



9.1 Introduction

Tourism makes a significant positive contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of the County. Between the 2000-2005, County Wicklow had 982,000 domestic visitors to the County, which generated a total revenue of €115m. In addition, overseas visitors make a substantial contribution to economy as evidenced by a total generation of €59m in revenue in 2007 by 254,000 visitors.

The County's tourism and recreational attractions are important assets, which form the basis of the County's tourism industry and which are fundamental to the enjoyment of the County by both visitors and residents. Attractions range from areas of scenic beauty, which provide attractive natural bases for outdoor pursuits, such as the Wicklow mountains, which comprise mountain peaks, valleys, rivers and lakes, the coastline with long stretches of sandy beaches and dunes and the numerous woodlands. The County has a rich heritage of archaeological and historical sites, manor homes and gardens, and attractive towns and villages. In addition, there are a number of golf and resort hotels, and adventure centres, which are within driving distance of Dublin which are attracting increasing numbers and visitors and business related events.

Although the County must continue to provide for the positive development of tourism and recreational assets, it is necessary that these facilities are managed in a sustainable manner so as to protect against any potential detrimental impacts on the environment and local communities. In this respect, the Council is aware that development can damage and destroy the assets it seeks to exploit, in particular through excessive visitor numbers, inappropriate development, various types of pollution and other forms of adverse impact. The relationship between tourism / recreation and the environment must be managed in a way that continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.

This chapter will aim to promote and facilitate the development of a sustainable tourism and recreation and will set out objectives to deal with land use matters pertaining to the planning and development of the tourism and recreation sectors, including general matters, tourism related developments including tourist accommodation, facilities and interpretive centres, integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complexes, tourist / recreational infrastructure and the promotion of specific tourist themes and products.

9.2 Context

The tourism and recreation objectives of the County Development Plan must be prepared in line with national, regional and local strategies.

9.2.1 National Spatial Strategy (NSS)

The NSS recognises the positive influence that the tourism and recreation sectors can have on regional development, by reason of the fact that tourism and recreation activity can be focused on areas with an otherwise weak economic base. The NSS particularly identifies the role that 'urban generated rural recreation' can play in driving the tourism and recreational sectors at locations close to the main urban centres. The NSS recognises that specific spatial responses are needed to maximise the potential contribution of the tourism and recreation sectors to balanced regional development, while protecting the assets, which make these areas attractive for visitors.

9.2.2 Failte Ireland 'East & Midlands Regional Tourism Development Plan 2008-2010'

Failte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority aims to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. Failte Ireland has prepared the 'East & Midlands Regional Tourism Development Plan 2008-2010'. The Strategy aims to achieve a target of at least €505m revenue from tourism by 2010, with more than 900,000 holiday visitors.



The strategy aims to develop and drive business in the region around a number of different themes. Having regard to County Wicklow's proximity to Dublin, the County is well positioned to meet the needs of domestic and overseas visitors from the capital, as well as the Dublin based business community, and as such, it is considered that there are great opportunities to capitalise on the County's 'Beyond Dublin' potential. The strategy identifies that this would require the development and promotion of high quality short-visit and day-trip reasons to visit.

The strategy also identifies that there needs to be a focus on quality attractions, places to eat and sleep, and good infrastructure. In this regard, accessibility, by car or public transport is vital for success. It is noted that overall quality in the region is below par and improved standards and quality are required.

9.3 Strategy for tourism and recreation

Strategic Objectives

- To secure the tourism and recreation sectors as key economic drivers which will contribute to balanced economic development across the County;
- To increase the number of tourists visiting the County;
- To increase the length of stay of tourists, and in particular, encourage day-trippers to stay overnight within the County;
- To protect the environmental quality of the County;
- To preserve the character and distinctiveness of scenic landscapes that are of high amenity value;
- To protect Wicklow's principal strengths and capitalise on the distinct tourism and recreational attractions that are on offer – scenic beauty, woodlands and waterways, coastal areas and beaches, and built and natural heritage;
- To ensure a focus on high quality tourism and recreation products;
- Improve tourism and recreation infrastructure;
- Promote tourism and recreation development in co-operation with relevant tourist agencies, including Bord Failte and the Wicklow County Tourism.

Subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of an area, and subject to compliance with all other objectives of this plan, it is the objective of the Council to favourably consider development proposals that contribute towards the achievement of these strategic objectives.

9.3.1 General Objectives

TR1 To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism and recreation sectors in a sustainable manner. This means that the Council will permit the development and maintenance of tourism and recreation developments which help generate income and employment for locals, so long as the development is in a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the natural and built environment or the local culture in which it exists.

TR2 To ensure that all tourism and recreation developments are designed to the highest quality and standard.

TR3 To generally require tourism and recreation related developments to locate within existing towns and villages, except where the nature of the activity renders that impossible. Within existing towns and villages, the Council will promote and facilitate the development of tourist related uses at appropriate sites on land zone for tourism, commercial or mixed use development. The scale, size and use of a proposed development shall be appropriate to the area. Developments will only be permitted subject to the protection of residential amenity, maintenance of the vitality of settlements, and protection of the character and heritage of settlements.



TR4 To only permit the development of a tourism or recreational facility in a rural area in cases where the product or activity is dependent on its location in a rural situation and where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development does not adversely affect the character, environmental quality and amenity of the rural area or the vitality of any settlement and the provision of infrastructure therein. The natural resource / tourist product / tourist attraction that is essential to the activity shall be located at the site or in close proximity to the site, of the proposed development. The need to locate in a particular area must be balanced against the environmental impact of the development and benefits to the local community.

TR5 The Council recognises that certain tourist facilities that are located in rural areas, may be provided as stand alone development, and that ancillary uses (e.g. club house, café, restaurant, shop etc) may be required in order to ensure the long term viability of the tourist facility. Additional uses will only be permitted in cases where the additional use is integrated with and connected to the primary use of the site as a tourist facility, and in cases where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the additional use is ancillary to the primary use of the site as a tourist facility. The additional use shall be located adjacent to the tourist facility.

TR6 To ensure that tourism and recreation related developments are appropriately located in the County. Subject to the following exceptions, all tourist and recreation related developments are 'open for consideration'¹ in all landscape areas:

- The following tourist uses will not be permitted in the Zone of Outstanding Natural Beauty (both the Mountain Uplands Zone and the Coastal Zone): Static caravans / mobile homes and touring caravans²;
- Holidays homes will not be permitted in any zone other than urban zones except where they comply with objectives TA4, TA5 and TA6 below;

TR7 To favourably consider proposals for tourism and recreation related development, which involve the reinstatement, conservation and/or replacement of existing ruinous or disused buildings. This shall be subject to all other objectives being complied with, and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. In all areas, preference will be given to the conversion and adaptation of existing buildings rather than the provision of new development on greenfield sites.

