



**BLESSINGTON  
LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025  
WRITTEN STATEMENT**





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Local Area Plan Adopted **16<sup>th</sup> June 2025**  
Local Area Plan Effective **28<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

This Local Area Plan shall be read in conjunction with the Wicklow County Development Plan.



## A.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the **draft** Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 prepared pursuant to Section 20 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The purpose of this plan is to put in place a land use framework that will guide the future sustainable development of the Blessington area as shown on Land Use Map No. 1 appended to this plan. This plan, in conjunction with the County Development Plan, will inform and manage the future development of the area.

The previous local area plan for the town, prepared in 2013, was the first to be prepared for Blessington. This local area plan will build upon the successful strategies and objectives developed in the previous plan but will adapt where necessary to reflect updated national and regional planning policy and guidance and general emerging planning issues.

The majority of policies, objectives and development standards that will apply in the Blessington area are already determined in the Wicklow County Development Plan and all efforts shall be made to minimise repetition of County Development Plan objectives in this Local Area Plan, other than the summary provided in Section A.2, unless it is considered necessary to emphasise assets or restate objectives that have particular relevance and importance to the area. While this will facilitate the streamlining of this plan to just those issues that are relevant to this area, and an overall reduction in the content of the plan, this should not be seen a diminution of the level of importance or indeed protection afforded to this area.

In particular, development standards, retail strategies, housing strategies etc that are included in the County Development Plan shall not be repeated, and shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Local Area Plan. Any specific policies / objectives or development standards required for this area will be stated as precisely that, and in all cases will be consistent with the County Development Plan. Thus development standards will therefore be the same across the entire County, and any differences for specific settlements would be clear and transparent, to both those adopting the plans, and the general public alike.

It is also important to note that the land-use objectives of this plan aim to support other plans and strategies prepared by Wicklow County Council, including the Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan, the Wicklow Climate Action Plan, Wicklow Tourism Strategy and Marketing Plan, Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan, Wicklow Heritage Plan etc., all which have a wider remit than this LAP. However, this Local Area Plan shall only include objectives that are area specific and achievable, and avoid those that are aspirational or are best dealt with in the annual budget, road works programme, etc. **The role of land use plan is to put in place a framework within which development can occur, but does not decide what works actually get done** by either private individuals or public bodies. The delivery of objectives will be determined by the initiation of private development or by the allocation of public funding through the annual budgetary process, which is a separate process to any land use plan.

This LAP is framed in accordance with the development horizon set out in the 2022 County Development Plan. In particular, residential development objectives including land zoning provisions have been made on the basis of providing enough housing land to meet the prevailing Core Strategy population and housing targets set out in the County Development Plan at the time of adoption of the LAP, with flexibility in the zoning provisions to ensure that (a) the targets can be achieved in the event that unforeseen impediments to the development of certain lands arise and (b) the LAP does not have to be formally amended to reflect any changes in the Core Strategy or population / housing targets that may arise during the lifetime of the County

Development Plan due to changes to the National Planning Framework<sup>1</sup>, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy or changes to planning legislation<sup>2</sup>.

## **1.2 Plan format**

The plan comprises a written statement and a series of maps that provide a graphic representation of the content of the written text. Where there is any discrepancy between the text and maps, the text shall take precedence.

The plan is accompanied by a number of studies and appendices, including:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment,
- Natura Impact Assessment (Appropriate Assessment),
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment,
- Local Transport Assessment,
- Social Infrastructure Audit,
- Green Infrastructure Audit,
- Blessington Architectural Conservation Area Appraisal, and
- Blessington Town Centre First Plan.

All of these assessments have informed the crafting of the plan.

A key aim of a Local Area Plan is to set out development strategy for the future development of the area and from this vision, all policies and objectives can be developed and implemented with the overall aim of achieving this strategy. The development strategy must be consistent with the 'Core Strategy' of the County Development Plan and reflect the history, physical characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of the area. The factors influencing the development strategy are set in Sections A.2 and A.3, with the strategy described in Section A.4.

Thereafter the plan will set out the Blessington specific development objectives under a number of headings.

Where there is any doubt as to whether a specific development proposal accords with these development objectives and / or those of the County Development Plan, the overall town development strategy and the principles set out therein shall be taken as the guide to that assessment.

## **1.3 Maps**

The maps provide a graphic representation of the written statement of the Plan. They indicate land use and other development objectives together with various other objectives of the Council. The maps do not purport to be accurate survey maps from which site dimensions or other survey data can be measured.

The plan relates to the lands within the settlement boundary of Blessington, see Map No.1

## **1.4 Public Consultation**

Pre-draft consultation with the public, local community groups and commercial / business interest in the area, as well as public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies and infrastructure providers has been

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<sup>1</sup> The draft revised NPF was published for public consultation on 10 July 2024.

<sup>2</sup> The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), is currently being reviewed with a draft Bill published in January 2023. The new Act is expected to be passed by the Oireachtas in 2024.

carried out in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning Act (as amended). All of these consultations, including submissions made, have been considered in the crafting of the plan.

**Note:** Details shown on all map is for information purposes only. Further details on any item should be clarified with Wicklow County Council. The maps have been produced by Wicklow County Council with available Local Authority and Tailte Éireann Surveying Base Data.

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## A.2 COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN STRATEGY FOR BLESSINGTON

The Blessington LAP must be consistent with the objectives of the County Development Plan and its Core Strategy.

### A2.0 Strategic Goals

Healthy placemaking, climate change and economic opportunity are the three overarching cross-cutting themes of the Wicklow County Development Plan and therefore are the three strategic objectives that inform and shape this Local Area Plan. The legislative and policy context for each theme is outlined in the Overall Strategy of the County Development Plan. These cross-cutting overarching themes align with the key principles identified in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

There is significant overlap between the three themes. Placemaking integrates with the creation of sustainable communities which includes housing, sustainable mobility, healthy town centres and economic development. Climate change has implications for sustainable mobility, economic development and heritage and biodiversity. Economic development is increasingly integrated with our response to climate change and to the delivery of healthy placemaking.

### A2.1 Core Strategy

Local Area Plans exist in a hierarchy of plans flowing from national level (NPF) to regional level (RSES) to County level (Wicklow County Development Plan). It is through the County Development Plan that these higher order strategies, as well as other national and regional policies (e.g. relating to compact growth, regeneration, transportation and the environment) are translated to a 'local level'. The County Development Plan includes a 'Core Strategy' which sets out the 'direction' for the future growth of the County, in accordance with these higher level strategies, and in particular sets out the settlement and population growth strategy up to 2031, evaluates the demand for housing and adequacy of zoned lands to meet those needs, as well as providing strategies for regeneration, infrastructure, environmental protection and retail development.

Blessington is a Level 3 settlement in the County settlement hierarchy – a 'self-sustaining growth town'.

Table 1 below sets out the key elements of the Wicklow County Development Plan 'Core Strategy', as they apply to Level 3 settlements.

**Table 1 Wicklow Core Strategy for Blessington**

Core Strategy of the CDP	Application to Level 3
<b>Settlement, Population &amp; Housing Strategies</b>	Level 3 settlements are designated 'Self Sustaining Growth Towns' described as ' <i>Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining</i> '. These towns range in size (as per the Census of population in 2022) from c. 6,000 to 22,000 persons. Population growth in Level 3 towns is targeted to be in the 20%-25% range between 2016 and 2031.
<b>Economic Development Strategy</b>	Level 3 settlements are identified as 'Level 3' in the County Economic Development Hierarchy
<b>Retail Strategy</b>	Level 3 settlements are identified as 'Level 3' in the County Retail Hierarchy.

<b>Community Development Strategy</b>	The accompanying Social Infrastructure Audit has placed Blessington at Level 2 of the Community Facilities Hierarchy, having regard to the intended growth envisaged in the Core Strategy and the wider hinterland population accessing services in the settlement. Blessington thus falls into the 7,000-15,000 population range and should be ideally serviced by the following community infrastructure: Multi-purpose Community Resource Centre, Sport & Recreation Centre, Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre, Youth Resource Centre, Local Multi-Purpose Community Space/Meeting Rooms, Outdoor Water Sports Facilities (where applicable), Neighbourhood and Local Parks, Outdoor Multi-Use Games Areas – Synthetic/Hardcourt, Playgrounds, Playing Pitches, Alternative/Minority Sports Facilities, Open Space/Urban Woodlands/Nature Areas, Library, Arts and Cultural Centre.
<b>Infrastructure Strategy</b>	In accordance with the County Development Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures will be required to facilitate a modal shift to more sustainable transport options including promotion of development patterns, and the development of enhanced infrastructure, to facilitate walking, cycling and increased use of public transport;</li> <li>- Only locations that are already served, or are serviceable with water and wastewater infrastructure shall be identified for new development.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Strategy</b>	To ensure the objectives of the plan are consistent with the conservation and protection of the environment.

## A2.2 Role and function of the settlement

Blessington is designated a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' in the Wicklow County Development Plan within the 'Core Region' of the Eastern and Midlands Region. It is located on the Kildare/Wicklow border approximately 27km southwest of Dublin and 11km from Naas, the County town for Kildare.

The town is a strong and active town that acts as the service centre for a wide rural catchment including the villages of Hollywood, Manor Kilbride, Lackan, Ballyknockan, Dunlavin, Donard and Vallemount (in County Wicklow), Rathmore, Eadestown, Ballymore (in County Kildare) and Brittas in County Dublin. The town has a strategic location along the N81 in proximity to the Dublin metropolitan area and at the entrance to the west of the County. The town is served by a reasonable quality bus service including Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann services.

The N81 national secondary road passes directly through the town centre. It is intended to realign the current route of the N81 to the west of the town. The National Road Design Office has published a preferred route corridor for the N81 realignment between Tallaght and Hollywood Cross. There is a need to appropriately manage the development of lands located in the current route corridor for the N81 realignment. The development of this route and the completion of the town inner relief road, would contribute significantly to the enhancement of the overall quality of the town centre. In the short term the priority shall be the completion of the partly constructed inner relief road in conjunction with Kildare County Council.

With this re-routing of regional traffic out of the Main Street, a significant opportunity arises to regenerate the historic town centre, create a stronger urban structure, and strengthen the town's identity and sense of place. This area is an Architectural Conservation Area, with a wealth of architecture and history. During the lifetime of this plan, the Council will strive to reclaim and reassert the Main Street as a place for the people rather than as a through route for vehicular traffic and make it more attractive to locals, visitors and investors, to create new employment and wealth generating activities.

To the east and south, Blessington is bounded by the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, a man-made lake created in the 1940s by the damming of the River Liffey at Poulaphouca waterfall, and now a designated conservation site. Hydroelectricity is generated at the dam, and the reservoir also supplies water to the Dublin region, following treatment at the nearby Ballymore Eustace water treatment plant in Co. Kildare. Recreational use is also made of the reservoir and it is an important asset to the town and its surrounds. In this regard, the opportunity exists to capitalise on the tourism potential associated with the Blessington Greenway. Phase 1

of the greenway (6.5km) has been completed and links the town of Blessington with Russborough House. Wicklow County Council is committed to enhancing tourism infrastructure and attractions in the Blessington area, particularly those related to the Blessington Lakes and those that bring benefit to the villages surrounding the lakes, subject to the utmost protection of the environment, including water quality and natural habitats.

The town shall provide for local growth in residential, employment and service functions and will include enhancements to the built environment, water services, and public transport links. Accommodating such additional functions must be balanced with protecting the character and quality of the town centre.

The town is located on the Wicklow / Kildare county boundary. It shall be a priority to ensure that any plans prepared for the town are undertaken in consultation with Kildare County Council to provide a strategy for the sustainable development of the town and its hinterland as a whole, irrespective of County borders.

As a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town', the settlement should provide housing for people from across the County and region.

### **A2.3 Town Centre Development**

Level 3 town centres perform a variety of roles and functions for their residents and their wider rural communities. The strengths of these settlements lie in their capacity to accommodate a mix of uses including employment, residential, community and other functions in a compact walkable environment that provides a high quality of life. They are a hub for social, economic and administrative functions in addition to providing places for recreation, worship and leisure.

Blessington, like many towns across all tiers of the hierarchy in County Wicklow, has experienced significant challenges to retain vibrancy and vitality. The National Planning Framework and the County Development Plan place a strong emphasis on strengthening Ireland's urban structure by targeting both population and employment growth in urban areas, promoting urban infill and brownfield development and ensuring that towns and villages are attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and wellbeing.

The retail function of Level 3 towns is as set out in the County Retail Strategy, and it is considered to fulfil the role of a 'sub County' town centre, serving a wide district. Retail is a key function of Level 3 towns and a thriving retail sector is essential to maintain vitality and vibrancy in the core areas of the town and to maintain the town as the focal point for the wider rural area in which it is located.

Towns and villages are continually evolving. This is essential for their survival. It is important that Wicklow's planning policy is flexible to allow town centres to evolve and diversify. The planning policy for Level 3 town centres like Blessington will therefore be based on the following objectives:

#### **Town Centre & Retail Objectives**

- To support the continued enhancement of Blessington Town Centre as the heart of the settlement, where people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities can avail of services and interact within their communities;
- Ensure that the town centre is an attractive places to live in, to work in and to visit, easy to get to, easy to walk and cycle within and is a competitive place to conduct business;
- Create a compact town by reusing existing buildings and maximising the potential of infill and brownfield sites; use all mechanisms and processes available to drive forward the redevelopment and regeneration of vacant, underutilised and derelict sites;
- Use public realm improvements to stimulate investment and economic confidence; encourage public

art in publicly accessible spaces such as town streets and squares and along existing or future parks and amenity routes;

- Promote healthy placemaking and prioritise walking and cycling; improve linkages between core town centre and existing community infrastructure and lands earmarked for future housing development;
- Embracing the historic character and heritage attributes of the town centre and strengthen the strong sense of place;
- The redevelopment of lands within the town core area, particularly those sites with frontage onto the main streets and squares of Blessington, shall provide for street fronting buildings of a high quality design or for a high quality urban space, including hard and soft landscaping, and appropriate street fixtures and furniture, in order to enhance and create a more attractive streetscape;
- To allow a relaxation in certain development standards in the town centre zone in the interest of achieving the best development possible, both visually and functionally while maintaining the highest quality of design in all new developments;
- Facilitating a diverse mix of uses, and particularly encourage residential usage at appropriate town centre densities, and the concept of 'living over the shop';
- Facilitate an expansion of retail floorspace to reduce leakage of expenditure from both the town itself and the wider County. Guide and promote the expansion of retail floorspace first and foremost within the core retail area and thereafter in accordance with the sequential approach to retail development;
- Provide for an expansion in the variety of retail and retail service facilities so that the town includes a range of retail outlets that provide for the day to day needs of the local population and the needs of other businesses and tourists, in accordance with the provisions of the "Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoEHLG 2012), and any subsequent Ministerial Guidelines or directives and the Wicklow County Retail Strategy.

## A2.4 Population and Housing

The population and housing targets for Blessington<sup>3</sup> are provided in the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan 2022-2028, expressed as growth from 2016 to 2031.

