



# Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

<b>Who are you:</b>	Group
<b>Name:</b>	Blessington AFC
<b>Email Address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Reference:</b>	BLESSLAP-102417
<b>Submission Made</b>	April 3, 2024 10:26 AM

## File

Blessington AFC - LAP Submission 03.04.24.pdf, 1.49MB



Blessington AFC,



Wicklow County Council  
Planning Department,  
County Buildings, Wicklow Town,  
Co. Wicklow  
467 FW96

FAO Planning Department in Wicklow County Council.

## 1.0 Introduction

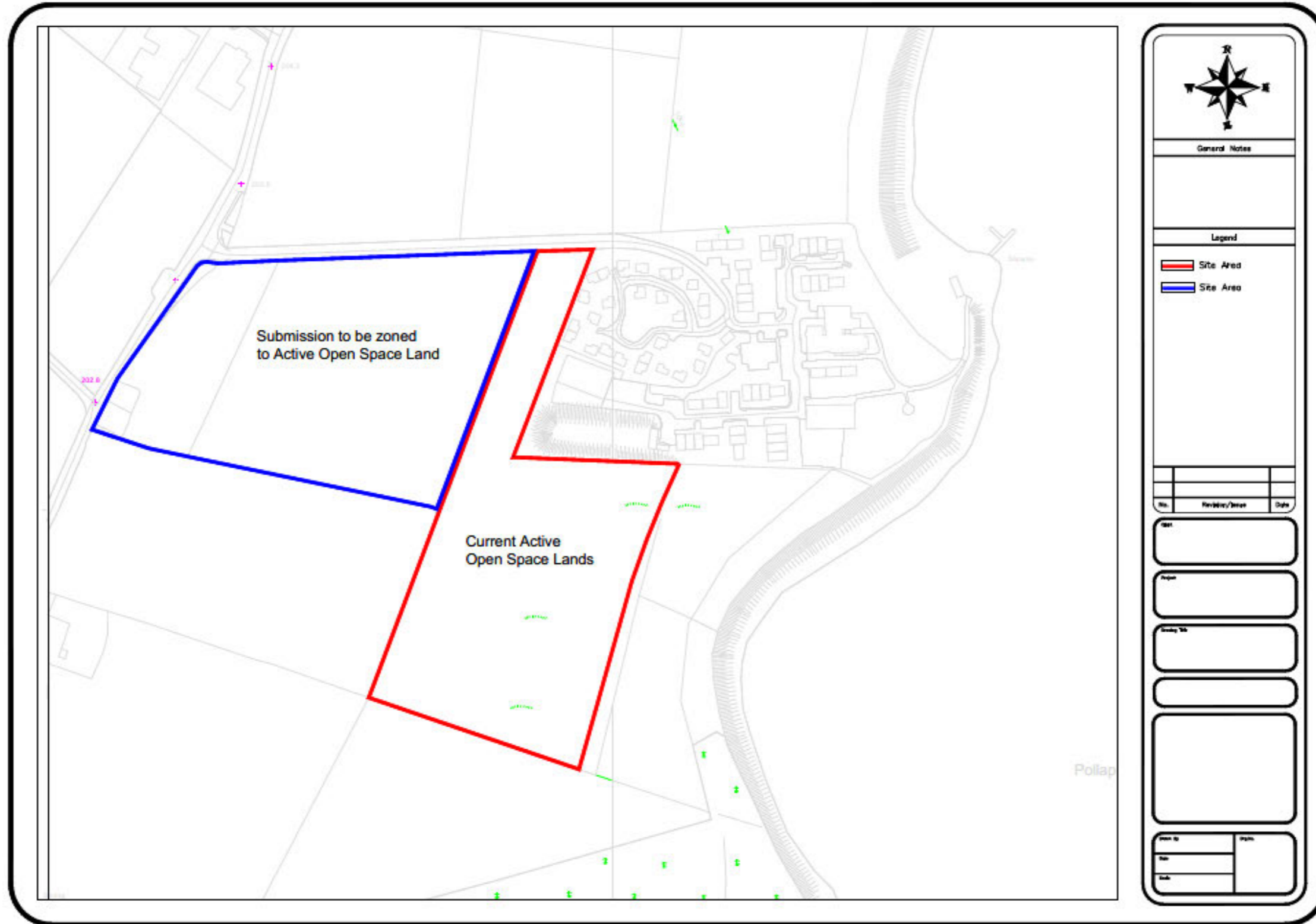
I am writing to you on behalf of Blessington AFC in the hope to improve the current infrastructure of the club for the benefit of the people and surrounding areas of Blessington.

