



# Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Group
Name:	Blessington GAA
Reference:	DBLESSLAP-180116
Submission Made	December 11, 2024 6:10 PM

## Topic

Tourism Development / Greenway Supporting Infrastructure Map

## Submission

See attached

## Topic

Community Development (incl. sports facilities & schools, etc.)

## Submission

See attached

## Topic

Social Infrastructure Audit

## Submission

See attached

## Topic

Land Use Zoning / Specific Local Objectives / Land Use Zoning Map

## Submission

See attached

## File

Blessington GAA Draft Local Area Plan Submission Dec 24.pdf, 1.79MB



**Blessington GAA**  
**Public Consultation Submission to the**  
**Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Blessington GAA club would like to make the following submission as part of the Draft public consultation process for the New Local Area Plan for Blessington.

**Introduction:**

Blessington GAA Club was founded in 1909 and originally located on lands adjoining Burgage cemetery. Due to increasing demand for additional playing pitches the club relocated in 2007 to its current location at Blessington Demesne which has served the club well for a number of years and has acted as a key focal point for the wider community.

**Context:**

Since this move in 2007 the population of Blessington has grown from 4,018ppl in 2006 to a population of 5,611ppl, an increase of 40% (source census 2022). Of the current population there are a total of c. 1500 males and females falling within the 5-19 age cohort alone. These figures bear through to demands currently being placed on our existing playing pitches and facilities within our existing club grounds at juvenile level while our adult membership continues to grow. The club currently has a membership in excess of 800 people.

With further growth envisaged within the town arising from recent permissions and development at Burgage, the former rectory site and within the Blessington Demesne area, the need for increased playing facilities has become a significant issue and area of concentration for our club.

As a club we recognise the need for growth and new housing to accommodate our adult members and their families which should remove the need for members to move away from the area. Such growth and new housing does however bring an increased demand on all services with our club forming one strand of the social infrastructure requirements of a growing area. While the club works vigorously to ensure we can meet this demand and has not been found wanting in the past, existing facilities are already strained with a clear need for further expansion.

Unfortunately demand for new housing increases the cost of facilitating such expansion with a strong need for support to be provided from both a local government and commercial private sector perspective. Such support will contribute significantly towards ensuring facilities are suitable and capable of meeting future demand arising from new developments over the lifetime of the Local Area Plan.

**The Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025**

*Population and Housing Targets*

It is noted that table 2.1 sets out a population target of 6,313 ppl. This would result in an increase of 702 people from the 2022 census figure for Blessington. It is also noted that the housing unit target for the town up to 2031 is 519 units. Taking the existing population of 5,611ppl and the number of housing units 1,851 this provides for an average household size of

c. 3 ppl per household higher than the national average. Taking a reduced household size of c. 2.7pp per household the plan provides for a growth of 1,401 people almost double that targeted in the table 2.1.

It is also noted that these figures do not appear to include lands zoned for development within County Kildare to the southwest. It is worth noting in this regard that Munfine Park is currently under construction with the Kildare County Council boundary which will deliver 69 units or an additional 186ppl. It is also noted that a further 10.25ha of land is zoned for new residential development in this area which would have the potential for c. 360 units or 970 ppl.

Such provision provides for over 1,000ppl within the Kildare County Council boundary in addition to the potential for an additional 1400 people within the Draft plan area. This provides for a combined potential growth of 2,500 additional people with the town potentially reaching an overall population of over 8,000ppl.

Taking the above into consideration it is contended that now is the time to allocate sufficient lands to meet this targeted growth in order to ensure that vital recreational and active open spaces are provided to meet such demand.

#### *Active Open Space Provision*

It is noted that the plan makes reference to Active Open Space provision and details projected demand for the town as part of the Social Infrastructure Audit carried out as part of the plan. In this regard Blessington GAA grounds are identified as making up a significant proportion of the outdoor play space within the town at 7.9ha of 8.72ha.

