



ASHFORD SMALL GROWTH TOWN I DRAFT LOCAL AREA PLAN

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1. LOCAL AREA PLAN STATUS AND PROCESS

Part II, Chapter I, Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (the Act), as amended, provides that an LAP may be prepared in respect of any area which a planning authority considers suitable; and in particular for areas which require economic, physical and social renewal and for areas likely to be the subject of large-scale development within the lifetime of the Development Plan.

An LAP shall be made in respect of an area which is designated as a town in the most recent census of population and other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census, which has a population in excess of 2,000 and is situated within a functional area of a planning authority which is a County Council.

The 2002 Amendment to the Planning and Development Act (2000) indicates that an LAP can include specific objectives pertaining to the zoning of the land, however these objectives must be consistent with the CDP. Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002, Section 8).

Once the Draft Plan is prepared, notice of the intention to make the proposed Local Area Plan will be advertised in one or more newspapers circulating in the area. Information will also be disseminated through public counter, website, and by phone. The statutory time frame as set out in the Planning and Development Acts, commences upon public display of the Draft Local Area Plan.

Timeframe	Progress of statutory LAP process
Week 1	Draft Local Area Plan on display - submissions invited 6 weeks
Week 6	Preparation of Manager's Report on submissions received 6 weeks
Week 12	Manager's Report given to Members for consideration 6 weeks
Week 18	Plan made unless Members decide to amend 3 weeks
Week 21	Notice of alterations published & submissions invited 4 weeks
Week 25	Preparation of Manager's Report on submissions (alterations only) 4 weeks
Week 29	Manager's Report given to Members for consideration 6 weeks
Week 35	Plan made as per Manager's recommendation (or) Members make Plan contrary to the Manager's recommendations

2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A Public Consultation Meeting was held on Thursday 30th of August 2007 from 4pm-9pm at Chester Beatty's pub in Ashford. A Background Issues Paper and a submission form were made available to each attendee upon arrival at the meeting.

The Public Consultation Meeting was held in a clinic format, where each individual/stakeholder had an opportunity to speak to a planner(s) individually. Written submissions were invited from the public from the 30th of August up to the closing date of the 27th September at 5.00 pm.

List of those who made Pre-Plan Submissions:

1. Coordination Unit DCENR C/o Francis Heaslip
2. Charles & Geoffrey Tottenham C/o Frank O’Gallachoir
3. Patrick Fahey & Peter Crossan C/o Frank O’Gallachoir
4. Vincent Doyle C/o Alphaplan Design
5. Ronald Phillips & Michelle Hender Phillips C/o Alphaplan Design
6. Stephen Miley
7. Stephen Miley
8. Killiskey COI Parish C/o PD Lane
9. Ashford Rovers FC C/o Jim King
10. Aisling MacGrath
11. Ashford Development Association
12. Ashford Development Committee C/o Martin Kelly
13. Scoil Na Coroine Mhuire C/o Edward Barry
14. Jane Dignam
15. Martin Kelly
16. Oona McKiernan
17. Marie & Tony Behan
18. Ashford GAA Club C/o Myles Manning
19. Eleanor Mayes
20. Olive Moroney
21. Maurice & Olive Ramsey
22. Madeline Jay & Simon Pratt C/o Frank O’Gallachoir
23. Derek Connolly
24. Ashford Community Group C/o Fiona O’Rourke
25. Bayberry Properties C/o PD Lane
26. Arrell Properties C/o PD Lane
27. Michael Ryan C/o Theo Phelan Design
28. Charles O’Reilly Hyland C/o Theo Phelan Design
29. James & Rosemary Farrelly
30. James Farrelly
31. Devil’s Glen Holiday & Equestrian Village C/o Stephen Miley
32. McCarthy and Kelly Partnership C/o Tiros Resource Ltd
33. Donal Kavanagh C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc.
34. Gerry Daly C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc.
35. Emmett Hedigan C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc.
36. Ashford Rovers FC C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc.
37. Sharon Hughes C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc.
38. James & Rose Farrelly C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc.
39. Brian Stokes C/o Cunnane Stratton Reynolds
40. Brian Stokes C/o Cunnane Stratton Reynolds
41. Ashford Tidy Town Group
42. McCarthy and Kelly Partnership C/o Tiros Resource Ltd
43. Emmett Hedigan
44. Glenkerrin Homes C/o McGill Planning
45. *Vincent Doyle C/o Pat O’ Connor & Assoc. (Late Submission)*
46. *Gerry Fortune C/o Kim Dreyer. (Late Submission)*