**Table 2 Blessington**

**Table 2.1 Population Targets**

LEVEL 3	2016 Census	Q2 2028 CDP Target	2031 CDP Target
Blessington	5,234	6,145	6,313

**Table 2.2 Housing Unit Targets 2031**

LEVEL 3	2016 Housing Stock	Q2 2028 CDP Target	2031 CDP Target	Growth 2016-2031
Blessington	1,914	2,352	2,433	519

### Population & Housing Objectives

- To adhere to the objectives of the Wicklow County Development Plan in regard to population and housing as are applicable to Blessington and ensure that the provisions of the plan creates a flexible

<sup>3</sup> This relates only to that part of Blessington in County Wicklow

land use framework that allows for housing targets to be fulfilled.

- A minimum of 30% of the targeted housing growth shall be directed into the existing built up area of the settlement, on lands zoned 'town centre', 'existing residential' and 'mixed use'. In cognisance that the potential of such regeneration / infill / brownfield sites is difficult to predict, there shall be no quantitative restriction inferred from this plan or the associated tables on the number of units that may be delivered within the built up envelope of the town.
- In order to ensure however that overall housing and population targets can be delivered, land may be zoned for new residential development outside of the existing built up envelope, subject to the amount of zoned land not exceeding 70% of the total housing target for that settlement.
- To require that new residential development represents an efficient use of land and achieves the highest density possible, subject to the reasonable protection of existing residential amenities and the established character of existing settlements.
- To promote and facilitate in-fill housing developments, the use of under-utilised / vacant sites and vacant upper floors in the town centre for residential use and facilitate higher residential densities at appropriate locations, subject to a high standard of design, layout and finish;
- **Housing occupancy controls:** As a 'self-sustaining growth town', Blessington should provide for the housing demands generated from people from across the County and region.

## A2.5 Economic Development & Employment

The County Economic Hierarchy identifies that Level 3 'self-sustaining growth towns' such as Blessington are strategically important locations for economic growth and employment development, and would be suitable locations for both foreign and local sources of investment in a mixture of 'people' and 'product' intensive sectors. Depending on their degree of accessibility, scale of population / workforce and market catchment, and the availability of support services, the Level 3 towns have varying roles to play in acting as attractors for investment.

The factors that make a town economically viable and attractive to investors and visitors are numerous and often hard to predict and influence, but for the purpose of these land use plans, the strategy for economic development will be based around:

- a) providing a land-use framework for each town, which makes the Council's requirements and expectations with respect to the location and type of new employment generating development abundantly clear;
- b) supporting and facilitating, to the highest degree possible (subject to environmental and other relevant planning considerations) all forms of employment generation and in particular, to encourage employment and commercial uses as a key activity in the town centre;
- c) a focus on 'placemaking' to create attractive and sustainable communities, with high quality services and public realm, to create attractive places to live, work, visit and invest.

An established measure of the employment 'health' of a settlement is a measure called the 'jobs ratio'. This is the relationship between the resident workers and the number of jobs in any defined area. It is the aim of the County Development Plan to increase the County's job ratio to 70% by 2031, which will require some locations to exceed this level, and even to exceed 100%, in order to counter balance areas, such as smaller settlements and rural areas, that would be unlikely to reach such a high level of employment.

While the jobs ratio in Blessington has improved between 2016 and 2022 reflecting the important role this town plays in the economic development and support of its hinterlands, the ratio in Blessington falls short of what would be desired given its position in the County Economic Development Hierarchy and its strategic economic importance in West Wicklow.

It is important that a high level of employment is maintained into the future as the resident population grows, and is developed further in an environmentally sustainable manner, with a particular focus on growing employment and businesses in the town centre and other already built up areas, densifying existing employment areas, and targeting growth at locations that are the most sustainable in terms of accessibility. In this regard, it is considered appropriate to plan for a jobs ratio increase by 50% in Blessington, as shown in the table to follow.

This table also shows the minimum amount of land recommended to be zoned for new employment in Blessington. While it is assumed that a proportion of jobs growth will occur in the town centre and other mixed use lands that are not specifically zoned for employment alone, or will occur on existing developed employment land through intensification, sufficient undeveloped land will be zoned for new employment to meet all of the jobs growth required, on the assumption of 80 employees per hectare, plus an additional 'headroom' of 100% to ensure that there will be no shortage of site choice for developers of new employment.

LEVEL 3	Jobs ratio 2022	Targeted future jobs ratio 2031	Jobs target for settlement in 2031	Jobs growth 2022-2031	Minimum quantum of zoned employment land (ha)
Blessington	60%	90%	2,000	750	19

### Economic Development & Employment Objectives

- Increase the quality and range of employment opportunities by facilitating developments that involve foreign and local investment in a variety of forms, including 'people' and 'product' intensive industries. The Council will particularly support the development of 'people' intensive employment generating developments at locations served by sustainable and active modes of transport, those that provide for the local convenience and social service needs of the area and those that provide for the needs of tourists and visitors. The Council will support the development of 'product' intensive industries at appropriate locations, and will particularly support developments based on the use of a local rural resource.
- To facilitate and support the highest degree possible, all forms of employment creation on appropriately zoned land and to promote the intensification of activities on existing employment sites and to take advantage of the existing economic assets of the town in order to stimulate further employment within the area.
- Promote in the first instance the growth of economic activity and employment in the town centre and built up parts of the town; and where a demand for 'greenfield' employment development is identified, to ensure zoned, serviced land is available in appropriate locations in accordance with the zoning principles of the County Development Plan.
- To encourage the redevelopment of town centre and brownfield sites for enterprise and employment creation throughout the settlement and to consider allowing 'relaxation' in normal development standards on such sites to promote their redevelopment, where it can be clearly demonstrated that a development of the highest quality, that does not create an adverse or unacceptable working environment or create unacceptable impacts on the built, natural or social environment, will be provided.
- To encourage and facilitate the development of small to medium scale indigenous industries and services at appropriate locations within Blessington. The Council acknowledges that the development of small scale projects with long term employment potential are important in sustaining both urban and rural settlements in County Wicklow and as such, the Council will adopt a proactive and flexible approach in dealing with applications on a case-by-case basis.
- Support a shift towards low carbon and climate change resilient economic and enterprise activity, reducing energy dependence, promoting the sustainable use of resources and leading in the Smart

Green Economy.

- To promote high quality housing, community facilities and a built and natural environment that is attractive to indigenous and foreign industry and employees.
- To promote tourist developments at suitable locations that are of an appropriate scale and design, particularly developments that are associated with the tourism products or themes associated with the town and its hinterland and maximise the town's location as a destination and gateway between the tourism assets.
- To facilitate home-working, the development of co-working hubs and innovative forms of working, which reduce the need to travel.

## **A2.6 Social & Community Development**

The provision of accessible social and community infrastructure, including open space and leisure / recreational facilities, contributes to the quality of life for all and it is important that existing and future residents of the town and its catchment are provided with such facilities. High quality social and community services in an area can also make a place more attractive for the establishment of new businesses and to encourage long stay visitors. In particular, new community facilities will be required to be provided in tandem with the development of significant new residential developments and new neighbourhoods.

### **Community Infrastructure & Open Space Objectives**

- To facilitate the development of a range of high quality community and recreational facilities that meet the needs of the local population, and in particular to require that new community and recreational facilities are developed in tandem with new housing, through the implementation of the objectives of Chapter 7 of Volume 1 of the County Development Plan.
- To manage the pace of new housing developments commensurate with existing / planned community facilities.
- To support existing clubs and sporting organisations in providing continued sports activities for those living in the settlement and the wider area;
- To support the creation of functional and healthy public spaces and pedestrian routes within the settlement and to other nearby settlements, in order to maximise opportunities for outdoor activity.
- Where projects for new recreation projects (such as riverine parks, greenways, walking routes, trails etc) identified in this plan are not already provided for by existing plans / programmes or are not already permitted, then the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account planning need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the overall plan relating to sustainable development.

## **A2.7 Built Heritage & Natural Environment**

The protection and enhancement of heritage and environmental assets through this plan will help to safeguard the local character and distinctiveness of the town and its surroundings, providing local economic, social and environmental benefits. The maps included in this plan include heritage maps indicating the key natural and built heritage features.

### **Heritage Objectives**

- To protect natural, architectural and archaeological heritage, in accordance with the objectives set out in the County Development Plan;
- To enhance the quality of the natural and built environment, to enhance the unique character of the town and environs as a place to live, visit and work;

- To promote greater appreciation of, and access to, local heritage assets;
- To ensure the protection and enhancement of natural habitats, cultural heritage, ecological resources and biodiversity and in particular, to safeguard the integrity of European Sites, watercourses and rivers in the area.

## **A2.8 Service Infrastructure**

The provision of transport and services infrastructure is essential to the development of any town, providing ease of movement within towns, connecting towns to surrounding areas and providing sufficient service infrastructure capable of meeting the demands of the resident, commercial and employment populations. Adequate infrastructure is vital for the facilitation of the future development of Blessington. This includes water services, effective road and public transport networks, energy, telecommunications, waste management etc.

The County Development Plan, and various programmes of the Council's Transportation and Environmental Services Departments, as well as outside agencies such as Uisce Eireann and the National Transport Authority, provides detailed strategies and objectives for a whole range of service infrastructure. As these provisions apply directly to Blessington it is not considered necessary to restate all of these objectives; any objectives included in these plans are those considered necessarily to emphasise assets or restate objectives that have particular relevance and importance to the area.

### **Service Infrastructure Objectives**

- Promote a development pattern and the development of enhanced infrastructure to facilitate walking, cycling and increased use of public transport; in particular:
  - to support and facilitate the implementation of measures to improve walking / cycling opportunities within the town and between the town and other centres of population and activity in the wider area;
  - to support and encourage actions to address through traffic on the main street, to reduce and slow traffic through the centre and give priority to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and public realm improvement's;
  - to promote the delivery of improved public transport by facilitating the needs of existing or new bus providers with regard to bus stops and garaging facilities (unnecessary duplication of bus stops on the same routes / roads will not be permitted); facilitating the provision of bus priority where a requirement for such is identified; requiring the developers of large-scale new employment and residential developments in the town to fund / provide high quality pedestrian and cycling facilities to public transport routes / nodes;
  - to support design solutions and innovative approaches in order to reduce car dependency;
  - to cooperate with NTA and other relevant transport planning bodies in the delivery of a high quality, public transport systems.
  
- Facilitate and promote the delivery of reliable and effective water, drainage, energy, waste management and communications infrastructure to service the existing and future development needs of the settlement. In particular:
  - to support and facilitate the improvement and increased resilience of the water distribution, supply and storage systems;
  - to support and facilitate any necessary upgrades to the wastewater collection and pumping systems (where required);
  - ensure the separation of foul and surface water discharges in new developments through the provision of separate networks. Ensure the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and in particular, to ensure that all surface water generated in a new development is disposed of on-site or is attenuated and treated prior to discharge to an

- approved surface water system;
  - to promote energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy projects.
- To ensure that only appropriate land uses are provided on lands identified as being at risk of flooding.
  - Where projects for new infrastructure identified in this plan are not already provided for by existing plans / programmes or are not already permitted, then the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account planning need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the plan relating to sustainable development. A Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken where appropriate, for relevant new road infrastructure in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection, and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.

## A.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The key factors that will drive the development strategy for Blessington are:

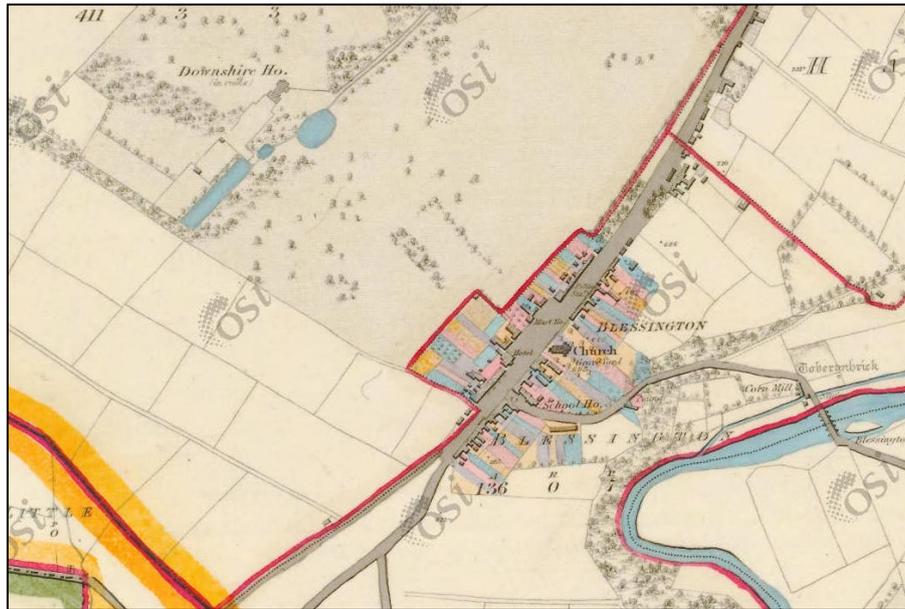
- the development and growth strategies / objectives for the settlement as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022 (derived from the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy) detailed in Section A.2 above;
- the findings and recommendations set out in the various studies / assessments accompanying this plan, including in particular the SEA, AA and SFRA,
- the historic pattern of development and the physical context (including any constraints to future development).

### A3.1 Historical Development

Blessington was developed as an estate town by Archbishop Michael Boyle from 1667 onwards, a short distance north from the now-deserted medieval settlement at Burgage More. The name 'Blessington' is thought to have derived from a false etymology of the Irish name 'Baile Coimín'. 'Coimín' is similar to an Irish word for blessing, 'Comaoin', so it was through that 'Baile Coimín' had the meaning of 'town of the blessings', hence 'Blessington'. Rather, 'Coimín' is the Irish version of the surname 'Comyn', which may refer to a 12<sup>th</sup> century Archbishop by that name. Burgage More was previously the centre of settlement in the area, being visible on maps of the 1658 Down Survey. Remains of a castle can be seen at the site to this day. Traces of earlier settlement are evident in nearby Glen Ding Forest, including a ringfort known locally as 'Rath Turtle Moat'.

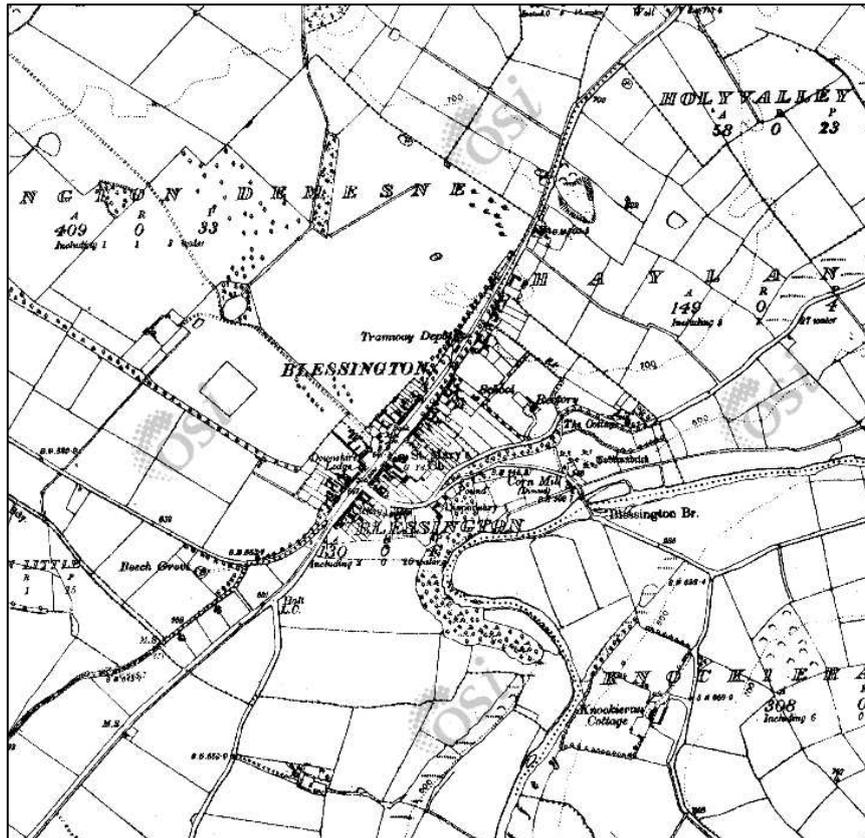
Upon acquiring the land, Archbishop Boyle built a dwelling between Glen Ding and the River Liffey. This house was surrounded by an early example of a demesne landscape and deerpark (alternatively referred to as either Blessington House/Demesne or Downshire House/Demesne). Blessington Main Street was developed in a linear fashion along the eastern boundary of this demesne, and continued to develop around the junctions of Kilbride and Naas Roads. The demesne and settlement eventually passed into the ownership of the Hill family, the Marquises of Downshire, beginning the association of that name with Blessington. Several fine buildings on Blessington Main Street were constructed in the period of their ownership, including the Market House (Credit Union).