The club has limited facilities within the town of Blessington and are looking to retain the current Active Open Space lands owned by Wicklow County Council and to propose the rezoning of further lands owned by Wicklow County Council to Active Open Space. The below will outline the exact areas of lands, a similar proposal in a neighbouring county completed by the County Council, a possible example layout of existing lands zoned active open space, information outlining the need for further facilities for the club and letters of support for these much needed facilities.

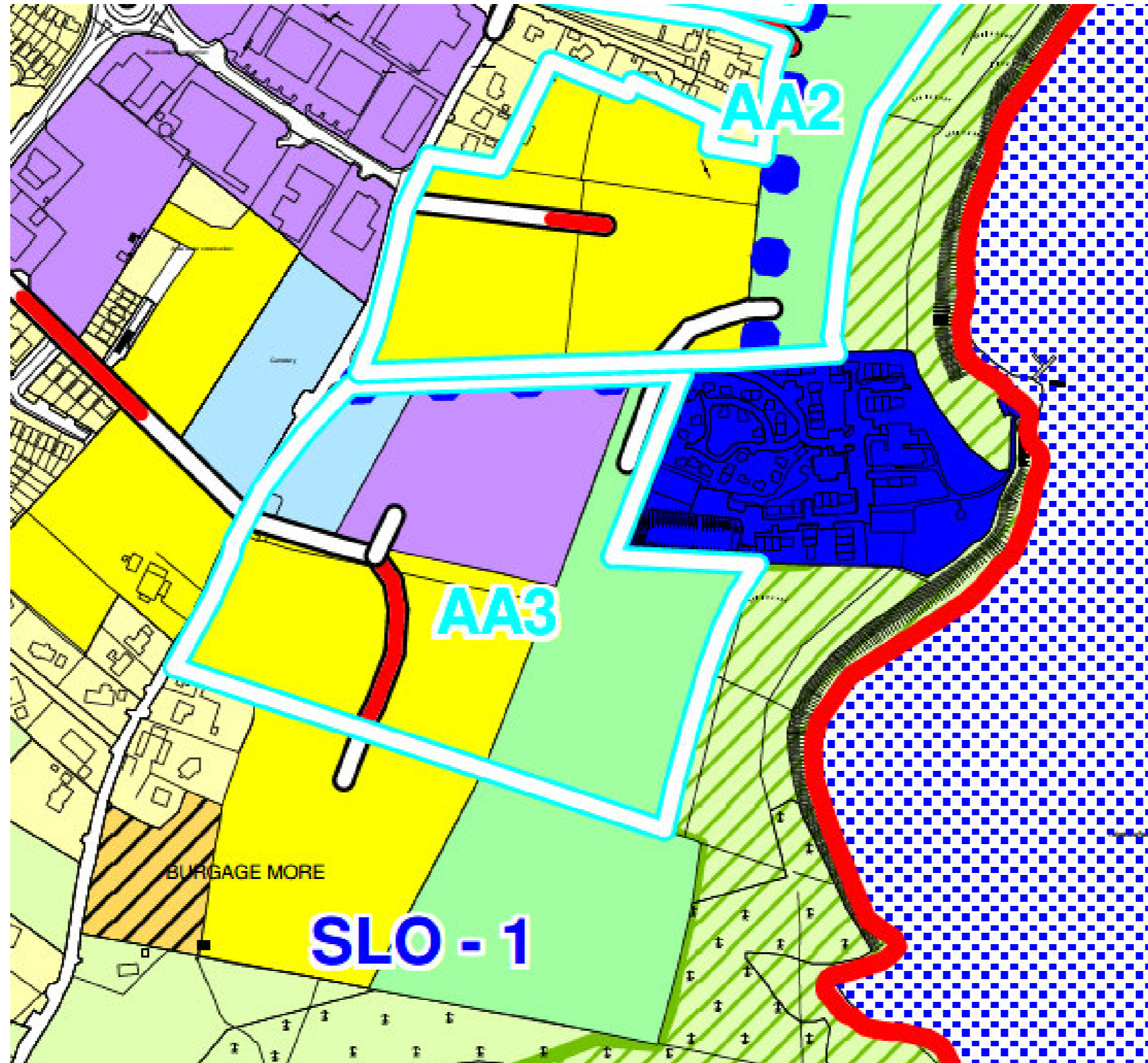
