



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

PREPARATION OF BLESSINGTON LOCAL AREA PLAN 2010-2016

ISSUES PAPER



**PLANNING DEPARTMENT
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY BUILDINGS
WICKLOW**

OCTOBER 2009

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background	3
1.2	Statutory Context	3
1.3	Timeframe of Plan & Structure of Issues Paper	4
1.4	Strategic Environmental Assessment & Appropriate Assessment	4
2.0	IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES.....	6
2.1	Population and Settlement Strategy	6
2.2	Employment and Industry	7
2.3	Town Centre & Retailing	7
2.4	Community Facilities	8
2.5	Tourism and Recreation	9
2.6	Heritage and Landscape Conservation	10
2.7	Infrastructure.....	11
2.8	The Rural Economy	12
APPENDIX 1	GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN PREPARING THE NEW LOCAL AREA PLAN.....	13
APPENDIX 2	GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A SUBMISSION	14
APPENDIX 3	SUBMISSION FORM.....	15
APPENDIX 4	MAP.....	16

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Wicklow County Council intends to prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Blessington for the period 2010 to 2016. This document has been prepared as part of the first stage in the LAP process.

Public consultation is important at the start of the preparation process of the Plan in order to address issues and concerns, which relate to the Plan, to ensure that the final Plan reflects public aspirations as well as government policies, strategies and guidelines.

A public information session on the LAP will be held on Tuesday 3rd November 2009 in the Wicklow County Council Blessington Offices 3pm-5pm and 7pm-9pm

During the period **27th October 2009 to 15th December 2009**, copies of this "Issues Paper" will be available from:

- the Council's Planning Department, County Buildings, Wicklow.
- the Council's website www.wicklow.ie
- the Council's Area offices in Blessington

You are invited to submit your views on what the Draft Local Area Plan should contain and what issues it should address. Submissions and observations should be marked ***Blessington Local Area Plan*** and should state your name and, where appropriate, the body represented, in writing to:

Sheila O'Leary
Senior Executive Officer
Planning Department
Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow

Submissions and observations may also be made by email to the following address:
planreview@wicklowcoco.ie

Submissions made between **Tuesday 3rd October 2009 and Tuesday 15th December 2009** will be taken into consideration prior to the preparation of the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan. In order to facilitate the Plan preparation, please make your submission as early as possible.

It should be noted that there will be other opportunities later on in the process for you to further express your views and make additional submissions.

Further public notices will be published in newspapers and on the Council's website indicating when further submissions may be made.

1.2 Statutory Context

Section 18 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (the Act), as amended, provides that a 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.

A LAP shall be made in respect of an area which is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census. A LAP shall also be made in respect of an area 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.

A LAP is required to be consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan, although the 2001 Amendment to the Planning and Development Act (2000) indicates that a LAP can include specific objectives pertaining to the zoning of the land.

The Act requires that a LAP consists of a written statement together with a plan or plans indicating the objectives in such detail as may be determined by the Planning Authority for the proper planning

and sustainable development of the area to which it applies including details of community facilities and amenities, and standards for the design of the developments and structures.

1.3 Timeframe of Plan & Structure of Issues Paper

Following this initial period of consultation, a draft LAP will be drawn up by Wicklow County Council. The draft LAP will then be placed on public display for a period of 6 weeks, during which further submissions can be made by the general public. Once this formal period of display is started, the timeframe for the process is then fixed by legislation.

The Local Area Plan shall set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area. The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides for the preparation of the Plan in three stages:

- Preparation of the Draft Plan.
- Making of the Local Area Plan.

Within each of these stages there are four common requirements:

- Public Notification
- Public Consultation
- Manager's Report
- Preparation of the Plan

This Issues Paper has been prepared in order to stimulate debate on the planning issues that the new Plan may address over its duration from 2010 to 2016. It deals with some of the main issues under various topic headings. **These headings are not exhaustive and you are invited to raise other matters you may consider relevant.**

1. Population & Housing
2. Employment & Industry
3. Town Centre & Retailing
4. Community Facilities
5. Tourism & Recreation
6. Heritage & Landscape Conservation
7. Infrastructure
8. Agriculture & Forestry

This issues paper is accompanied by a map showing

- The proposed boundary for the LAP
- Existing and permitted land uses in Blessington

Any pieces or parcels of land that are not assigned a colour on this map are lands for which a future use or zoning has not been determined. For the most part, these lands are in agricultural or fallow use.