TR8 To facilitate the provision of tourist information / interpretive centres and cultural venues at appropriate locations where they can be integrated with existing settlements or existing tourism facilities.

TR9 To facilitate the development of tourism facilities and infrastructure related to the film industry, including film trails / routes, signage and visitor attractions.

¹ Uses that are 'open for consideration' are uses that will only be permitted in cases where the Council is satisfied that the use would not conflict with the general objectives for that zone / area and permitted or existing uses, as well as being consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the strategies / objectives of this plan.

² This refers to the development of any new static / touring caravan and mobile home parks; expansion of existing facilities will be considered subject the suitability of the site, a modest scale and high quality design.



9.3.2 Accommodation

TA1 To facilitate the development of a variety of quality accommodation types, at various locations, throughout the County.

TA2 To positively consider the development of new hotels³ in all parts of the County, with particular preference for locations in larger settlements (Levels 1-6 of the County settlement hierarchy). In other, more rural locations (villages / rural areas), it must be demonstrated that

- the area proposed to be served by the new development has high visitor numbers associated with an existing attraction / facility;
- a need for new / additional hotel type accommodation for these visitors has been identified having regard to the profile of the visitor and the availability and proximity of existing hotels in the area;
- the distance of the location from a significant settlement is such that visitors to the area / attraction are unlikely to avail of existing hotel facilities

TA3 To positively consider the (part) conversion of existing dwellings to Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs)⁴ and Guesthouses⁵, to be operated by the owner-occupier of the dwelling. Applications for new build B & Bs / guesthouses will in the first instance be evaluated as private dwellings and the objectives and standards applicable in that area type (e.g. large town, rural town, rural area etc) will be applied.

TA4 To require new holiday home / self-catering developments to locate within either established settlements or at established tourism / recreation facilities, other than those developments involving the renovation / conversion of existing buildings.

TA5 To require the developers / owners of new holiday homes / self catering developments to enter strict legal agreement (under Section 47 of the Planning & Development Act) with the Planning Authority specifying that

- the units may only be used for tourism purposes and shall not be allowed to be used as a permanent residences;
- in the case of small-scale developments⁶, the entire development, including all buildings, land and any on-site tourist facility, shall be held in single ownership and shall not be subdivided. All units shall be available for short term letting only of a maximum duration of 4 weeks;
- in the case of larger scale developments⁷,
 - (a) all lands, including any on-site tourist facility shall be held in single ownership (including all lands included in the site boundary and land which adjoins, abuts or is adjacent to the land to be developed and which is under the control of the applicant or the person who owns the land which is the subject of the application) and
 - (b) in the event that any unit is sold or leased, the owner/lessee shall enter a legal agreement with the Estate Company, stipulating that the unit may only be used by the owner/lessee for holiday use for a maximum of 3 months in any year and shall at all other times be used/leased/ marketed by the Estate Company for short term (maximum 4 weeks) tourism use.

³ A building, or part thereof, where sleeping accommodation, meals and other refreshments and entertainment, conference facilities, etc., are available to residents and non-residents, and where there is a minimum of twenty rooms en suite. A hotel includes an 'apart hotel'.

⁴ A dwelling house of which part of the bedroom accommodation is available for overnight rental by members of the public and breakfast may be provided as part of the service but no other meals.

⁵ A building, or part thereof, where sleeping accommodation, meals and other refreshments are available to residents and non-residents, and which has a minimum of five rooms and no more than nineteen rooms.

⁶ Small-scale holiday home / self-catering developments are generally those associated with on-farm accommodation and small-scale tourist attractions or developments, and would not normally be in excess of 10 units.

⁷ Large-scale holiday home / self-catering developments are generally those associated with significant tourism / recreation complexes such as hotels, golf courses, adventure centres etc.



TA6 Holiday home / self-catering developments on a farm holding shall be provided by farmhouse extension or by the utilisation of other existing dwellings / structures on the property. Only where it has been demonstrated that these are not viable options, will permission be considered for new build development. Any new build development shall be in close proximity to the existing farmhouse.

TA7 To facilitate the development of hostels⁸ along established walking / hiking routes and adjacent to existing tourism / recreation facilities.

TA8 To encourage touring caravan and camping sites to locate adjacent to or within existing settlements or established tourism facilities (subject to the exclusion set out in Objective TR6), having due regard to surrounding land uses and proper planning and development of the area.

TA9 To give sympathetic consideration to the improvement of, and extension to, existing tourist accommodation related developments, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and subject to compliance with all other objectives of this plan.

9.3.3 Integrated Tourism / Leisure / Recreational Complexes

Integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complexes are medium to large-scale leisure and recreational developments that will often include accommodation facilities. The development of a limited number of exceptionally high quality integrated tourism, leisure and recreational complexes at appropriate locations, particularly untraditional tourist locations, can have positive results in terms of realising the creation of new tourism products and in terms of promoting tourism growth.

They will normally include some of the following uses: Hotel and associated facilities, restaurants / cafes, conference centre, golf course, equestrian centre, trekking centre, fitness centre, indoor/outdoor water facility, fishing facility, indoor/outdoor ski centre, museums/art galleries, nature trails, walking routes and associated facilities. They may also include tourist related residential and retail facilities that are ancillary to the main tourist attraction.

ITLR1 To support development at existing / proposed integrated tourism / leisure / recreational complexes at the following locations:

- Druids Glen Golf Club, Woodstock Demesne (Map 9.01);
- Norpark (ski slope) site, Newtownmountkennedy (Map 9.02);
- Ballynattin, Arklow (Map 9.03);
- Brook Lodge, Macreddin West, Auhgrim (Map 9.04);
- Rathsallagh House, Dunlavin (Map 9.05);
- Castletimon, Brittas Bay (Map 9.06).

ITLR2 To consider applications for the development of further ITLR facilities having regard to:

- Accessibility from the east and west transport corridors;
- Accessibility to major towns and/or centres of population;
- Proximity to designated tourism/visitor areas;
- The existence of other such facilities or major tourist accommodation sites in the vicinity;
- The adequacy of the site area and site features to accommodate a range of integrated tourist / leisure / recreational activities;
- The Council will support the development of integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complexes on estate holdings with large estate houses that are directly attached to villages or towns.