## 2.0 Submission

### 2.1 To retain existing Active Open Space & Change Zoning of further lands to Active Open Space

The above clubs need further infrastructure and have all come together to submit the proposal to retain the existing lands as Active open Space and to propose the further lands to the east of the existing to be rezoned as active open space also.



2.2 Existing Zoning as per current Blessington LAP 2013 - 2019



### 3.0 Example Developments in Kildare County Council

The below example is a similar development in Kildare County Council which has created facilities and infrastructure in 2009 for multiple clubs utilising council land.

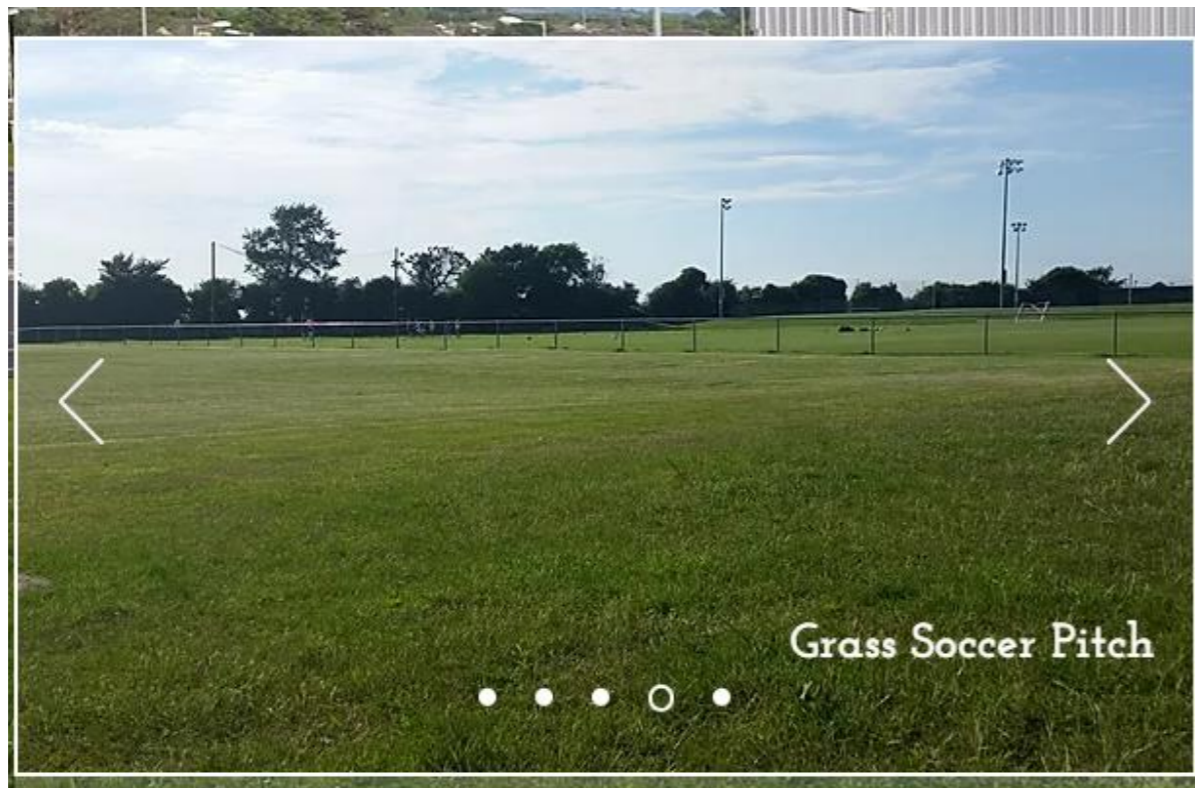




# Other Facilities

Along with the sportshall and all weather pitches we have:

- 6 changing rooms
- A small meeting room
- A grass athletics track with a 100mtr six lane all weather tartan strip
- Grass soccer pitches: 11 aside and 7 aside



Grass Soccer Pitch



K Leisure operates three facilities in Co. Kildare, in Athy, Naas and Newbridge. The Athy and Naas sites offer 25m swimming pools, fitness classes, state of the art gyms, sauna and steam rooms. Newbridge is a dry site with a full gym and a dedicated strength and conditioning arena. Other facilities include an indoor hall, astro pitches and coffee dock. Our ultra-modern, multi-award-winning clubs have activities for every level of ability and age.

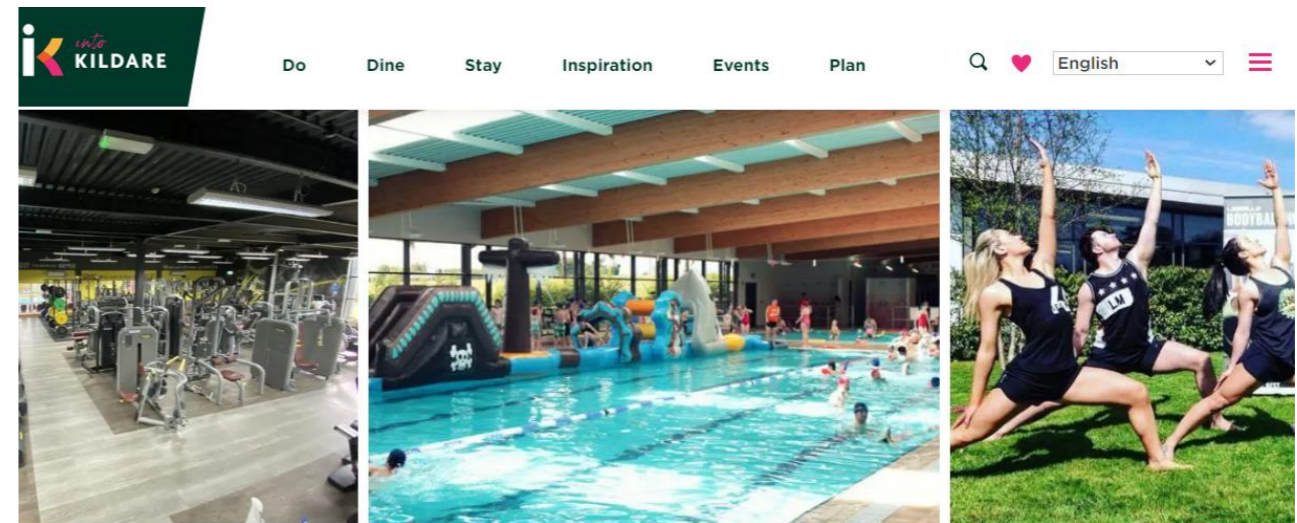
# Kildare leisure centres officially opened



By Pete Hayman 19 Oct 2009

Two new swimming pool facilities in Athy and Naas, County Kildare, Ireland, have been officially opened by Martin Cullen, the Irish minister for arts, sport and tourism.

The K Leisure Swimming Pool complexes in both towns will be operated by Kildare Sports and Leisure Limited, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kildare County Council. K-Leisure Athy boasts a 25m swimming pool with moveable floor, a family changing area, a spectator area, sauna and steamrooms, an aerobics studio and a fitness suite equipped by Technogym. The Naas facility also includes a learner pool.



[Into Kildare](#) > [Kildare Listings](#) > [Adventure & Activities](#) > [K Leisure Naas](#)

[Add to favourites](#)

## K Leisure Naas

[Naas](#)

**With top class gyms, swimming pools, spas, fitness classes and astro pitches available for everybody, K Leisure is the number one choice for fitness and leisure.**

This ultra-modern, multi-award-winning club has activities for every level of ability and age with a 25m swimming pool, fitness classes, state of the art gym, sauna and steam rooms. Other facilities include an indoor hall, astro-pitches and coffee dock.