Downshire House was burned during the 1798 rebellion and was not rebuilt, with the earliest Ordnance Survey mapping showing that the house was in ruins. However, many heritage buildings remain on Blessington Main Street, including St. Mary's Church of Ireland (parts of which may date from the establishment of the town), the former Downshire Hotel (originally the home of an agent of the Downshire estate), and the above mentioned Market House, which provides the backdrop to Market Square in the centre of the town. Many other buildings in the historic core of Blessington date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the wider area, further estate houses were built over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, including Tulfarris House, Baltyboys House, and the Palladian mansion of Russborough House.



**Historic Map No.1: Blessington - Historic 6-inch Map First Edition**

The Naas Road was laid along its current route by the time of the last edition of Ordnance Survey 6-inch mapping, having followed a more southerly route previously. Naas Road initially followed Dempsey's Lane onto Blessington Main Street, rather than directly meeting the N81 further south in the present. Kilbride Road was extended to meet Red Lane and onwards to Threecastles, providing an alternative route to Manor Kilbride on the western banks of the Liffey. Notably, the last edition 6-inch historic mapping shows the location of a 'Tramway Depot'. This was the original terminus for the Dublin & Blessington Steam Tramway, which ran between Terenure and Blessington from 1888. This was later extended to Poulaphouca as the Blessington & Poulaphouca Steam Tramway. The Tramway ceased operations in December 1932.



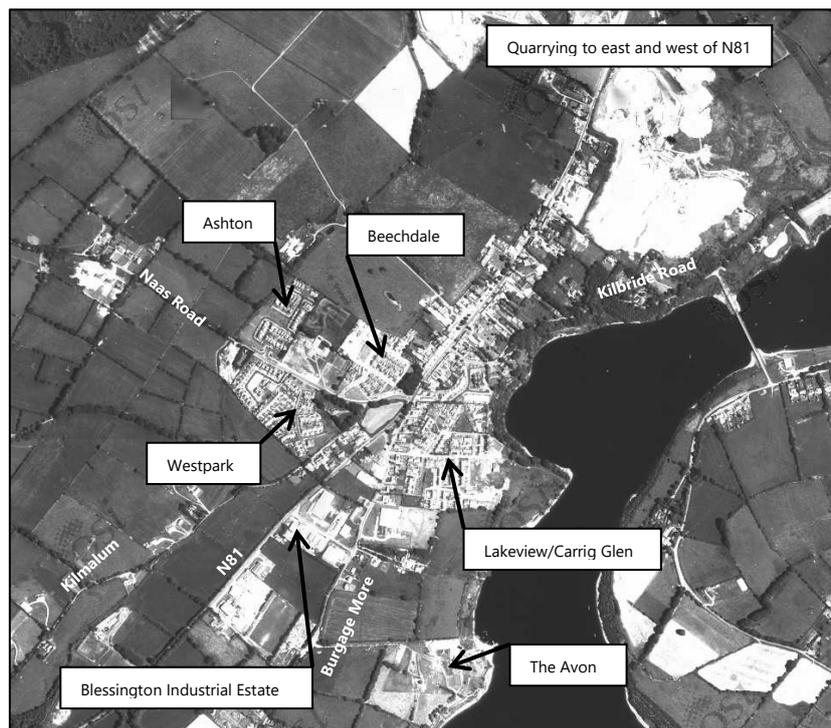
**Historic Map No. 2: 6-inch Last Edition**

Several significant changes in the historical development of Blessington took place over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By far the most significant change was the creation of the Poulaphouca Reservoir by the ESB during the 1930s and 1940s. Now a designated Special Protection Area, the reservoir radically changed the landscape around Blessington, transforming the settlement from a town on the banks of the Liffey to a lakeside settlement. While many routes out from Blessington already comprised of bridges over the Liffey, some routes were either substantially changed or entirely severed. The direct route from Troopersfield/Burgage More towards Baltyboys was severed. Further south, a direct route between Russborough and Tulfarris was severed. The 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the development of sand and gravel quarrying in close proximity to the settlement, largely on the 'Blessington Delta' geological feature in an arc around the northern part of the town.

### **Modern development patterns**

The late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginning of suburban housing development, primarily along the Naas Road, and the development of industrial areas to the south of the town. In the mid-2000s, the development of the former Blessington Demesne began, leading to the construction of Newtown Square and the existing sections of the Blessington Inner Relief Road. The entirety of the former Blessington Demesne was not fully developed in this period, although elements of a road network to serve the overall development were constructed and remain in-situ, including partially constructed link roads to the west of Blessington. The result of this pattern of development is a large area served (or partially served) by an existing road network with peripheral developments beyond, that would benefit from better integration into the built-up area of Blessington. Blessington Main Street remains the main arterial route through the settlement for traffic on the N81.

In recent decades, further tourist attractions have developed in proximity to the lakeshore in Blessington. This includes the Avon resort, to the south east of the town centre in Burgage, and the existing sections of the Blessington Greenway, which passes along Troopersfield Road, Burgage More, and along the Lakeshore to Russborough House. Wicklow County Council is committed to enhancing tourism infrastructure and attractions in the Blessington area, particularly those related to the Blessington Lakes and those that bring benefit to the villages surrounding the lakes, subject to the utmost protection of the environment, including water quality and natural habitats. The road network in the vicinity of the Avon and the existing greenway can be constrained in places, and the area can feel disconnected from the overall settlement, being away from the built-up area. As the town centre of Blessington should remain the primary visitor service centre in the area, connections between the built-up area and the existing greenway (and associated tourism services) may require improvement over the plan period in order to cater to possible extension of the greenway and future tourism projects in the Blessington lakeside area.



**Historic Map No. 3: OSi 1995**



**Historic Map No. 4: Google Earth 2022**

### **Impact on Future Development Options**

The historical pattern of development within Blessington creates path dependencies that will shape the future development of the settlement within a variety of constraints and opportunities. The 'estate town' development of Blessington Main Street, with long narrow plots behind each street facing building, now provides a significant area of vacant or underutilised land in the historic heart of the settlement that could provide town centre infill and regeneration opportunities.

The development of the Poulaphouca Reservoir creates boundaries to the development to the south and east of the settlement, and restricts movements in these directions.

Furthermore, the development of quarrying over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century creates a barrier in a large arc around the north of the settlement. However, unlike the reservoir, these quarrying lands could provide development opportunities as gravel resources are depleted and quarry remediation takes place.

The previous development on the former Blessington Demesne results in areas of disjointed development connected by an existing and partially constructed road network which also services significant areas of greenfield and vacant land in proximity to the town centre.

Development opportunities could be realised using this pre-existing infrastructure, including infill opportunities closer to the town centre. The initial development of tourism facilities and the Blessington Greenway, and future tourism projects in the Blessington Lakeside area, will result in continued tourism activity in Burgage More. A degree of development may be desirable in this area to better integrate tourism facilities with Blessington Town Centre, subject to the appropriate protection of sensitive environmental assets in the area.

On the basis of the above, options for the future development of Blessington can be developed within the following parameters created by historical development patterns:

- The full utilisation of backland plots along Blessington Main Street should be a priority for new development.
- The serviced vacant and greenfield land to the west of Blessington will likely be the location for the most intensive development within the settlement, to capitalise on the pre-existing infrastructure in the area and to integrate currently disjointed areas of development.
- Development opportunities should be explored to the south and east of the settlement to integrate tourism facilities into the rest of the settlement, however the priority over the plan period will generally not focus on this area and certain land uses may not be appropriate in the vicinity of the Poulaphouca Reservoir.
- Development opportunities, including measures to improve permeability, should be explored on current and former quarry lands.

### **A3.2 Physical Context**

The assessment to follow considers only currently undeveloped lands; physical constraints / barriers are not deemed to be pertinent within existing built up areas, although it is acknowledged that localised issues may arise that could affect the developability of certain sites (e.g. access / traffic safety, site conditions, archaeology).

#### **Natural Environment**

The natural environment provides a habitat for a variety of species and is a source of amenity for human settlements. Despite the fact that Blessington is urban in character, the area includes several elements of the natural environment that impact on the future development of the area, most significantly the Poulaphouca Reservoir Special Protection Area and associated low-lying wetlands. This SPA includes Greylag Goose and Lesser Black-backed Gull as qualifying interests. There was an observed 78% decrease in the numbers of Greylag Goose present in the SPA over the period 1995-2016, therefore it is imperative that the integrity of the SPA, and wider areas of potential habitat, is appropriately conserved in developing strategies for the future development of Blessington. In general, the largest quantum of intensive development will be directed away from areas in proximity to Poulaphouca Reservoir, towards the west of the settlement, although a limited level of development may be possible to the south east of the settlement with mitigating objectives and appropriate buffer zones.

Other natural assets include Glen Ding Hill and Forest, an area of significant archaeological importance, the under-construction town park in the former Blessington Demesne, as well as watercourses, mature trees and substantial hedgerows within the plan area.

Apart from their intrinsic biodiversity value as habitats for a variety of plant and animal species, these elements of the environment provide direct and indirect benefits to the population of Blessington and the wider area. They are places where people can engage in recreational activities such as walking, sailing and playing informal field sports. These also provide a visual amenity that enhances the attractiveness of the settlement as a place in which to live and work. These assets are therefore worth protecting.

Each of these elements of the natural environment are utilised in some way by the settlements' population. These assets have come under pressure from development. For example, in the past it was not uncommon for watercourses to be culverted for relatively long sections for residential development. Therefore, in crafting a strategy for the future development of Blessington, appropriate buffer zones may be required to protect these important assets to maintain biodiversity value and green infrastructure services within the settlement of Blessington.

## Services & Infrastructure

Blessington is targeted for growth and the associated required growth in infrastructure to accommodate this. In relation to road infrastructure, the primary issue in the settlement is the necessity for all through traffic along the N81 to travel via Blessington Main Street. The Blessington Inner Relief Road was constructed (in part) in the mid-2000s, however it does not currently provide the desired bypassing route for through traffic as the northern and southern segments of the road have not been completed. It is a priority of Wicklow County Council to progress the completion of these two road segments. The bypassing of Blessington Main Street would allow for significant public realm enhancements that may act as a catalyst for town centre infill development. Furthermore, junctions on the N81 which currently experience capacity issues, e.g. at Blessington Business Park, would not hinder the development of the remainder of Blessington Demesne to the west of the settlement, the preferred location for intensive development over the plan period.

Water supply is currently provided to most areas of Blessington primarily by the Poulaphouca Reservoir via the Ballymore Eustace Water Treatment Plant. In the 2000s the water supply to the town was improved with the construction of two reservoirs in Glen Ding Forest and the laying of piping to connect, in the vicinity of Eadestown, to the main 1600mm trunk from Ballymore Eustace. Consultation with Uisce Éireann has indicated that there is water supply capacity available over the plan period, based on the Wicklow County Development Plan population targets. In terms of waste water, Uisce Éireann have recently completed an upgrade to Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant to c. 9,000 population equivalent, which would serve the level of growth envisioned by the Wicklow County Development Plan Core Strategy over the plan period.

## Quarries

Blessington has seen the growth of a significant sand and gravel extraction industry over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focused on the Blessington Delta geological feature in an arc across the northern boundary of the town. The N81 and Kilbride Road are the only northward roads that pass through the quarry areas from Blessington, with the quarries presenting a significant physical barrier to all other northward movement. Until such time as this area can be appropriately redeveloped, it will present a significant barrier to the northward extension of the settlement. To the west of the N81, several quarries by multiple different operators merge together into a contiguous band of extraction to the county boundary (and beyond). In parts of this area, quarrying has ceased and the land has been remediated. This remediation has retained steep slopes and quarry faces in some circumstances, which may present difficulties in redeveloping the lands and providing better permeability, although these same barriers can also present ecological benefits (e.g. sand martin habitat). To the east of the N81, a single area of quarrying known as Doran's Pit extends as far as Kilbride Road to the east. Unlike the western quarry area, Doran's Pit has a flatter ground level, with the area having been used primarily for ancillary quarry activities rather than active quarrying in recent years. As a result of this, Doran's Pit may be more readily available for intensive redevelopment in the shorter term.

In considering how and where to grow the settlement further, the physical limitations must be recognised, namely:

- Development of undeveloped lands to the east and south of the settlement needs to be carefully managed given the physical constraints presented by the Poulaphouca Reservoir and the reservoir's status as a European Site, the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA. Having regard to the characteristics of this protected site, it is important to ensure that the lands in close proximity to these sites are protected from new development and to limit the extension of existing development in this area to an appropriate level.
- Growth to the north may be constrained by former and active quarrying operations. However, these quarry lands may provide the opportunity for regeneration and development and for the provision of new movement opportunities, depending on their current remediation status / condition. Such opportunities will be identified in this plan.

- Growth to the west is constrained by Glen Ding, the adjacent forest, and the general rise in elevation in this direction. However, significant lands between the current built-up area and this area, some which is already serviced, would be suitable for development over the coming plan period and will be promoted as the area of most intensive development over the plan period.