The current and future demand can be compared to the existing open spaces as follows:

Open Space Type	Existing (ha)	Current Demand (ha)	Unmet Current Demand (ha)	Future Demand (ha)	Unmet Future Demand (ha)
Outdoor Play Space	8.72	24	15.28	27.2	18.5
Casual Play Space	4.15	9	4.85	10.2	6.05
Equipped Play Space	0.17	3	2.83	3.4	3.25

#### *Social Infrastructure Audit Table Extract*

While the plan is correct in ascertaining that Blessington GAA currently occupy a site of c. 7.9ha this land area provides for only three playing pitches and a smaller all-weather pitch totalling **c.4ha of actual play space** once all car parking, storage, club facilities and circulation space etc has been factored in.

The club are under pressure for additional playing space at present and as the town grows such pressure will continue to grow.

While it is noted that 18.5ha has been identified within the plan it is considered that c.4ha of this allocation comprises of car parking/hard standing/circulation areas within the GAA grounds.

While the club welcome the provision of a significant proportion of the remaining AOS 14.9ha within SLO2 such lands are located within a single landownership which is likely to be difficult to deliver given the limited level of housing allocated alongside the provision of these lands.

Taking the potential level of growth arising within the plan area alongside the Kildare lands in addition to this shortfall of 4ha it is considered that there is a significant need to reconsider the Active Open Space provisions within the plan and to identify additional potential lands/zonings which are capable of addressing this shortfall.