Family Swim sessions mean parents and kids can enjoy swimming together, and the Swim Academy provides a valuable life skill to young kids. You can take the stress of planning your child's next birthday party by booking an activity packed party session at K Leisure.

[See More](#)

[ADVENTURE & ACTIVITIES](#), [FAMILY FUN](#), [RAINY DAYS](#), [NAAS](#)

[Share This](#)



### Contact Details

[+353 045 881655](tel:+353045881655)

[Send Email](#)

[Visit Website](#)

[Get Directions](#)

New Caragh Court, Naas, County Kildare,  
W91 VP27, Ireland.

### Social Channels

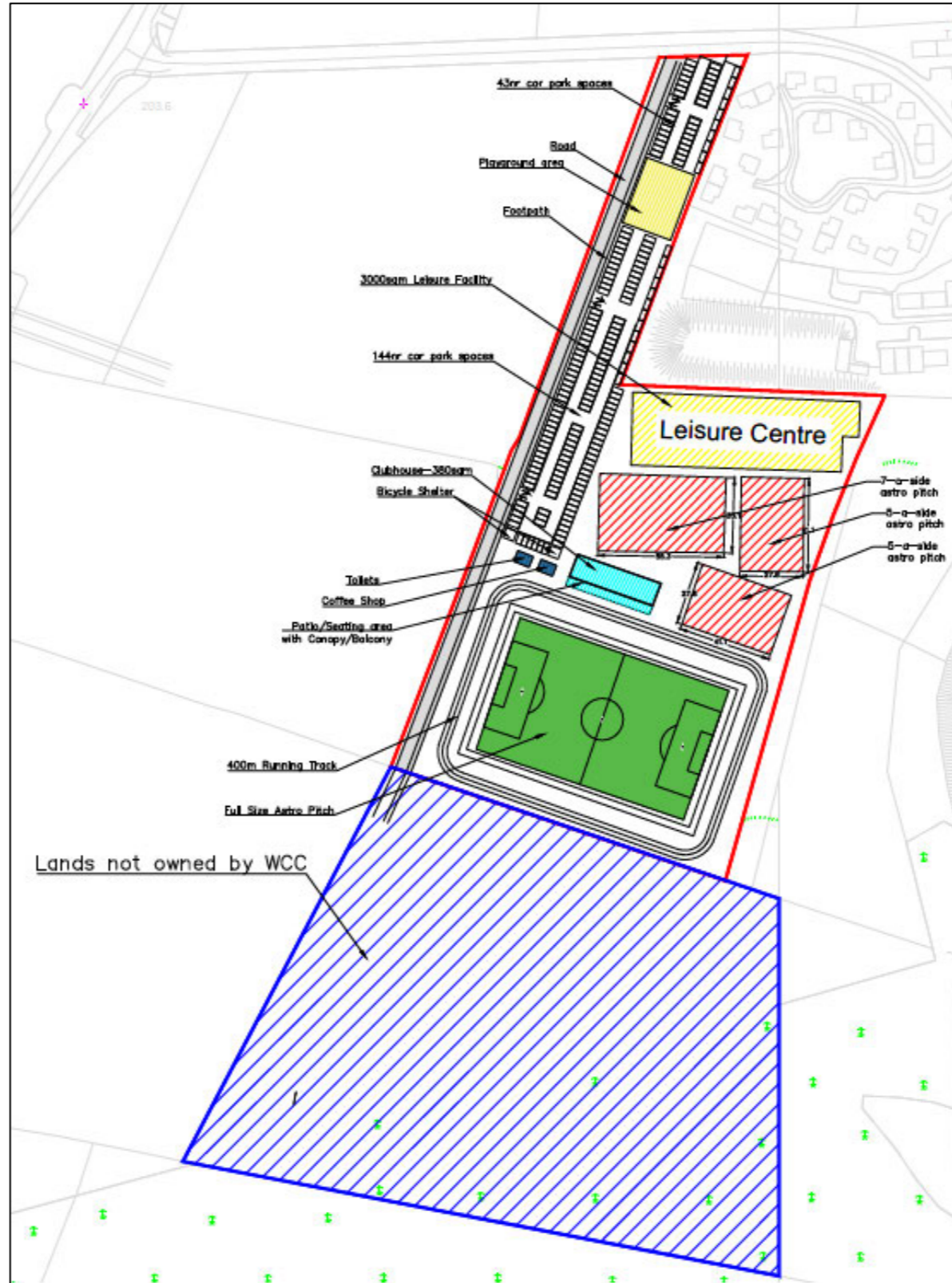


### Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 6am to 9.30pm  
Saturday & Sunday: 9am (gym), 10am (pool) to 5.30pm

These facilities were all developed in one location to the west of Naas on land owned by Kildare County Council. This facility has given top class facilities and infrastructure for Naas AFC, Naas Athletic Club and Naas Hockey Club and has allowed these clubs to grow and prosper all while having a full equipped Leisure facility for the Naas and surrounding areas.

#### 4.0 Example of possible layout for existing Active Open Space lands





## 5.0 Club Information

### 5.1 Blessington AFC



#### HISTORY

Founded in 1968, Blessington AFC started their journey with a single senior team competing in the (AUL) Athletic Union League in Dublin. Over the course of more than a half a century since, the club has grown and evolved to become the largest football club in West Wicklow. We now have over 650 members from Blessington and the surrounding townlands generating twenty-five teams that compete in all age groups, both boys and girls, in the Dublin and District Schoolboys League (DDSL - the biggest schoolboys league in Europe), the Metropolitan Girls League, and the Leinster Senior League. We are very proud to say we recently welcomed 3rd generation members to play for our community club.

#### HISTORY

As part of Sport Irelands 20x20 initiative (an all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perception of women's sport) Blessington AFC has been working hard over the past few years to promote girls' football in our community. We are now delighted that we have 3 girls' team within the club. The stag that features on our club crest comes from our original grounds which were located in between Glending and Deerpark on the Naas Road in the townland of Deerpark.

The club played just off the Naas Road until after the 2007-08 season, before our partnership with Roadstone and our move to our new home at Crosschapel.

Turning old quarry grounds into a place where children can enjoy football was no easy feat but after heavy investment, we are proud to say that...



*The original Blessington AFC senior team.*