Headline Issues

A summary of the main issues raised in Public Submissions and during Public Consultation meeting included:

Population and Residential

- Projected population figures for Ashford too low
- Need to provide affordable housing for local people
- Provision of Part V of Planning & Development Act 2000

Retailing and Town Centre

- Supermarket not suitable in Ashford
- The development re-location of the GAA and development of the site as a park and town centre is necessary
- Some form of sporting activity or play should be retained on the GAA site

Community and Education

- Reserve land zoned for both schools to allow for their expansion
- Need for facilities for the youth
- Community centre needed in a central location
- Anti-social behaviour prevalent in some areas, alternatives need to be provided for young people
- Sewerage to be extended to Devil's Glen
- Need for a playground and facilities for the youth etc

Natural/Built Heritage and Tourism

- Trees of amenity should be specified and should continue to be protected
- Tourism attractions such as Avoca Handweavers to be encouraged
- Bridle track along riverbank in conjunction with walking route
- Development must reflect local character of the village – important that this character is retained

Zoning

- Traveller accommodation to be considered.
- Clarification on proposed densities for R1 zoned lands
- Clarification on the permitted uses in the 'Greenbelt' zone
- Timescale for the commissioning of the new Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Where would a landfill be permitted

Employment

- Need for a business park
- No objection to existing zoning of Industrial/Employment lands
- Industrial/Employment site should be relocated out to Kellystown

Transport

- Road Objective through AA2 lands as an alternative to the Nun's Cross Bridge
- The footpath on the R763 is insufficient in width
- The parking at Mount Usher needs to be looked at

3. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The development management standards with which developments have to comply are both set out in the relevant chapters of the Wicklow County Development Plan and in this Local Area Plan. Where appropriate standards for particular development do not exist in this Plan, the development management standards in the County Development Plan shall apply.

3.1 Development Contributions

Having regard to the capital expenditure required to adequately provide for Roads and Transportation, Environmental and Community Facilities Infrastructure, the Council will require contributions from benefiting developers. Contributions shall be made in accordance with Wicklow County Council's development contribution scheme, adopted December 2005, and crafted by virtue of its powers enacted under Section 48 (1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

In addition Wicklow County Council will continue the practice of granting Planning permissions with the inclusion of conditions requiring levies and or bonds to be paid and/or works undertaken to facilitate developments in the interests of the common good.

4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a Plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the Plan or programme. It informs Plans of the environmental impacts of alternative actions and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into Plan making.

4.1 Legal Framework

On the 21st of July 2004, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) was transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004). Relevant 'Guidelines for Planning and Regional Authorities' were subsequently issued by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2004.

SEA is mandatory for Plans for areas with a population of 10,000 or more. Where the population involved is less than 10,000 and in the case of Variations of Development Plans, the EU Directive nevertheless requires screening of the Plan or Variation, in order to establish if development resulting from policies and objectives will cause significant environmental effects.

4.2 The Screening Process

Screening is the technique applied to determine whether a particular Plan, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant an SEA. The key indicator that will determine if an SEA is required of particular non-mandatory Plans, is if they are likely to have *significant environmental effects* on the environment or not.

Where the Planning Authority is uncertain that there is a prima facie case for an SEA, the Plan must be screened for its possible significant effects and the designated environmental authorities should then be formerly consulted during, and as part of, the screening exercise.

The designated authorities are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, and the Department of Communications, Marine, and Natural Resources. While the EPA must be consulted in all cases, consultation with the two Departments is conditional on the Plan having significant effects within the remit of those departments.

4.3 Consultation with Environmental Authorities

Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources

- The implementation of this LAP should not compromise the status objectives as set out in the Water Framework Directive. The Plan will have regard to the Water Framework Directive.
- Development on foot of this LAP should be considered premature until suitable Sanitary Services infrastructure is in place to take and treat satisfactorily the anticipated increased loadings. Development shall be dependant upon the availability of sanitary services infrastructure.

Eastern Regional Fisheries Board

NO RESPONSE RECEIVED

DoEHLG and EPA

NO RESPONSE RECEIVED

The conclusion of the County Council's consideration of the criteria set-out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development SEA Regulations is that the development proposals and the policies and objectives contained within the variation are unlikely to give rise to any significant effects on the environment.