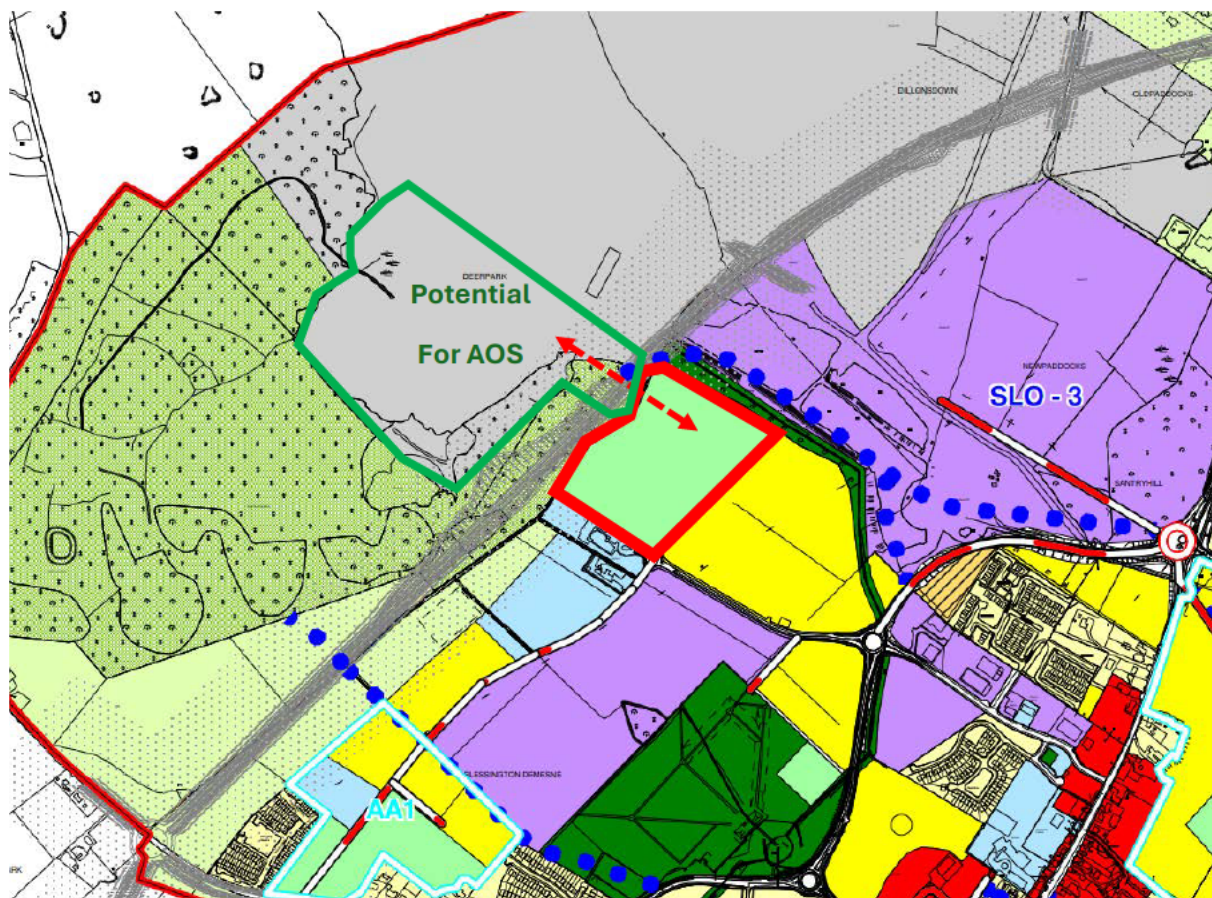
### **Blessington GAAs proposal**

Taking the above into consideration it is considered that there are two key considerations which must be factored into the plan:

1. A miscalculation of 3.9ha of lands as actual active open space and
2. A very conservative estimate of potential growth which does not reflect the current level of development both within the Draft Plan area and the adjoining lands within Kildare.

Having regard to the above it is considered that the active open space provisions of the plan be revisited, and the following be considered as the club grounds (outlined red below) are quite constrained in terms of natural options for expansion of playing pitches with lands to the southeast subject to a current planning application for housing and the adjoining lands to the southwest occupied by the No.1 School and Kare Facility.

The most natural option for the development of the existing playing pitches is therefore to the northwest on lands identified as Quarry Lands in the Draft Plan. The use of these lands for quarrying activities has long ceased with the subject lands currently in use for agricultural purposes (See map Below)





While it is noted that the N81 future road corridor is identified running through the connecting section of these lands, it is considered that access to the former quarry lands could be easily facilitated as part of the detailed design for the future development of this long-term road proposal providing ease of access to new AOS/Agri lands where playing fields are permitted in principle.

Such lands would facilitate a gradual expansion of the GAA club in a manner which maximises existing and planned future facilities ensuring the long term future of the club at this location.

Within this proposal there are two options for future provision of Active Open Space:

1. Removal of the OS2 Natural Area Zoning adjoining the GAA lands and the re-designation of part of Quarry lands as Agriculture with playing fields permitted in principle or
2. The provision of a new connecting corridor from the existing GAA grounds through the OS2 Natural Area Zoning and the re-designation of part of Quarry lands as Agriculture with playing fields permitted in principle.

#### **Option 1:**



#### **1. Lands Identified in Blue:**

To be **rezoned Active Open Space** in the land use zoning map with the provision of playing fields permitted in principle.

#### **2. Lands Outlined Orange**

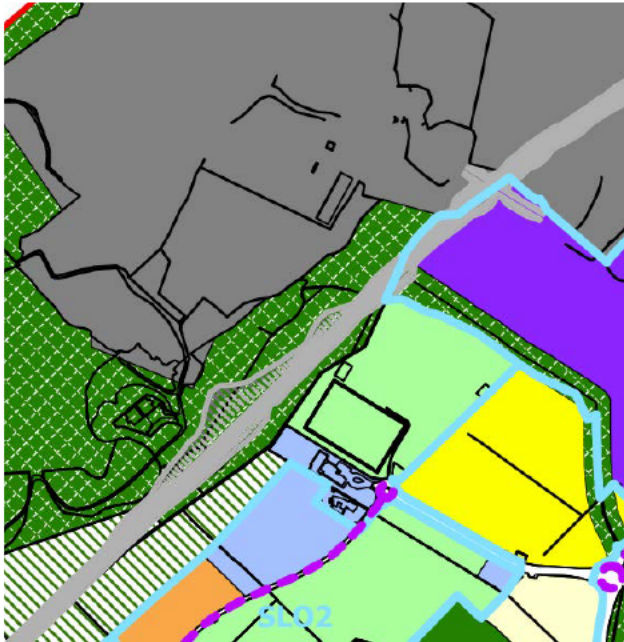
To be rezoned Agriculture in the land use zoning map with the provision of playing fields permitted in principle.

