



Wicklow Town - Rathnew LAP Submission - Report

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Reference:	WRLAP-124348
Submission Made	September 27, 2023 1:01 PM

File

LAP submission.pdf, 5.94MB

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On 7 September 2022, the Wicklow County Council submitted an application for the implementation of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP) Action plan in response to Minister Ryan's push to use up the €9m+ funding allocated to them. In their application they were proposing to start work on several WT cycling routes. There are however some glaring issues regarding the existing routes, which the WCC thus far have failed to address.



According to the National Cycle Manual (NCM): ***“Directness is the most important requirement for network planning. Delays, detours, gaps or interruptions should be avoided. Major trip patterns should be as close to “as the crow flies” as possible. A well designed urban cycle network should confer an advantage in terms of average distance or journey time when compared with other transport networks. It is illogical to discontinue cycling provision near busy destinations to accommodate or maintain other traffic flow. A well designed urban cycle network should confer an advantage in terms of average distance or journey time when compared with other transport networks.***



Ever since the implementation of the one-way system in the town centre, the WT1 has been **broken** and is no longer bi-directional. Cyclists coming from the South-East side of town no longer have a direct route to/through their town centre. The NCM clearly outlines how by adding a contra-lane for cyclists this can be overcome. If the one-way system in the town centre were changed to a **Low Speed Zone (LSZ)**, priority would be given **first** to the pedestrian, **second** to the cyclist and vehicles would not be permitted to exceed **30km**.

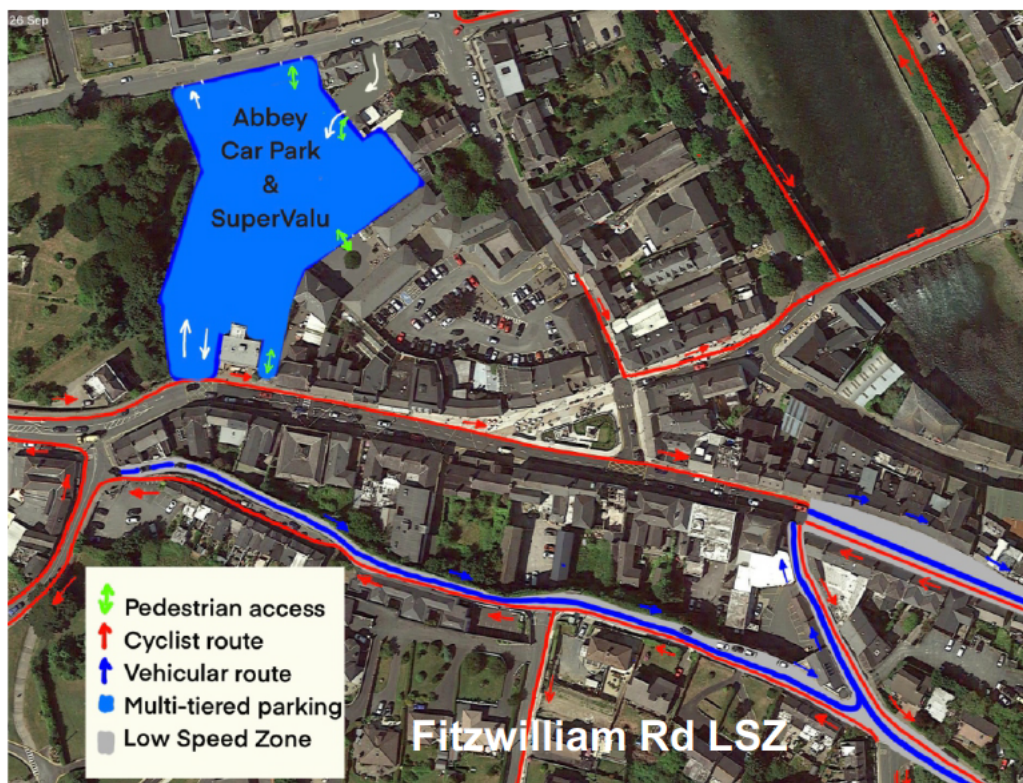
The entrance to the LSZ could be ramped up to pavement height to encourage traffic to slow down, there would be no pavements which in turn would create a larger footprint, reduce