5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

5.1 The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The NSS is a twenty-year national planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. Under the NSS the cities and towns of Ireland were designated a status to reflect their role as drivers of development in their relevant region. The population of Ashford would indicate that it falls under the category of 'Urban Centre' (circa 1,000) however because of its proximity to Wicklow Town (Primary Development Centre) and Rathnew (Urban Centre) it was not awarded this status. It can therefore be concluded that Ashford should develop with strong links to Wicklow Town/Rathnew without competing for industrial, commercial or retail development and thus primarily accommodate the needs of Ashford and its immediate environs.

5.2 The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004 – 2016

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) put in place a broad Planning framework for the development of the Greater Dublin Area of which Wicklow forms a part. The Guidelines are informed by and flow from the National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020. The RPG's provide an overall strategic context for the Development Plans of each Local Authority.

The RPG's make a distinction between the existing built up area and its environs where the built up area is the Metropolitan and the remainder the Hinterland with a range of settlement sizes that have the potential to attain an enhanced level of sustainability. Northeast Wicklow including Bray and Greystones/Delgany and their environs are within the Metropolitan area while the remainder of the County is the Hinterland.

The Settlement strategy in the Hinterland is essentially based around a clearly articulated hierarchy of settlements. This strategy seeks to promote development into a series of tiers, with the Large Growth Towns I and II and the Moderate Growth Towns at the urban end of the strategy with the other towns located in the tiers below. Ashford's population means that under the RPGs, its settlement type is 'Small Growth Town' (1,000-5,000).

This settlement type fulfils the following role:

Settlement Type	Population Range	Accessibility	Typical Distance from higher level settlement	Economic Function
Small Growth Town	1,000-5,000	On national primary or secondary road. Good bus links to Railway and larger settlements	10km from Large Town	Attractor for investment

5.3 Wicklow County Development Plan 2004 – 2010

Wicklow is one of the most rapidly growing counties in Ireland. This is a result of population retention, growth, and in-migration. In-migration and natural population increase has resulted from Wicklow's location within the Greater Dublin Area and the influence of Dublin's Urban Shadow, together with the amenities it offers, including its coastline, mountains and scenic rural areas.

The County Development Plan settlement strategy seeks to locate population growth and channel development in line with the principles of the RPG's. The application of such a strategy includes the promotion of growth within the Metropolitan area settlements of Bray and Greystones/Delgany, the Hinterland Large Growth Towns of Wicklow/Rathnew and Arklow, and the Moderate Growth Towns of Blessington and Newtownmountkennedy. It also seeks to facilitate local growth, where in-migration is restricted, in Small Growth towns, Villages and other Rural Areas. The CDP promotes a hierarchy of settlements in recognition that settlement role and function is a product of scale and spatial distribution.

The County Development Plan provides a settlement strategy which is configured in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines and recognises the reality that larger settlements have critical mass and are thus more successful at providing a wide range of environmental, economic and social facilities, in generating indigenous employment growth, and attracting inward investment.

Ashford is designated as a 'Small Growth Town I' in the County Development Plan (CDP). As provided in the CDP, the indicative population for Ashford in 2010 is 2,295 and the target population for 2016 is 3,000. It is intended that the necessary infrastructure will be in place to provide for this growth.

Such settlements represent the 'stronger small towns in the County, which provide a good range of employment, retail and social/community services to their hinterland'. These towns will serve as hubs for the development of social, cultural and economic services which are necessary for quality of life and sustainable communities.

Policy SS3 of the settlement strategy contains the criteria for local growth for multi-house and single house developments for Ashford (see Population and Settlement Strategy Variation No. 3 of 2007, SS3 at Section 4.1.5, Page 5 and definitions at Page 3). In short this policy restricts single house development to those living and/or working in the County for 1 year. For multihouse developments, 50% of residential units are available for regional growth, and there are no restrictions as to who can purchase these. The remaining 50% are restricted to those who have resided in Co Wicklow for at least one year.

All lands within the Development Boundary fall under the Landscape Zone 'Corridor Area' due to its proximity to the N11.

6. POPULATION

As provided in the County Development Plan, the indicative population for Ashford for 2010 and 2016 is 2,295 and 3,000 respectively. The table below gives the context of population growth since 1996.