The designation of a colour / use on any land does not preclude the plan assigning a different use for that land nor does it guarantee that any application on those lands will be successful.

A 200m buffer zone around the Poulaphuca Reservoir is shown on this map. This is not intended to suggest that lands in this buffer will not be considered for zoning / development but rather it is the sensitive zone within which any decision about land uses will have to be considered very carefully and examined to ensure compliance with EU and national legislation regarding protection of waters and habitats (please see section to follow on Strategic Environmental assessment and Appropriate Assessment).

1.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment & Appropriate Assessment

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.

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 & Local Government in November 2004.

As the population within the plan area is less than 10,000 SEA is not mandatory; however, given the environmental sensitivities of the Blessington and environs area, Wicklow County Council has decided to undertake a SEA as part of this plan. In this regard, the draft LAP will be accompanied by an 'Environmental Report' evaluating the potential impacts of the proposed plan on the environment. This Report will be available to view at the same time as the draft plan and comments or observations can be made on this report.

EU Habitats Directive 'Appropriate Assessment'

'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) is a process which comprises the assessment, based on scientific knowledge, of the potential impacts of the plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site¹ and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. The impacts assessed must include the indirect and cumulative impacts of the plan, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impact on the site. It informs plans of the environmental impacts of alternative actions and contributes to the integration of environmental considerations into plan making.

Under the ruling in Case 418/04 EC Commission v Ireland, it was found that Ireland had not correctly transposed and implemented the EU Habitats Directives by not providing explicitly for 'Appropriate Assessment' of land use plans. This judgment is expected to require legislative change to complete the transposition of the Directives; however to date no legislation or guidelines have been produced with regard to 'Appropriate Assessment'. It is the current recommendation of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government that any land use plan is screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites. In any

case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan may have an impact, a full 'Appropriate Assessment' must be carried out, as well as a full SEA. This screening will be carried out in the first instance and the results made available at the draft plan stage.

There is one Natura 2000 site in proximity to Blessington – the Poulaphuca Reservoir SPA (Special Protection Area). It will be necessary to carefully consider any suggestions with regard to zoning or development of land in proximity to the reservoir or other development that may directly or indirectly impact on this habitat. In order to avoid potential impacts on the reservoir habitat, it is likely that a buffer zone will be recommended between the lakeshore and development land.

¹ Natura 2000 sites are sites subject to European designations, normally known as SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and SPA (Special Protection Area). These are protected under the Habitats Directive of 1992 (EU directive 92/43/EEC)

2.0 IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

2.1 Population & Housing

Wicklow County Development Plan

Blessington is designated as a Moderate Growth Town in the Wicklow County Development Plan. In 1996, the population of Blessington was 1,860. This grew to 4,018 in 2006, an increase of 115% over 10 years (or c. 12% per annum). In percentage terms this is significantly higher than the population increase in County Wicklow of 23% for the same period. It is estimated however that growth will now moderate and will not exceed c. 6% per annum up to 2022.

As provided in the (draft) County Development Plan 2010-2016, the indicative population for Blessington in 2016 is 6,000 and 7,500 in 2022. It is intended that the necessary physical infrastructure will be in place in the town to cater for this level of growth. The town will serve as a hub for the development of social, cultural and economic services, which are necessary to maintain and improve quality of life and which will develop a sustainable community.

The current County Development Plan 2004-2010 and the draft County Development Plan 2010-2016 require that 20% of the houses in new developments be reserved for people that have been living and / or working in the County for 1 year prior to the purchase. The plan places the same control on the development of all new individual houses.

Current situation

Planning permission has been granted in Blessington for approximately 1,100 residential units since 2000. Of this number, approximately 800 are still to be built or were built after the 2006 census. Therefore sufficient permissions exist to grow the population to 6,000, which is the current target for 2016. Therefore it is not intended that this Local Area Plan will make provision for the development of further significant housing developments

during the lifetime of the plan. Rather, the purpose of the plan will be to apply a land use zoning framework to already developed or permitted land, in order to clarify the uses to which this land can be put and to regulate changes of use or changes to existing permissions during the plan period.