potential trip hazards, while facilitating buggy/wheelchair access. Where the road is wider, rather than the current double parallel parking system, there would be ample space for diagonal parking slots instead (see diagram below). The Bayview Hotel, which is currently being restored, has enough space for a tiered car park with the front entrance serving as a pedestrian access to Main St. I have spoken to the owner and he is amenable to this idea. It would make sense therefore to reinstate vehicular access to High St from Kilmantin Hill for vehicles <3.5ton, running East to West with a contra flow for cyclists. High St would be given priority where it meets Dispensary Ln/New St and Hillside/Bayview Rd.

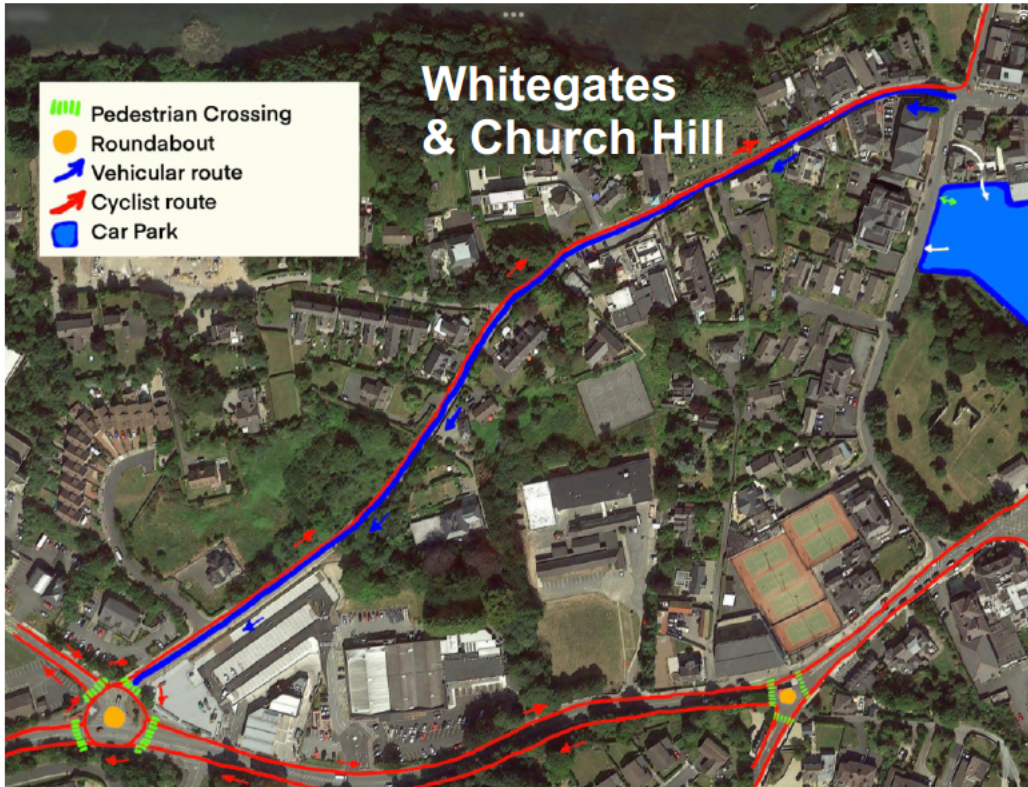
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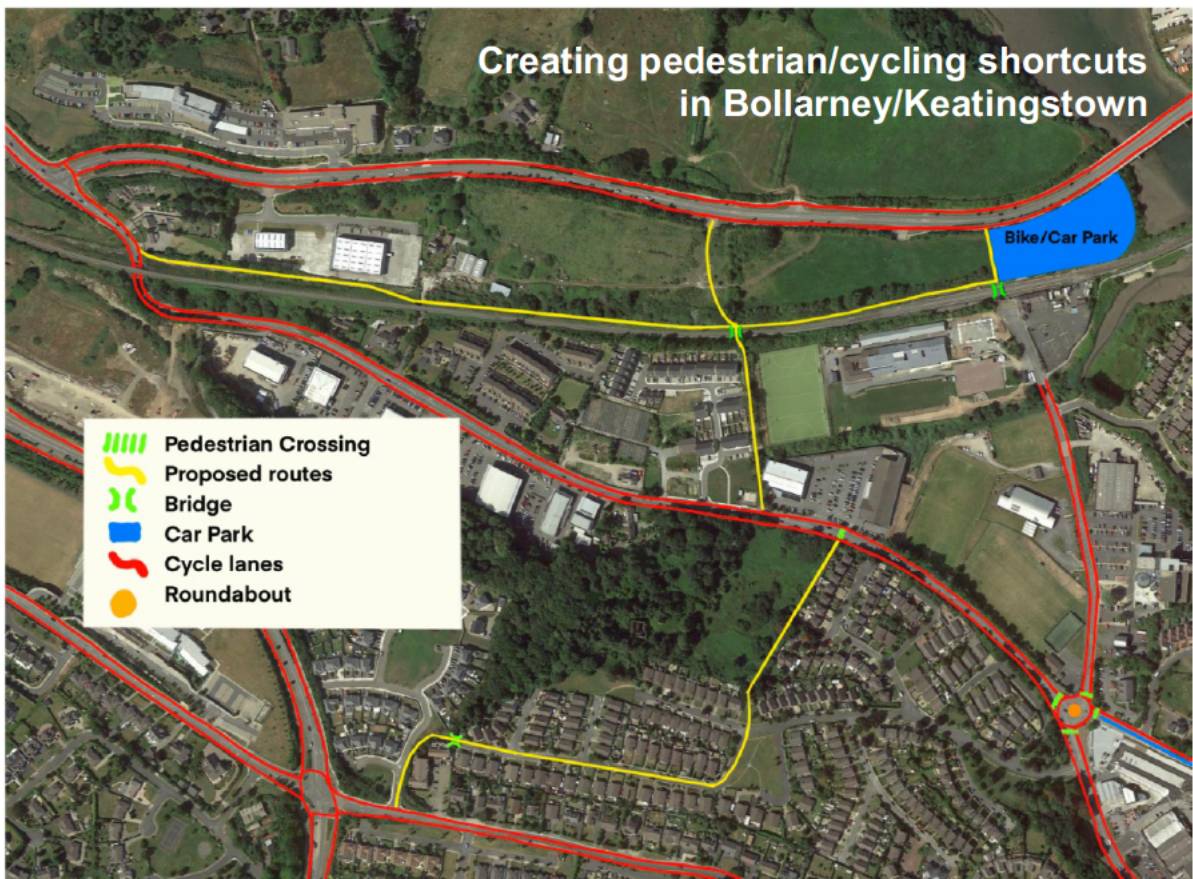
All of the one way streets where possible should have contra lanes for cyclists Quarantine Hill, Salthouse Ln, Bridge St, Church St, Fitzwilliam Rd, Mortons Ln, and especially Church Hill as it serves as an important feeder route for two schools, the Glebe, EGS and their church. All uphill roads should have cycle lanes as well as all roads leading to schools, playgrounds, sports complexes, any public amenity that serves childrens' needs so that the younger generation is given every opportunity and encouragement to use their bikes rather than seeking a lift from their parents. All WT cycling routes with the exception of Low Speed Zones should have bidirectional lanes, which will help other vehicles to be more vigilant and slow down. **All ramps should be removed and replaced with chicanes.**