Proposal removal of (19,000sqm bank/planting)

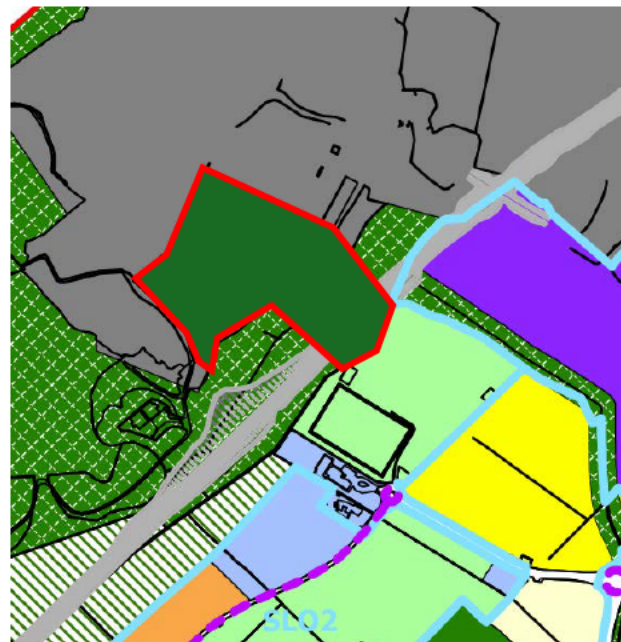
Provision of 766m\*2m wide new perimeter planting (1532sqm) – Deficit c. 17,500sqm planting.

Option 1 would result in the following:

From Draft LAP



Change to: Agri with the zoning matrix identifying playing pitches as open for consideration





## Option 2:



### 1. Lands Identified in Blue:

To be **rezoned Agriculture** in the land use zoning map with the provision of playing fields permitted in principle within the zoning matrix for such lands.

### 2. Looped Walk

A new Looped Walkway Objective to be included in the plan extending the recently constructed Glen Ding Walk through the Agricultural Lands and linking into the existing GAA grounds. Car Parking within the existing GAA grounds could be availed of for walkers using this amenity.

**3. Access** - Facilitate a semi permeable vehicular access to be provided to access the agricultural lands for emergency vehicles and pitch maintenance. The provision of the access route shall be sensitively designed and form part of the looped walkway with any tree loss compensated through the provision of new boundary planting along the southwest, northwest and north eastern boundaries of the area marked blue.

Proposal removal of c.160m by 4m (640sqm)