Social & Affordable Housing

The Wicklow Housing Strategy 2004-2010 and draft Housing Strategy 2010-2016 are incorporated into the County Development Plan and govern the issue of housing in County Wicklow.

Social and affordable housing is provided by the Local Authority in a number of ways including:

- Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, which requires that 20% of developments be devoted to social / affordable housing
- Wicklow County Council's house building programme;
- Assistance to other agencies and individuals; and
- Through the acquisition of dwellings and other special programmes.

Main Issues

- What steps should be taken to manage the impact of population growth?
- What housing difficulties are the people of Blessington experiencing?
- How can the Plan cater for a range of different housing needs, including, the elderly, students, the homeless, the mobility impaired, traveller families and first time buyers?
- How can the residential amenity of the town be maintained and improved?
- What are the perceived preferable formats for housing layout and housing types for the town and at what density and height?
- What contributes to an attractive residential layout?
- What should accompany residential developments for the convenience of new residents?

2.2 Employment & Industry

Background

The last comprehensive survey of the employment characteristics of Blessington residents was the 2006 Census. This census found that the Labour Force Participation Rate² in Blessington was 74%, compared to the County average of 63% and the National average of 62.5%. In 2006, there were 2,140 Blessington residents 'at work' with 20 people looking for their first regular job and 96 people unemployed (this equates to an unemployment rate of 4.25%). At the time of the 2006 Census, the National unemployment rate was 4.5%.

The 2006 Census found that the principle employment of Blessington residents was wholesale and retail (17%), manufacturing (16%), construction (14%) and real estate, renting and business activities (11%). The Census however does not indicate the proportion of these jobs that were located in and immediately around Blessington town. A significant number of Blessington residents leave the town and its environs for work, particularly for the south Dublin and city centre areas. Of the 2,394 Blessington residents that responded to a Census question about commuting, approximately 67% indicated that they travel more than 10km to work or school every morning i.e. that they leave the town itself (Naas is c. 10km away, M50 is 20km and Dublin City centre is 28km).

Clearly the economic situation has worsened since 2006 - the National unemployment rate had increase to 12% in the second quarter of 2009. While detailed local figures are unavailable, unemployment in the Blessington area is assumed to have increased along the same lines and perhaps to an even higher degree, given the high dependence on industries associated with the Construction Sector, including aggregates/stone

² The Labour Force Participation rate is defined as the total amount of people who are classified as "at work", "looking for first regular job" and "unemployed" as a percentage of the total population excluding people aged under 15.

products and engineering. While the number on the Live Register in the mid-east region (counties Wicklow, Kildare and Meath) fell in September 2009, the mid-east region overall has experienced the highest increase in Live Register numbers in the State over the last year.

Main Issues

- How can new employment be stimulated in Blessington and its environs?
- Is there need to zone currently undeveloped land for employment and industry?
- Should facilities such as crèches, restaurants, leisure etc., be provided within employment centres?
- How can the Plan integrate enterprise land uses with other forms of land use such as residential, transportation, tourism etc?

2.3 Town Centre & Retailing

Background

Blessington has a vibrant and attractive town centre and in recognition of the heritage value of its older buildings, features and urban form, it is proposed to designate the town centre as an 'architectural conservation area'.

There are however a number of aspects of the town centre that detract from its overall quality including the high volumes of traffic, inadequate or haphazard parking arrangements, derelict sites / buildings, poor signage and damaged footpaths, kerbs, road surfaces and street furniture.

Blessington provides retail and retail services to a wide hinterland. A survey of retail uses was carried out in August 2009 and this found that there was c. 2,400sqm of convenience floorspace³ and c. 2,400sqm of comparison floorspace⁴ in the town.

³ Convenience goods comprise foods, alcoholic and non alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and non-durable household goods

⁴ Comparison goods include clothing/footwear, furniture & household equipment, medical products and books / newspapers.

