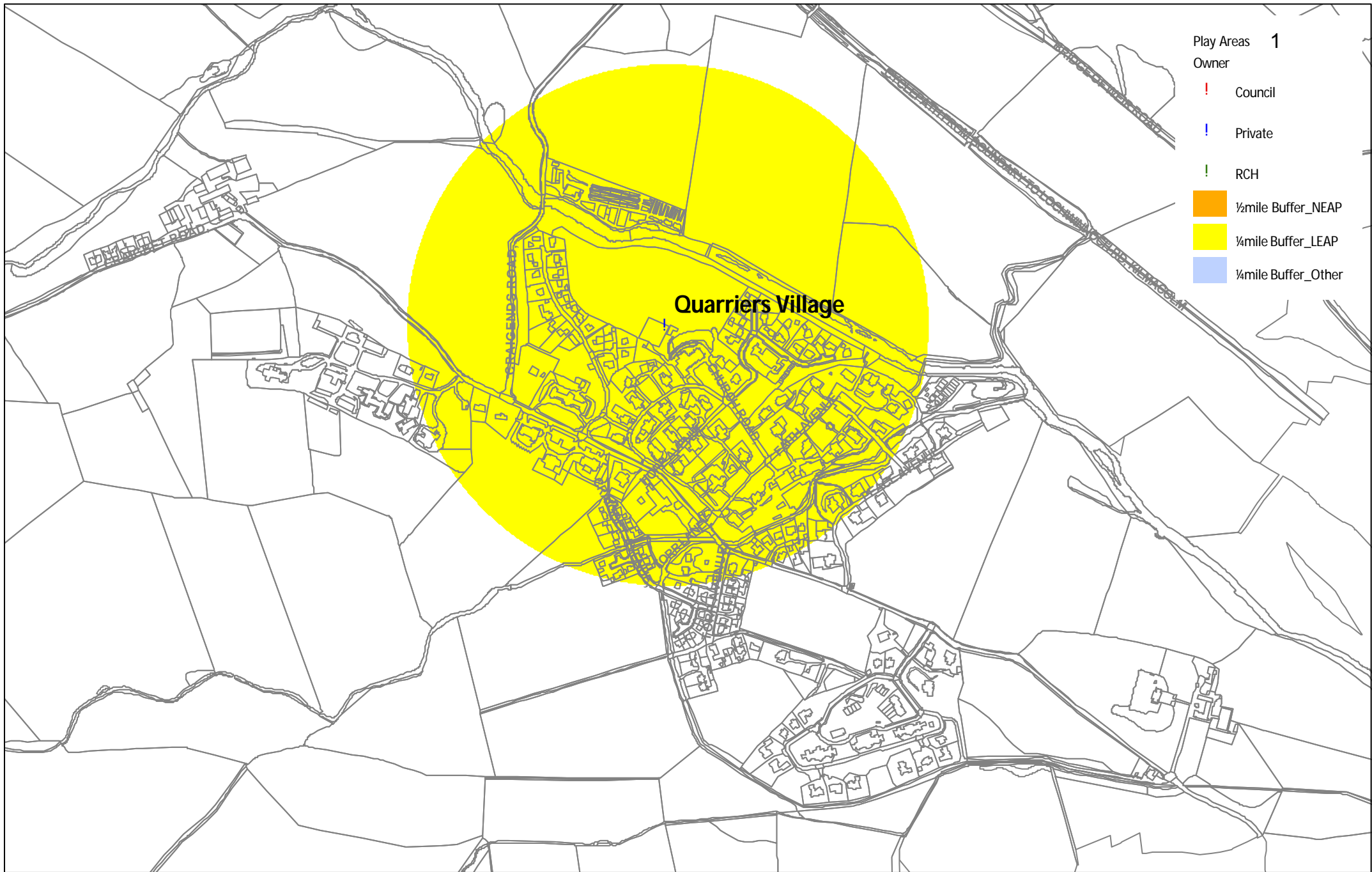
PLAY AREAS

Neighbourhood Maps 2012



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