## A.4 OVERALL STRATEGY

In light of Sections A2 and A3.1 and A3.2 above, the development strategy adopted in this plan has a number of elements:

- The key parameters for the future physical development of Blessington are based around protection of the environment, sustainability, compact growth and developing the settlement in a manner that will generate the minimal number of private car journeys and maximise walking, cycling and use of public transport.
- Consolidate the existing built pattern in Blessington by maximising the development potential of large sites close to the core and any infill sites and backland sites along the main roads within the town core of Blessington;
- To provide a framework for the future development of Blessington town centre to facilitate the development of this core area as the centre/focus of the settlement. To enhance the public realm in this centre and enhance connections and linkages to the residential areas surrounding the centre, as well as providing connections between this area and important recreational assets such as the Poulaphouca Reservoir.
- To promote and encourage the appropriate regeneration of quarry lands with a mix of uses including residential and other such uses that provide local job opportunities, and uses that support the existing town centre;
- To facilitate the appropriate development of greenfield residential lands that are serviced and serviceable within the settlement, particular to the west of the town on the grounds of the former Blessington Demesne, in a managed / phased manner so as to align with the housing / population growth targets set out in the County Development Plan and the delivery of commensurate community services;
- To provide for new employment opportunities on serviced / serviceable greenfield lands at appropriate locations that are connected to local residential areas with walking, cycling and public transport facilities. There are a number of sites that has the potential for employment growth, e.g. former quarry lands, lands in the vicinity of Blessington WWTP, and on infill sites within existing industrial estates;
- To provide for new community, educational and recreational opportunities on serviced/ serviceable greenfield lands at appropriate locations that are connected to local residential areas with walking, cycling and public transport facilities. There are a number of sites that have the potential for new schools, community infrastructure and recreation / sports facilities, primarily along a part-constructed link roads to the west of the town centre, south from the GAA grounds and towards Naas Road.
- To ensure that the lands surrounding the European Site of the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA are protected from adverse impacts arising from new development and to carefully manage and control the extension of existing development in proximity to these areas. Generally, zoning for new development will only be provided for above the 194m contour adjoining the lakeshore.
- To rationalise and consolidate the settlement boundary of Blessington to omit extensive areas of lands previously zoned AG 'Agricultural Lands' in the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013, where possible, as the objectives of the Wicklow County Development Plan in relation to the rural area already applies to these areas. AG 'Agriculture', shall be retained within the plan boundary only where necessary to create a zoned bridge to OS2 'Natural Areas' zoned lands e.g. lands in the vicinity of the lakeshore or the intervening lands between the town and Glen Ding.

## **PART B    SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- B.1    TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION**
- B.2    HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**
- B.3    ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- B.4    TOURISM**
- B.5    COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
- B.6    HERITAGE, BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
- B.7    INFRASTRUCTURE**
- B.8    ZONING**

### **B.1    TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION**

This section will set out the objectives for the sustainable development of the Blessington’s town centre and retail that are relevant to and implementable through a local land-use plan.

The town centre and retail strategies, objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the Blessington area. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- The role of town centres and strategies for realising successful centres;
- Regeneration and renewal
- Placemaking
- Public realm
- Compact development
- Universal design
- The County Retail Strategy
- Objectives for town centres and retail including the design of new developments and the appropriate design and location for new retail

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; and the objectives to follow are those considered necessarily to emphasise assets or restate objectives that have particular relevance and importance to the area.

#### **Blessington Town Centre**

Blessington Town Centre constitutes the historic core of the settlement, concentrated around Blessington Main Street, Kilbride Road, and Market Square. In recent decades, the town centre has expanded significantly with the development of Newtown Square on lands associated with the former Blessington Demesne. The town centre is the primary focus within the settlement for a wide range of activities including retail, dining/public houses, banking, public administration, religious services, education, and residential uses.

Blessington Town Centre currently experiences high volumes of traffic passing through the area along the N81, with a significant area within the town centre dedicated to on-street and surface car parking. Several buildings and sites are vacant along Blessington Main Street, including notable heritage buildings such as the former Downshire Hotel and the former Ulster Bank. There are significant regeneration opportunities presented by the potential re-use of vacant structures, the redevelopment of empty street frontages and back land plots to rear of town centre properties, and the reconfiguration of car parking areas to provide focal points for pedestrian and retail activity in a vibrant and attractive town centre environment.

## **Blessington Town Centre First Plan**

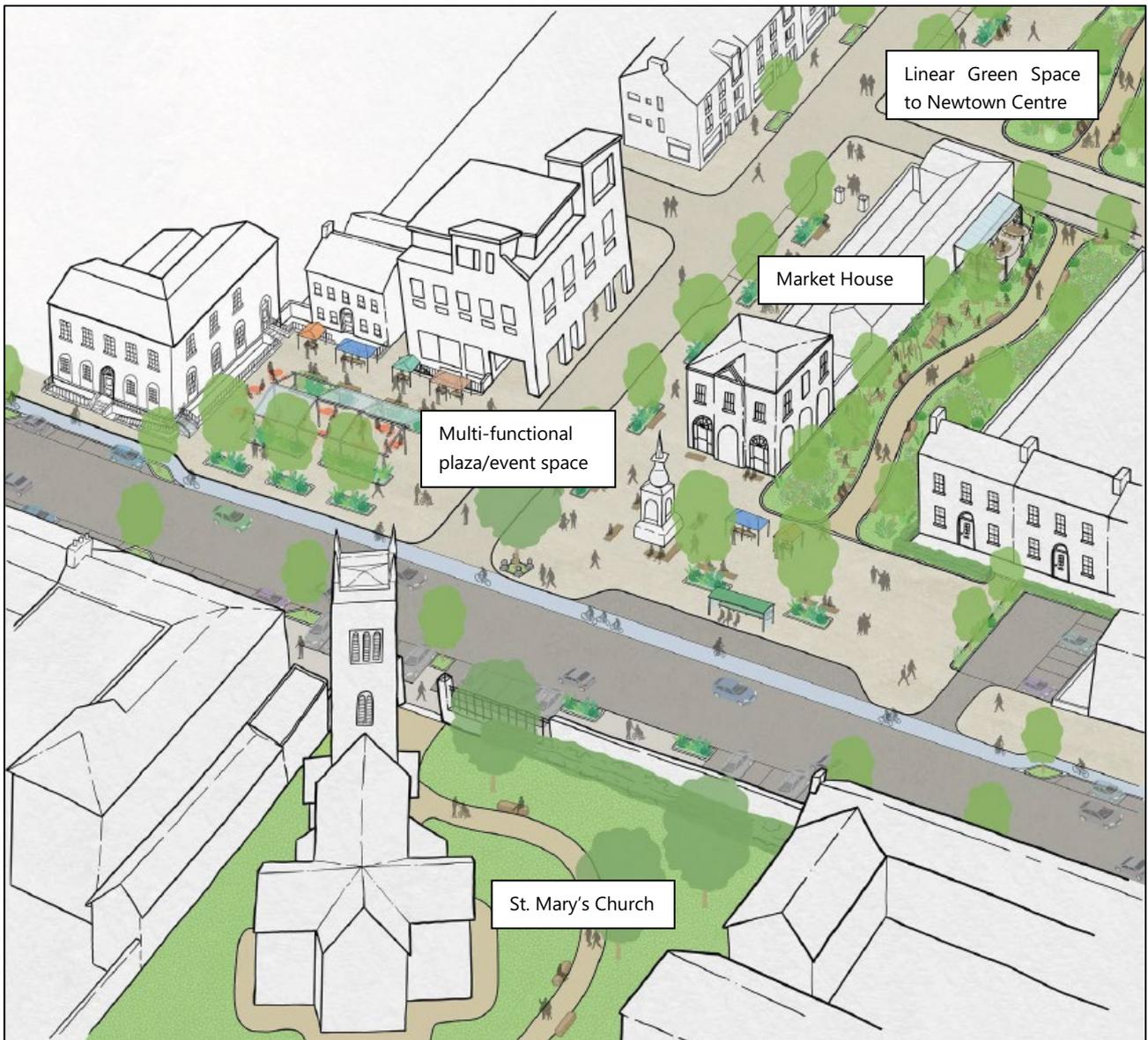
In December 2021, Blessington was designated Wicklow's only 'pathfinder' town for the emerging Town Centre First (TCF) policy approach for Irish towns. This led to the preparation of the Blessington Town Centre First Plan in February 2024 (see accompanying Appendices), which builds on previous town centre health checks and sets out a range of projects for the improvement of Blessington Town Centre with identified funding streams. The Blessington Local Area Plan is a land use framework and is not an 'action plan'. As such, the full range of projects included in the TCF plan is not required to be integrated into the Local Area Plan. However, where identified actions or projects in the TCF Plan may require support in a statutory land use framework, such matters will be included in the Blessington Local Area Plan.

## **Public Realm**

Footpath widths are not consistent throughout Blessington Town Centre, and in some cases can be constrained or are lacking on both sides of a road. Furthermore, historical issues in relation to maintenance and the private ownership of Newtown Square have resulted in areas of paving and signage being in poor condition, as identified in a 2019 Street Route Accessibility Audit. Many (though not all) of the issues raised in that 2019 audit could be addressed as part of a comprehensive public realm project on Market Square and its immediate vicinity on Blessington Main Street. Furthermore, Market Square and Newtown Square currently present as two distinct areas that are visually and spatially poorly connected to one another. Improvements could involve the provision of a linear green space visually linking the two developments, and the spatial integration of the two areas by infill development on surface car parking that currently divides the squares.

Such a public realm improvement project is proposed in the Blessington Town Centre First Plan and the Local Area Plan will facilitate and support its implementation. Public realm and other road improvement schemes within Blessington could also provide an opportunity to underground cabling along Blessington Main Street.

While the improvement of the Market Square is a key element of the town centre regeneration strategy for Blessington, any alterations to the layout and public usage of the Square shall be determined by Wicklow County Council and the Elected Members of Baltinglass MD, taking into account the views and needs of residents and business owners in area, who will be consulted through any future consent processes.



**Figure B.1.1: Illustrative concept for public realm enhancements to Market Square and Blessington Main Street as proposed by the Blessington Town Centre First Plan. The above image should not be considered a final design.**

### **Movement in Blessington Town Centre**

While transport matters are more generally dealt with in Section B.6 below, and in the accompanying Blessington Transport Assessment, certain projects and objectives have the potential to have a transformative effect on Blessington Town Centre. The completion of the northern and southern sections of the Blessington Inner Relief Road (BIRR) would significantly alter movement patterns in the town centre and allow for a substantial reduction in through traffic passing through the area. The reduction of through traffic would allow a considerable reallocation of road space from private vehicular traffic to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport. This reallocation of road space would provide the opportunity to significantly improve active travel infrastructure and the public realm along the entirety of Blessington Main Street beyond the Market Square area, as proposed by the Blessington Main Street N81 Road Safety Improvement Scheme. Furthermore, the reconfiguration of traffic movements around Newtown Square (see below) alongside the redevelopment of areas of surface car parking would transform this area from one that is currently

dominated by cars to one more pedestrian-focused in character and result in additional town centre development sites. The evolution of patterns of movement and the potential of enhanced 'lingering space' within the town centre could stimulate footfall and retail activity in the area.

## Retail in Blessington

The County Development Plan sets out the retail hierarchy for the County in line with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. New retail provision should accord with the County Development Plan retail hierarchy. Retail development should be appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement it is located in. Blessington has been identified as a Level 3 Town Centre (Key Service Centre) in the County Wicklow Retail Hierarchy and Strategy. This section sets out the objectives for the sustainable development of Blessington Town Centre that are relevant to and implementable through a local land-use plan.

Blessington provides retail services to a wide rural catchment. The town is relatively well served by convenience shops including Supervalu, Aldi and Dunnes Stores. The comparison offer is more limited and provided by small independent shops on the Main Street, a small number of new shops in the new town centre development, and the comparison element of the Dunnes Stores unit. It is the vision that Blessington will be the principal shopping and service destination for its wide catchment area.

Blessington is fortunate in that retail uses are currently concentrated within Blessington Town Centre, with no large out-of-centre retail activity. The current, and envisioned, spatial extent of Blessington does not indicate that such out-of-centre or 'neighbourhood centre' retail areas are currently required or desirable. The retail needs of Blessington and the wider area should ideally be accommodated within the Core Retail Area within the town centre, as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. On that basis, the Blessington 'Core Retail Area' shall be considered the priority area for retail development, while the remainder of the town centre (as zoned for such purposes) will constitute an area of secondary priority for retail development. The development of retail floorspace outside the town centre will not be encouraged.

**The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of town centre regeneration objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following objectives shall apply in Blessington:**

Town Centre Objectives	
<b>BLESS1</b>	To support and facilitate activities and developments that will improve the vitality, connectivity and vibrancy of Blessington Town Centre.
<b>BLESS2</b>	<p>To encourage the development of infill sites and back lands within Blessington Town Centre in a manner that preserves/creates fine grain building plots and presents strong urban frontages to existing and proposed streets. Active frontages at ground floor level will be encouraged. Traditional arches on Blessington Main Street should be used/reused as primarily pedestrian and cyclist passages to back lands, with vehicular traffic accessing plots from alternative locations if practical.</p> <p>Such areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Opportunity Sites as identified in this plan and the Blessington Town Centre First Plan.</li> <li>▪ Back lands of premises on Blessington Main Street facing onto Kilbride Road, between the junction with Blessington Main Street and the Rectory residential development, subject to the preservation of historic boundary walls and landscape amenity in relation to the Poulaphouca Reservoir.</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS3</b>	To support and facilitate improvements to the public realm in Blessington Town Centre to provide an attractive, comfortable environment for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport. Such improvements could include the following:

- Reductions in through traffic along Blessington Main Street
- The rationalisation and reconfiguration of car parking within Blessington Town Centre.
- The reconfiguration of traffic movements around Newtown Square.
- Improvements to the spatial and visual connectivity between Blessington Main Street, Market Square and Newtown Square
- The implementation of a comprehensive public realm scheme on Market Square and adjacent areas of Blessington Town Centre.
- The undergrounding of cabling along Blessington Main Street.

**BLESS4** To direct retail development into the Core Retail Area as a first priority, as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (or any update thereof), in line with its position in the County Retail Hierarchy & Strategy. This will be accomplished as follows:

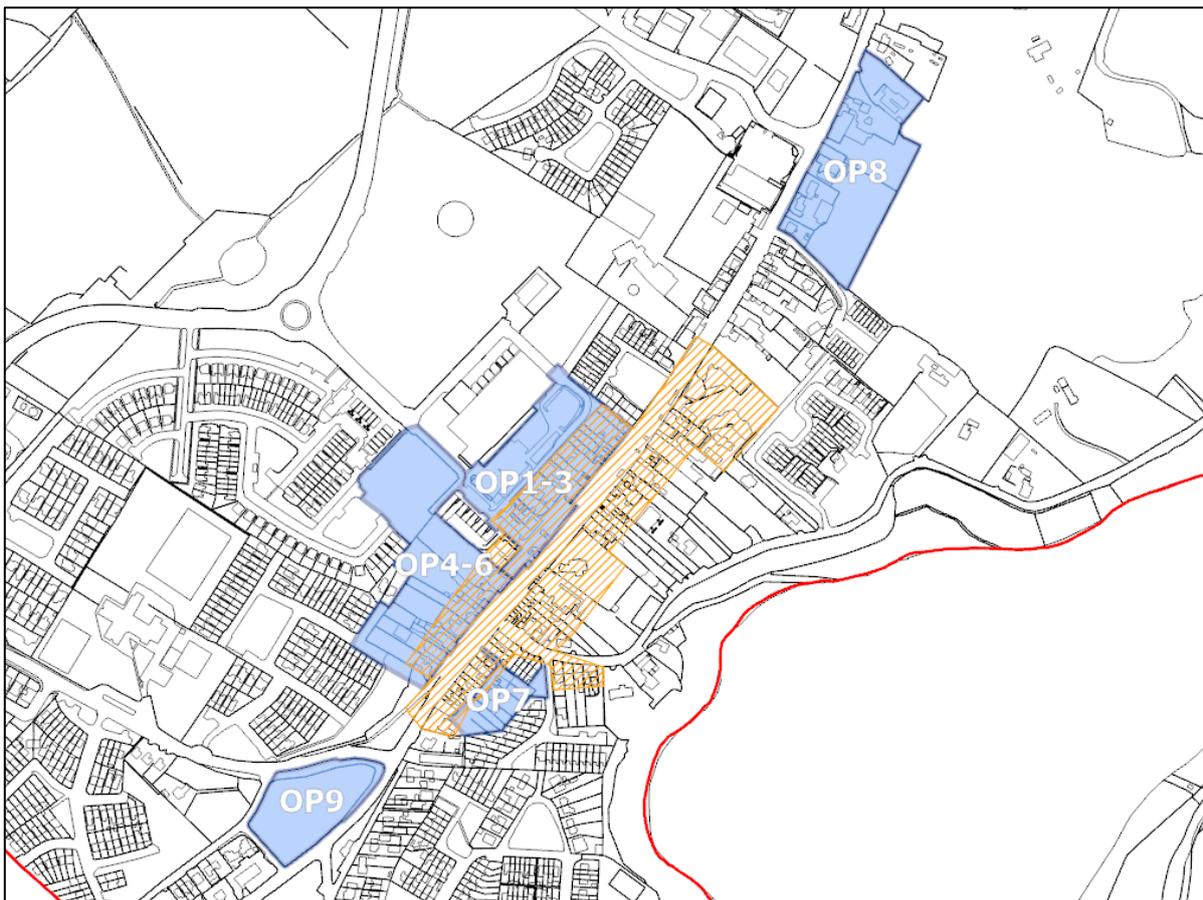
- There will be no quantitative restriction on the development of retail floorspace within the Blessington Core Retail Area.
- All developments for additional retail floorspace, which are **both outside** the Core Retail Area **and within** Blessington Town Centre (as zoned for such purposes), will be required to be accompanied by a Retail Impact Assessment in line with 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities – Retail Planning' 2012 and any updated or relevant guidelines.
- The development of retail floorspace outside of Blessington Town Centre (as zoned for such purposes) will not be facilitated unless absolutely necessary.