Draft County Retail Strategy

The Draft County Retail Strategy (published October 2009) is incorporated into the draft County Development Plan. The specific objectives for retail in Blessington include:

- The designation of Blessington as a 'Level 3' sub-County town centre, such towns having a good range of comparison shopping, with a mix of retail types benefiting from lower rents away from larger urban sites, leisure & cultural facilities and a range of cafes and restaurants;
- It would be expected that financial and other services (banks and building societies) would be located alongside other retail services creating an active and busy centre;
- The growth in convenience retail floorspace of 2,000-2,500sqm and comparison retail floorspace of 2,000-3,000sqm.
- To direct larger scale new retail development into the identified core area and failing suitable sites being available, to edge of centre sites;
- To reserve 50% of the growth allocated to the identified core retail area;
- To facilitate the development of a discount food store in the town;
- Expansion of the retail-warehousing sector, either at existing retail warehousing or industrial estate locations, or on new sites to be determined through the local area plan process.

Main Issues

- What measures can be taken to improve the town centre environment to make it more attractive to visit for shopping and leisure activities?
- What uses are inappropriate in the main retail area of the town?
- Are there any deficiencies in the existing retail provision within the town, e.g. what kind of shops are required that are not present?
- What type and scale of retail activities should be provided in Blessington?
- What other kind of uses and services should be provided?
- What form should any new retailing take? Should it be a shopping centre or in a more traditional urban form typical of a shopping street?
- Are there enough appropriate retail facilities available within walking distance of residential areas in the town?
- Are there derelict sites which should be used to consolidate the provision of retail services?
- What measures should be taken to ensure there is sufficient parking adjacent to retail facilities?
- How can public transport, walking and cycling links to retail facilities be improved?
- Does advertising and signage cause visual clutter in the town, and what measures can be taken to reduce and counteract this?

2.4 Community Facilities

Background

The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2007 have placed greater emphasis on Planning Authorities to provide specific policies and objectives for the development of community facilities within their administrative areas. These objectives relate firstly to the provision of community services, including schools, crèches and childcare facilities. Secondly the objectives must encourage the integration of planning and sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area. The 2000 Act has also extended the range of facilities for which financial contributions can be levied to include community facilities.

Wicklow County Development Board Outlook 2002-2012

The Wicklow County Development Board Strategy has identified a number of key issues with regard to community development. Generally it is considered that greater support of the community and voluntary sector is needed. Genuine supports are required that enable the community/voluntary sector to participate in decision making at County and regional

level. The strategy also identified problems with accessing national funding schemes. There are gaps in support to the voluntary sector regarding information for funding and the ability to access it successfully. There is a need to ensure that sporting and recreational activities are developed and promoted in a sustainable and socially inclusive manner. Finally the strategy encourages the provision of increased recreational facilities to serve the needs of people with disabilities in County Wicklow.

Wicklow County Development Plan

The (draft) County Development Plan sets out strategies and objectives with regard to community facilities, including open spaces.

It is the strategy of the County Development Plan to promote and facilitate the development of "Sustainable Communities" through land use planning, by providing for land uses capable of accommodating Community, Leisure, Recreational and Cultural Facilities; accessible to and meeting the needs of all individuals and local community groups, in tandem with the delivery of residential and physical infrastructure in order to create a quality built environment in which to live.

In particular, the plan addresses:

- education facilities,
- health and care facilities,
- childcare and preschool facilities,
- leisure and recreation, including play and activity facilities for children, teenagers / young adults
- cultural facilities such as arts, libraries and places of worship

Main Issues

- Are there deficiencies in the existing open spaces within the town?
- Is there adequate sports and recreation space available in the town?
- Where could new parks/open spaces and recreational areas be located?
- Are there any significant interest groups or community activities without adequate accommodation or

satisfactory location to carry out their activities?

- Is there a shortfall in community space or are there any existing community groups without appropriate accommodation?
- Which community and cultural facilities (such as schools, churches etc.) within the town are in need of expansion?
- Are there adequate provisions for training and education in the town? Should additional primary, post primary or adult education facilities be provided?
- Is there a requirement for additional services such as healthcare services or local libraries?

