

[REDACTED]

Sent: 10 January 2020 13:17
To: 'Billy Timmins'
Subject: RE: Submission to Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027

A Chara,

I wish to acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of your submission regarding the County Development Plan review.

Mise le meas,

[REDACTED]
Planning, Development and Environment.

From: Billy Timmins [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 January 2020 13:07
To: Planning - Plan Review
Subject: Submission to Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027

A Chara,

I wish to make the following submission to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027.

1. Structure of the plan: A "one size fits all" policy is not appropriate for Wicklow. Some counties create development policies based on the needs of an area. Some parts have Development pressures as great as anywhere in the country and on the other hand some townlands are in the Clar programme. The county should be divided into three categories, broadly based on high, medium and low to zero population pressure. Engagement with those making planning applications, via preplanning, should be enhanced.

2. Statutory content of the plan:

A. The "Core Strategy" may contain some policies that are not reflected in National Guidelines. This is particularly applicable to Transport and Road policy, where certain desirable policies for the county are not presently included e.g. N81 new road and Luas to Blessington.

B. The strategic flood risk assessment needs to be thoroughly examined, particularly where it can have a negative or blocking impact on positive possible future development in an action area plan.

3. Settlement strategy.

A. Level One. Metropolitan, Bray. Transport policy should seek to link the Eastern and Western sides of the M11. A major Sports Complex needs to be a priority for the area. A funding stream is outlined in Project Ireland 2040. WCC should prioritise an application for such a facility in Bray. Adequate zoning of land for education must be provided and policy should not hinder or limit future expansion on existing adult or further education sites. The potential for increased use of adult education sites must be recognised.

B. Level Two. Large Growth Town 1. Wicklow/ Rathnew. The transport and road policy should ensure that the most attractive routes are the routes used and that there is visible and accessible parking. The harbour area has endless potential. The green space between both towns needs to be protected from development pressures.

C. Level three. Large growth Town 2. Arklow. Revitalisation of the old town centre is very important and any major derelict sites in the area should have a targeted policy. An access from the Vale road to M11 should be included.

D. Metropolitan Area. Greystones/Delgany. Green spaces, including sporting facilities, should be protected from development pressures. Signage, demarking the various areas, needs to be enhanced. The provision of a " viewing point " with limited parking North of the Grove cemetery, off the R761, should be considered.

E. Level four. Blessington. A parkland and walk linking the new greenway and town centre to Glen Ding should be identified. There should be adequate zoning for sporting and community facilities including a swimming pool and soccer pitches. An area action plan for the north/east of the town should be included. Proposals for the N81, including the bypass and a Luas stop should be identified.

F. Newtown. Linkages to the eastern side of the M11 should be enhanced. The southern side of the town on the old N11 needs to have an increased link to the core.

G. Baltinglass. It should be upgraded to a level four town. This should not impact on the current settlement strategy re planning qualifications which I believe should be abolished for all non rural areas. This is necessary to assist in developing it as a hub for South West Wicklow, as outlined in the application by WCC for funding under the Rural Regeneration Programme. A new link to the R747 and N81 upgrade should be included as objectives. Town centre zoning should include all the town and not prohibit commercial development. Equally change of use from commercial to residential should be permitted. It makes sense to have a widespread national policy of encouraging people back into town centres while at the same time refusing change of use planning applications. Access to the Cistercian Abbey ruin should be enhanced. A footbridge immediately North of the bridge should be an objective. Reference should be made to the Hillfort complex in the area and a site for a potential interpretative centre should be outlined. Zoning on higher lands should be residential and not industrial/employment. A pilot painting/mural scheme should be examined along the lines of Waterford City, Kiltimagh, Co Mayo and Clonakilty, Co Cork.

H. Levels 6, 7 and 8. Zonings should be sustainable and development possible. Derelict buildings with the potential to link streets or areas need to be identified.

J. Level 9. Engagement with the landowners needs to take place. While this policy had potential the uptake is poor, this maybe due to a lack of awareness.

K. Level 10. Rural Area. I appreciate that if one is over prescriptive in this policy area that there maybe unintended consequences. I was a member of the council during the preparation of the County Development Plan 2004-2010. I sought to include a policy whereby a family or member of a family who were inherently rural based but for various reasons lived in an urban area could qualify for a rural planning. Trying to formulate a wording that would achieve the objective was difficult. I have no doubt it is the same today. At the time the Director of planning, as an example, made reference to the number of people that were rural based and had moved into Arklow and Avoca in the previous decades and the possible impact of the policy. No wording was included but a decision was made to look at applications on a case by case basis in a sympathetic manner. In general this was successful. However I am aware that on occasion the spirit of the proposal may not have been upheld and that may have resulted in what I think would seem as unfair. I have no doubt that was not the intention, but in the absence of an appropriate wording this could happen. This policy should be examined with a view to facilitating such cases.