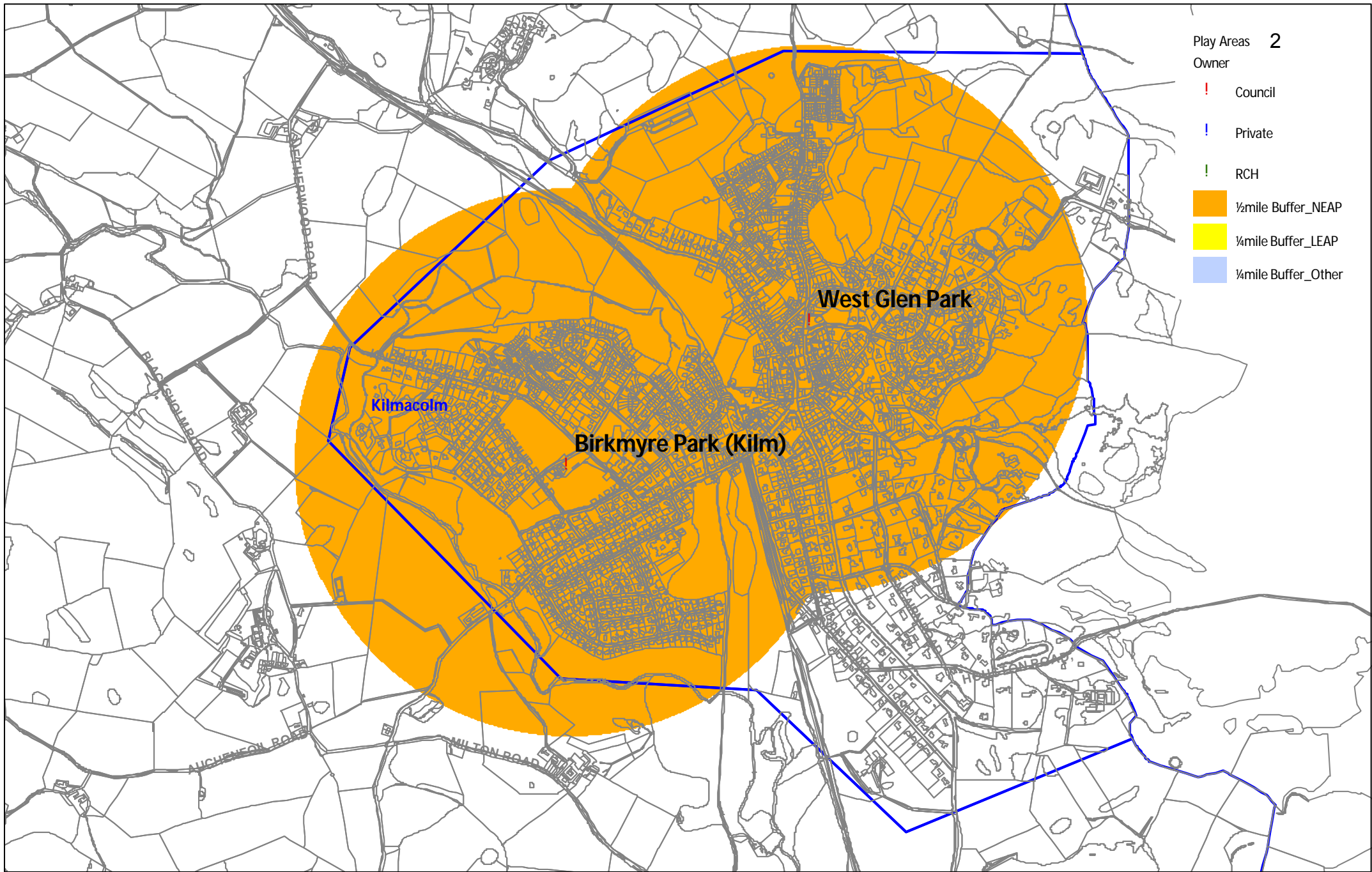
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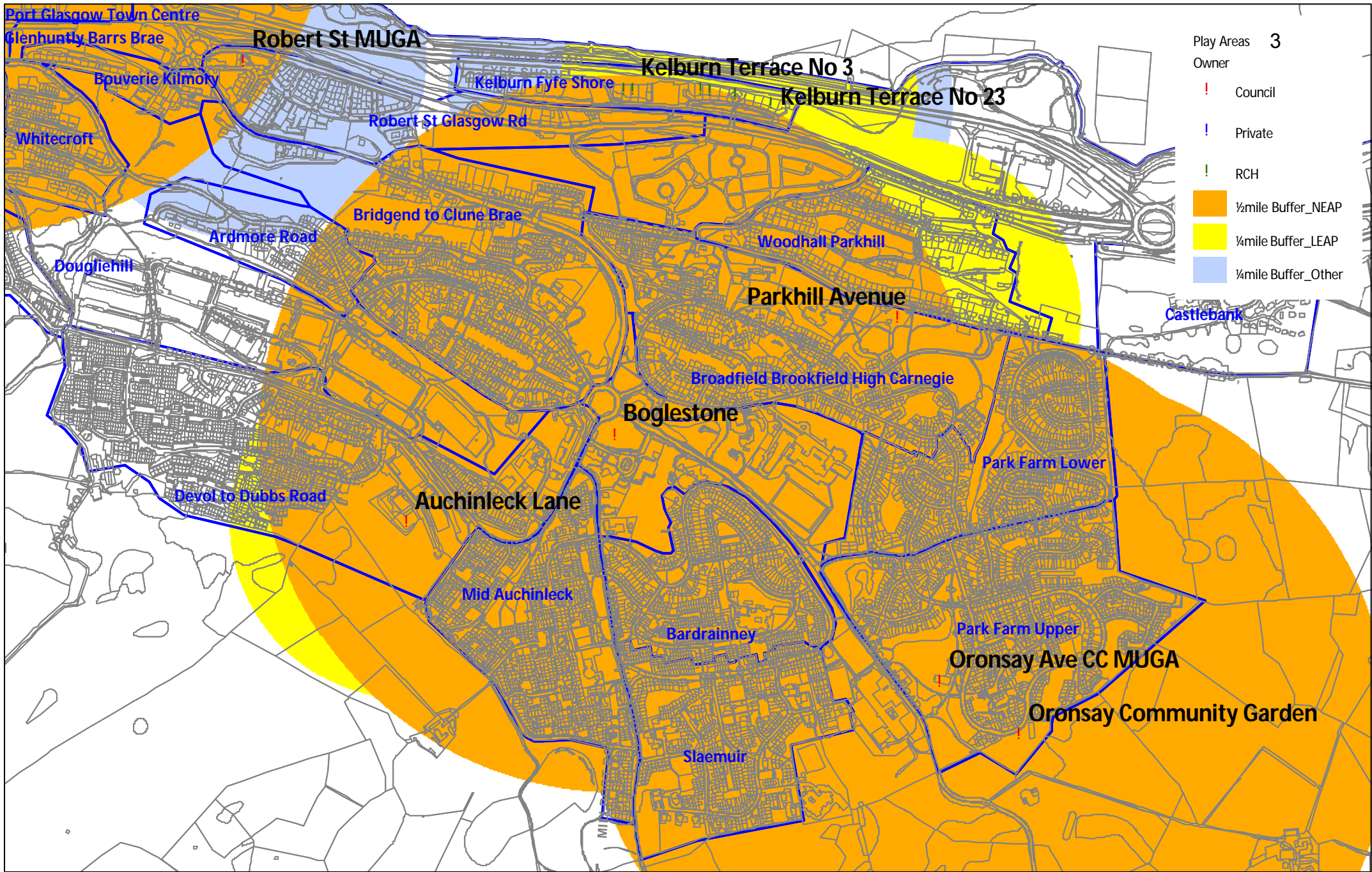