2.5 Tourism and Recreation

Background

County Wicklow has compelling advantages as a destination and centre for tourism and recreation. With its close proximity to the Dublin Metropolitan Area, it is ideally located to benefit economically from both the day-tripper, the foreign visitor and the stay over visitor markets.

Like any industry, tourism has its advantages and disadvantages. When operating to its capacity, it attracts significant visitor spending in the local economy, creates employment and assists investment. On the other hand there can be disbenefits ranging from traffic congestion and parking problems, to the commercialisation of historic and attractive environments. Pressure to provide tourist orientated facilities to meet the needs of visitors and tourists also creates particular problems. Proposals for tourist orientated development such as accommodation, restaurants, and retail outlets are not always compatible with the character and scenic amenity of the area.

Blessington has the potential to act as a gateway to the Wicklow Mountains and to provide facilities and accommodation associated with its proximity to the mountains. Furthermore, the Poulaphuca Reservoir provides opportunities for sport, recreation and passive enjoyment. The

Wicklow County Partnership has recently commissioned a Poulaphouca Reservoir Recreation Opportunities Feasibility Study and where possible, the new LAP will include objectives that support any recommendations that come out of this study.

Main Issues

- How might the LAP encourage the development of Blessington as tourist destination and gateway to the Wicklow Mountains?
- What tourism products or services are under developed in the area? What type of new products or services should be encouraged?
- How can a balance be struck between development of tourism / recreation facilities and protection of the environment?
- How should the Plan deal with tourism and recreational related activities that require extensive areas of open land such as golf courses, quad biking etc?

2.6 Heritage & Landscape Conservation

Heritage Background

Under the Heritage Act 1995, Heritage is composed of the following elements: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways. The Council has regard to the aforementioned elements when forming Heritage Policy.

Natural Heritage

Wicklow has a rich and diverse natural heritage. The Council has a role to play in helping to ensure the conservation of this resource for current and future generations. Of importance are designated wildlife habitats and species (e.g. NHA's, SAC's), areas of geological interest, and non-designated habitats for wildlife such as coastlines, trees, hedgerows, stone walls, rivers and lakes. The Wicklow

County Development Plan contains policies for the protection of these features. Proposed NHA's, SAC's, SPA's, Nature Reserves, Geological Areas of Scientific Interest, trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and trees worthy of preservation are listed in the plan.

In formulating additional policies the Council will need to have consideration to EU Habitats and Bird Directives, as well as national legislation in the form of the Natural Habitat Regulations.

In this regard, there is one Special Protection Area/proposed Natural Heritage Area in Blessington and its surrounds at the Poulaphouca Reservoir. The town is also in close proximity to the pSAC/pNHA of the Wicklow Mountains National Park. There is one group of trees considered for preservation in the area - Broadleaf trees at Burgage Mor.

As part of the background research for this draft LAP, the Council commissioned a study of Local Biodiversity in Blessington, with a view to establishing areas or sites of biodiversity importance.

Built Heritage

The Wicklow County Development Plan includes objectives for the protection of archaeological sites and monuments and protected structures. The Development Plan lists National Monuments in State care and indicates areas of archaeological importance as well as architectural conservation areas.

Blessington has 8 Protected Structures, designated under the 2000 Planning Act. The 2000 Act provides that all Development Plans must now include objectives for preserving the character of places, areas, groups of structures or townscape of special interest. It is proposed (as part of the draft County Development Plan 2010-2016) to designate the town centre of Blessington as an *Architectural Conservation Area*.

There are numerous sites of archaeological record in and surrounding the town, the most noteworthy being the Rath Turtle Moat at Glending.

Main Issues

- How can the obligations regarding the conservation of natural heritage resources be met in light of increased development pressures?
- How can the Plan advance the protection and conservation of habitats and species that are outside designated areas?
- How can the Plan best work with other interested bodies in promoting and increasing awareness about our natural heritage?
- What measures are required to protect, while allowing appreciation of and access to Glending Hill and its associated archaeology?
- How can the Plan best offer protection to Blessington's archaeological and architectural heritage?
- How can we achieve a balance between development pressures and the protection of built heritage?