4. Housing: All developments should include a percentage for sale to first time buyers. Public housing should not include one bed upstairs units.

5. Economic Development.

A. CoWorking hubs should form a part of policy and WCC should lead the way. Increased engagement with the private sector is required. A core economic area should be identified in the south west area e.g. light engineering or food and agriculture and linkages established with the Carlow Institute of Technology.

B. Tourism. The Statement of Tourism Strategy 2017-2026 should be amended and added as an appendix to the plan. There is virtually no mention of the south west of the county and there are major omissions in the document. The importance and potential of the Hillfort complex in the south west is non existant, I have included some Information from Dr Alan Hawkes, extracts of which I feel should be included in the tourism strategy and the heritage section.

C. Agriculture. There should be proactive engagement with farmers who seek to diversify.

- D. Forestry. Views should be protected when examining planting proposals.
- E. Fishing. Reference should be made to the various rivers e.g. Slaney.
- F. Extraction industry. The heritage of Ballyknockan Village needs to be highlighted and a proposal to build on its heritage formulated.

6. Centres and retail. While I appreciate that the core of a town is most important and its viability should be protected it is also important that residents have access to a range of options. If such options are not available they will go elsewhere. In view of this, if town centre zonings don't realise their objectives, secondary options that may not be central must come into play after a certain time period. Failure to address this will lead to stagnation and eventually decay.

7. Tourism. See economic development. A plan to increase, enhance and link all walks should be outlined. The potential of The Wicklow Way needs to be realised by the commitment to have a marketing plan.

8. Community Development. All town plans should include housing for the elderly similar to the Carnew Community and including residential day care. Graveyard policy should permit the purchase of double and treble graves.

9. Public transport. The N81 project and the link of the R747 (and its upgrade) to the M9, Dunlavin to the M9, and the Luas to Blessington should be included. The M11 plan maybe completed by the time this document comes to fruition. If not the proposal should be aimed at widening the current route and increasing the public transport options.

Road signage should include facilities e.g. the golf links at Arklow. Consideration should be given to identifying and developing a number of electronic notice boards around the county which could be hired out by WCC for commercial and civic use. Imagine no election posters.

10. Climate change. Areas suitable for solar farming need to be identified. Charging points for EVs should be provided as appropriate.

11. Heritage : See tourism. Information plaques on historical buildings or outlining historical events should be encouraged e.g. Cottage where JM Synge gathered much of his material for " Shadow of a Glen". Develop a series of "monuments" across the county to recognise the many literary figures associated with the county. Recreate the WW 1 War Memorial at Woodenbridge in towns and villages with the associated detail.

12. Coastal zone Management. Identify access with signage and protect

13. Development contributions. Examine with a view to increasing house building. The infrastructural and development levy costs are prohibitive.

Signed Billy Timmins

Hillfort display panels

Baltinglass Court House

A chronological themed proposal

Dr Alan Hawkes

Text panelling A-C

It is proposed that this text (A-C) should be placed near the entrance to the room and should accompany the large location map which depicts all of the hillforts. The text (A-C) provides an initial background to the hillforts and the UCC excavations.

INTRODUCTION

THE IRISH HILLFORT (A) *{before the visitor is informed about the Baltinglass forts, he/she needs to know what a hillfort is}*

Hillforts are among the most important monuments of the late prehistoric period in Ireland. There are approximately 100 sites that might be properly termed hillforts, a term loosely used to describe a wide variety of large hilltop sites that were enclosed by banks, walls, palisade fences and ditches. The building of enclosures on hills and mountains has a long history in Ireland, with the earliest examples dating to the fourth millennium BC.

Hillforts typically occur in prominent positions in the landscape, generally on the highest point, upper slopes or spurs of hills or ridges. It is generally accepted that this landscape setting had a strategic aim, designed to 'control' a specific territory, its resources and routeways, with the hillfort functioning as a centre for high-status residence, ceremony and assembly. They may occur in isolation or in small clusters, the best known being a group of nine examples in the Baltinglass area of Co. Wicklow, described by some as 'Ireland's hillfort capital'.