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Quarriers Village

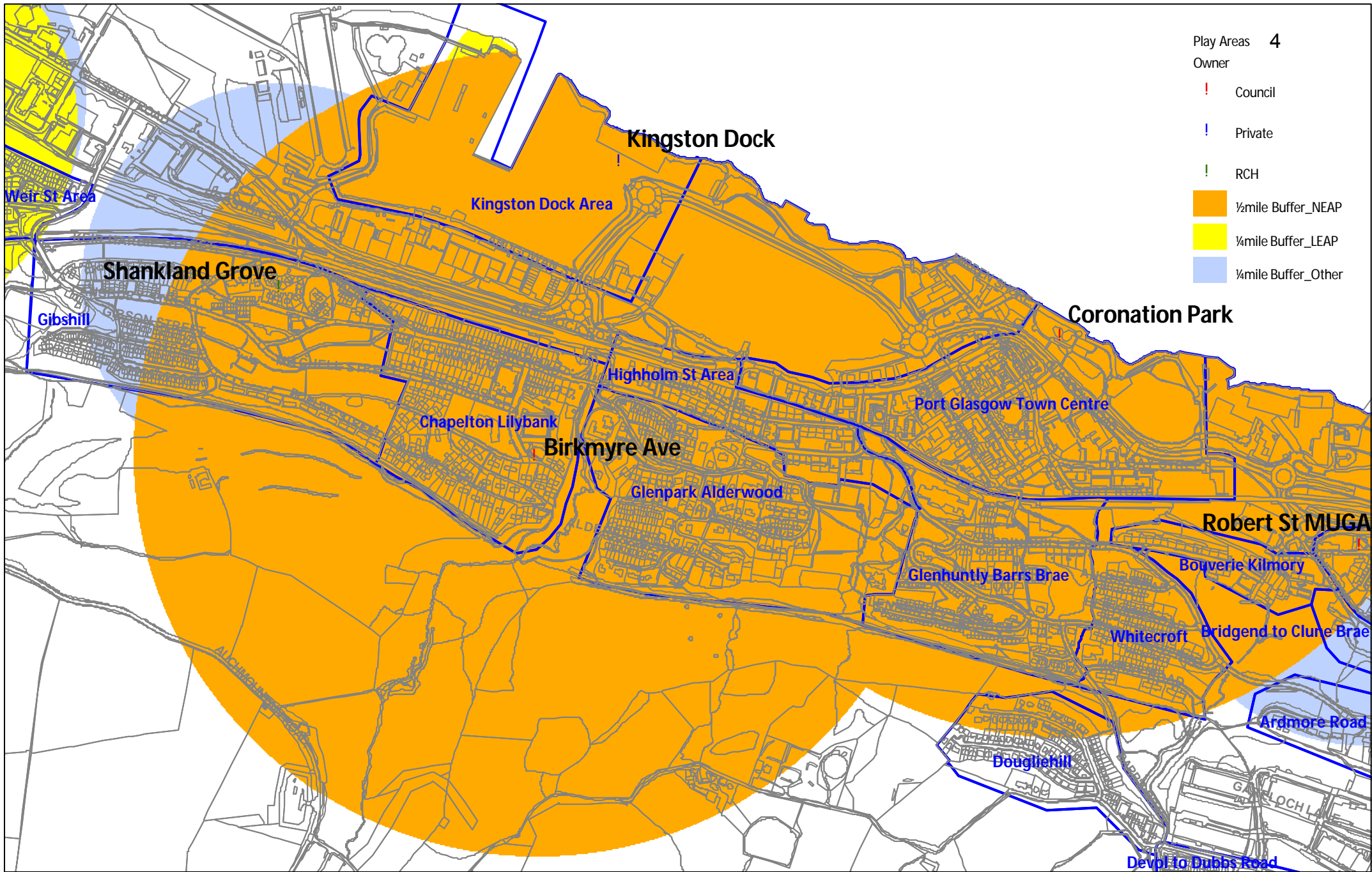




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Port Glasgow East

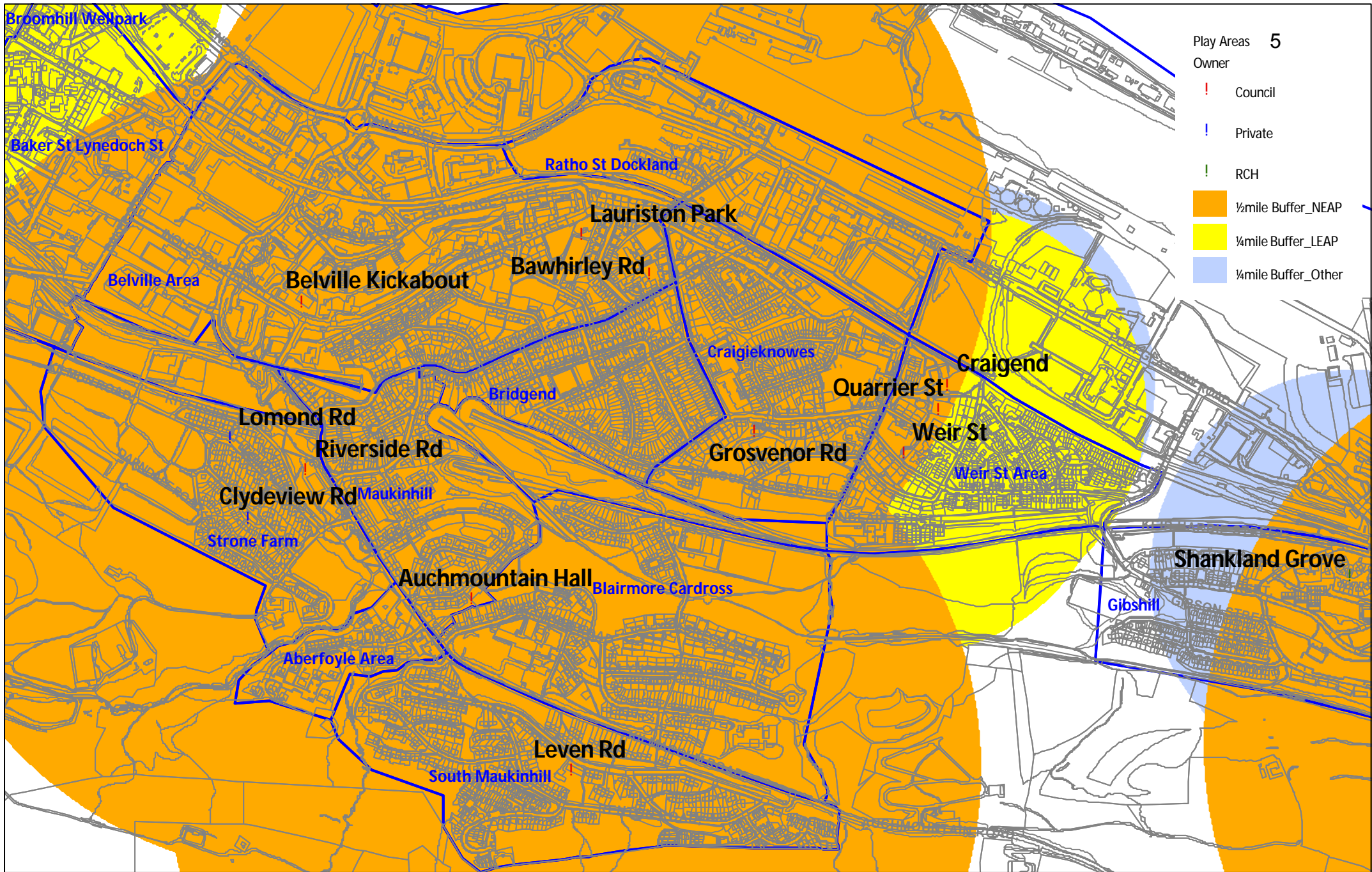


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Port Glasgow Central to Gibshill