Landscape Background

The challenge when it comes to planning for the future management of the landscape is to ensure developments occur in a manner that is sustainable, i.e. that heritage and scenic qualities are protected in tandem with the need to encourage sustainable settlement and economic development.

The Wicklow County Development Plan categorises the County by landscape zones. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Amenity Zones, Rural Area Zones and Access Corridor Zones are identified. Blessington is located in a Corridor Area immediately adjoining an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

A number of views and prospects in and around Blessington are identified as providing special amenity value. These include the Lake Drive around the Poulaphouca Reservoir.

Main Issues

- How can the Plan best protect the character of the landscape while at

the same time facilitating modern settlement and development needs?

- Is there a need to review current landscape policies in response to increased development pressures?
- Can the listed views and scenic areas be adequately accessed from the town?
- Are there other views, areas of special amenity, which are worthy of protection in the town?

2.7 Infrastructure

Background

Infrastructure within the town includes a wide variety of services and functions, without which it could not function socially and economically. These include:

- Waste, effluent and emission control (wastewater treatment, the protection of existing groundwater aquifers and the recovery and disposal of household and hazardous waste).
- Water supply.
- Fire service.
- Roads.
- Public Transport.

Wicklow County Council aims to provide public water supply to towns, villages and rural areas in accordance with the Council's "*Water Services Investment Programme*". Investment in water services in Blessington and its surrounds is part of this programme. Wicklow County Council is nearing completion of a new water supply scheme to the town, which sources the water from the water treatment works at Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare. The existing Wastewater treatment plant has been upgraded recently from 3,000 p.e. (population equivalent) to 6,000 p.e.. However, a significant proportion of this new capacity has already been taken up or has been allocated to developments already granted permission. This limited spare capacity will restrict the amount of new zoning and development that can occur on foot of this LAP.

It is an objective of the County Council to improve existing road networks in the

interest of safety and free flow of traffic. Measures to achieve this objective may include footpath provision and improvement, the improvement of junctions, horizontal and vertical alignments, pavement strengthening and the provision of cycleways.

The Blessington Inner Relief Road is partially complete between the N81 and the Naas Road, the final elements still awaiting completion being the link to the N81 through Roadstone to the north and through Co. Kildare to the south. Wicklow County Council is pursuing the completion of this road.

The NRA is currently undertaking a study on possible alternative routes for the N81, which will effectively form a by-pass of Blessington. The final location of the preferred route selected may impact on options for the zoning and development of land in the environs of the town.

Main Issues

- Which infrastructural improvements should take priority within the new Local Area Plan? For example transport, water supply, waste treatment, telecommunications etc?
- How can the use of public transport, cycling and walking be promoted and the use of the private motor car reduced?
- Are there any deficiencies in, or difficulties with, existing linkages (vehicular, pedestrian, cycle) between different parts of the town?
- Are you prevented from walking to the town centre? What prevents you from using this route?
- Are there any walking routes to the town centre that can be improved?
- Where should new linkages be established?
- How do you travel to school? If you do not walk or cycle, what are your reasons?
- How can transport and land use planning be integrated to produce a sustainable living and working environment?
- Is there a need for bus services linking the outlying areas surrounding the town to the town centre?
- What form of car parking plan is required for the town centre?
- What solutions are there to the traffic congestion problems in Blessington? Is a town by-pass the remedy or would this have other knock-on adverse impacts?
- What roads or junctions in the town require upgrading to improve safety or traffic flow?
- How can the Plan strike a balance between infrastructural development and protection of the natural and built environment?

2.8 The rural economy

Background

The percentage of people employed in the County's primary sectors (agriculture, forestry and fishing) has fallen substantially from 7.45% in 1996 to 3.22% in 2006, which is below the national average of 4.19%. While agriculture is providing less employment, it still is an important source of income and employment in rural areas. Wicklow has the highest percentage of forestry cover in the Country (18% in 2007).

The extractive industry has a significant presence in the Blessington area due to the wealth of aggregates, particularly sand and stone. The exploitation of these resources has the potential to provide significant employment and economic activity to the locality and although it is acknowledged that the slowdown in the economy has significantly impacted on this industry, it is likely that strong demand will return in time.