**BLESS5** To promote the development of opportunity sites within Blessington Town Centre in accordance with the specific criteria set out for each identified area within this Local Area Plan. Regard should also be had to concept and access plans for opportunity sites as included in the Blessington Town Centre First Plan (or any update thereof).

## Blessington Opportunity Sites (OP)

'Opportunity sites' (OP) are identified in this Local Area Plan, which would, if developed, contribute to the enhancement of the public realm, streetscape, vibrancy, vitality, and the retail/services offer in the town centre. There are numerous underutilised and unoccupied properties within Blessington Town Centre that could be redeveloped to contribute to the enhancement of the area and any development proposal for these sites should have regard to the objectives of the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan, and the Blessington Town Centre First Plan as relevant. Development proposals on individual land parcels within OP sites may be considered subject to the delivery of relevant development objectives and the safeguarding of the delivery of objectives/access on adjacent lands. Note that this Local Area Plan has included all opportunity sites identified in the Blessington Town Centre First Plan, but has also identified further opportunity sites as relevant.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of phasing or priority, while the Local Authority will support where possible the development of all OP sites during the lifetime of the plan, the focus for the Local Authority's own efforts, including developing projects and seeking funding will be OP1, 2 and 3 located in the very core of the town centre, around Market Square.



**Figure B.1.2: Town Centre Opportunity Sites (blue) and Blessington Architectural Conservation Area (hatched orange)**

<sup>4</sup> For a number of the OPs / SLOs concept sketches are shown in this plan. These are conceptual only, did not include complete site surveys/analysis, and should not be taken as a definitive guide as to the acceptability or otherwise of any access points, road layouts or building positions/designs. Any application for permission on said lands must conform to all standards and requirements of the Planning Authority, as set out in this plan and the Wicklow County Development Plan.

## Opportunity Sites – Blessington Town Centre First Plan

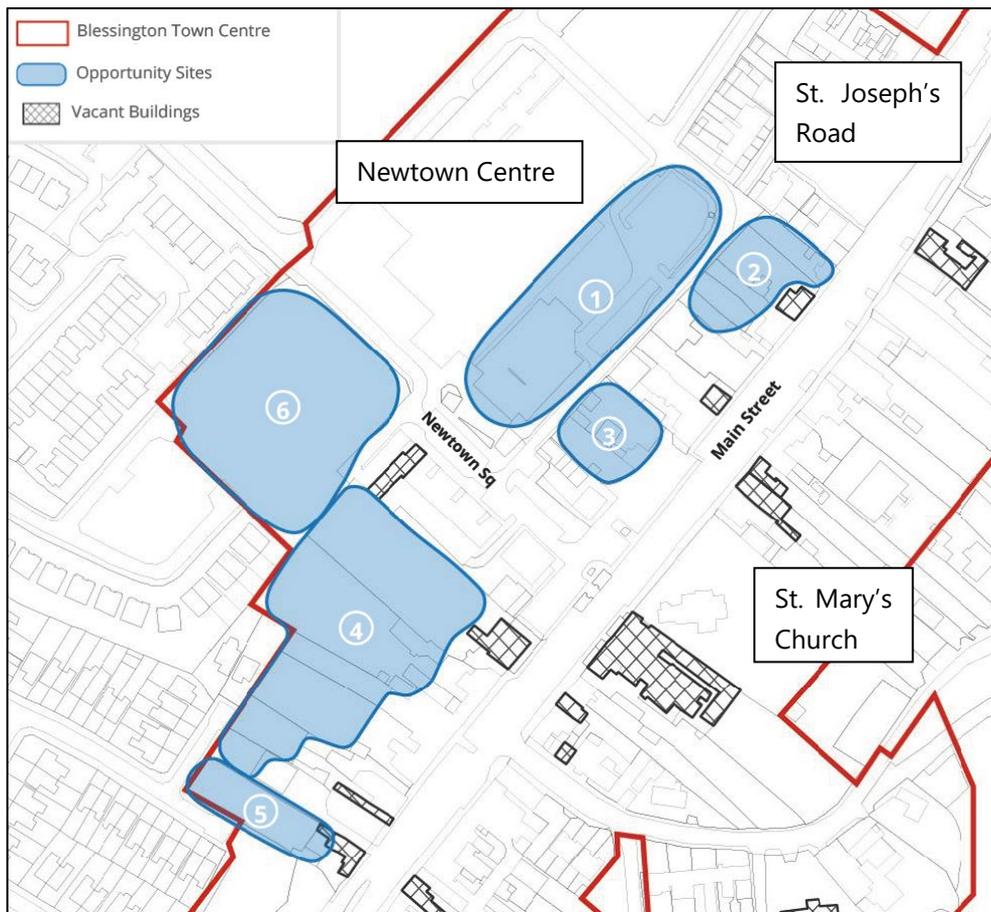
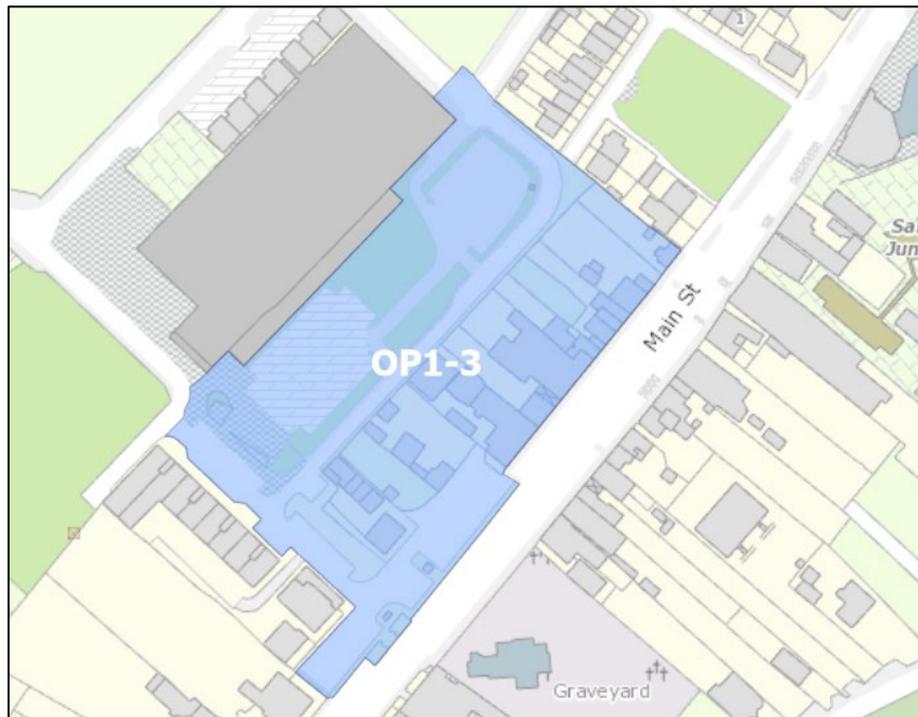


Figure B.1.3: Opportunity Sites as identified in the Blessington Town Centre First Plan



**Figure B.1.4: Opportunity sites OP1-3 and their immediate surroundings**

These opportunity sites were addressed together in the Blessington Town Centre First Plan, and consist of the following:

**OP1 - Blessington Town Centre**

This site is comprised of areas of temporary surface car parking, access roads to a multi-storey car park and residual green areas/road verges to the east of the Dunnes Stores-anchored Newtown Centre.

Currently, the site represents a spatial and visual break in the built up area between Market Square/Blessington Main Street and the Newtown Centre. The appearance of a large area of surface car parking with a varying quality of surfaces does not provide an attractive permeable area for pedestrian movement or lingering within the very centre of the settlement, in a location that should be a key area for movement between Blessington Main Street, Newtown Square/Centre and St. Mary's Senior National School.

**OP2 – Blessington Main Street**

This site is located on Blessington Main Street just south of St. Joseph's Road and is currently occupied by three derelict buildings which face onto the Main Street with approximately 30m of street frontage and significant areas of vacant back land. An existing gap in the street frontage onto Blessington Main Street (represented by two adjacent gateways to back lands) could present an opportunity for the creation of a new pedestrian/cyclist linkage between Blessington Main Street and Newtown Square, with active frontage presented along this new linkage in the development of back lands on this site.

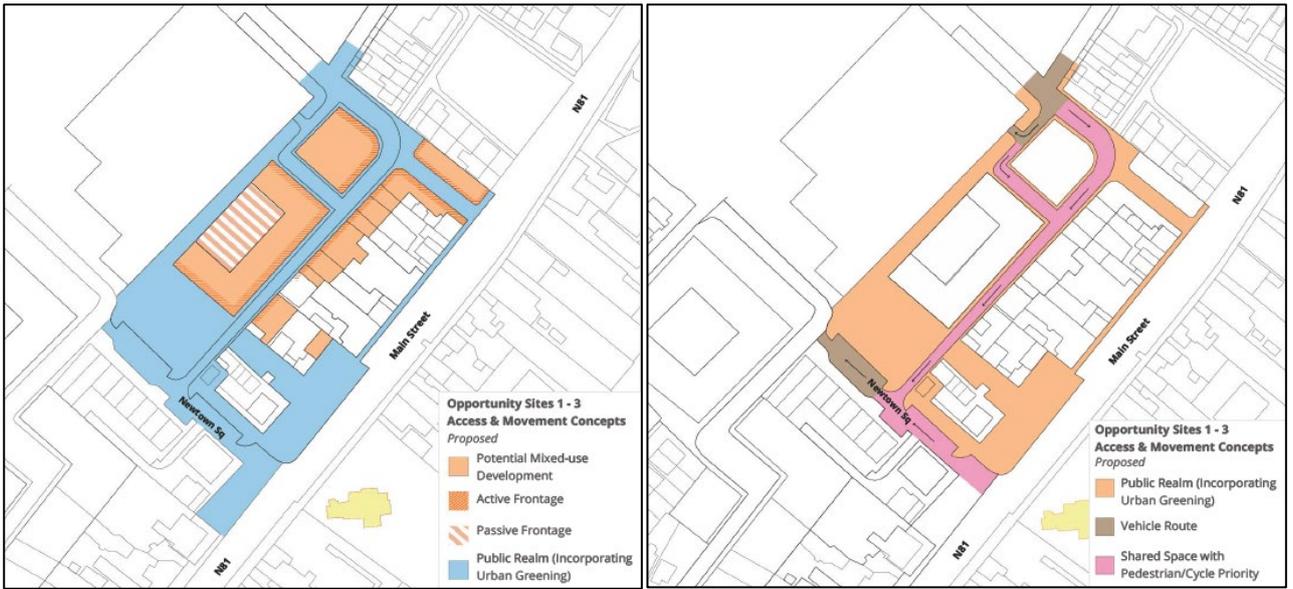
### OP3 – Market Square

This site is located along Market Square and is centred on a vernacular house known as 'The Forge' and under-utilised land to the south (between 'The Forge' and the Credit Union/Market House), to the north (between 'The Forge' and the West Wicklow House) and to the rear, with approximately 40m of street frontage onto Market Square. This site could provide the opportunity for an improved visual link between Market Square and the Newtown Centre on the southern part of the opportunity site, with infill and back land town centre development within other areas of the opportunity site.

An overall strategy for the three opportunity sites, and sites in the immediate vicinity of such (e.g. back lands of premises on Blessington Main Street between OP2 and OP3), is provided below.

#### Objectives BLESS OP1-3

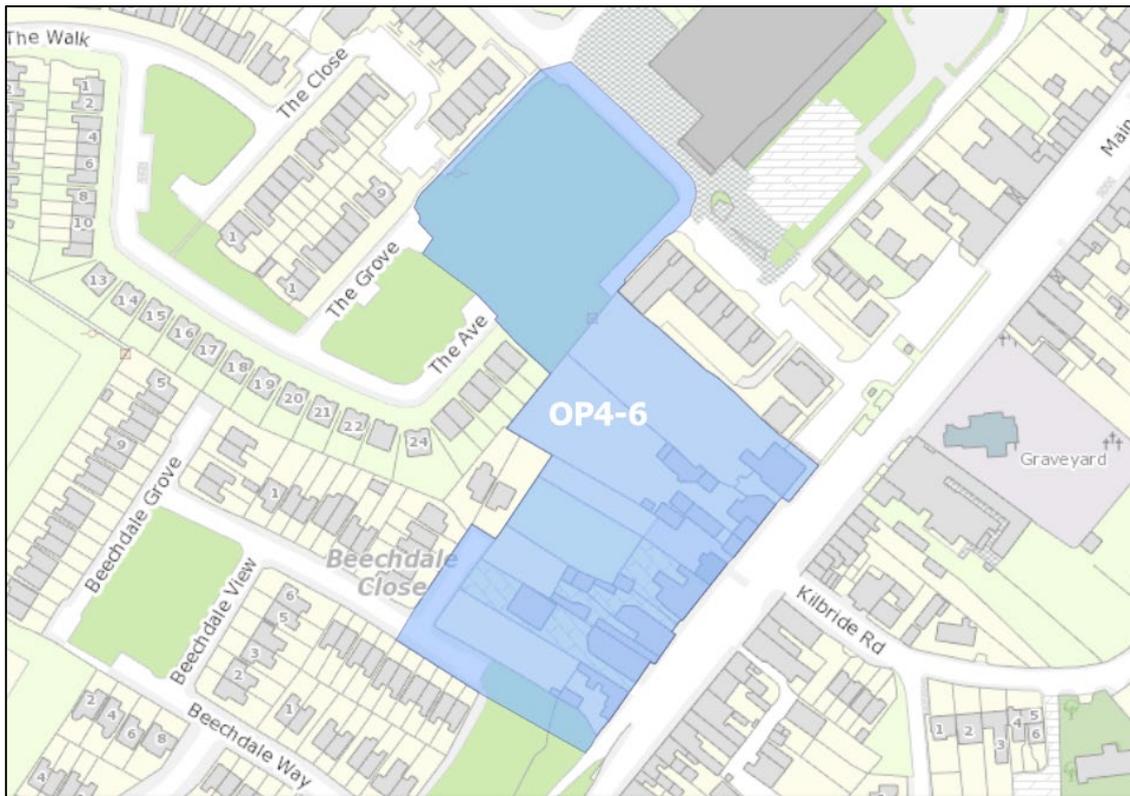
- To provide for mixed use town centre infill development (which shall include residential use, particularly on upper floors). Indicative block formats, plot lines, and active frontages are provided in the below concept parameters and access plans. Development proposals should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area.
- To provide for landmark infill development on an area of surface car parking and incidental green verges (OP1). Such development would be suitable for a wide range of commercial, retail, community, tourism and residential use, subject to the provision of adequate active uses to all frontages.
- To provide for a new pedestrian/cyclist street through an existing gap in street frontage (two adjacent gates and, if necessary, a single storey extension to the south) between Blessington Main Street and north of the Newtown Centre in OP2. Active frontages and an attractive public realm should be provided along this new pedestrian link. Existing vernacular buildings of heritage value should be retained.
- To provide for infill development on vacant sites on Market Square (OP3). Such development should provide for a linear green space on a vacant site between 'The Forge' and the Market House/Credit Union. Where possible, active frontages should be provided onto this linear green space. The linear green space shall continue towards the Newtown Centre with safe pedestrian crossing points across intervening roads/streets. The linear green space shall widen into a larger public realm/green square along the south of OP1. The **southern** gable of 'The Forge' should inform the **northern** boundary of this linear green space through OP1. Greenery and street trees can be employed to maintain the sense of enclosure around Market Square at the entrance to this linear green space.
- The development of back lands between OP2 and OP3 (i.e. the rear of intervening premises along Blessington Main Street) should provide strong urban and active frontages onto existing or proposed streets. Architectural variation between these intervening plots will be encouraged, while plot amalgamation will be discouraged.