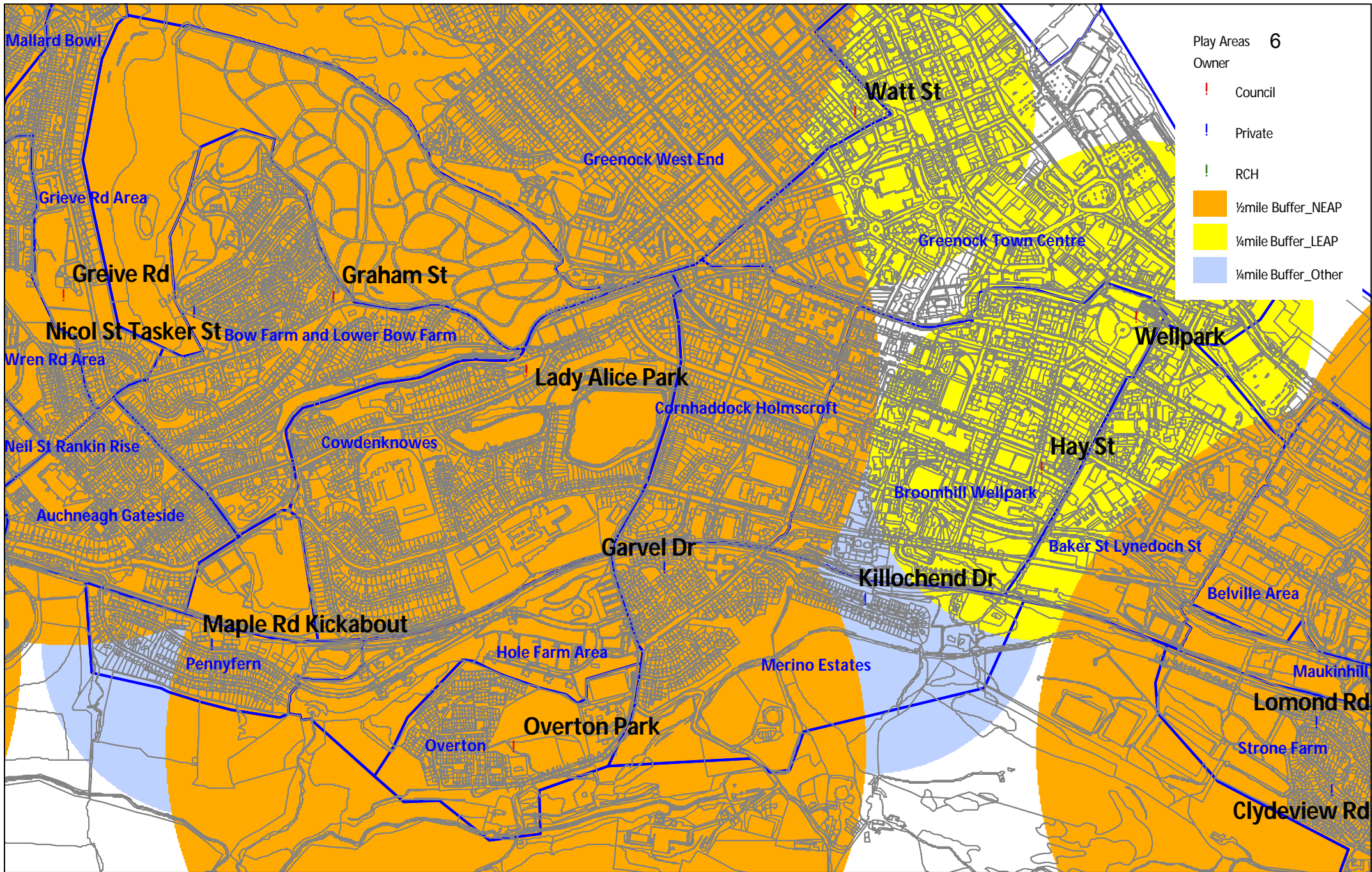


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Gibshill to Baker Street



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Baker Street to Bow Farm



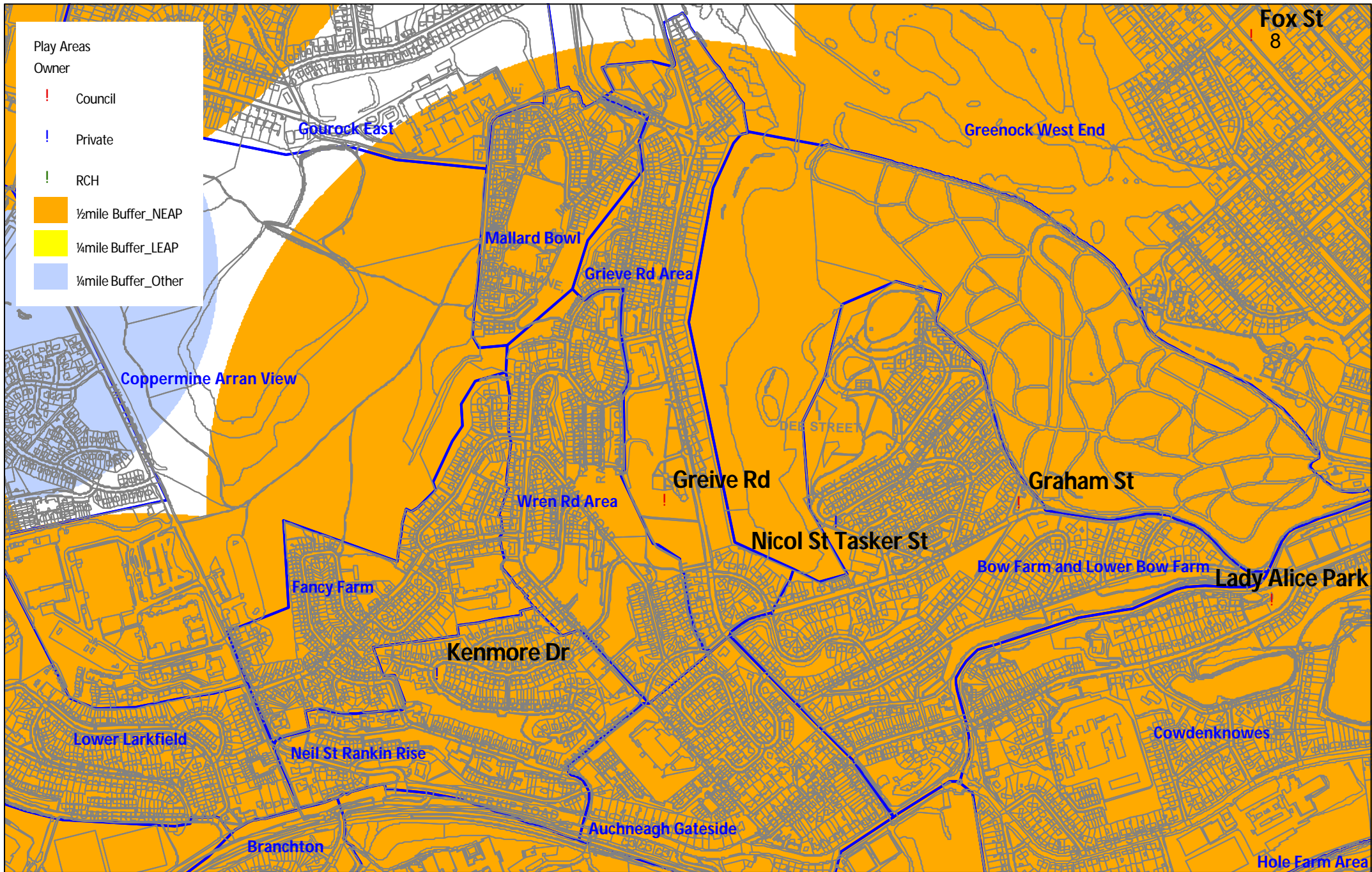
- Play Areas 7