### OUR VISION

Blessington AFC is a community-based volunteer organisation which aims to create a suitable and safe environment for players of all ages and ability to take part and thrive in football. Our aim is to instil in all our players a sense of identity and belonging in our community, while enjoying the benefits a team sport brings, especially to our younger members as they develop friendships and skills that will benefit them later in life.

### CURRENT CLUB DETAILS

656 members

25 teams in total

2 Senior teams

3 Girls teams

Active academy with 40 members

### FACILITIES

2 Fully drained 11v11 pitches

1 11v11 training pitch

2 x changing rooms

Toilet block

2 x old containers

### FACILITIES

Over the past two seasons it has become apparent that Blessington AFC has outgrown its current facilities. Our training pitch is the only pitch we have with some form of lighting, meaning across the winter months, this pitch is used heavily. The heavy wear and tear from training frequently leads to this pitch being closed to allow the surface to recover. Teams have resorted to hiring other all-weather pitches within the town to train during the winter months. Furthermore, on match days we are starting to struggle with capacity as the rewards of our productive academy led to more teams needing matches scheduled.

S.W.O.T ANALYSIS	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 50 years of history and tradition within the community</li> <li>Large and growing junior membership</li> <li>Volunteer/mentorship very strong within the club's ethos.</li> <li>Affiliate club to Shamrock Rovers F.C.</li> <li>Club has developed Ireland internationals</li> <li>Good governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No facilities in Wicklow, the club's county</li> <li>Pitches in use are not club owned</li> <li>3 pitches located 4km away with no safe route other than by car</li> <li>Lack of space/playing pitches</li> <li>Lack of training facilities/floodlights/all-weather pitch</li> <li>Waiting lists for some age groups</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth of girl's football</li> <li>Growth in membership due to population increase</li> <li>Development/increase of pitches located in Crosschapel Co. Kildare</li> <li>Land/A place to call our home in Co. Wicklow</li> <li>Development of players &amp; coaches with FAI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No land/pitches or connection with Co. Wicklow, our home</li> <li>Inadequate number of pitches in Crosschapel Co. Kildare.</li> <li>Inability to meet demands of population growth</li> <li>Pitches in use are not club owned, security of tenure</li> <li>Other sports strength in facilities a deciding factor in members leaving the club</li> </ul>