⁸ A building, or part thereof, which would provide meals, sleeping accommodation and maybe other refreshments and entertainment to residents only, and is other than a hostel where care is provided.



ITLR3 To require all applications for development at identified or new ITLR sites to comply with the following requirements:

- Development shall be carried out on the basis of an integrated, comprehensive master plan and business plan, to be agreed at the outset of the development with the Planning Authority;
- The development as a whole shall be held in the single ownership of the developer. In the event that certain elements of the development will require to be sold / leased to make the project viable, this shall be stated at the outset and measures proposed to operate / manage / market the entirety of the facility as a single entity;
- Any holiday home / self catering type accommodation proposed as part of the facility shall accord with Objective TA5;
- All development shall be so designed to respect the character of the area and any existing heritage features on the site, including demesne houses or other protected features.

9.3.4 Other visitor facilities

TO1 The Council will encourage the opening up of heritage Country houses (such as Derrybawn House, Laragh (see Map 9.07) and the Chrysalis Retreat Centre, Donaghmore) for use as places of Retreat, Study and Education subject to the following criteria being fulfilled:

- The facility shall be accommodated within the existing house or a small scale sympathetic extension thereto;
- the house shall be of a sufficient size to provide the facilities required including overnight accommodation, restaurant / dining facilities and meeting / seminar facilities;
- courses shall be operated by the house owner;
- visitor stay shall be short term only.

Any development of such estates should have regard to the following criteria within an overall planning application:

- Proximity to existing tourism/visitor areas;
- An adequate site area to provide the appropriate facilities without comprising the existing attractions of the location;
- The preservation of the character of the existing landscape;
- Any development, including ancillary residential shall be retained in single or common ownership and/or shall be the subject of a concise legal management contract that ensures the continued future appropriate maintenance and management of the property.

9.3.5 Tourism & recreation infrastructure

TF1 To promote and facilitate improvements to tourism and recreation infrastructure within the County. The Council will favourably consider proposals for developments that place a particular emphasis on improving traffic flow, sign posting, car parking facilities, service/rest facilities etc., subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and the objectives of this plan.

TF2 To cooperate with Wicklow County Tourism, Bord Failte and other appropriate bodies in facilitating the development and erection of standardised and branded signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions.



TF3 To positively consider applications for new developments that provide facilities and services for travelling tourists (such as rest facilities, cafes, etc) at appropriate locations in the County. Only where it is not viable or convenient to provide such services in existing settlements / established visitor facilities, will alternative locations be considered and these should be conveniently located adjacent to the national road network.

9.3.6 Tourism & Recreation Themes & Products

TTP1 To encourage eco-tourism projects or those tourism projects with a strong environmentally sustainable design and operational ethos.

TTP2 To facilitate and promote the development of small-scale tourist enterprises that are developed in conjunction with established rural activities such as agriculture. Such enterprises may include open farms, health farms, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking etc.

TTP3 To support the development of new and existing walking, cycling and driving trails, including facilities ancillary to trails and the development of linkages between trails in Wicklow and adjoining counties.

TTP4 To support the development of craft/artisan centres at established tourist facilities. In particular, the Council will support the development of an arts, crafts and interpretive centre at Sextons Garden Centre, Glen Of The Downs (Map 9.08).

TTP5 To promote and facilitate new and high quality investment in the tourism industry in Wicklow, with particular reference to tourist and recreation activities that relate to one or more of the following themes: Christian and pre-Christian heritage, mining heritage, scenic beauty, houses and gardens, waterways.

TTP6 To support the development of Avoca Mines as a tourist attraction. The development of a mining heritage centre could incorporate a range of projects incorporating tourism, nature exploitation, scientific and ecological research, adventure, craftwork and environmental projects. Any development shall accord with the principle of sustainable tourist development and shall particularly ensure the preservation and enhancement of mining heritage.

TTP7 To promote, in co-operation with the various relevant organisations, the more extensive use of the coastal strip for such activities as touring, sight-seeing, walking, pony trekking, etc. as a tourism and recreational resource for the residents of County Wicklow and other visitors.

TTP8 To promote and encourage the recreational use of coastline, rivers and lakes for activities such as game fishing, boat sailing etc. Where such recreational uses involve the development of structures or facilities, the Council will ensure that the proposals will respect the natural amenity and character of the area, listed views and prospects onto and from the area in question. Where possible, such structures should be set back an appropriate distance from the actual amenity itself and should not adversely affect the unique sustainable quality of these resources.



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9.4 Tourism & Recreation Design Standards

9.4.1 General Criteria for Tourism & Recreation Developments

1. Tourism and recreation developments shall be assessed against the following criteria:-
 - The nature, scale and use of a development shall be appropriate to the character of the area in which it is to be located and shall be visually sympathetic to its surroundings. This shall apply to matters such as the type of use, number of employees, hours of operation, amount of expected visitors, site area, building size, design, layout etc, as well as to the particular land use, and the economic and social requirements of the area and its surroundings;
 - The development shall not give rise to any significant adverse environmental impact, in terms of detrimental impact on the scenic value, heritage value and/ or environmental/ ecological/ conservation quality of the area. It shall not have a negative impact on the surrounding area in terms of nuisance, noise, odours or other pollutants;
 - The development shall not be detrimental to the amenity of nearby properties, and in particular, to the amenity of nearby residential properties;
 - The proposal shall be acceptable in terms of the following traffic and parking issues:
 - Car parking is required to be in accordance with the standards of the plan. Car parking shall be provided within the boundary of the site, unless the Planning Authority agrees other suitable arrangements;
 - There shall be safe vehicular access to and from the road network;
 - The capacity of access roads shall be adequate for the likely levels of traffic generated by the proposal;
 - There is adequate provision for pedestrians and public transport providers
 - The proposal shall be acceptable in terms of water supply, wastewater disposal and surface water drainage;
 - All developments in rural areas must be capable of being satisfactorily screened and assimilated into the landscape;
 - Developments should generate economic and social benefits for local people and enhance the well-being of host communities.
2. It is the objective of the Council to ensure that tourism and recreation related developments do not destroy the qualities, which visitors come to the County to enjoy.
3. It is the objective of the Council to ensure that no development is permitted that compromises the intentions of the County Wicklow Settlement Strategy.
4. All planning applications should include details of the nature and scale of the proposed operation, and include opening hours and anticipated traffic levels. A business plan should also be submitted, where appropriate.
5. Applications for tourism and recreation developments in rural areas shall be accompanied by the following information, in addition to that required to be submitted under the Planning Regulations:-
 - Comprehensive justification of need for the development;
 - Overall master plan for the development;
 - Evaluation of compliance of the proposed development with the other requirements of the County Development Plan here set out;
 - Evidence that, where feasible, existing ruinous or disused buildings have been reused to maximum potential.