- Owner
- ! Council
 - ! Private
 - ! RCH
 - Orange 1/2 mile Buffer_NEAP
 - Yellow 1/4 mile Buffer_LEAP
 - Light Blue 1/4 mile Buffer_Other

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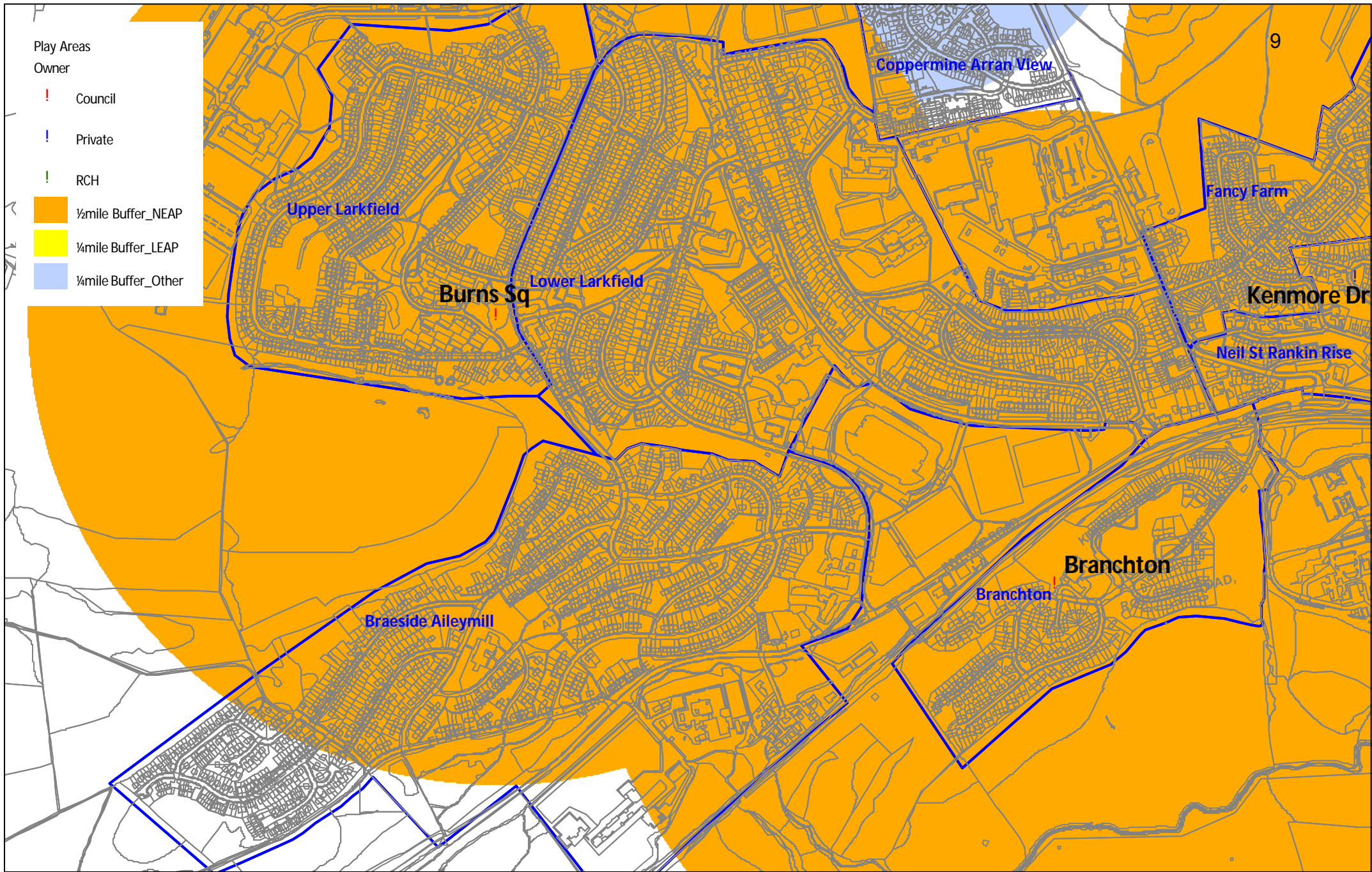
Greenock West End