Main Issues

- How can rural activity in the areas surrounding Blessington be supported and encouraged by development in the town?
- What facilities or services in the town would encourage and support rural activity?
- How should the Plan balance the demands of the extractive industry with the amenity value of landscape and residential areas?



APPENDIX 1

GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN PREPARING THE NEW LOCAL AREA PLAN

- Development Plan Guidelines (2007)
- National Development Plan 2007-2013
- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, People Places Potential (2002)
- Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)
- Making Ireland's Development Sustainable (2002)
- Local Authorities and Sustainable Development: Guidelines on Local Agenda 21 (1995)
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016
- Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines – Best Practice Guidelines (2005)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines & Implementation of SEA Directive (2004)
- EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and DoEHLG circular on Appropriate Assessment SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Draft 2008)
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009 & Best Practice Urban Design Manual (Dec 08) Part 1 and 2
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines (2005)
- Social Housing Design Guidelines
- Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines (2007)
- Action on Housing, DOEHLG (2000)
- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007) (Best Practice Guidelines)
- The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
- A Platform for Change, Strategy 2000-2016 Dublin Transportation Office, November 2001
- New Institutional Arrangements for land Use and Transport in the Greater Dublin Area- Consultation Paper (2001)
- Transport 21, 2006-2015
- Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2030
- 2020 Vision – Sustainable Travel and Transport: Public Consultation Documents
- Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2000)
- Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016
- The Provision of Schools and the Planning System – Code of Practice for Planning Authorities (2008)
- Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)
- National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010
- Ready Steady Play! A National Play Strategy (2004)
- National Biodiversity Plan (2002)
- National Heritage Plan (2002)
- Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Public Worship (2003)
- Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)
- Framework and Principles for the protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999)
- National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000)
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities (2004)
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structure (1996)
- Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006)
- Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland (2007)
- Bio-Energy Action Plan, DCENR
- Waste Management – Changing Our Ways



- Proposed National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2008 – 2012
- Tree Preservation Guidelines: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1994)
- Environmental Noise Regulations relating to the Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise
- Air Quality Plan for the Dublin Region 1999
- Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, 2002-2031
- Greater Dublin Water Supply Strategic Study 1996-2016
- Development Management Guidelines (2007)
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities (2003)
- Funfair Guidance (2003)

This list is not exhaustive and additional documents will be considered as appropriate.

APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A SUBMISSION

Please keep all submissions clear, simple and concise. A submission form is attached to this document and you may find this easy to use. However, submissions do not have to be made on this Form. In either case, please enclose a map, if appropriate and where necessary to identify land pertaining to the submission.

A good submission is that which relates to specific policies, locations or activities. If you have suggestions with regard to new policies or objectives, you could suggest where these could/should be included in the Plan.

A good submission should be in the best interests of proper planning and sustainable development. Consideration of submissions will be balanced against EU, National, Regional and local policy/guidelines, and submissions where possible should reflect that. Appendix 1 of this document identifies those documents referred to in the **preparation of the Plan**.

Submissions and observations should be marked ***Blessington Local Area Plan*** and should state your name and, where appropriate, the body represented, in writing to:

Sheila O'Leary
Senior Executive Officer
Planning Department
Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow

Submissions and observations may also be made by email to the following addresses:
soleary@wicklowcoco.ie
planreview@wicklowcoco.ie

All submissions shall be lodged not later than **15 December 2009**. These will be taken into consideration prior to the preparation of the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan. In order to facilitate the Plan preparation, please make your submission as early as possible.



