



# Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

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## Topic

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

## Submission

I am writing to advocate for the construction of dedicated public athletics facilities in Blessington, West Wicklow. These facilities should include: a 400-meter running track with a synthetic rubberized surface with equipment needed to take part in track and field events; associated amenities such as changing rooms and restrooms; adequate parking facilities and landscaping and green spaces to integrate the facility into the surrounding environment.

Blessington is a growing community with a vibrant sports and recreation scene, however the town and surrounding areas currently lack a dedicated running track, which means that residents of all ages must travel to other areas to access these facilities. The benefits include:

- (i) improved health and wellbeing by promoting physical activity and providing a safe and accessible space for people of all ages and abilities to exercise
- (ii) enhanced sports facilities, catering for the needs of local athletic clubs, schools, and individuals interested in running and other sports
- (iii) community development as the facility will serve as a hub for social interaction and community events
- (iv) environmental benefits as the development will enhance green spaces in the town.

As some-one with lifelong engagement in track and field athletics, I have experienced the benefits of having a dedicated local athletics track and the challenges of training and competing when this is not available. A dedicated athletics track will be a catalyst to promoting and maintaining participation in both recreational and competitive athletics, including giving young athletes the opportunity to experience the large range of track and field athletic events and find an event that they enjoy and can develop a skill in.

Track and field athletics truly is a sport that is inclusive of all ages and abilities. It is also a sport that equally encourages and supports both male and female participation - the Athletics Ireland Strategic Plan indicates that female membership outnumbered male membership in recent years - and therefore it represents a wonderful opportunity to promote continued sports participation in teenage girls, an age group where participation in sports typically declines.

Development of an athletics track in Blessington is a crucial step to highlight the focus, importance and commitment to promoting physical, social and mental health and wellbeing for residents in the town and surrounding areas.

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