9.4.2 Overnight accommodation

1. Applications will be considered on the basis of the particular characteristics of the proposed scheme. Proposals that have a detrimental impact on the amenity, character and environmental quality of the area will not be permitted. In this regard, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following matters in the determination of planning applications, in addition to those set out in Section 9.4.1 above:
 - Compliance with Objectives TA2 – TA9;
 - The size, scale, design and nature of the accommodation;
 - The availability of existing accommodation facilities in the vicinity;
 - The standard of accommodation for the intended occupiers of the premises (including indoor and outdoor space and amenity requirements, noise insulation, parking provision, access, etc.)
2. The scale of overnight accommodation allowable on any site may be restricted according to the amenities proposed to be provided for guests and the impact of the facility on the amenities of the area.
3. Adequate information will be required to be submitted to satisfied the Planning Authority that the design, size and nature of a proposed facility is such that no doubt exists regarding the intended use of the facility as tourist accommodation. In particular, the Planning Authority shall be satisfied that the development is to be retained for visitor accommodation use and will not be used for long term, permanent residential use or other non-tourist use.
4. The Council will only permit the development of static caravans / mobile homes, touring caravans and camping sites in areas where the local environment can absorb such development. Sites should have significant existing natural screening. All proposals should be accompanied by comprehensive planting schemes. In particular, the Council will discourage touring caravans from locating on the actual amenity which attracted them to the area in the first instance in order to protect the interpretation and tourist value of the site in question.

9.4.3 Holiday Homes

Where the principle of holiday homes has been accepted at a particular location the layout and design of the development shall accord with the following standards:-

- The design of holiday homes should be of a high standard, incorporating imaginative layouts, well laid out communal open spaces, significant and appropriate landscaping, sufficient private space and parking facilities for both occupants and visitors;
- The design of units themselves should be imaginative, of a high quality and respect the character of the area in which they are located. Favourable consideration will generally **not** be given to detached suburban type developments - courtyard type developments will be particularly encouraged;
- Sites features such as hedgerow, trees etc shall be maintained wherever possible;
- A management company will be required to maintain and manage the upkeep of holiday home developments in particular with respect to landscaping and the maintenance of communal buildings / services and letting / occupancy. A management company will also be required to maintain and repair any private effluent treatment plant or water supply.

9.4.4 Caravan & Camping Developments

Where the principle of static / touring caravans or camp sites has been accepted at a particular location, the layout and design of the development shall accord with the following standards:-

- Design and layout should be of a high standard ensuring adequate safety, separation between plots and well located communal areas such as shower blocks and common open spaces;
- A grant of permission for a caravan park will not imply, unless otherwise stated in the permission, a grant of permission for additional facilities such as a shop, café, restaurant or building of other commercial purposes;



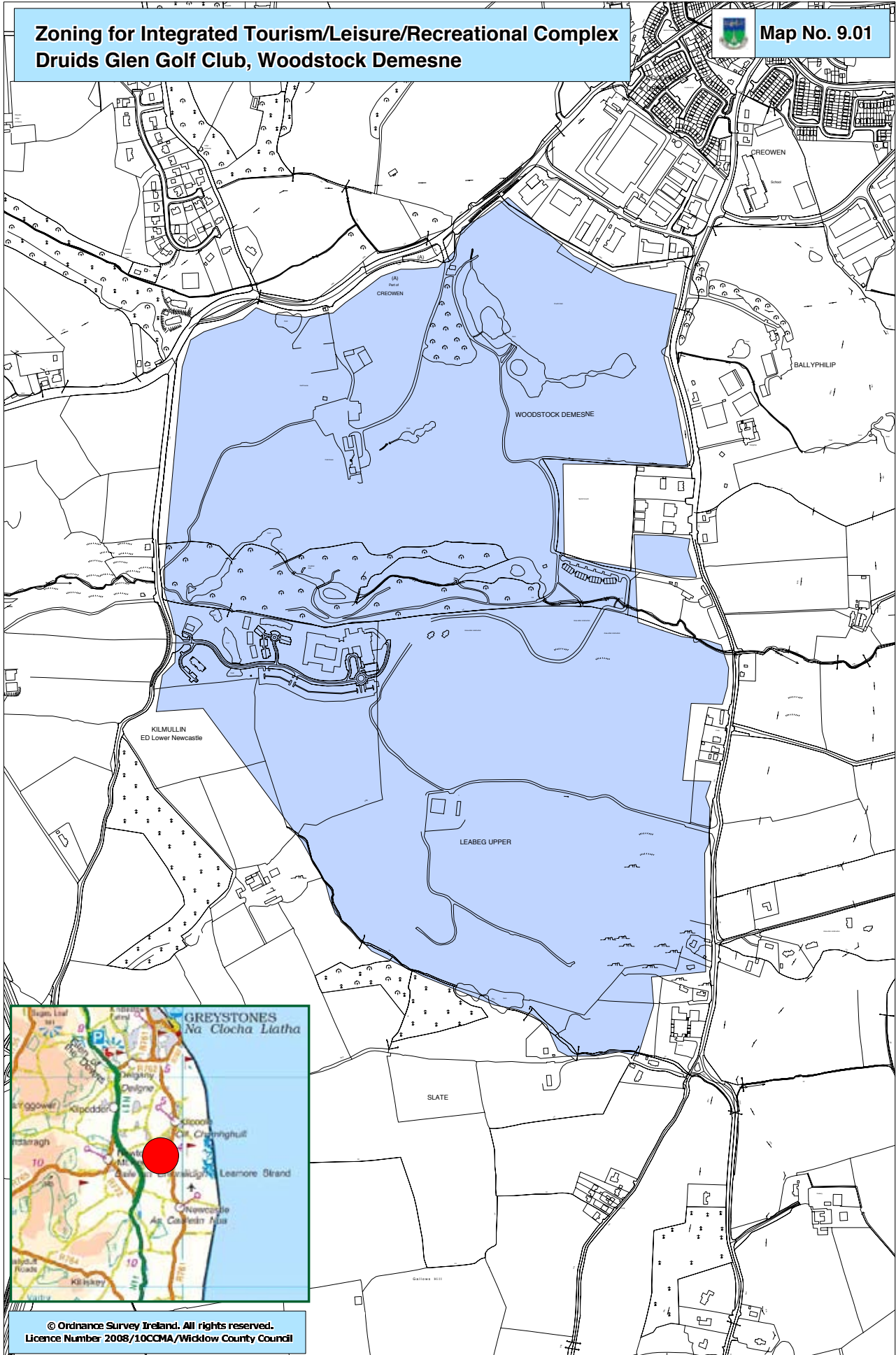
- Sites should normally be accessible to existing local services and public utilities, but should not adversely affect them;
- The overall level of development in any one area should not detract from the amenity presently enjoyed by local residents. No such sites should be located immediately adjacent to existing residential properties or be overlooked by the same;
- High quality and extensive landscaping and trees planting will be required around all boundaries and throughout the site. Any new planting should only be necessary to reinforce existing substantial tree cover and not to compensate for a lack of existing cover. New planting should normally comprise indigenous species and a comprehensive and detailed landscaping scheme, prepared by an appropriately qualified professional, should be submitted with any application;
- Public lighting should be on low level posts and of low intensity;
- Compliance with the Regulations for Caravan and Camping Parks, (Bord Failte 2009).



**Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/Recreational Complex
Druids Glen Golf Club, Woodstock Demesne**



Map No. 9.01



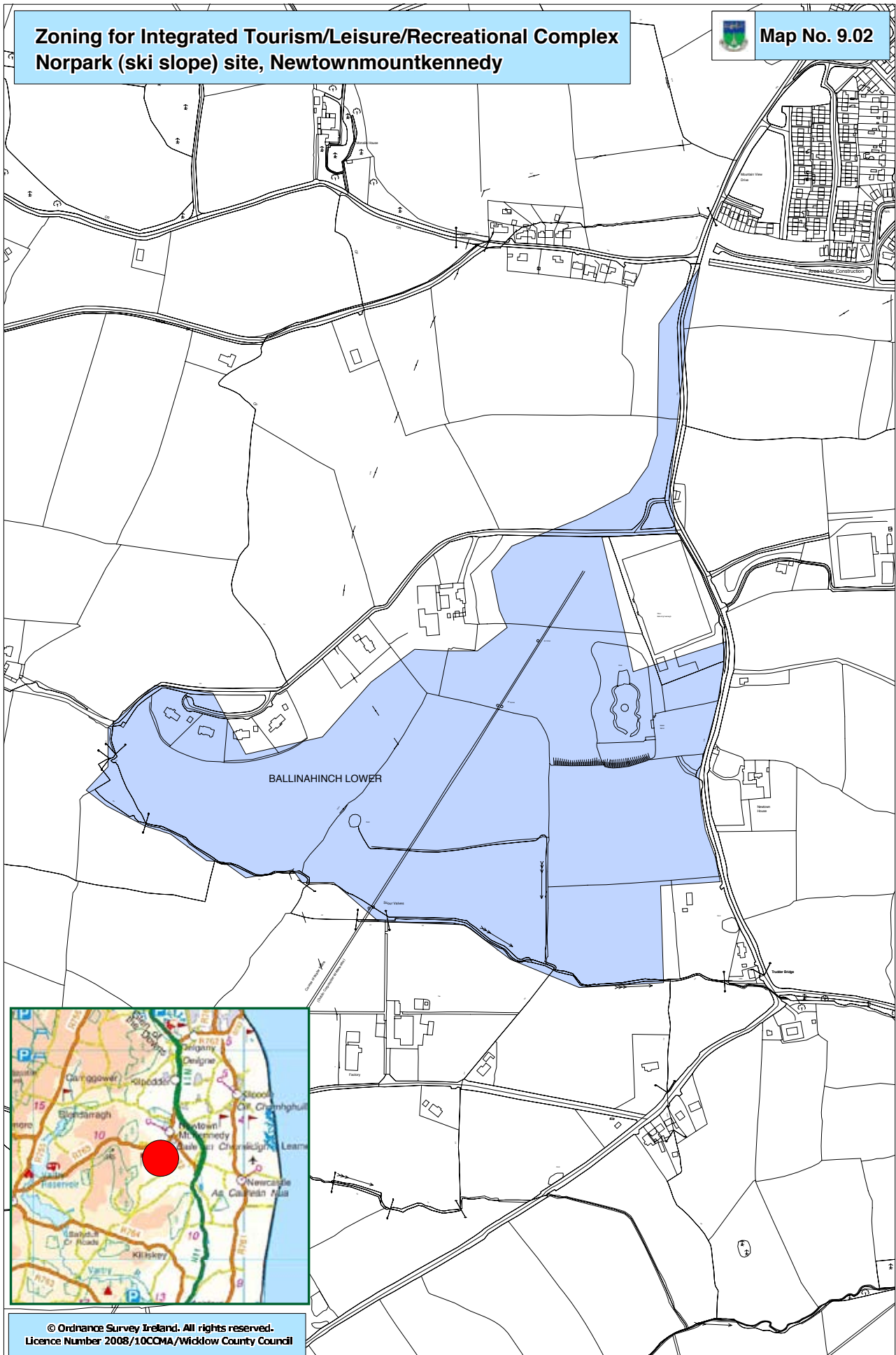
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**Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/Recreational Complex
Norpark (ski slope) site, Newtownmounkennedy**