**Figure B.1.5: Concept Parameters & Access Plan for Opportunity Sites 1-3 and immediate surroundings as per Blessington Town Centre First Plan**



**Figure B.1.6: Illustrative concept sketch of a proposed linear green space to the north of the Market House/Credit Union continuing towards the Newtown Centre**



**Figure B.1.7: Opportunity Sites OP4-6 and their immediate surroundings**

**OP4 – Downshire Lodge**

This site is comprised of the backlands of a number of properties along Blessington Main Street, from the former Ulster Bank (Downshire Lodge) to the rear of Hennessy’s Hardware (inclusive). The premises facing Blessington Main Street have a variety of uses including commercial and public administration (Garda Station). The opportunity exists for the creation of a new streetscape and infill development along the rear of these premises, accessed from a vehicular access route south of the Newtown Square apartments using an existing roadway and routes through OP6. It is crucial that the development of individual back lands in this area not ‘land lock’ or prejudice the development of intervening/adjacent back land plots, including OP5 below.

**OP5 – Dempsey’s**

This site is similar to OP4 in that it constitutes back lands to the rear of ‘Dempsey’s’, a protected structure, that is immediately adjacent to OP4 back lands. This site differs from OP4 in its vicinity to adjacent residential areas (Beechdale Close) and the site’s frontage onto Dempsey’s Lane. This could allow for the opportunity to improve pedestrian access from Beechdale Close toward Blessington Main Street. Furthermore, the frontage onto Beechdale Close could, if necessary, allow for the independent development of this opportunity site ahead of the vehicular route through OP4. It would not be desirable to allow for vehicular movement to/from this site onto Dempsey’s Lane.

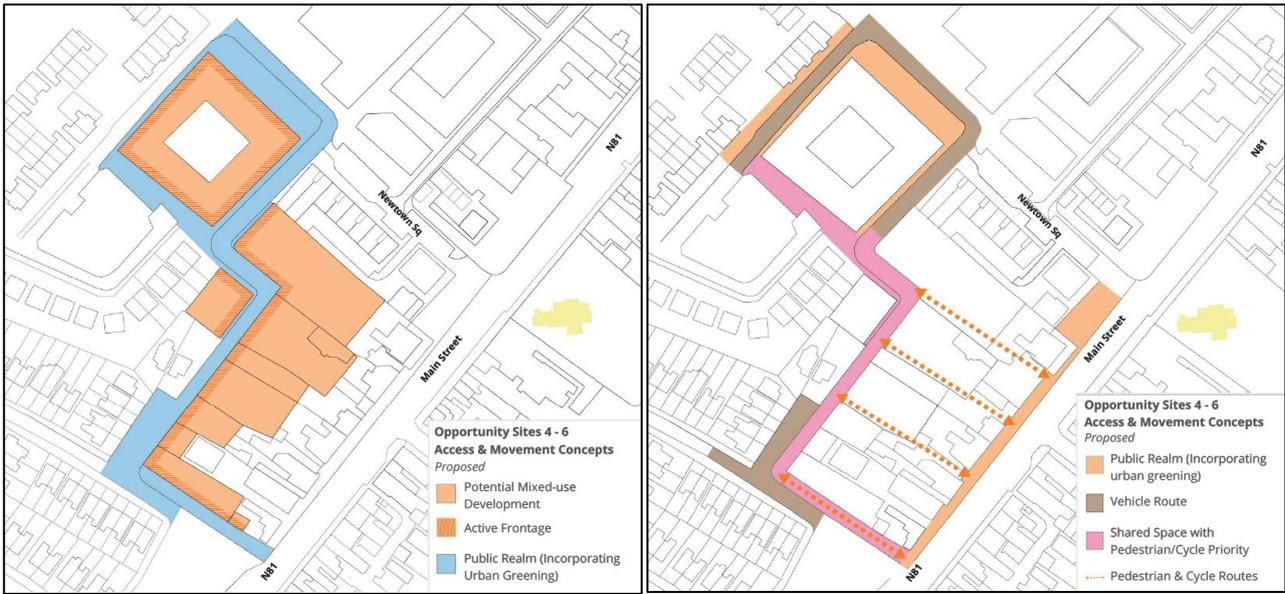
## **OP6 – Downshire Park**

This site is a large vacant site to the immediate south of the Newtown Centre and west of the Newtown Square apartments. This site has the potential to significantly enhance the town centre character of Newtown Square and mark a clear transition between the town centre and residential areas to the west and south. There is also the potential for improved connectivity between adjacent residential areas and the town centre through the site. The key development criterion for this site is the need to provide for a vehicular route through to OP4 and OP5. Though the site is located outside the Blessington Core Retail Area, it is important that an active street frontage be provided at ground floor level, which could include a range of community or non-retail commercial uses, unless a retail impact assessment can justify further retail uses in this area.

An overall strategy for the three opportunity sites OP4, OP5 and OP6, is provided below.

### **Objectives BLESS OP4-6**

- To provide for mixed use town centre infill development (which shall include residential use, particularly on upper floors). Indicative block formats, plot lines, and active frontages are provided in the below concept parameters and access plans. Development should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area.
- To provide for a new vehicular access point along the eastern boundary of OP6 to service OP4 and OP5 from Newtown Square, alongside other vehicular access points as indicated in the below access plan. The development of any individual opportunity site, or plot therein, should not 'land lock' or prejudice the development of adjacent/intervening plots. Permission will not be considered on OP6 unless the above vehicular access point/road servicing OP4/OP5 is included in the proposed development.
- To provide for new urban 'shared space' streets and pedestrian and cycle routes within OP4, OP5 and OP6 as indicated in the below access plans. Vehicular access to/from Dempsey's Lane into the opportunity sites will be discouraged.
- The development of back lands within OP4 and OP5 should provide strong urban and active frontages onto existing or proposed streets. Architectural variation between these intervening plots will be encouraged, while plot amalgamation will be discouraged.
- The development of OP6 should provide for active ground floor uses, having regard to its location outside of the Blessington Core Retail Area.
- Development within OP4 and OP5 should seek to preserve sightlines between Blessington Main Street and Glen Ding to the west, especially with regard to views through the gaps between existing buildings that are indicated below as pedestrian and cycle routes.
- The development of OP6 should have regard to sightlines between Blessington Town Centre (both in a general sense and with specific reference to St. Mary's Church of Ireland) and both Glen Ding and landscape elements of the former Blessington Demesne to the west. The building line of OP6 facing the Newtown Centre should be informed by the Newtown Square apartments to the immediate east. The development of OP6 should seek to preserve the residential amenities of adjacent existing residences.
- The development of these opportunity sites may require the reconfiguration of traffic movements around Newtown Square to remove the necessity of traffic entering the sites traversing the full circuit around the Newtown Centre/OP1. Rather, vehicular traffic should spend as little time as possible traversing the town centre, e.g. potential two-way access from the south-west corner of the Newtown to allow vehicular traffic to immediately proceed to the Blessington Inner Relief Road.



**Figure B.1.8: Concept Parameters & Access Plan for Opportunity Sites 4-6 and immediate surroundings as per Blessington Town Centre First Plan**

## Opportunity Sites - Additional Local Area Plan Opportunity Sites:

### BLESS OP7                      Horseshoe Arch & Backlands

This site is comprised of a series of back land plots behind Blessington Main Street and south of Kilbride Road. The plots are currently accessible through a horseshoe-shaped arch from the Main Street. This arch is constrained in width and height and would present difficulties in accessing back lands for larger vehicles and emergency services. Rather, the horseshoe arch would present an attractive pedestrian and cyclist access way to these backlands, with vehicular traffic requiring an alternative access point to this block of back lands.



**Figure B.1.9: Opportunity Site OP7**

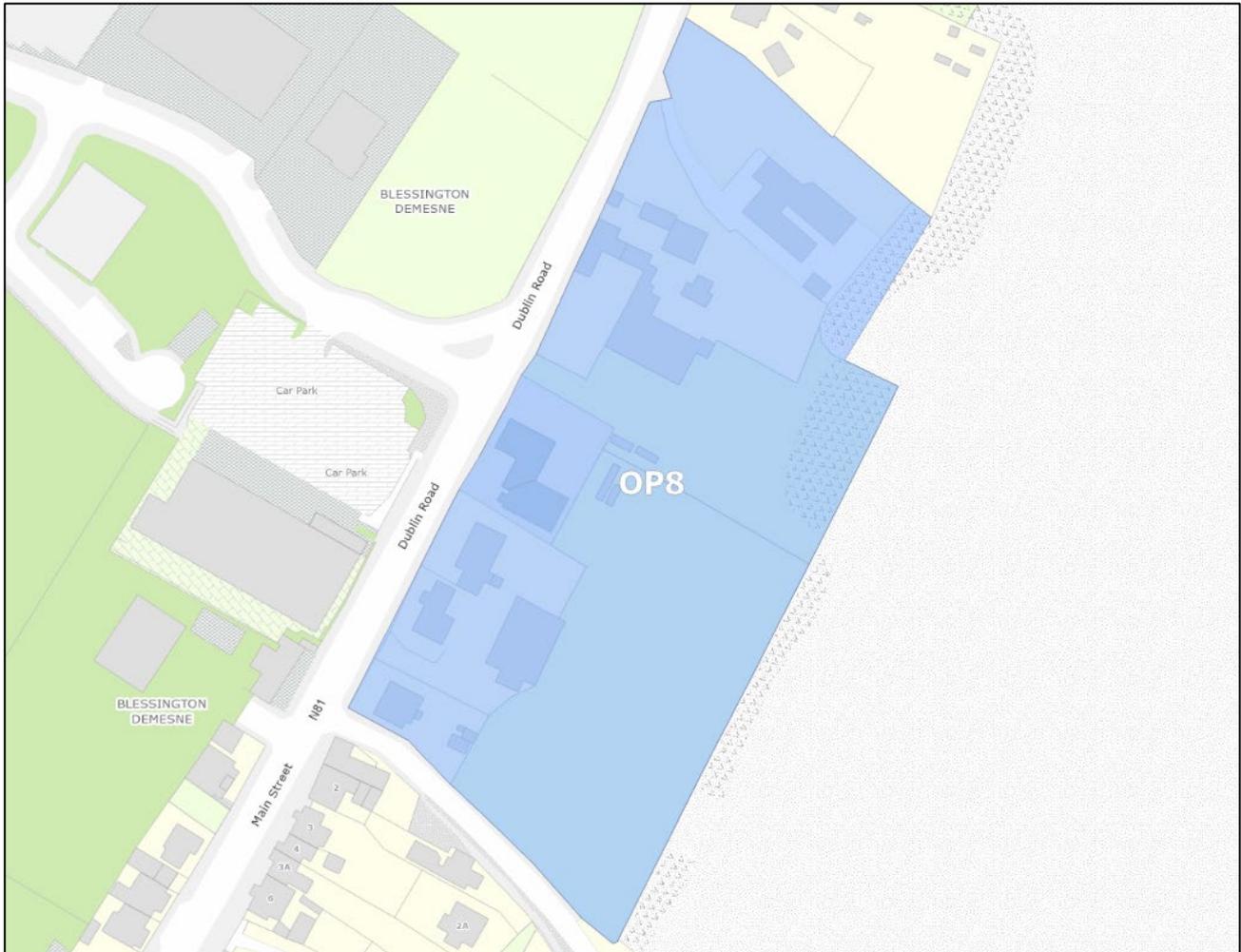
### Objectives BLESS OP7

- To support the development of these lands for mixed use town centre infill development (which could include residential use). Development should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area.
- To provide for a pedestrian and cyclist only passageway through the horseshoe arch onto Blessington Main Street.
- The development of any individual landholding, or plot therein, should not 'land lock' or prejudice the development of adjacent/intervening plots.

## BLESS OP8

### North Blessington Main Street

This site is comprised of a combination of 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban dwellings with outbuildings surrounding the Maxol service station on Blessington Main Street/N81 and older vernacular dwellings to the northern end, with commercial activity ongoing to the rear of some dwellings. Were commercial activity to cease or relocate, this would be a significant area of town centre land that could allow for redevelopment opportunities. The primary focus of redevelopment in this opportunity site should be to form high intensity residential and mixed use development to improve the activity and visual appearance of the area, and to provide for pedestrian and cyclist permeability through the site to connect to any potential redevelopment of Doran's Pit.



**Figure B.1.10: Opportunity Site OP8**

#### Objectives BLESS OP8

- To provide for mixed use town centre infill development (which shall include residential use). Development should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area, which is located a short distance to the south of the opportunity site.
- The redevelopment of this site shall provide pedestrian and cyclists routes (with two-way segregated cycle lanes) through the site to connect Blessington Main Street to any potential redevelopment of Doran's Pit.
- Redevelopment of this site should seek to retain vernacular buildings that are present and have regard to their massing, while new buildings along the western boundary should also providing strong urban and active frontages to Blessington Main Street.

## BLESS OP9 Naas Road – N81 junction

This site is comprised of a large field at the junction of the N81/Blessington Main Street and the Naas Road. The site slopes steeply to the west, with hedgerows and significant mature trees along the northern/north-western, eastern and southern boundaries. The western boundary has a modern ornamental hedge boundary. The site is located to the immediate south of Dempsey's Lane and to the west of the green space at Rockypool Villas. The redevelopment of this site provides an opportunity to link these two green spaces through the creation of a public open space on this site that is well located to the south of Blessington Main Street.



