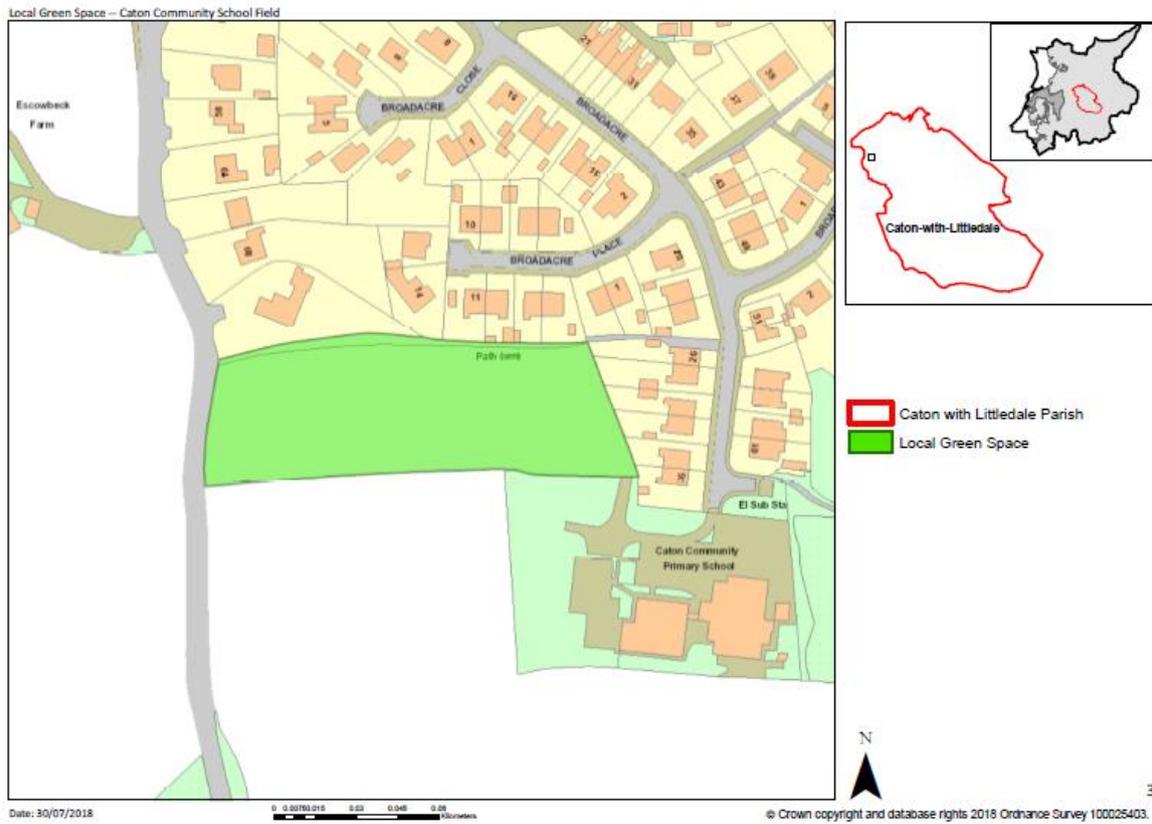


LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION: CATON COMMUNITY SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD

**Caton Community School Playing field**



Map kindly supplied by Lancaster District Council

Aerial image



This summer image shows the patchily worn grass, evidence of extensive use, by the community and not just by this small school.

The most important boundary is at the bottom of the image where the thickness of the long established and potentially wildlife rich hedgerow and trees can be clearly seen. About two thirds of the crown of the veteran oak is on the image. Along two thirds of the upper boundary are other hedgerows, sufficiently wide to provide habitats for birds and other species.

The proximity to the surrounding estate homes and the ancient footpath, visibly well used, along the upper boundary, and leading through to Broadacre, are also noted.