Map No. 9.02



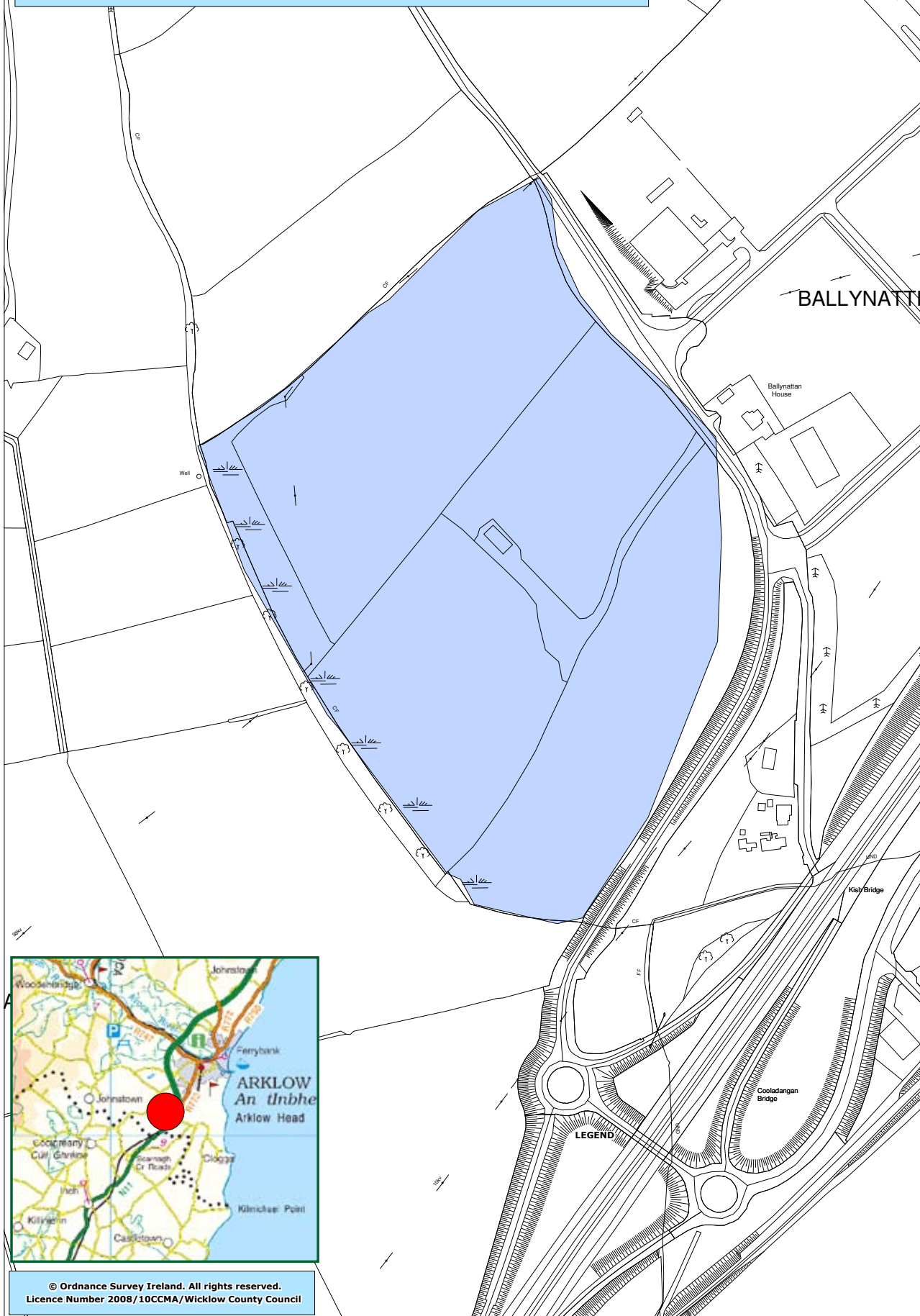
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**Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/Recreational Complex
Ballynattin, Arklow**



Map No. 9.03



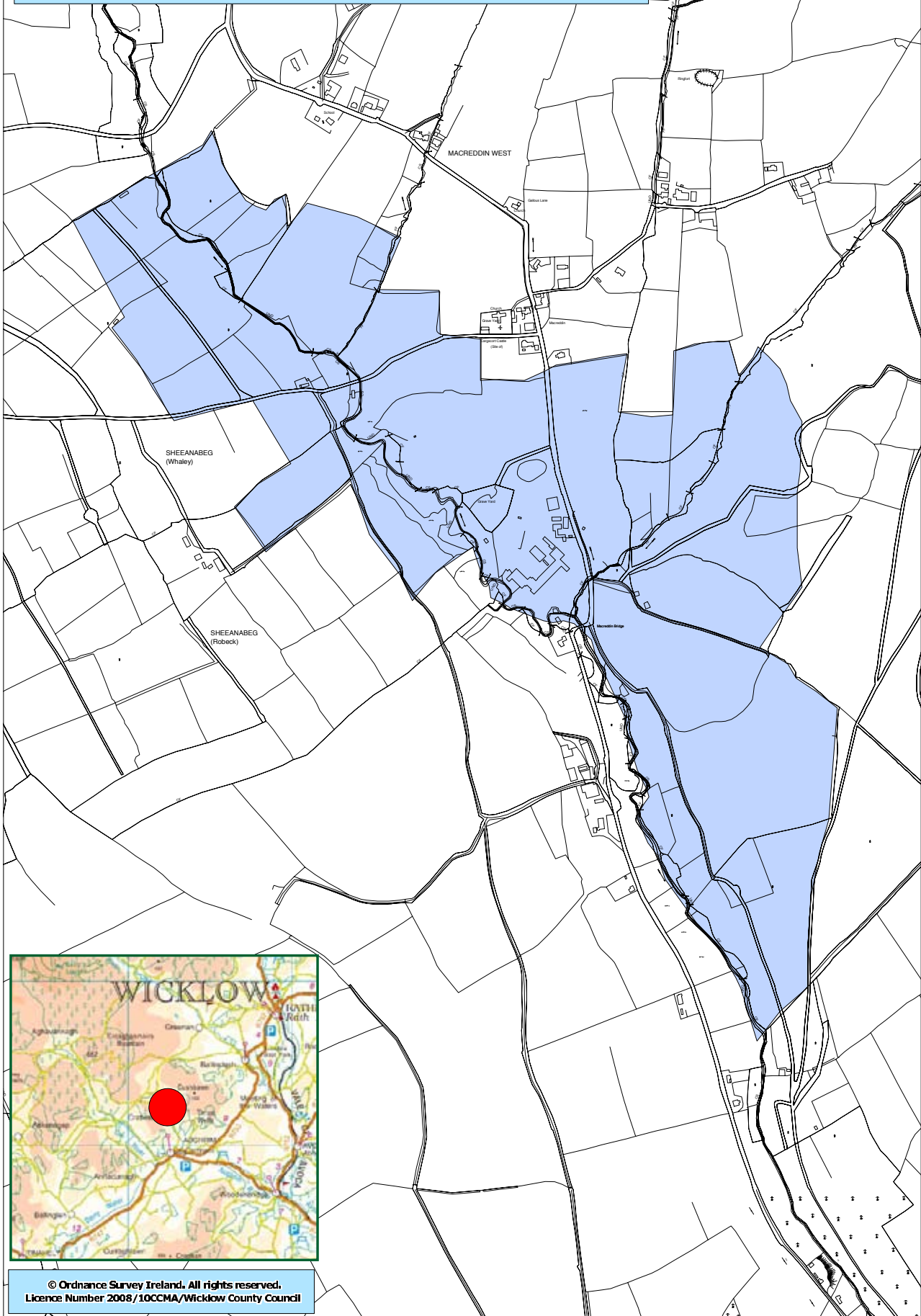
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**Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/Recreational Complex
Brook Lodge, Macredin West, Aughrim**