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Wherever possible, housing estates should have pedestrian/cyclist access routes from one estate to the next to allow them to take the shortest route, ie. people from Keatingstown should be able to cut through housing estates to access the shops, rather than take their cars (see diagram below). A curious feature of the SMP is the **WT2**, which as you can see on page 1, follows the Port Road, before turning South to run right through the heart of our Victorian Train Station. One assumes it is in anticipation of

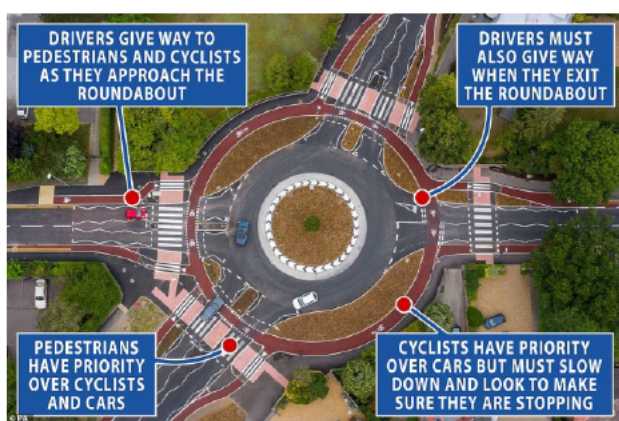


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the DART coming to Wicklow. Surely it would make more sense to upgrade the other derelict bridge and laneway (268m West of the station) to cater for cyclists coming from the North. Once again, I have spoken to the landowner and he seems amenable to the idea.

Another problem with the existing cycle lanes is the lack of maintenance and upkeep. In Rathnew, for example, when Cllr Snell complained about them disappearing over a year ago, they were still visible. Overgrown hedgerows, potholes, blocked drainage resulting in debris, resurfaced roads where the gullies and manholes have not been made flush and are often as deep as the potholes themselves, these are just some of the common issues that cyclists (and drivers) swerve to avoid and the National Cycle Manual (NCM) makes frequent references to these throughout their manual to ensure they are not overlooked.

Equally frustrating is the fact that the cycle lanes simply stop whenever they reach a challenging feature such as tunnels, roundabouts or village/town centres and these are precisely the spots where cyclists tend to meet the most aggressive and unyielding drivers. When the first cycle lanes appeared almost a decade ago, it was assumed they would eventually get around to addressing these contentious areas, but as yet nothing has happened. The NCM shows clearly how cycle lanes should be incorporated on roundabouts and “*In particular, the confluence of cycle routes as they approach and exit from bridges and pinchpoints should be specifically detailed*”. Perhaps the best way to resolve the issue at Bollorney tunnel would be to create a pinch point or choker like the one they have on the Strand Rd in Bray, as large vehicles already tend to approach it from the middle of the road while yielding to oncoming traffic.



Here is a more detailed image of a typical roundabout one would find if driving in Europe mainland. Between Ashford and Wicklow Town centre there are four roundabouts (there should be a fifth at Whitegates) and yet we expect our pedestrians and cyclists to take their lives into their own hands trying to circumnavigate them.

It's vital that we create safer roads for our pedestrians and cyclists now because very soon the volume of traffic will have doubled. In Ashford alone there is approved permission for 638 new houses, with another 250 in the pipeline. It won't be long before the population of

Ashford reaches 4000. That's a lot of school children that could be cycling to school and most of them will be going to schools in Wicklow.

Lastly and for a change of subject, I want to talk about areas where children can gather to play, meet their friends, neighbours or school mates. Granted, technology has killed off the need for most of that, because nowadays we only need our thumbs to communicate. However, younger children still need to be able to play with their peers in an environment that is reasonably safe, near to home, but not necessarily with one or both parents standing less than 50 yards away watching them while chatting to other frustrated parents. Aside from the Murrough, Ballynerrin and Rathnew playgrounds, there really is nowhere in Wicklow for kids to hang out,

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play or socialise with their peers. In much of Europe, practically **every** housing estate has their own playground, but for a population of 16.5 thousand people, Wicklow/Rathnew has 3 and one of them is approximately 1/2km from the nearest house. I've heard lots of complaints coming from young parents who've moved here and are shocked to discover that if they want their kids to get fresh air, they have to hop in their car, drive to the Murrough, stand by and watch them play for an hour or so. How ludicrous is that?!

So I looked at a map of Wicklow town and all its snugly packed housing estates all shamefully cut off from one another, marked the existing playgrounds in pink and where I think the council could add some more amenities for kids in yellow, because I really believe, in this day and age, we should be doing a lot more to encourage our younger generation to go outside and play the way we all used to from dawn till dusk.



I also think it should become Council policy, to not allow the building of any new estates without adding some sort of play area alongside a common grassland area.

I hope this helps and please feel free to contact me should you have any questions about any of the above.
Kind regards

Róisín McCullagh