**Properties: Grid ref OS 530643, area 0,716 hectares 1.769 acres, perimeter 0.395 km, 0.25 miles**

Ownership: Lancashire County Council

**The field is local in character, not an extensive tract of land**

**It is in very close proximity to the community it serves**

#### **Public Access:**

Footpath from stile onto Quernmore road to north east corner continuing between bungalows to Broadacre

Field extensively used for formal games and informal recreation by all age groups in the community

#### **Boundaries**

The field is bounded to the north and east by the bungalows of the Broadacre estate, built in the 1960's, the northern boundary being largely hedged with sufficient shrubs and small trees to encourage birds to perch and look for food.

To the west it is bounded by a stone wall the other side of which runs Quernmore



road. To the south is a wide ancient, wild hedge and small and four substantial trees, including a very large veteran oak (see image silhouette). To the far side of the south boundary of the area is another field in agricultural use.

**Two area specific challenges must be met to establish eligibility for local green space designation:**

**Challenge 1: Future need to provide more school buildings to cater for an increased child population**

Lancashire County Council, which owns Caton Community School, the sports hall, the land around the school, and the playing field, has a general policy of retaining land adjacent to a school, in order to be able to extend the school should demand for places rise or new facilities be required. Development could be conveniently



located on any part of the extensive land adjacent to the school. However it is counterintuitive to apply the principle to the playing field, which as the map shows, is sited some distance away from the area on which the school buildings would be extended, at the east/south corner, with the remainder of the field extending even further away to the west. The image on the

left hand of the page illustrates land adjacent to the school on which the buildings would be extended. The playing field is located away from the school sports hall and the school buildings beyond.

**Land already designated: If land is already protected consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained from Local Green Space designation.**

**Challenge 2: Existing Protection as a playing field and the additional need for green space protection**

The space is already protected as a school playing field, in which capacity it is well used and valuable. A local resident commented that '*Obviously it is used by the school for sport, including the annual sports day when the field is marked out with running tracks, rounders pitches etc.*'

However, the value as a school playing field could be replicated elsewhere, should a different field adjacent to the school grounds, for example to the south, be made available and substituted for it.

The case for designation as local green space is based on additional and different reasons for specific extra protection of this field as a local green space, reasons

which do not transfer to other fields. The field has been used for community recreation long before the school was built. In summary, one local resident said:

*' I would regard Caton Primary School playing field as a very important green space amenity for the village and strongly feel that it should be designated as such.'*

A resident living in a bungalow to the north of the field commented: *' My garden adjoins the Caton Primary School playing field so I am in a good position to see at least some of the use which is made of it making it so much more than just a school playing field.'*

### Evidence of demonstrable value to and use by the local community, under the NPPF criteria

#### Historical significance

Caton school playing field has been in use by the community for centuries. The present boundaries are identical to those shown on 'old maps', and on many of which the present footpath is marked.



The 1910 map shows that the main access for the mill workers at Rumble Row Mill (a turning mill) was on foot. The path runs in a northerly direction from the mill, by the millstream, then turning west along the length of the northern edge of the playing field. This may well have been an area where the mill workers may have enjoyed whatever recreation time they had, and the strong feelings expressed by the community about the value to them and others over the years resonates with the historical role. Later maps show a later footpath continuing the other side of the mill, crossing Artlebeck on stepping stones towards Borwick. The 1932 OS map also shows Rumble Row Mill, and the Mill pond, with older cottages before the development of Broadacre.

The views from the field to the west are especially fine, including the wooded hillside of the once extensively landscaped grounds of Escowbeck House, including rolling hillocks through which the Escow Beck runs. The area includes where the site of a fish and boating pond (see map of the estate) and it has been pointed out that although the pond has disappeared there are still the remains of locks which maintained the flow of water to the desired levels.

### Beauty

Views across to the west show the historic Escowbeck estate landscaping



Above, left, the prominent veteran oak and beyond the landscaped grounds of Escowbeck; above right, a close up of same; below looking across from playing field to Escowbeck house in the distance and below it the roof of Escowbeck farm, and the site of the Fish Pond and Boat House.