Map No. 9.04



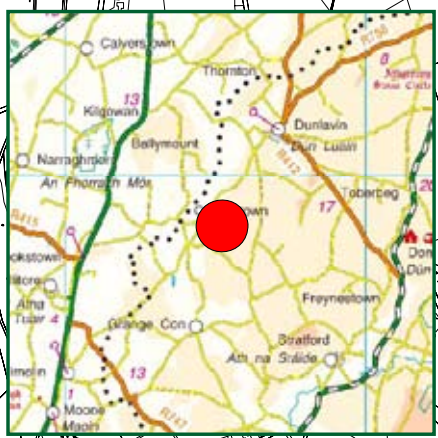
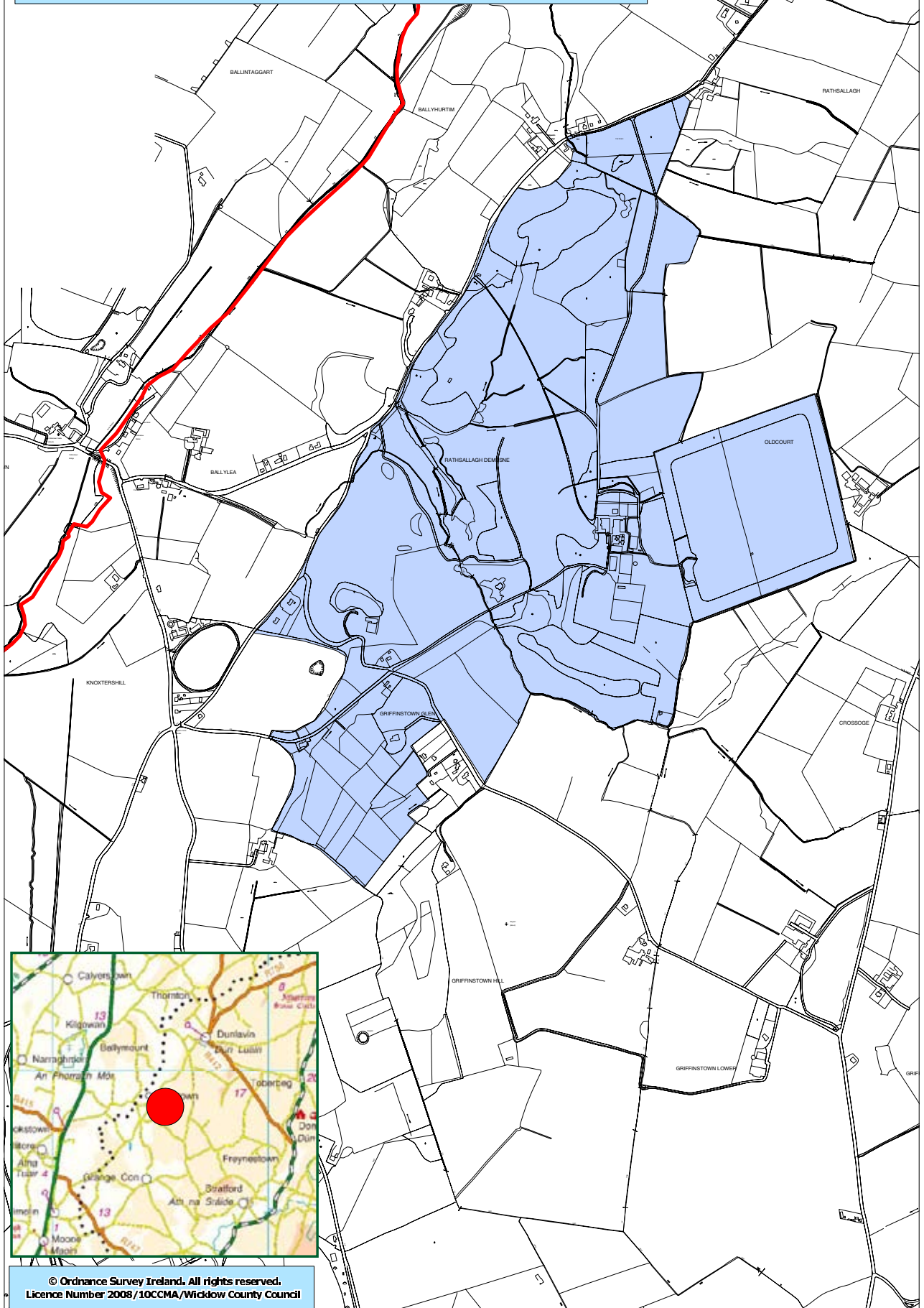
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Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/Recreational Complex Rathsallagh House, Dunlavin