GROWTH POTENTIAL
The Town of Blessington currently has a population of 5,520 [2016] – Census.
With current approved planning applications, and submitted applications, this can be expected to grow to approximately 8,000 – 9,000 by 2027.
With this influx of youth to the area we anticipate our current club membership increasing by 40% to 50% by 2030.

CLUB AIMS	
Aim 1	Gain access to land in Co. Wicklow through collaboration with local authorities and representatives. Blessington AFC is a Wicklow club that has no connection to Wicklow. 2022 has been targeted for development/highlighting of facilities and lack thereof.
Aim 2	Development and expansion of existing pitches and facilities in Crosschapel Co. Kildare as they are inadequate to meet current needs. Addition of pitch 4. Agreement with landlord (Roadstone) to retrofit existing structure for a shop.
Aim 3	Achieve the FAI Club Mark, awarded to clubs based on best practice in the governance, management, and administration of a football club.
Aim 4	Secure the future of our pitches located in Crosschapel Co. Kildare with our landlord by extending the agreement to 2037.

## 6.0 Letters of Support



Co. Wicklow.

27 March 24

Wicklow County Council Planning Department

**Re: Blessington Local Area Plan Blessington AFC Letter of Support**

Dear Members of the Wicklow County Council Planning Department,

I am writing to you in support of Blessington AFC's submission to the Blessington Local Area Plan and their continued search for a home in Co Wicklow. I have been engaging with the club and their committee for almost four years now and recognise the real need for them to find an accessible site close to town in Blessington.

Blessington AFC currently play their "home" games in Crosschapel, Co. Kildare as tenants to Roadstone. I have visited their pitches in Crosschapel and members of the Blessington AFC committee have explained to me how the club has outgrown this site. Their current location is unsuitable for many reasons, such as the fact that the club cannot apply for Sports Capital Grants for capital development of the site such as installation of an all-weather pitch, and erection of floodlighting etc. It is also unsuitable given its location 4km outside of Blessington town with the only access being via the busy N81 which makes the location inaccessible by foot or bicycle for the vast majority of their young players and families. The club has outgrown these pitches and need more space to cater for their growing numbers, which I believe are now in excess of 700.

The Blessington LAP is an opportunity to plan for the future of the town and its growing community. I believe that an important part of this is ensuring that there are spaces for sports clubs and community groups to grow whilst also being accessible and inclusive for all members of the community.

I fully support the development of a multi-use sports complex with a swimming pool, football and rugby pitches and a running track at a shared location in Blessington. This sharing of resources and facilities will help to promote participation in sport and support community groups within Blessington and surrounding areas. I hope that these facilities will be included in the upcoming Blessington Local Area Plan so that local sports clubs like Blessington AFC can continue to grow and future generations can develop a love for sport.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Whitmore".

Deputy Jennifer Whitmore





Dublin District Schoolboys'/Girls' League

28<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

Att: Wicklow County Council Planning Department

**Re: Blessington Local Area Plan Blessington AFC Letter of Support**

Dear Members of the Wicklow County Council Planning Department,

I am writing to you in support of Blessington AFC's submission to the Blessington Local Area Plan and their continued search for a home in Co Wicklow. Blessington FC currently have 21 underage teams playing in the DDSL League for both boys and are girls.

Blessington AFC currently play their "home" games in Crosschapel, Co. Kildare as tenants to Roadstone. The club has outgrown these pitches and need more space to cater for their growing numbers, which I believe are now in excess of 700.

The Blessington LAP is an opportunity to plan for the future of the town and its growing community. I believe that an important part of this is ensuring that there are spaces for sports clubs like Blessington FC so they can continue to grow and future generations can develop a love for the sport.

Yours in Sport

Mick Kennedy  
Operations Manager