



Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Private Individual
Name:	Gerard Gilvary
Reference:	DBLESSLAP-140548
Submission Made	December 11, 2024 2:13 PM

Topic

Overall Strategy of the LAP

Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to make some observations in relation to the above plan. From the outset I am concerned that the proposed plan is exclusively concerned with the land use in County Wicklow only. Due to the topography of the land and the county border with Kildare, the plan is largely concentrating on infill developments and previously agreed planning permissions. However, most future large scale housing developments will straddle the county border, or in the case of Kilmallum Road plans-totally in County Kildare. After the recent mammoth failure of the Blessington Greenway not to receive permission over fundamental errors of failing to prove the safety of the Dublin water supply- which would have been a given from the outset of the process. This major set back will reverberate around the region for the foreseeable future. But I am sure that the project will rise again possibly in phased elements such as the N81 stage etc. Its incorporation in to the Development Plan much not be diluted at this early stage.

To avoid any further setbacks, may I call upon Wicklow County Council to consider extending the remit of the plan to includes lands situated in County Kildare and adjacent to the town of which any development will have a profound impact on the integrity of the Local Area Plan under consideration. I feel that the Council are doing themselves a disservice by not producing a joint Local Area Development Plan with Kildare County Council. Having an integrated plan will accurately portray the aspirations of both Councils in facilitating orderly growth. For example, the population targets on page 7 (table 2.2) are very conservative as they exclude developments that are or will take place on the southern edge of the town or close to the route of the bypass near the Cairn Homes site.

I am all too aware, that because of the Banking Crisis in 2008 and the collapse of the Cookehill Development plans- that the town has lost a decade of exponential growth. In the last year Cairn Homes have been steady progress on their development plans for the original Cookehill site and also provide us eventually with a superb civic park that has been tastefully created. They will soon be joined by Glenveigh Homes as a major provider of housing stock for the district. Luckily for the town, a lot of essential infrastructure has been put in place well beforehand (shopping centre, schools, theatre and relief road), there has been a moderate increase in population along the southern edge. These infrastructure elements will come under rapid pressure over the lifetime of this plan as new housing stock enters the market.

May I call upon the Wicklow County Council to issue a supplementary document in cooperation with Kildare County Council, making explicit the designation of the lands bordering the town. I would not expect Kildare County Council to produce its own Local Area Plan for the district- unless significant "new town" developments are envisaged. Currently Kildare planning applications occur with minimal concern to the impacts to the town. By showing an integrated local area plan will minimise the debacle that has plagued the greenway project.

Topic

Infrastructure (incl. Infrastructure Delivery Schedule)

Submission

The literally stop-start process of improving the N81 has stalled indefinitely alongside the linking bypass. This is the last major trunk route in Leinster not to have major improvements to carriageway widths, bends, signage etc. Having a road that passes through three municipal boroughs is a logistical challenge that the National Roads Authority must take an active role in improving this vital radial route to and from the city. The N81 acts as a gateway to West Wicklow- the largest borough in the county and for visitors to the lakes and mountains. Its current piecemeal improvements whilst welcome, do not create a strong impression for a county that models itself on endless opportunities!

The town plan has a short-term focus on getting the Blessington Inner Relief Road (BIRR) completed. This roadway-like the N81 has turned into a jigsaw of different or partially built surfaces. The opening of the northern section would reduce heavy traffic on Oak Drive which was designed as an access road- not a throughfare. The southern section poses more of a problem, as the steep incline by Blessington Abbey/ Orchard is not suitable for HGV's, most quarry related traffic carrying 44 tonnes. Such vehicles cannot build up enough speed to safely enter traffic flows at the adjacent roundabout from effectively a hill start. It would be prudent for the council to reroute the BIRR around Blessington Manor to join the N81 near the waste water treatment plant. This could also be close to the location of the proposed Park and Ride facility.

MAIN STREET

The completion of the three roadways, the BIRR, the Naas distributor road and the Doran's Pit to Knockieran bridge which will become the "go-to" route for visitors to the greenway carpark, will finally open up the Main Street for major public realm and traffic management. The completion of the local unnamed distributor road from Oak Drive to the Naas Road will in effect become a town bypass for traffic to and from Kildare. Will there be traffic-controlled signals or a roundabout at the Naas Road junction?

The physical composition of the Main Street currently is that it has its back to both the lake and the Newtown shopping centre. The loss of the main anchor-The Downshire Hotel has had a major impact to the general footfall on the street. Such large-scale reduction in through traffic will facilitate more adventurous use of the road space for pedestrians and cyclists and a re think on parking spaces (having to reverse out onto a major route is a key reason for slow traffic movement along the main street as locals know that at any moment a car could appear in their path).

The placing of the ESB cables underground will greatly transform the appearance of the main street. Any future electricity trunk network improvements should to be placed underground around the bypass.

There is considerable potential to revitalise the main street and make strong physical connections to the lake and the shopping centre- rather than being hidden out of sight.

Topic

Local Transport Assessment / Transport Strategy Map

Submission

The impacts of the collective trauma from the C-19 pandemic are now starting to become apparent within the community in relation to travel patterns. There is considerable merit in actively building the park and ride particularly to coincide with the opening of the BIRR, which could change perceptions of using public transport amongst private vehicle owners.

Anecdotal evidence from similar park and ride schemes in Belfast show that the bulk of users are from within a short radius of the facility and use the car for the "first and last mile" of their journey. This would reduce the amount of all day on street parking around the Main Street and been a boon to businesses who trade there. A regular bus link to Tallaght, Naas or the city would be a strong incentive to reduce car journeys along the N81 especially as parking in these areas is expensive.

The park and ride may persuade commuters from further along the county to switch to public transport.

However, commuters who do not work or attend education adjacent to a direct bus route will be less inclined

to make a change.

File

BLESSINGTON LAP 2025 SUBMISION GERARD GILVARY.pdf, 0.08MB

BLESSINGTON AREA LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025.

SUBMISSION BY GERARD GILVARY.

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ROAD NETWORK

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PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

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CONCLUSION:

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