Map No. 9.05



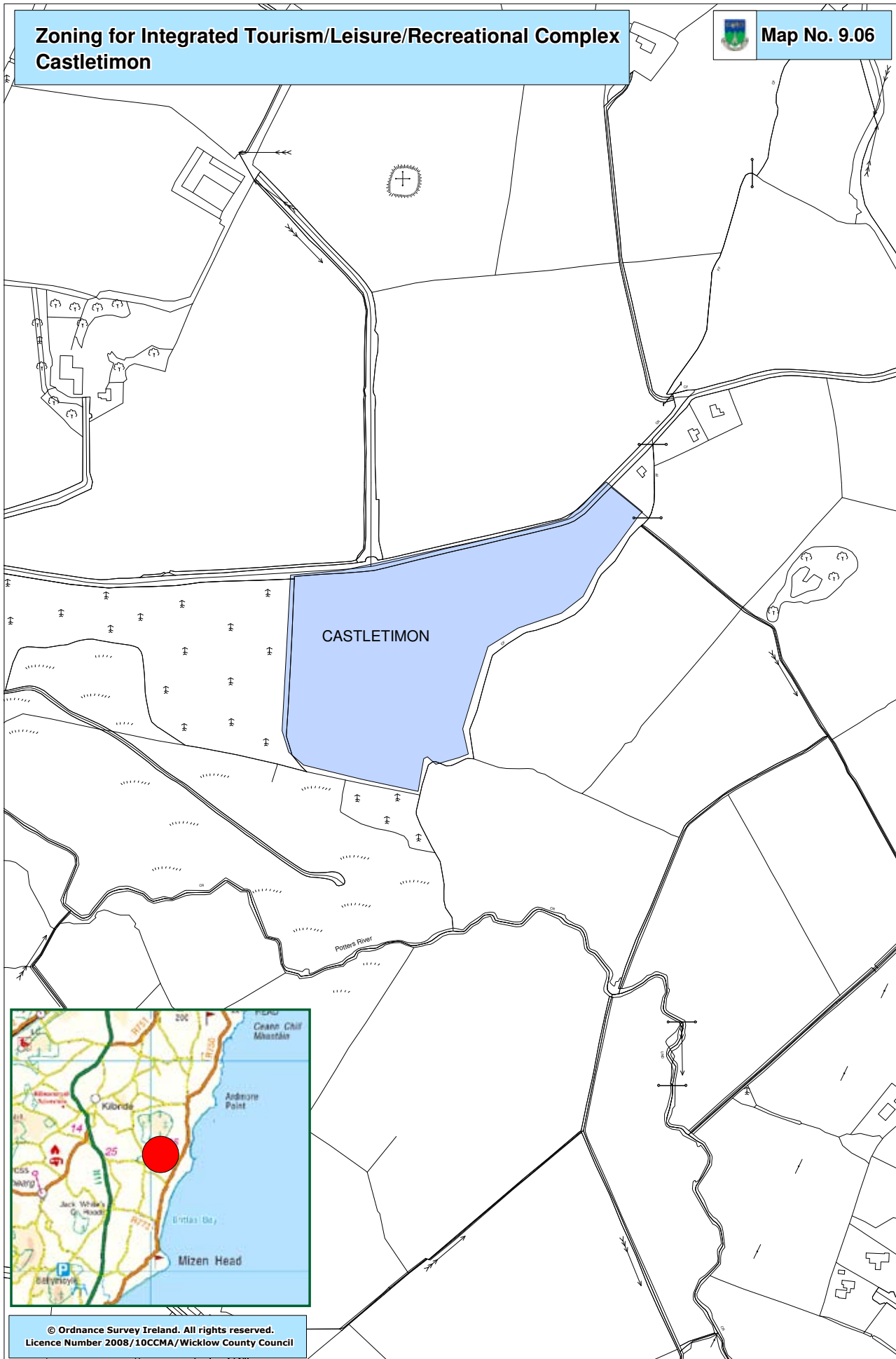
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**Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/Recreational Complex
Castletimon**



Map No. 9.06

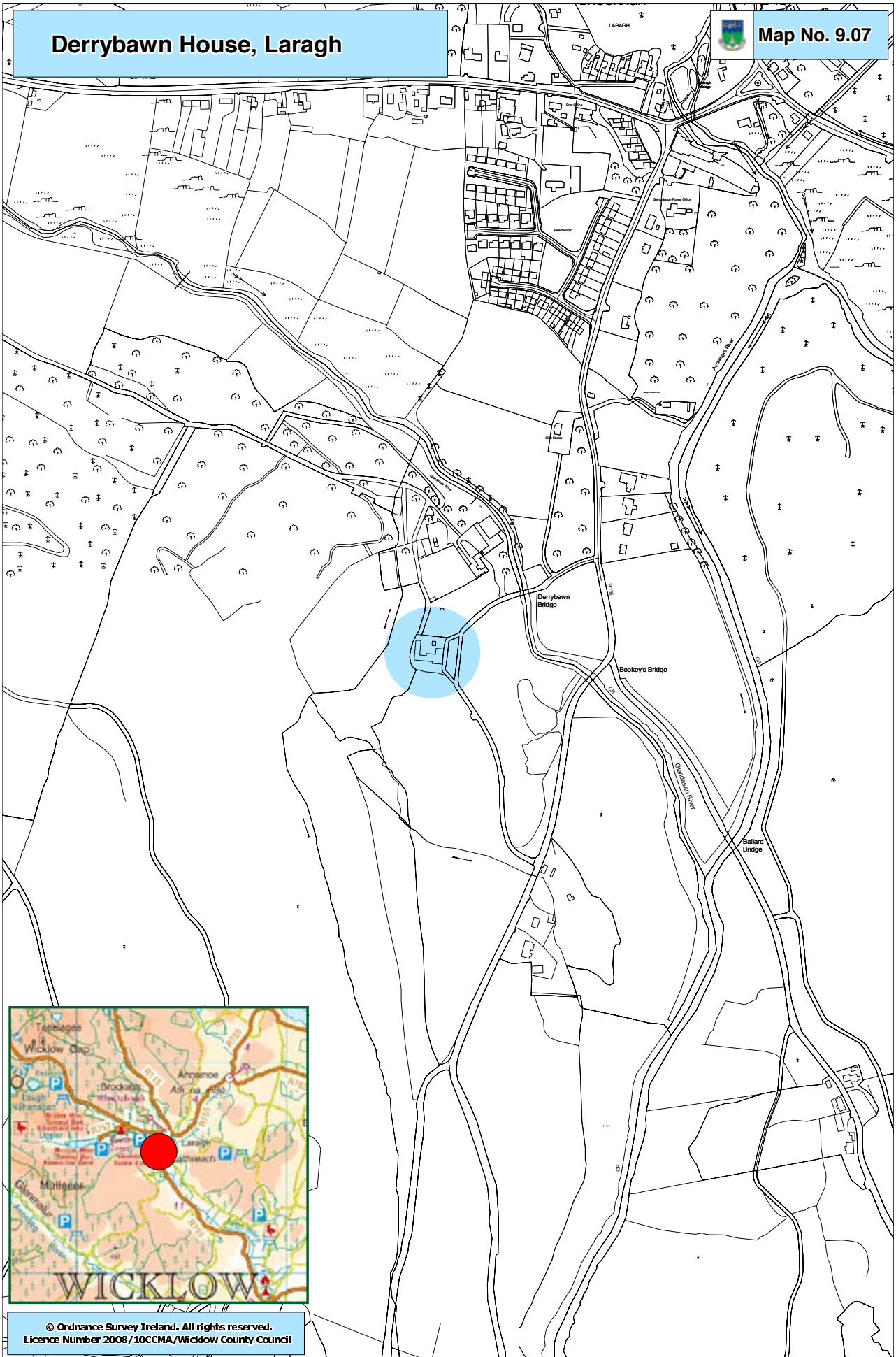


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Derrybawn House, Laragh

Map No. 9.07



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