It is possible that more than one prehistoric hillfort tradition existed in Ireland. The earliest of these may be **hilltop enclosures** used by some farming communities during the Early Neolithic. The defensibility of those sites, combined with their economic and symbolic significance, meets many of the criteria of a hillfort. This was followed two millennia later by the emergence of the Bronze Age **hillfort**, centres with similar associations but with additional military and political significance in different societal contexts.

THE BALTINGLASS HILLFORT CLUSTER (B) *{This section introduces the Baltinglass hillforts to the visitor}*

The building of hillforts in prehistoric Ireland required significant amounts of time, people and natural resources to complete and were built throughout Ireland during the later prehistoric period. However, it is the size, complexity and concentration of hillforts at Baltinglass that separates this area from others as a unique and significant location during this period of Irish prehistory.

The Baltinglass group comprise a unique cluster of nine hillforts and hill-top enclosures. These include some of the largest hillforts known in Ireland, which occur across five hills on the edge of the West Wicklow mountains. This landscape was recently the subject of detailed survey and excavation by University College Cork. Sample excavation and radiocarbon dating at six of these Baltinglass hillforts provides new information on the chronology of this hillfort landscape

The new picture of the Baltinglass complex presents a succession of hillforts and hill-top enclosures built at various times in the late prehistoric period. The evidence from six of nine recorded sites points to distinct phases of construction over a 3000-year period. This commenced with the large enclosures built at Hughstown, Spinans Hill and Rathcoran in the Early Neolithic (c.3700–3500 BC). This was followed two millennia or so later by the construction of Rathnagree hillfort and the adjacent Sruhaun enclosure on Tuckmill Hill during the Middle Bronze Age (c.1400–1100 BC). Tinoran hillfort was built in the early part of the Late Bronze Age (c.1100–1000 BC), and was occupied possibly as late as 900–800 BC.

Text panelling D-G

It is proposed that this text (D-G) should also be placed near the entrance to the room and should accompany the first series of mounted photographs relating to the Neolithic forts - Rathcoran, Hughstown and Spinans. These are the earliest dated enclosures of the group and therefore should be the first series of photographs the visitor sees.

THE 'HILLFORT' IN NEOLITHIC IRELAND (D) *{This section introduces the visitor to the first enclosures built in the Baltinglass group}*

The building of enclosures on hills and mountains has a long history in Ireland. The earliest of these may be hilltop enclosures used by some of the first farming communities during the Early Neolithic.

The Neolithic ('New Stone Age') in Ireland was marked by the introduction of agriculture and the farming way of life. These early farmers brought with them new ideas about food production and had the ability to grow crops and raise domesticated animals such as cows,

sheep and goats. It was a process that first began in the Near East around 9000 BC, spreading across Europe over the next five millennia, reaching Ireland around 4000 BC. Farming had a lasting impact on the Irish landscape, with the clearance of trees to create fields for cultivation and animal grazing.

The first farmers also introduced the earliest pottery vessels as well as utilising a much wider set of artefacts, including polished stone axes, a variety of flint tools and saddle querns for grinding grain. They lived in large rectangular houses, which were generally defined by deep slot-trenches that would have supported stout wooden walls, while the roofs were most likely thatched.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Neolithic was the introduction of new forms of burial monuments in the form of megalithic tombs. Many of these tombs were built on mountain tops or in other dominating localities. This underlines the importance of high ground as places for activities linked to various belief systems in early prehistoric Ireland. The large Neolithic enclosures built on various hilltops in the Baltinglass landscape may also be part of this wider phenomenon of enclosing ritual space in the period.

The investigation of the Baltinglass landscape indicates that the first hillforts may have been large multiple enclosures built by farming communities of the Early Neolithic, c.3700–3500 BC. The dating of these sites, now some of the largest Neolithic enclosures in Ireland, adds to a small number of other hilltop enclosures of the fourth millennium BC known from Ireland. Defence was a consideration in the location and design of some of these enclosures, with effective barriers created by a varying combination of ditches, banks, stone walls and timber palisades.

HUGHESTOWN, CO. KILDARE (E) *{This text should accompany any imagery of Hughstown}*

This is the westernmost hillfort of the Baltinglass cluster. It is located on the border between counties Kildare and Wicklow in the townland of Hughstown. The site encloses an area of 8.22 hectares on Hughstown Hill, with wide views of the lowlands of south Wicklow, east Kildare and Carlow. Geophysical survey and excavation confirms four concentric enclosures, all of which have been dated to the Early Neolithic. Burnt timbers found during the excavation of the third enclosures, suggests the site had been destroyed by fire sometime between 3700–3500 BC.