Views of the veteran oak tree and through the tree arch to the uplands of the Forest of Bowland:



## Recreational value

The following written evidence of a wide range of recreational activities were sent in by residents. These include:

### Organised sports:

a) *'This field has been used by local children before the school was built in 1974. The local children have been playing competitive football in the local Youth League on this ground since about 1970/1. The field has been in constant use since on a regular basis.'*

b) *' There are regular football training sessions after school hours on at least one afternoon per week. On Saturday mornings there is junior football training and coaching organised, I understand, by one of the local churches, and junior matches occur several times per season on Sunday mornings.'*



*' It is used every week by Brookhouse and Quernmore Methodist Churches and Caton Baptist Church who offer football coaching for children ranging from 7-14 years of age and is always well attended, with up to 30 or more taking part including girls, with responsible adults in charge. It is also used by Caton Terriers Junior Football Club. They have two teams of under 8 and under 9. They have joined the local Service to Youth League and to play competitive football they had to affiliate with the Lancashire Football Association. Each game is well supported by families of the children playing and all well behaved.'*

### Informal community recreational use:

*'Quite often families with grandchildren and great grandchildren play games on the sports-field. Our grandchildren when they came to visit often used to play in the field now it is our great grandchildren.'*

Others spoke of picnics on the field, informal games, and of flying kites - the remains of one is still lodged high in the branches of the veteran oak. From their home overlooking the field it was observed that *'On a casual basis I often see families using the field - playing, exercising dogs, flying kites, even flying model aircraft.'*

Safety for children for informal recreation:

One frequent 'like' of young people taking part in the neighbourhood planning survey is the friendliness of living in the parish, but importantly, this category included feeling safe. There are several reasons why Caton community playing fields are regarded as safe by families.

- ❖ The footpath links directly to the Broadacre cluster of homes with an older and newer estate feeding into Broadacre. Access to the field is direct, easy and safe.
- ❖ An important feature stressed by many local people is that the field can be accessed safely by local children completely away from traffic. It is at the end of a quiet cul de sac:  
*'It is essential for children to be able to take part in any sport and the field is ideal with no danger from passing traffic.'*
- ❖ It is also separate from the main roads passing through Caton:  
*'The amount of traffic using (nearby) Quernmore road make it dangerous.... There are large lorries, tractors, motor bikes travelling at speed and cyclists also using this road'*
- ❖ The siting of the field, with plenty of room to play but surrounded at a distance by homes feels reassuring in that many local residents feel responsible for keeping an eye open to ensure that children are safe (see survey of Fell View residents).

### **Proximity of a beautiful field near to home:**

We also heard of less able and elderly people living nearby who like to come to the field every day for a peaceful amble and to enjoy the views from the field, especially those across to the west of the wooded hillside of the Escowbeck landscaped grounds, through which the Escow Beck runs.

*(examples: a letter was sent from residents aged 80 and 79 who have lived all their lives in Caton; we heard of the elderly mother of another resident who lived around the corner from the field).*

### **Use of the footpath**

The footpath, as noted as a historical feature, linked Quernmore road (then a quiet lane) and Caton residents to Rumble Row mill (the mill pond of which now said to be the site of Caton community School buildings). It now links the stile to Quernmore Road along the field edge and continues through the bungalows along the original route to Broadacre, bypassing the school. The path is in popular use as is evident by the well-worn track. There is a lively social media presence and notifications to Caton Parish Council relating to alleged negligence in poop scooping, which also indicate frequent use. A resident whose garden runs at the back of the path commented:

*'There is a footpath which runs through the field and is well used by walkers of all ages on a regular basis.'*

### **The environment: Richness of wildlife**

#### **The veteran oak**

The very large oak tree is a prominent feature of the field for everyone. One resident assessed the girth to see if it would qualify as a veteran tree: 'It is approx. three



quarters of the length of the field from the school and the circumference about four metres' (at chest height). A very rough estimate of age is between 160 and 200 years old. Veteran trees are renowned for the diversity of wildlife, invertebrates, lichens etc living in and on them because of their age.