Provision of 766m\*2m wide new planting (1532sqm) –

**Surplus 892sqm of new planting.**

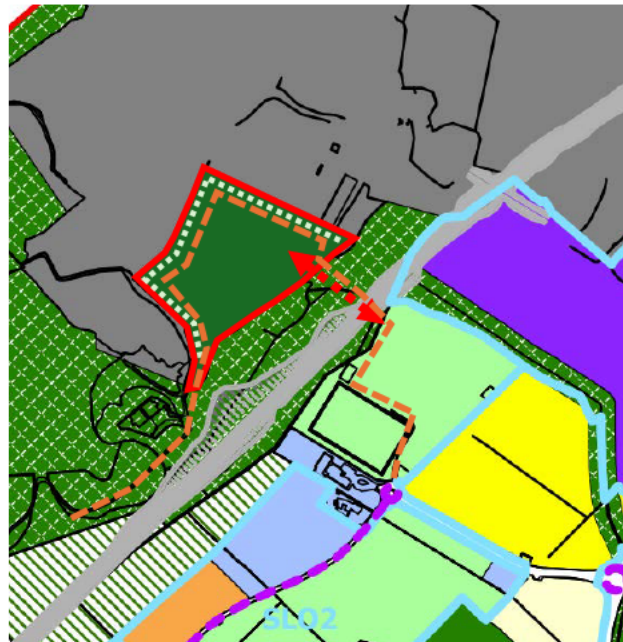
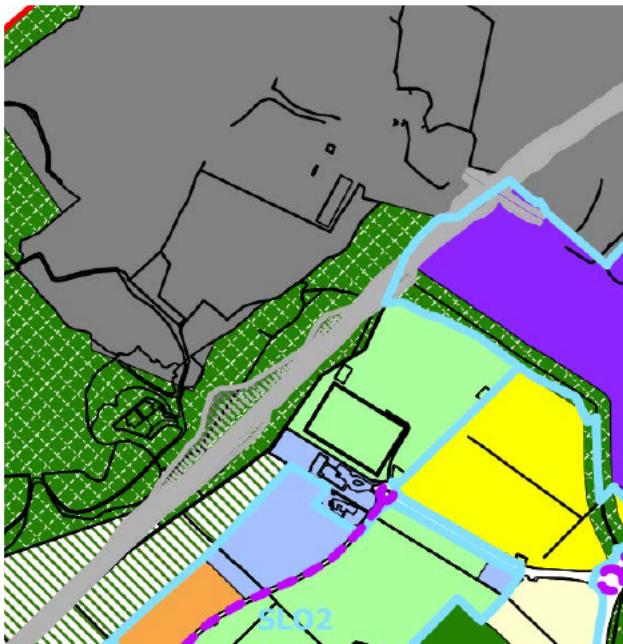


**Option 2 would result in the following:**

**From Draft LAP**

**Change to:** Agri with the zoning matrix identifying playing pitches as open for consideration

*New Objective: To facilitate playing fields including the provision of 2m deep perimeter planting providing an ecological corridor to the adjoining stream – a new Connected Looped walkway extending Glending Greenway shall be provided as part of the provision of any new playing fields.*



## Indicative Layout for proposal – Facilitating a Looped Walkway (extending existing Glending Greenway



Existing Greenway Walk

Proposed extended Greenway Walk (Looped Walkway)



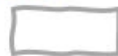
Site Boundary



Site Boundary Planting.



## Playing Pitch Indicative Outline







- Existing Greenway Walk 
- Proposed extended Greenway Walk (Looped Walkway) 
- Site Boundary 
- Site Boundary Planting 
- Playing Pitch Indicative Outline 



**Conclusion:**

Having regard to the above and the submissions made to the Pre-Draft consultation process it is clear that there is a strong demand for additional playing fields/Active Open Space within the Blessington Area.

While Blessington GAA welcome and are supportive of the Active Open Space provisions set out in the Draft Plan it is considered that this provision has included c.4ha of the GAA grounds as Active Open Space which comprise of car parking/circulation space and therefore this results in a shortfall of actual open space provision.

In addition, it is considered that the population targets and housing projections do not accurately reflect the quantum of potential growth both within the Draft Plan area and within lands zoned for residential development within Kildare which form part of and will create demand for such facilities in the near future.

It is therefore respectfully requested that the Draft Plan maps be revised to include options 1 and/or 2 as set out above. Such measures will facilitate the potential for Blessington GAA to meet current demand and further develop as the town grows into the future. It is considered that such provision can be carried out in a sustainable manner similar to other existing developments such as the Cabinteely GAA and Ticknick Park within Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (See Appendix A)

Yours sincerely

*Kevin Foster*

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Kevin Foster

Chairperson

Blessington GAA Club.



## Appendix A - Cabinteely GAA and Ticknick Park within Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.



Sensitively designed connecting walkway/accessway through forestry to playing pitches.