RATHCORAN, CO. WICKLOW (F) *{This text should accompany any imagery of Rathcoran}*

Rathcoran is one of three hillforts on Tuckmill Hill, a prominent hill overlooking the modern town of Baltinglass to the south-west. The site is located on the highest spur of the hill which extends into three townlands of Collinarrig Upper, Pinnacle and Tuckmill Hill.

The site can be described as a large pear-shaped bivallate monument, occupying a total area of 10.06 hectares. It is defined by two ramparts 15m apart, enclosing the summit of Baltinglass Hill with extensive views to the north, south and east. A passage tomb is recorded within the centre of the monument, while a cairn is located just outside the southern enclosing element on the southern slope.

Excavation of the inner bank at Rathcoran revealed the monument had at least two phases of construction. The initial phase comprises a substantial timber palisade, of which the north-western section was destroyed by fire. Burnt timbers from this palisade were dated to the Early Neolithic (3762–3640 BC). After a period of time, the timber posts were removed and replaced by a large rubble stone rampart that was retained by a large granite stones.

The passage tomb *{This text should accompany any imagery of the passage tomb}*

The Baltinglass passage tomb is located within the summit of Rathcoran Hillfort, at an altitude of c.382m above sea level, on the junction of the townlands of Pinnacle, Coolinarrig Upper, and Tuckmill Hill, Co. Wicklow.

Patrick T. Walshe excavated the site over three seasons from 1934 to 1936. The excavations revealed a multi-phased Neolithic monument with five chambers of various shapes, sizes, and methods of construction.

The monument consists of a kerbed cairn measuring 27m in diameter. This cairn material was built up to form a massive protective wall around the monument when the excavation was completed. When the stone cairn was removed, up to five structures with evidence for rock-art, a large ornamented stone basin, stone artefacts and at least three adult and one child burial were revealed. Recent examination of these burials identified them as some of the earliest in Ireland.

SPINAN'S HILL 1, CO. WICKLOW (G) *{This text should accompany any imagery of Spinan's Hill}*

The Spinans Hill complex comprises three hillforts, namely Brusselstown Ring, Spinan's Hill 1 and Spinan's Hill 2. Spinan's Hill 1 enclosure lies on the northern summit (410m OD), in the townlands of Ballyhubbock Upper and Spinans Hill, surrounded by the larger enclosure of Spinans Hill 2. It consists of a sub-quadrangular enclosure measuring c.550m by 320m, with a perimeter of 1.29km over an area of 11 hectares.

The enclosing element is a single low bank of stone, best preserved on the northern and eastern sides, with indications of an external ditch along the eastern side. Sample excavation revealed that the rampart was formed by piling stones, probably gathered from surrounding hill slopes, to create a bank 1.5m high. Two charcoal samples at the base of this stone rampart were dated to the Early Neolithic 3697–3527 BC.

Text panelling H-N

This section (H-N) introduces the visitor to the Bronze Age and gives a brief account of the Bronze Age hillforts in the Baltinglass Area. It should follow the Neolithic story and accompany pictures relating to the Bronze Age forts below

THE HILLFORT IN BRONZE AGE IRELAND (H)

There was a significant increase in hillfort construction and settlement activity in the Baltinglass area during the later second millennium BC. This was a period when as many as six hillforts may have been built, beginning in the Middle Bronze Age (1600–1100 BC).

This period of the Bronze Age was a time of great change in Ireland, with population growth and economic prosperity in many regions. Agriculture was the basis of these economies, with an intensification of farming that extended into uplands and other parts of the landscape not previously inhabited. This was also a period of growing social division in Ireland, connected to the spread of a warrior ethos across Europe from 1500 BC onwards. Strong regional societies emerged, whose power was largely based on agriculture, but also expressed in the circulation of large amounts of bronze, gold and other valuable materials.

The evidence points to the special position of male warriors and their families, as part of a wealthy aristocracy that controlled significant economic resources and trade. This concentration of power would eventually lead in many regions of a hierarchical society that was active in the consolidation of large regional territories which is reflected in the construction of large fortified settlements, such as hillforts. This was achieved in various ways, ranging from stone walling and timber palisades, to banks and ditches. The building of hillforts in defensive landscape positions during this period was connected to a new type of political structure and centralized leadership. Within these societies, hillforts represented a conspicuous display of power in the landscape.

Many excavated Bronze Age hillforts in Ireland provide evidence of being attacked with their defences destroyed by fire. One particular example in the Baltinglass group (Rathnagree) provides important evidence of the conflicts that must have arisen among these regional powers.