The school children are beneficiaries of having such a wildlife and plant rich environment so close to the school. Other community groups such as church youth groups, and beavers and scouts, are also potential beneficiaries.

The wide, wild hedge and trees along the south of the field encourage 'School lessons including observations on wildlife and identifying wildflowers.'



A local wildlife enthusiast contacted us and wrote: *'The wood pile is good for insects and fungi - but don't ask me to identify the different fungi! There are those big, thick wide hedges - in places they are 5 or 6 yards deep. Again, the pheasants' presence indicates scrubby area providing cover and food for birds and insects.'* He suggests that this area would be ideal for an invertebrate survey, 'a citizen science project, established by The British Trust for Ornithology to get school children to do regular surveys in October, March and June of the insects in the soil. The children can identify, count and record what they find. They can

*establish a baseline and monitor seasonal and annual variations and they love getting their hands dirty while doing it! The findings have a wider significance in showing variations in food availability for adult birds feeding young during the nesting season. It's been designed as 'good intro to science' for kids.' This could also be a community project for youngsters!*

*In a garden bordering the field 'frogs, newts, dragonflies, damselflies and various aquatic invertebrates' have been noted.*

Other hedges and dry stone walls (standing or in piles) are attractive to wildlife.



Birds are a particular interest for many local people:

*' There is also a lot of wildlife around the area, to name a few: - blackbirds, goldfinches, blue tits, great tits, long tailed tits, greenfinches, woodpeckers, sparrows, robins, magpies, pigeons, rabbits and squirrels etc even a rogue sparrow hawk'.*

*' The field is a haven for wildlife. I have counted at least thirty species of birds visible from my garden. Squirrels are often seen, also the occasional hedgehog. At night owls can be heard.'*

A list of birds observed from a garden along the field on Broadacre Place:

*Seen every day visitors.*

*Blackbird  
Blue Tit  
Coal tit  
Great tit  
Collared dove  
Chaffinch  
Robin  
House Sparrow  
Rook  
Wood pigeon  
Wren*

*Seen fairly often.*

*Greenfinch  
Goldfinch  
Greater Spotted Woodpecker  
Jackdaw  
Longtailed tit  
Pheasant  
Pied Wagtail  
Magpie  
Thrush  
Starling*

*Seen rarely (at least once per year)*

*Black Cap  
Heron  
Kestrel  
Sparrowhawk  
Nuthatch  
Tree creeper  
Mallard*

## **Note: Contribution of Caton Community School Field to community sustainability**

Fell View, Caton Community School Field, and Station Field each provide:

- ❖ very local accessible green space, at the heart of a residential estate or historical building cluster within Caton, to which young and older children can walk safely and very close to home for informal play along a footpath, pavement, track, and away from main traffic routes.
- ❖ large enough 'field' areas of mowed grass to encourage a wide variety of informal games and other activities to be enjoyed by children with their friends, and with their families, and for residents to exercise their dogs.
- ❖ a row of houses on at least two sides, from which local people say they can 'keep an eye' on activities in the green space, to ensure safety.
- ❖ a social place for all local people to meet on a day to day, casual basis strengthening feelings of being part of the local community.

Almost all Caton families are immediately served by one of these local green spaces. Brookhouse is accessible on foot from between a few hundred metres to half a mile away.

*One of the basic conditions for neighbourhood plans is achieving sustainable development. The social, community, economic and environmental benefits of green spaces help to make local places sustainable. From Locality toolkit*

Caton Community School Field contributes to quality of place. Quality of place is a key factor in attracting investment, jobs and growth to an area. Caton Community School Field is also important in making our parish an attractive place to live, work and spend leisure time. So Caton Community School Field has real economic value to the surrounding area, in addition to creating community well-being.