**Figure B.1.11: Opportunity Site OP9**

### Objectives BLESS OP9

- To provide for mixed use town centre infill development. Development should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area, which is located a short distance to the north of the opportunity site.
- A public park/civic space measuring c. 0.3ha (including the existing wide verges along the northern boundary) should be integrated in to the design of any development along the northern and eastern boundary of the site in a manner capable of providing linkages to the green space opposite Rockypool Villas and the green walkway at Dempsey's Lane. This public park/civic space should be provided as one contiguous area that is not bisected by access roads. There should not be excessive areas of car parking between north/northeast-facing frontages and this space.

- Hedgerows and mature trees should be retained on the site to the north/north-western, eastern, and southern boundaries. Vehicular access to the site should be via the western boundary, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.
- The potential of the site should be maximised through use of the sloping topography of the lands. Strong urban and active frontages should be provided on the northern and eastern frontages subject to maximum retention of mature trees;
- Development should have regard to the planned Blessington Pedestrian and Cycle Improvement Scheme. Sufficient space shall be left free from development to allow for potential upgrades to the existing N81/Naas Road junction.
- Any lighting proposed should have regard to best practice guidance on bats and artificial lighting.



**Figure B.1.12: Concept Plan for Opportunity Site 9**

## B.2 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

This section will set out the local objectives for the sustainable residential development in Blessington that are relevant to and implementable through a local land-use plan.

The residential development strategies, objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the Blessington. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- The Wicklow County Housing Strategy
- Social and Affordable Housing
- Sustainable Communities
- Location of new residential development
- Compact Growth and Active Land Management
- Sequence / Phasing
- Densities
- Universal Design & Lifetime Adaptable Housing
- Quality of Design in New Housing Developments

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; and the objectives to follow are those considered necessarily to emphasise assets or restate objectives that have particular relevance and importance to the area.

### Zoning for residential development

It is an aim of this plan to focus new residential development into the serviced existing built envelope of the settlement. The 'Town Centre' (TC) zone and the 'Existing Residential' (RE) zones all present significant housing opportunities through densification of the existing built up area, re-use of derelict or brownfield sites, infill and backland development. In any development proposal for this area, particular cognisance must be taken of the need to respect the existing built fabric and residential amenities enjoyed by existing residents, and maintaining existing parks and other open areas within the settlement. These central areas may not be sufficient in size and scope to accommodate all of the required long term future housing growth, therefore new 'greenfield' housing development shall also be considered.

'Edge of centre' locations will be considered the priority location for such new greenfield residential development and will generally be zoned as 'New Residential - Priority 1' (zoned RN1) while more 'out of centre' housing sites (zoned 'New Residential - Priority 2' RN2) will only be considered where **Objective BLESS7** is satisfied and on the basis of integrated housing / community facilities / open space schemes that can be well connected to the existing built up area.

In order to be cognisant of extant permissions and/or the key role that some sites will play in the delivery of essential infrastructure, it may be necessary for some 'out-of-centre' sites to remain as Priority 1.

New residential areas may be subject to 'Specific Local Objectives' (SLO) designation - the purpose of the SLO is to guide developers as to the land use / infrastructure / phasing requirements for the lands.

### Development Potential & Density

In addition to the objectives of the County Development Plan and this Local Area Plan, the development potential of any site will be subject to determination of appropriate density at the development management stage. The application of density ranges will be considered in line with the objectives of the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and relevant Planning Guidelines. Density ranges should be based on

consideration of centrality and accessibility to services and public transport; and considerations of character, amenity and the natural environment. As the density that may be possible to achieve on any given site cannot be pre-determined, this plan will not include an estimate of housing yield for any particular area / site.

### Housing Targets & Extant Planning Permissions

Having regard to the Core Strategy and population / housing targets provided therein for Blessington, there is capacity within the lands zoned TC, RE (all located in the serviced, built up envelope) and lands zoned RN1 (greenfield residential lands either within the built envelope or with extant planning permission) to meet current targets.

In order to ensure a long term supply of zoned land, in particular to ensure flexibility in the event of an increase in housing targets during the lifetime of this plan, this plan also provides for additional zoned serviced / serviceable residential lands, over and above that needed to meet current targets, zoned 'RN2 – New Residential Priority 2'. Permission will only be considered during the lifetime of this plan for RN2 lands where the following two conditions are satisfied:

- 75% of Priority 1 new residential lands (RN1) lands have been activated (i.e. consent obtained and development initiated) **or** after 3 years following adoption of the LAP, less than 50% of the RN1 lands have been activated;
- It can be shown that the housing / population generated by the proposed development would not result in the prevailing Core Strategy targets at the time of the decision to grant permission being significantly breached.

Table 3.1 below sets out the land zoned for new residential development in this plan.

**Table 3.1 Residential Zoning**

Location	Area (ha)	Status (Q3 2024)	Area Type	Zoning /Priority
Blessington Demesne East	5.4	Permission granted	Urban Neighbourhood*	RN1
Burgage More	3.6	LA Scheme consented	Urban Extension	RN1
Blessington Demesne North (SLO2 – Parcel A)	9.1	Linked to essential infrastructure	Urban Extension	RN1
Blessington Demesne West (SLO2 – Parcel B)	12.7	No development activity - Serviceable <sup>5</sup>	Urban Extension	RN1
Santryhill	2.4	No development activity - Serviceable <sup>5</sup>	Urban Extension	RN1
Milltown Gate	1.3	No development activity - Serviced	Urban Extension	RN1

\*Though this site is green field in nature and could also be accurately described as an urban extension, it is situated immediately adjacent to the existing town centre. Therefore, to maximise the efficient use of centrally located land, urban neighbourhood type development is preferable, though it is noted that the achievable density cannot be pre-determined.

<sup>5</sup> Subject to completion of northern section of Blessington Inner Relief Road

Location	Area (ha)	Servicing Status	Area Type	Zoning /Priority
Doran's Pit	12	Serviced	Urban Neighbourhood*	MU/Priority 2
Newpaddocks	1.1	Serviceable <sup>5</sup>	Urban Extension	RN2
Blessington Demesne West (SLO1)	4.2	Serviceable <sup>5</sup>	Urban Extension	RN2
Burgage More North	5.6	Serviced	Urban Extension	RN2
Burgage More South	3.6	Serviced	Urban Extension	RN2

\*Though this site is brownfield in nature and could also be accurately described as an urban extension, it is situated immediately adjacent to the existing town centre in an area where quarrying activity has taken place. Therefore, to maximise the efficient use of centrally located land, urban neighbourhood type development is preferable, though it is noted that the achievable density cannot be pre-determined.

**The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of residential development objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following objectives shall apply in Blessington:**

Blessington Specific Residential Objectives	
<b>BLESS6</b>	The priority for housing growth shall be the existing built up area of the settlement, on lands zoned 'town centre', and 'existing residential'. In cognisance that the potential of such regeneration / infill / brownfield sites is difficult to predict, there shall be no quantitative restriction inferred from this plan or the associated tables on the number of units that may be delivered within the built up envelope of the town.
<b>BLESS7</b>	Notwithstanding the zoning / designation of land for new 'greenfield' residential development (RN), permission will only be considered for RN2 Priority 2 lands where the following two conditions are satisfied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 75% of Priority 1 new residential lands (RN1) lands have been activated (i.e. consent obtained and development initiated) <b>or</b> after 3 years following adoption of the LAP, less than 50% of the RN1 lands have been activated;</li> <li>- It can be shown that the housing / population generated by the proposed development would not result in the prevailing Core Strategy targets at the time of the decision to grant permission being significantly breached.</li> </ul>

## B.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This section will set out the local objectives for the sustainable development of Blessington's economy that are relevant to and implementable through a local land-use plan. Economic opportunity is one of the overarching and cross cutting themes of the County Development Plan and this Local Area Plan. Economic development and employment is one of the key elements in delivering sustainable communities. The land-use objectives of this plan aim to support the strategies of the Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan and the Wicklow Local Enterprise Office, which have a wider remit than this LAP in the area of economic development.

The economic development and employment strategies, objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the Blessington area. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- The role of land use planning in economic development; link between land use planning and the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)
- County Economic Development Hierarchy
- General Objectives for economic development
- Specific Objectives for Employment Types

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; and the objectives to follow are those considered necessary to emphasise assets or restate objectives that have particular relevance and importance to the area.

### **Blessington: An overview of current economic assets and trends**

Blessington is an economically active town with residents employed in a wide variety of industries both within and outside of the settlement. Commerce, trade, and professional services currently represent those industries employing the greatest proportion of Blessington residents.

As set out in part A, while Blessington's job ratio is improving, there is still a high rate of commuting out of the town for employment.

CSO Dataset F7069 'Population 15 Years of Age and Older, Usually Resident and Present in the State at Work' indicates the following for the 2022 Census:

<b>Commuters into and out of Blessington CSO Urban Area 2022 (Persons)</b>	
Total Residents with a fixed place of work	2097
Persons working in the town of usual residence	600
Persons working outside the town of usual residence	1497
Persons commuting into the town to work	657
Daytime working population	1257
Net Gain/Loss in working population	-840

This commuter activity is unsurprising considering the settlement's location in the vicinity of both Dublin and Naas. However, this commuting population represents a resident working population that could be attracted to expanded employment opportunities within the settlement. Alongside this outward commuting, inward commuting also takes place to a lesser degree. Were all resident workers to be accommodated within Blessington alongside those commuting into the town from elsewhere, the daytime working population would increase to 2,754 No. workers with a fixed place of work. This would increase to 3,192 No. workers when accounting for those without a fixed place of work.

In the last few years, especially since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, remote working has become increasingly popular. In 2022, approximately one-third of Blessington residents in employment stated that they worked from home at least partly.

Blessington has an existing manufacturing sector which is strong in comparison to the overall County. The number of people employed in this industry is proportionally lower than in previous censuses, being recently overtaken as the third largest employment sector by what the CSO describes as 'Other' industries. However, manufacturing remains a strong employment generator and is a sector which is more likely to employ resident workers in comparison to other industries. The 'Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing' and 'Transport and Communications' sectors also perform well in relation to employing workers resident in the town.

Professional Services, Public Administration, and 'Other' industries are growing industries in the employment of Blessington residents. However, these industries are among those least likely to provide employment within the settlement. Many commuters out of Blessington are working in these industries, alongside those without fixed workplaces (e.g. the construction industry).

Quarrying activities have provided employment opportunities within Blessington over much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to this day. As aggregate resources dwindle in the area, emerging technologies may extend the possibility of extraction, while in other cases areas of quarry lands may provide the opportunity for substantial redevelopment for strategic employment located close to the built-up area.

Blessington Mart also serves as an important marketplace and employment attractor for the wider area around Blessington. While the absolute number of jobs located here may be low, the jobs supported by the Mart would have a much wider potential, with Mart days potentially contributing to footfall within other areas of the settlement.

By facilitating the expansion of both 'product' and 'people'-based employment activities within Blessington, a dual-track strategy can be pursued whereby product-based industries grow (and are more likely to employ workers locally), while people-based industries also grow (representing the largest cohort of resident workers who currently commute out of the settlement).

Lastly, Blessington's lakeshore location and the presence of nearby tourist attractions provide the opportunity for significant tourism employment within the settlement (see section B.5 to follow).

Key existing employment areas within Blessington include:

- Blessington Town Centre, with the highest density of jobs (per square metre of employment floorspace) and where the highest absolute numbers of jobs are located.
- Blessington Business Park/Oak Drive, which has a variety of commercial operations, but with an increasingly community focused component including health centres, fitness studios and public services.
- Blessington Industrial Estate, the primary location for manufacturing within Blessington.

Vacant units and infill sites are present to varying degrees in each of these areas.

### **The role of this Local Area Plan in Economic Development in Blessington**

The land-use objectives of this plan aim to support the strategies of the Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan and the Wicklow Local Enterprise Office, which have a wider remit than this LAP in the area of economic development.

The County’s employment strategies<sup>6</sup> and their objectives will be required to be implemented by a wide range of actions and agencies, with the Local Area Plan’s role limited to the land-use and development aspects of the strategies. A land-use plan has no direct role in creating jobs or bringing new employers to Blessington. However, it is considered that this plan’s role is to ensure the availability of zoned land for employment purposes and to include objectives facilitating employment development in line with Blessington’s status at Level 3 of the Wicklow Economic Development Hierarchy, and the ‘Economic Development Strategy’ as set out in Part A.

### Availability of Zoned Land for Employment

This plan makes provision for the following greenfield, brownfield, and infill sites for employment:

**Table 4.1 Employment Zonings**

Existing / Developed Employment Lands	
Location	Area (Ha)
Blessington Business Park & Oak Drive – infill sites available	1.8ha
Blessington Industrial Estate & Troopersfield – infill sites available	11.6ha
Blessington Mart	4.8ha
Undeveloped Employment Lands	
Location	Area (Ha)
Current/Former Quarry Lands	41.9ha
N81 South (adjacent to Waste Water Treatment Plan)	2.3ha

**The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of economic and employment development objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following objectives shall apply in Blessington:**

Employment Objectives	
<b>BLESS8</b>	To facilitate and support all forms of employment creation on appropriately zoned land in Blessington and to promote the intensification of activities on existing employment sites.
<b>BLESS9</b>	To protect employment zoned land from inappropriate development that would undermine future economic activity or the sustainable development of such areas.
<b>BLESS10</b>	To facilitate and support the development of large-scale employment generating developments in Blessington, as the only settlement in West Wicklow designated for strategic employment development.
<b>BLESS11</b>	To facilitate and support Blessington Town Centre as the priority for ‘people’-based employment development, in line with the Core Retail Area as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan.
<b>BLESS12</b>	To facilitate and support the regeneration of current and former quarry lands for employment uses, as zoned for such purposes. The redevelopment of these lands would be suitable for a single large scale employer or for a wide variety of individual ‘people’- or ‘product’-based industries operating within an overall integrated layout within the lands.

<sup>6</sup> Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan and the Wicklow Local Enterprise Office, as well as the non-statutory ‘Wicklow Economic Think Tank’ strategy

<b>BLESS13</b>	To encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites for enterprise and employment creation throughout the plan area and to consider allowing 'relaxation' in normal development standards on such sites to promote their redevelopment, where it can be clearly demonstrated that a development of the highest quality, that does not create an adverse or unacceptable working environment or create unacceptable impacts on the built, natural or social environment, will be provided. For the avoidance of doubt, the redevelopment of quarry lands for employment purposes should not generally require the relaxation of standards due to the scale of employment lands in this area.
<b>BLESS14</b>	To facilitate and support the incremental reconfiguration of Blessington Business Park/Oak Drive toward a secondary 'people'-based employment area with a high quality public realm, active frontages, and safe active travel accessibility. New applications for employment developments will be considered subject to the inclusion of proposals for the above public realm improvements. New applications for developments deemed to be 'product'-based, or applications concerning existing developments of that type, will be further required to demonstrate that HGV traffic sufficient to create a hazard to active travel users within and around a subject site would not be generated.
<b>BLESS15</b>	To facilitate and encourage the exploration and exploitation of aggregates and minerals, in a manner which is consistent with the principle of sustainability, the protection of residential, environmental and tourism amenities within the plan area and the objectives relating to the Extractive Industry in Chapter 9 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

## B.4 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Blessington has developed its own tourism and visitor economy capitalising on its qualities as a cultural destination and area of local distinctiveness. The town's location on the lakeshores of the Poulaphouca Reservoir, and its proximity to the wider Wicklow Mountains, results in a uniquely varied and scenic landscape that is well recognised as an area of outstanding beauty both within the County and beyond. The proximity of cultural and architectural assets, including Russborough House and the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area, to this outstanding natural setting presents a well-rounded tourist offering within a short distance of Dublin.