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Bow Farm/Fancy Farm/Mallard Bowl

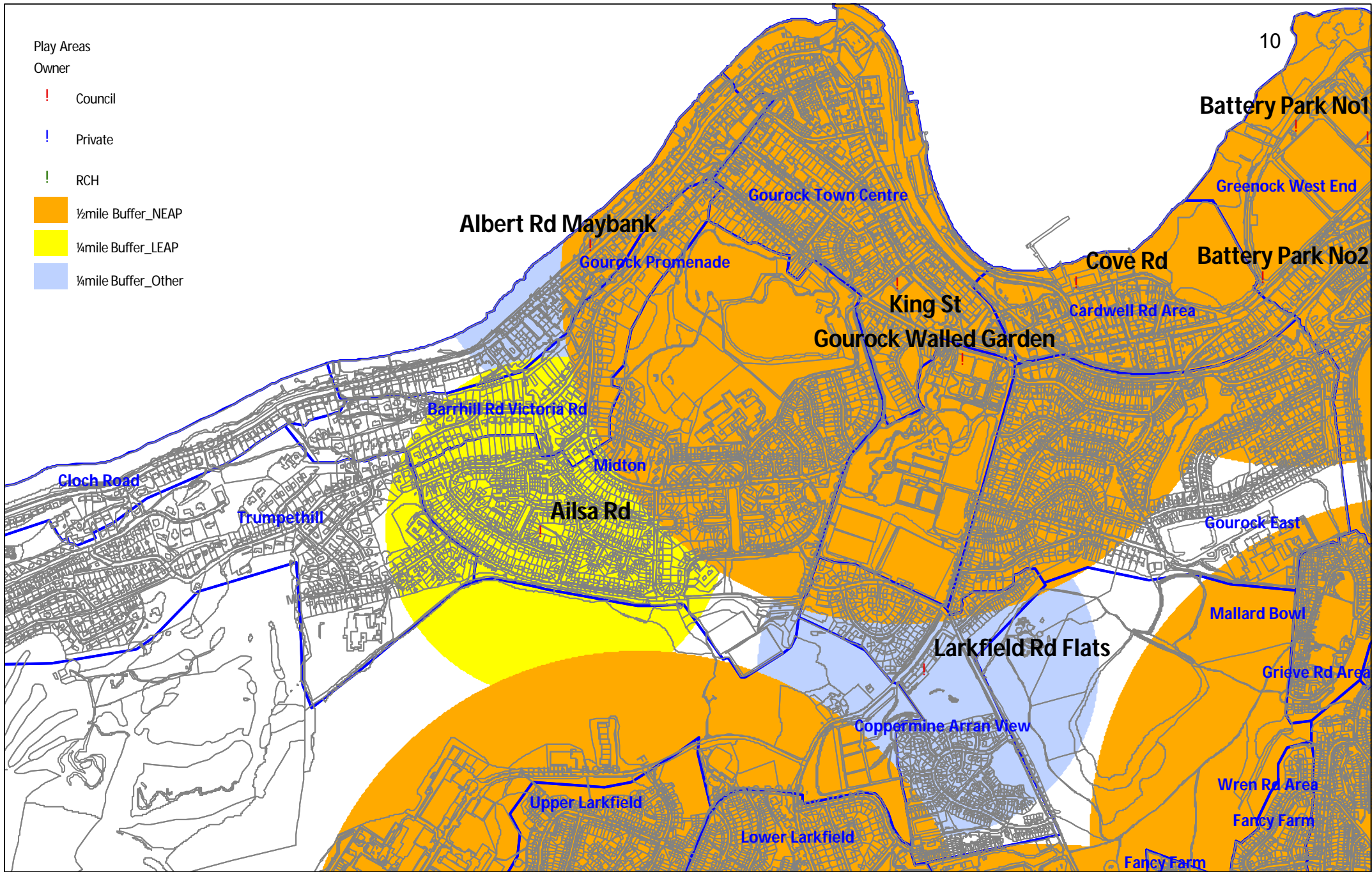


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Branchton to Upper Larkfield