RATHNAGREE, CO. WICKLOW (I) *{This text should appear alongside pictures of Rathnagree Hillfort}*

Rathnagree is a trivallate hillfort on the northern summit of Tuckmill Hill. The inner and outer enclosing elements consist of low stone walls and contrast with the middle enclosure, a more substantial earthen bank with an external ditch. Excavation confirms that this was a two-phased monument, beginning with three concentric, widely spaced enclosures protected by stout wooden palisades with low stone footings. Following the deliberate burning of these defences, the middle enclosing element was immediately rebuilt as a bank-and-ditch earthwork. Radiocarbon dates indicate that Rathnagree hillfort was built sometime between 1400–1200 BC.

SRUHAUN, CO. WICKLOW (J) *{This text should appear alongside pictures of Sruhaun Hillfort}*

This is one of three enclosures on Tuckmill Hill, located in Sruhaun townland on the southern spur of the hill, with extensive views of the lowlands of south Wicklow, east Kildare and Carlow. The levelled enclosure is sub-circular, surrounded by a low-relief bank, 4.5m wide and up to 0.2m high. Survey and excavation suggest the stone bank may have replaced earlier wooden fencing destroyed by fire

Geophysical survey does not indicate the presence of house structures inside the enclosure. This, together with the low nature of the outer bank, suggests the site should not be regarded as a hillfort as there is no evidence of fortification. It is possible that this site functioned as an animal enclosure used by the occupants of one of the nearby hillforts.

TINORAN, CO. WICKLOW (K) *{This text should appear alongside pictures of Tinoran Hillfort}*

This impressive hillfort in the Baltinglass complex is located in the townlands of Tinoranhill North and Tinoranhill South on the summit of a prominent hill with extensive views of the lowland of south Wicklow, east Kildare and Carlow. Today, the hillfort is covered by conifer forestry, with the exception of a small area on the south-west side now in farm pasture. There are four confirmed enclosures, with the possibility of a fifth, making this one of the largest hillforts in Ireland. The innermost enclosure may be a small ringfort of early medieval date.

Sample excavation of two enclosing elements indicated notable differences. The third enclosure is surrounded by carefully-built stone bank, while a bank made with soil from an external ditch was used for the fourth enclosure. Excavation inside the stone bank of the third enclosure identified small fires with burnt bone connected to the cooking of food during the Late Bronze Age (1214–923 BC).

Two other hillforts may have been built in the Baltinglass area during the Bronze Age: the well-known monument on Brusselstown Ring and a site recently discovered at Kilranlagh, east of Baltinglass town. Neither site has been excavated.

BRUSSELSTOWN RING, CO. WICKLOW (L)

Brusselstown Ring comprises a large bivallate hillfort, with widely spaced stone walls, occupying a total area of 32 hectares. It is located in the townlands of Brusselstown and Castlequarter, with the southern portion of the inner rampart forming part of the townland boundary. This inner stone bank varies in width (5.3-11.7m) and surrounds a natural oval terrace inside of which are numerous natural rock outcrops. The outer rampart is located 124-305m outside and does not follow the contours of the hill. It comprises a less substantial stone bank (10.2m wide), which is incorporated into the modern field systems.

Survey identified up to 288 possible hut platforms cut into the natural slope of the hill. Most of these are located between the inner and outer banks on the southern side.

KILRANLAGH, CO. WICKLOW (M)

This possible hillfort lies on the summit of Kilranlagh Hill in the townland of Colvinstown. This site has been substantially destroyed by forestry but seems to have had a single rampart comprised of rubble stone, approximately 14m high and 0.6m high enclosing an area of about 5.3 hectares. There are no internal features, although these may be obscured by thick vegetation. The south-western section of the hillfort perimeter abuts the outer edge of a large burial cairn. Two other cairns are recorded on the western slopes of the hill.

SPINAN'S HILL 2, CO. WICKLOW (N)

Spinan's Hill 2 is an extensive earthwork that surrounds an area of 131 hectares including both Brusselstown Ring and Spinan's Hill 1. The site was first discovered in 1992 using aerial photographs to identify what was believed to be the largest hillfort in Ireland. The ramparts are best preserved on the north and north-west sides where it comprises a bank/ditch/counterscarp arrangement. It is most visible on the northern side, where the internal bank ranges 5-8m in width and comprises mostly of rubble stone. The external ditch is 7-10m wide and 1.4m deep.