Year	Population	Change	Change (%)	Source
1996	1215			Census
2002	1356	141	10.4	Census
2006	1349	-7	-0.5	Census
2010	2295	946	70.13	CDP Indicative Population
2016	3000	705	30.72	CDP Indicative Population

The role of the LAP is to cater for an increase in population in Ashford to 2,295 in 2010 and 3,000 in 2016. There are sufficient lands zoned 'residential' in Ashford at present to accommodate for the projected 2016 population of 3,000.

Since the last Local Area Plan for Ashford in 2001 and up to July 1st 2006, permissions for 187 housing units inside the development boundary were granted. Of these only 24 had been completed due to infrastructural restrictions. Since July 2006, two significant permissions have been granted, permission for 142 residential units in Ballinalea and permission for 20 Social & Affordable residential units in Ballinahinch (with a further 34 pending a flood study). These two developments are pending the upgrading of sanitary services infrastructure.

What is proposed in this Plan is an increase in the designated population to **2,295 by 2010** (this would accommodate an additional 357 houses) and an increase to **3,000 by 2016**, which will allow for a further 266 houses.

7. QUANTITY OF ZONED LAND

It is intended to enhance the physical and social infrastructure and accommodate the needs of the town, in accordance with its 'Small Growth Town I' status as set out in the County Development Plan Settlement Strategy to accommodate the needs of existing and the Planned increase in population. This will require land to be designated for community and employment infrastructure, in addition to residential development.

7.1 Housing

Though this Plan will cover the period of six years until 2014, zoning will be in the context of the proposed population projections up to 2016, that is for an extra **1651** persons. The quantum of development until 2010 will of course be controlled through the development management process on the basis of the 2010 figures catering for an extra 946 people of which 837 are from extant Planning permissions (327 units). This will ensure that only the land necessary to accommodate the target population may be developed.

While the amount of land to be zoned is based on the number of people to be accommodated, Household Size, 'Excess Factor', 'Headroom', and Housing Density are all factors in this equation.

Household Size

As was stated above the average household size has been steadily falling in Co Wicklow, from 3.23 in 1996 to 2.9 in 2006, a fall of 0.033 per annum over the 10 year period, that accelerated to over 0.04 over the past 4 years. The Regional Planning Guidelines review group for the Greater Dublin Area estimates that the average household size by 2016 will be in the region of **2.56 persons per household**.

Excess Factor

This term describes the fact that demand for housing will exceed actual household formation due to:

- Some of the additional units being required to replace obsolete housing;
- Some units being vacant at any one time due to market frictional factors;
- Some units being second homes or pieds à terre.

The Excess Factor can vary over time, between regions, between counties and between urban and rural areas. The Regional Planning Guidelines have assumed that by 2010 the Excess Factor will be 20% for the Greater Dublin Area, and in the Mid-East region it will be circa 13%. Given that the Excess Factor is greater in urban than in rural areas, that Ashford is in the 'Hinterland' and that a considerable proportion of households in the town are commuter households, ***an Excess Factor of 6% will be used in this Plan.***

Headroom

This is the amount of extra land that should be zoned over and above the minimum amount needed to accommodate population targets. It is also known as market factor and is intended to allow for that element of zoned land that may not be released to the market for housing purposes during the Plan period. Headroom is normally in the 30% - 50% range, and a figure of 30% *will be applied in this Plan* given the proximity of the town to the N11 and Dublin, and the resulting greater likelihood that development will take place.

Housing Density

The density in the County Development Plan shall apply to *lands within the town boundary and for calculation purposes an average figure of 20 houses per hectare will apply to such land.*

Amount of New Zoned Housing Land

The number of houses to be catered for is based the current population (1349) divided by the current 2006 Household size (2.9), which yields 465. Then the current population (1349) is divided by predicted 2016 Household size (2.56), which yields 527 units. By subtracting the 465 from 527 the resulting figure of 62 reflects falling occupancy rates. The town is expected to increase by 1651 to reach 3,000 by 2016. Of this increase, 921 can be subtracted as pending planning permissions resulting in a need to accommodate 730 people. By applying the 2016 Household size this gives a requirement of 285 units, which is then added to 62 (falling occupancy rates) and resulting in a total requirement of 347 units by 2016.

The recommended density is medium density (20 units/ha). The amount of land required is found by dividing this figure of 347 by the density giving a net land requirement of ***17.35ha***. These figures are then adjusted by adding in the 'Excess Factor' and 'Headroom' giving a total allowance for zoned residential land of ***23.60 ha at medium density.***

7.2 Social and Community Infrastructure

Ashford has the following assets under this heading:

- Catholic Church;
- Church of Ireland Church;
- 2 Primary schools;
- GAA pitch and dressing rooms (in ownership of County Board);
- Soccer pitch and dressing rooms (leased from WCC);
- 3 Pre-Schools

Education

The Department of Education require sites located close to the new areas of housing, existing community facilities and the town centre. The two existing schools have requested that land currently designated to facilitate the extension of the existing schools be retained.