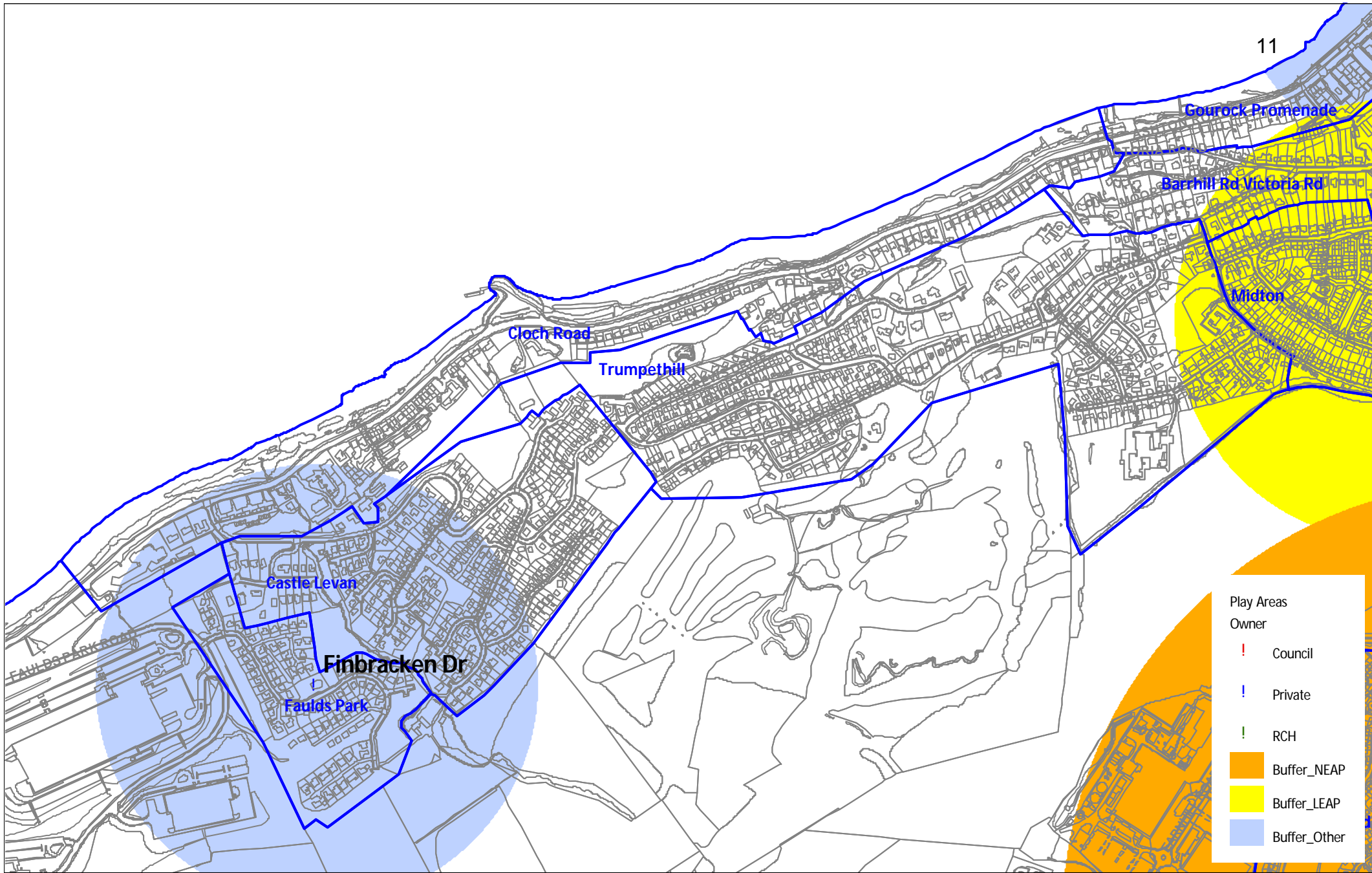


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Arran View to Gourock Promenade