Submission Form Draft Blessington LAP 2010

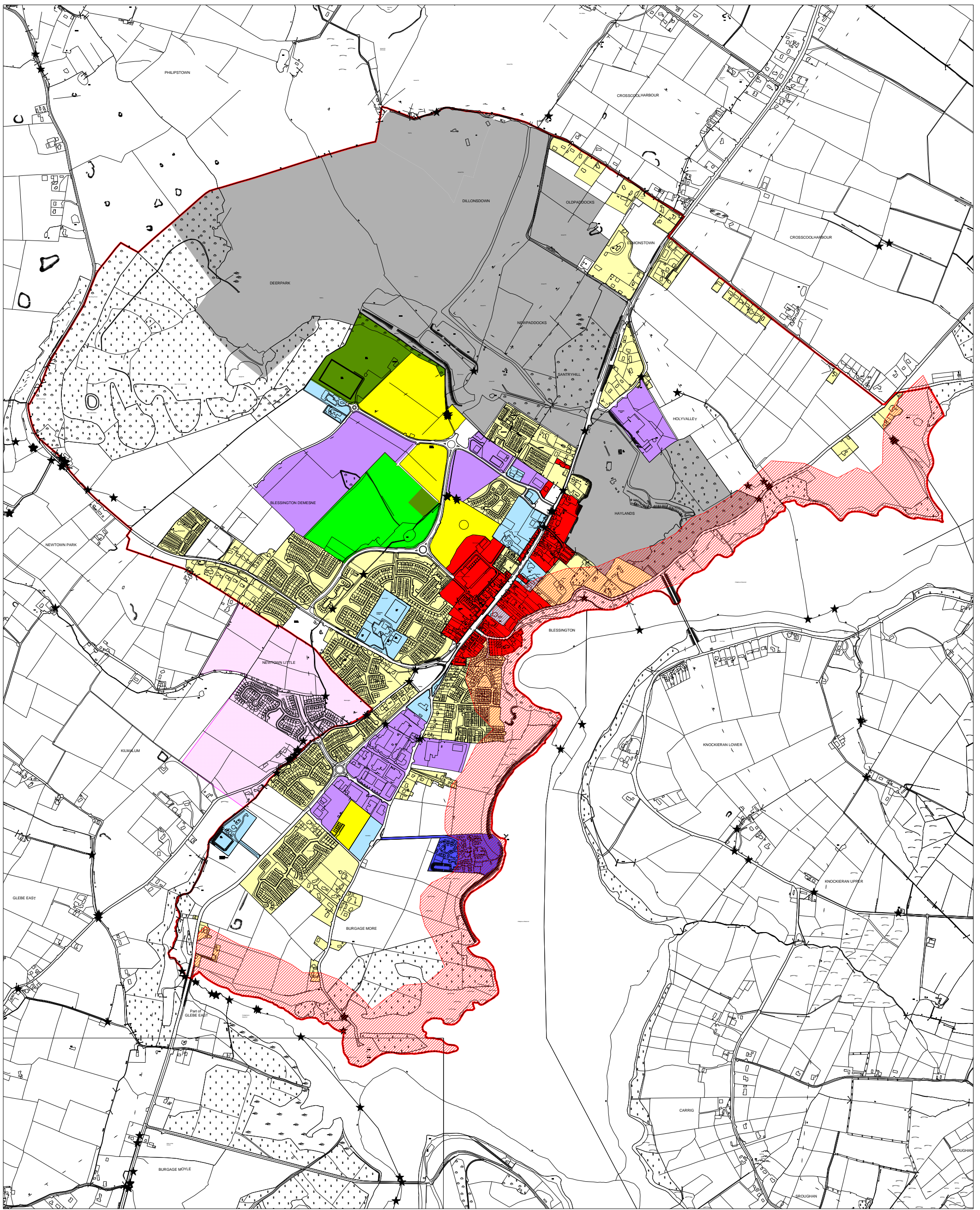
Name _____

Address _____

Comments:

Signed: _____

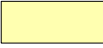








Date: _____

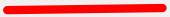



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
 Hidden
 Wicklow County Council Planning Department
 County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow
 Tel: (0404) 20100 Email: plande@wicklowcoco.ie

BLESSINGTON LAP 2010
Existing land uses & proposed plan boundary

Existing & permitted land uses

	Existing residential		Community & Education
	Permitted residential		Tourism
	Existing / permitted employment		Extractive Industry
	Active Open Space		Town Centre / Commercial
	Passive Open Space		200m buffer zone around lake
			Land Zoned in Kildare Development Plan

 **Proposed plan boundary**

Scale: 1:15000 @ A3	Date: 23 Oct2009
Drawn By: SW	
<small>Ordnance Survey Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence Number 2003/07CCMA/Wicklow County Council</small>	