There is a population of 1,349 in Ashford, which has two primary schools: Nun's Cross National School and Scoil na Coroine Muire Mixed National School. Ashford's projected population for 2016 is 3,000. According to the Department 11.3% of the population is of primary school age. This gives a total requirement of 187 extra primary school places or 8 additional mainstream classrooms. The Department of Education has recommended that it would be prudent to reserve 2.02 hectares (5 acres) for the expansion of the primary schools.

Considering current population of Ashford, primary pupil numbers attending schools in the town and an estimate of primary pupil numbers generated from the town's hinterland, the town's primary schools provide education for, in excess of, double the existing towns population. For this reason the Ashford LAP shall retain 2.03ha for the expansion of the primary schools. Of this, 1.4ha shall be adjacent to Scoil na Coroine Muire, while 0.63ha shall be adjacent to Nun's Cross National School giving the existing schools the option of extending their facilities.

As the estimated number of second level students is based on 8.5% of the population, this indicates 77 students would need to be catered for. This is too small a number to sustain a second level school and thus no allowance will be made for this.

Community and Play

This Plan will allow for 2.4ha of land per 1000 added population to be designated for these purposes, and thus at least 3.96ha extra land will be designated for active open space, to cater for the increased population of 1651 people.

7.3 Employment and Enterprise

The appropriate scale of employment to be provided for such a 'Small Growth Town I' as Ashford is guided principally by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, and the County Development Plan.

2006 estimates¹ for the GDA indicate the following employment trends: In terms of the future of the Irish Economy, the services sector is seen as the sustainable growth promoter for the economy. Manufacturing will continue to move to high-end technology operations, and overall, research and development and science, technology and innovation will become more integral. It is anticipated that there will be no major changes to employment rates. 2006 estimates indicate that 1.75% people work in Agriculture, 22.4% work in Industry and 75.85% work in Services.

The policies set out in 'Chapter 7: Employment' of the Plan are based on the above objectives.

This Plan will allow for 'employment' land to cater for the equivalent increase in population. Allowing for the following assumptions:

- 65% labour force participation rate
- a low density plot ratio of 0.4 to reflect the area and the preferred quality of service based employment or small enterprise units;
- a gross employment density of 25m² per employee;
- headroom 45%

Existing Population

$(1349 \times 65\% = 877 @ 25\text{m}^2 = 2.19\text{ha} / 0.4)$

$5.48\text{ha} + 45\% \text{ headroom } (2.32) = 7.9\text{ha}$

Projected Population

$(1651 \times 65\% = 1,073 @ 25\text{m}^2 = 2.68\text{ha} / 0.4)$

$6.70\text{ha} + 45\% \text{ headroom } (3.02) = 9.7\text{ha}$

These calculations give a requirement for employment land of **17.6ha** up to 2016. This amount of land was zoned in the previous Local Area Plan for Ashford however because of sewerage restrictions and limited access no development has taken place on the lands to date.

7.4 Retail

Ashford is currently served by a reasonable choice of convenience retailing (including petrol station, butcher, solicitor, chemist, hardware store and convenience food-stores). Only retail infrastructure, which corresponds to the towns' status in the Draft County Retail Hierarchy, is envisaged for Ashford.

This County Retail Strategy¹ has identified Ashford as a ‘Local Centre: Tier 2: Village Centre’. With a strategic policy to, “*facilitate the local provision of shops and services in Tier 2 level 4 Village Centres to meet the needs of existing and expanding populations*”.

The Strategy identifies a limited existing floorspace in Ashford: 389sqm of convenience, 564sqm comparison and 432sqm retail warehousing. Given the size of Ashford, retail expansion to the extent of self-sufficiency, particularly in the area of comparison provision, is unlikely and undesirable considering the role of the town in the County retail hierarchy. Significant increases in retail floorspace are not expected, however both the CDP and Ashford Local Area Plan will provide the policy framework to ensure that local shopping proposals (of suitable size and nature) are encouraged.

¹ Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016: Update on Regional Planning Guidelines – Economic Update, November 2006