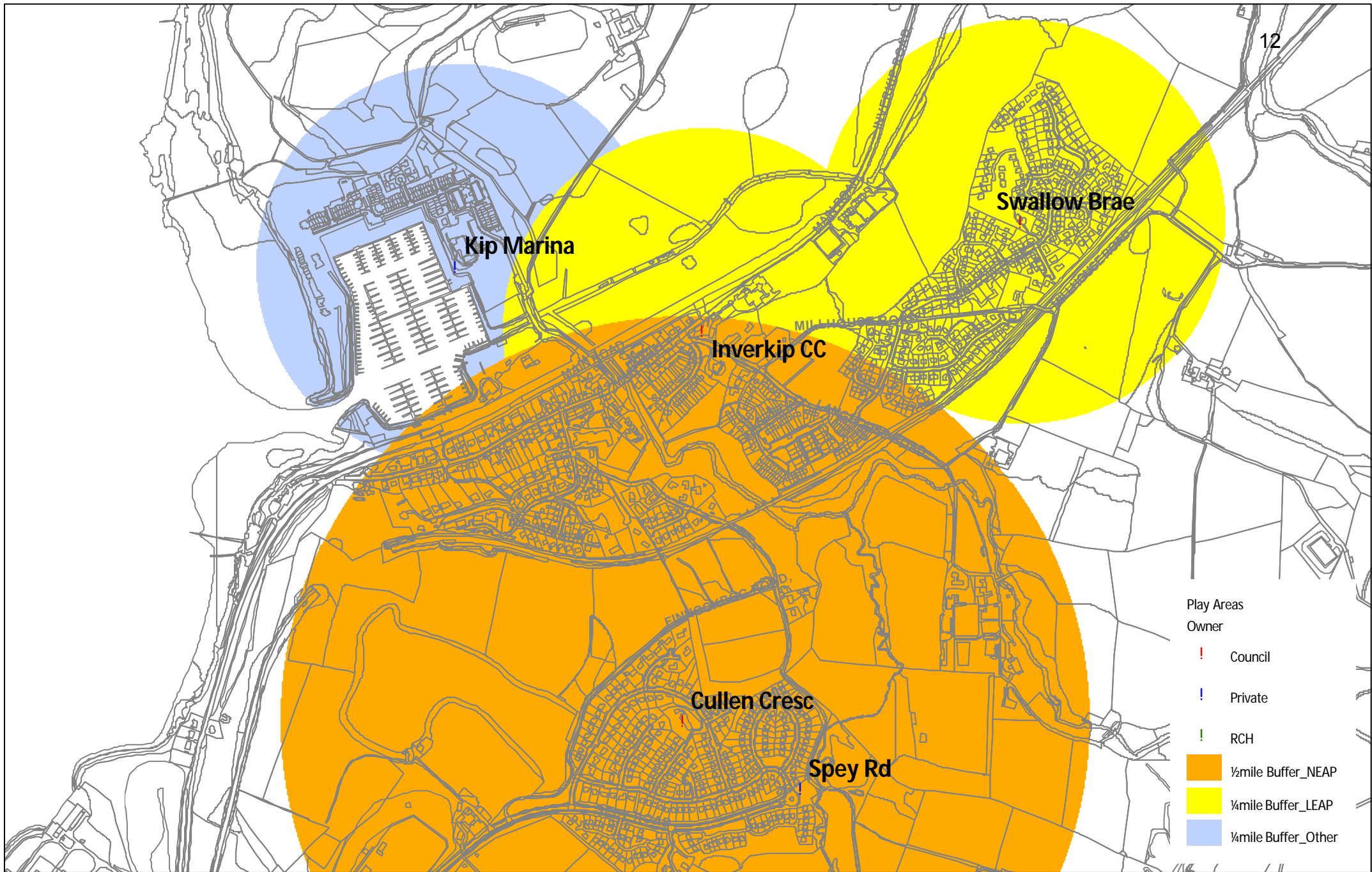


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Trumpethill to Faulds Park

Inverclyde
Council



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Inverkip

Inverclyde
 Council

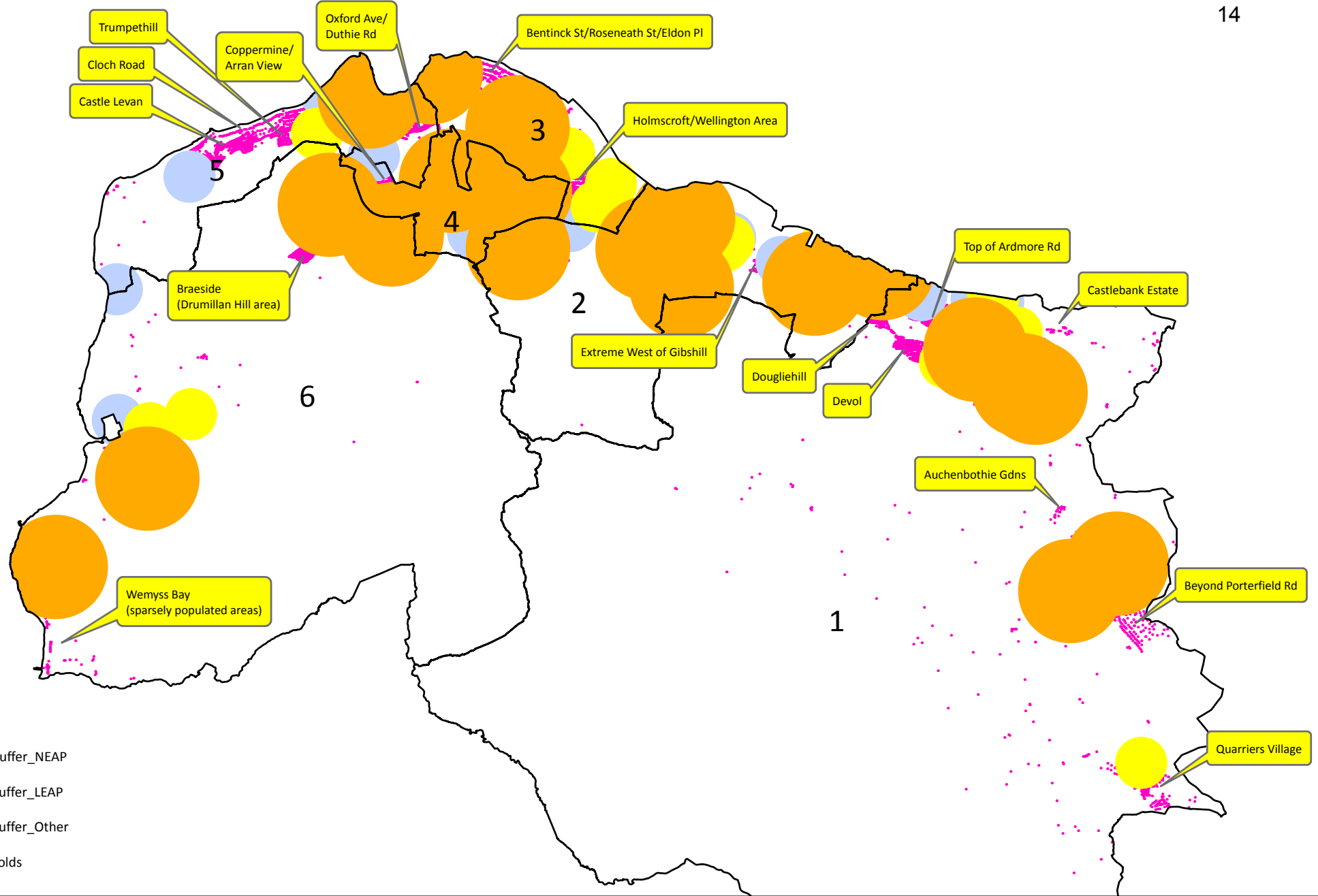


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Wemyss Bay



- Wards
- ½mile Buffer_NEAP
- ¼mile Buffer_LEAP
- ¼mile Buffer_Other
- Households

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Households outwith buffer of existing play areas