This section will set out the local objectives for the sustainable development of the Blessington's tourism industry that are relevant to and implementable through a local land-use plan. The land-use objectives of this plan aim to support the strategies and objectives for tourism and recreation development in the area as set out in the various Failte Ireland strategies and plans, the Wicklow Tourism Strategy & Marketing Plan, the County Wicklow Statement of Tourism Strategy, the County Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy and the Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan, which all have a wider remit than this LAP in the area of tourism and recreation development.

The Wicklow County Development Plan sets out a range of strategies, objectives and standards aim to promote and facilitate the development of a sustainable tourism and recreation and these will apply directly in the Blessington area. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- The overall strategy for tourism and recreation
- Tourism and Recreation Infrastructure; Visitor Facilities
- Tourist Hubs and Destination Towns and Integrated Tourism/ Leisure/ Recreational Complexes
- Tourist accommodation
- Tourism and Recreation Themes and Products
- Outdoor Recreation
- Greenways
- 

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; however, priority concerns in the Blessington area are (1) Appropriate management of existing tourism and recreational assets, and (2) the provision of adequate tourist facilities to cater to the future tourism projects in the Blessington lakeside area

### Key Tourism & Recreation Assets

Within the settlement, tourist attractions are located in three distinct areas, as follows:

- The lakeshore of the Poulaphouca Reservoir, to the east of the settlement, and specifically to the south-east where tourist facilities are located.
- The town centre, with its collection of heritage buildings and attractive 'estate-town' layout.
- Glen Ding Forest and Rath Turtle Moat, to the west of the settlement.

Linkages between these areas can be poor, although a pathway from the built-up area of the settlement to Glen Ding Forest is currently under construction. Linkages between Blessington Main Street and the lakeshore are constrained, with the main access being along Troopersfield Road to the south east, leading to the ruins of Burgage Castle. Other viewpoints are possible along Kilbride Road, with connections to Blessington Main Street along the 'priest's walk' through the residential development at the former Rectory. Northwards from that point, the next possible connection between Blessington Main Street/N81 would be at Red Lane, a significant walking distance.

The redevelopment of Doran's Pit may provide opportunities to provide an additional east-west linkage between the town centre and the lakeshore, with the potential for the development of an additional tourist attraction in walking trails in wooded areas along the eastern/north-eastern boundary of the site. Such redevelopment could include tourist services such as parking areas, changing facilities, and bathrooms. The development of attractions and services in this area could spread the extent of tourism assets to the north east of the settlement such that Blessington Town Centre can better serve

as the primary visitor service centre at the midpoint of Glen Ding Forest (west), Lakeshore (south-east), Lakeview and woodlands (north-east), while being a tourist attraction in its own right.

Tourism services do already exist within the settlement to take advantage of the tourist attractions on offer, namely 'The Avon' lakeshore visitor resort located on the lakeshore to the south of the settlement. However, tourist accommodation is lacking in the settlement, with the former Downshire Hotel having been closed for a significant period of time.

### **Blessington greenway**

The Blessington Greenway, a 6km walking and cycling trail, was opened in 2014. The existing Greenway passes along the lakeshore between the Avon, Burgage Castle, and towards Russborough House, terminating at Russelstown. The trail is well used by both residents and visitors alike.

While An Bord Pleanála refused permission in 2024 for an extension of the existing greenway to a route of 33km, linking the settlements of Ballyknockan, Vallemount, Lackan, as well as other attractions and tourist facilities at Russborough and Tulfarris, Wicklow County Council is committed to enhancing tourism infrastructure and attractions in the Blessington area, particularly those related to the Blessington Lakes and those that bring benefit to the villages surrounding the lakes, subject to the utmost protection of the environment, including water quality and natural habitats. Options for alternative projects around the Blessington Lakes that capitalise on, but appropriately protect, this asset are currently being reviewed. On this basis, the priority tourism issue in the settlement is the provision of adequate tourist facilities to cater future tourism projects in the Blessington lakeside area including facilitating tourist accommodation within the settlement.

Wicklow County Council has purchased the former HSE building on Kilbride Road to act as a hub for future tourism projects in the Blessington Lakes area which in turn would draw visitors into the town centre. Furthermore, this local area plan has identified a range of supporting infrastructure that would aid in the possible expansion of the existing greenway and lakeside tourism within the settlement. This infrastructure includes feeder routes for active travel users and additional Park&Ride locations for those accessing the lakes area by private vehicle. See Map No. 7 'Lakeside Tourism Supporting Infrastructure'.

**The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of tourism and recreation development objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following objectives shall apply in Blessington:**

<b>Tourism &amp; Recreation Objectives</b>	
<b>BLESS16</b>	To support opportunities to improve the tourism product in Blessington and to facilitate appropriate tourism development within the settlement.
<b>BLESS17</b>	To facilitate and support the development of improved linkages between areas of tourist attractions within the settlement of Blessington, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The lakeshore and tourist facilities at Burgage More/Burgage Castle.</li> <li>▪ Blessington Town Centre/Architectural Conservation Area/Greenway Hub.</li> <li>▪ Glen Ding Forest and Rath Turtle Moat.</li> <li>▪ Possible woodland attractions, lake views, and tourist services at Doran's Pit.</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS18</b>	To facilitate and support future tourism projects in the Blessington lakeside area including but not limited to links between the town centre and the lakes, and a possible extension to the existing Blessington Greenway.
<b>BLESS19</b>	To facilitate the redevelopment of the former HSE building on Kilbride Road as a Visitor Hub supporting future tourism projects in the Blessington area.
<b>BLESS20</b>	To facilitate and encourage the delivery of lakeshore tourism supporting infrastructure as indicated on Map No. 7 Lakeshore Tourism Supporting Infrastructure.
<b>BLESS21</b>	To facilitate active travel links to nearby tourist attractions, e.g. Russborough House, and other settlements in the area.

**BLESS22**

To positively consider the development of

- a) new hotels in Blessington;
- b) the development of touring caravan (Aires park) and camping sites (not static mobile home parks) having due regard to surrounding land uses and proper planning and development of the area;
- c) the development of hostels along established walking routes, the route of the existing Greenway or other future tourism projects in the lakeside area within the settlement, and adjacent to existing tourism facilities;
- d) the improvement of, and extension to, existing tourist accommodation related developments, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**BLESS23**

To promote and encourage the sustainable recreational use of the lakeshore of the Poulaphouca Reservoir for eco-tourism activities. Where such recreational uses involve the development of structures or facilities, the Council will ensure that the proposals will respect the natural amenity and scenic character of the area.

## B.5 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The provision of adequate community infrastructure is critical to ensure a high quality of life and facilitate and sustain the growth of the settlement over the lifetime of the plan and beyond. A wide variety of facilities are required in order to have a functioning and developing society.

The community development and infrastructure strategies, objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the Blessington area. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- The role of land use planning in community development; link between land use planning and the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)
- Community Facilities Hierarchy Model
- Education and Development
- Health and Care
- Culture & the Arts, including libraries and places of worship and burial
- Open space, Leisure and Recreation, including sports, children's play, facilities for teenagers and young adults

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; however, priority concerns in the Blessington area are (a) education, (b) health and care (including childcare), and (c) leisure & recreation, including sports facilities and community spaces, and therefore these issues are addressed to follow.

### Education

There are currently 5 No. primary schools within the area immediately around the settlement of Blessington, of which one is outside the local area plan boundary in Co. Wicklow (Blessington Educate Together) and another is located in Co. Kildare (Gaelscoil na Lochanna). There is 1 No. post-Primary School in Blessington and 1 No. Further Education and Training Centre.

Currently, projects are being progressed by the Department of Education to expand Blessington Community College, which is currently at capacity, and also to provide a permanent location for Gaelscoil na Lochanna (in Co. Kildare).

The accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit analysed the requirements for additional land for education purposes and recommended that land be zoned for at least one additional primary school and land be reserved for the longer term possibility of the need for another secondary school, given the somewhat constrained site area of the existing secondary school. Given Department of Education recommendations with respect to minimum site sizes for 'greenfield' new schools, and to ensure variety in locational options for possible future schools, a total area of c.6.3 ha, across five locations, is zoned in this plan for 'Community & Education' use<sup>7</sup>.

### Health & Care

There are a number of General Practitioners within Blessington, and in recent years Blessington Primary Care centre has been developed in the north of the settlement, with both HSE and private services operating from the facility. There are currently no nursing homes within the plan area, however there are valid planning permissions for such that have yet to be commenced. Childcare facilities within Blessington are experiencing capacity issues and, while demand from new developments will be provided for via the development management process, unmet existing demand may require additional policy support.

The accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit recommends that, rather than providing specific land use zonings, policy support for the expansion of the above services within the built up area be included in the local area plan.

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<sup>7</sup> Note: CE zoned lands are not 'reserved' solely for education use and a wide variety of education, care and community uses may be considered this this zone

## Leisure & Recreation

There are a number of community halls within Blessington, usually associated with a religious parish, including St. Kevin's Hall, the Coimín Centre, and St. Joseph's Hall. The accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit recommends that the requirement for a community hall as part of Specific Local Objective for the redevelopment of Doran's Pit be maintained.

A number of sporting organisations are active within Blessington and the wider area. Pre-draft consultation indicated a considerable shortfall in the provision of active open space within the settlement, with many sports clubs making submissions requesting that land be zoned for such purposes. A long standing issue within the town is facilities that are present being distant from the built-up area (including over the county boundary) and difficult for children and adults alike to access via walking and cycling.

While the Council's 'Play' and 'Sports and Recreation' strategies provide methodologies for determining the quantum of open space needed by the resident population, for planning and future proofing purposes, these standards will be taken as a minimum only and generally additional provision shall be made where possible to. In particular, through the public consultation process, the expressed land / space needs of existing and new sports clubs / groups will also be taken into account in the calibration of the OS zoning strategy and quantity, as will Blessington's catchment of surrounding smaller settlements and rural areas.

Having regard to the needs identified through the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit and from public consultation, this plan zones additional lands for future AOS development.

Numerous casual informal play spaces also exist around the town, in the form of open parks and the open spaces associated with housing developments, and new housing developments will be required to provide a minimum of 15% of the site area for such use (these open spaces are generally zoned RE or OS1). The plan includes land zoned 'OS2' which is intended to be maintained in its current undeveloped natural state in the interest of visual and natural amenity.

Pre-draft consultation has indicated the demand within Blessington for a swimming pool/leisure centre, a pop-up pool having been briefly located on Blessington Main Street in recent years. While such a facility could be delivered on land zoned for Active Open Space, it is considered prudent to zone additional land for Community & Education (CE) uses to facilitate the delivery of such a facility.

The Blessington Town Centre First Plan, published in February 2024, recommended the following in relation to an appropriate location:

- *Ease of access to appropriate local roads without increasing traffic along Main Street*
- *Ease of access to complementary community facilities*
- *The site is of a sufficient size to provide car and cycle parking*
- *Active frontages to all facades of development if located within the town centre*
- *Any existing vegetation is retained to integrate the development into the setting*
- *No risk to any protected sites, habitats or water bodies and mitigation for any biodiversity loss*
- *Sustainable designs for the built form and external spaces*
- *Sustainable energy use and generation.'*

## Zoning

In light of the needs described above and identified in the SIA, this plan zones the following additional lands for CE and OS uses:

<b>Lands Zoned for Community &amp; Education Use</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Blessington Business Park/Oak Drive	CE	1.4
SLO2 (Blessington Demesne adjacent to Kare)	CE	3.6
SLO1 (Blessington Demesne Link Road)	CE	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>CE</b>	<b>6.3</b>

<b>Zoned for Open Space</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
New Town Park	OS1	15.3
Blessington Business Park	OS1	0.2
South of Naas Road (southern BIRR)	OS1	0.4
SLO 1 (Naas Road/Blessington Demesne Link Road)	OS1	3.9
SLO2 Blessington Demesne	AOS	4.5
SLO4 (Doran's Pit)	MU/AOS (see SLO4)	5.0
Quarry Lands adjacent to Glen Ding	AOS	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>OS1/AOS/MU</b>	<b>36.2</b>

**The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of community development objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following objectives shall apply in Blessington:**

<b>Social Infrastructure Objectives</b>	
<b>BLESS24</b>	The Planning Authority will resist developments that entail the loss of existing community, education and open space/recreation lands or buildings unless it can be demonstrated that (a) adequate community, education and open space/recreation lands and buildings would be retained in the settlement having regard to the planned future population of the settlement or (b) the particular lands or buildings are not suitable or needed for current or future educational, community or open space / recreational usage. In particular, developments that would unduly constrain the ability of existing schools to expand will not be permitted.
<b>BLESS25</b>	To facilitate the provision of schools on lands zoned Community and Education (CE) and to consider the provision of schools on any land use zoning, excluding OS1 and OS2 zones, where it is in line with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan, relevant planning guidelines (including the Department of Education guidelines) and proper planning.
<b>BLESS26</b>	To facilitate and support the provision of new childcare facilities in a manner, which is compatible with land-use and transportation policies and adheres to the principles of sustainable development. To facilitate and encourage the co-location of childcare facilities with other educational facilities such as schools. Applications for the development of new educational facilities, or the significant redevelopment or extensions of existing facilities, should consider the provision of co-located childcare facilities within the development.
<b>BLESS27</b>	To facilitate and encourage the delivery of new open spaces, parks and multi-purpose sport uses close to the built-up area of Blessington, including covered spaces. In particular, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To require the delivery of significant areas of outdoor play space on lands zoned AOS as part of SLO-2 and SLO-4.</li> <li>- To require the delivery of public parks on lands zoned OS1 in SLO-1 and SLO-2.</li> </ul>

<b>BLESS28</b>	To facilitate and encourage the continued operation of existing and development of new community infrastructure, including (but not limited to) indoor multi-functional community spaces, youth centres etc., in Blessington. In particular, to require the development of a community hall in the redevelopment of Doran’s Pit in line with SLO 4, and the development of a community building in line with SLO9.
<b>BLESS29</b>	To facilitate and encourage the continued operation of existing and development of new care and health related facilities, including (but not limited to) primary care centres, general practitioners surgeries, care / nursing homes and respite / hospice centres facilities particularly within the built-up area of Blessington.
<b>BLESS30</b>	To facilitate and support the development of a swimming pool/leisure centre within Blessington.

## B.6 HERITAGE, BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the specific objectives with regard to the heritage of the settlement and should be read in conjunction with the County Development Plan - the heritage strategies, objectives, schedules and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the settlement<sup>8</sup>.

In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- Archaeology & National Monuments
- Architectural heritage, including the Record of Protected Structures, vernacular structures, and Architectural Conservation Areas
- Historical & Cultural Heritage
- Protected habitats
- Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows
- Water systems & wetlands
- Soils & Geology
- Landscape, including Views & Prospects
- Green Infrastructure
- Recreational Use of Natural Resources
- Public Rights of Way

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; however, the priority heritage concerns in the plan areas are (1) Architectural heritage, and (2) Biodiversity and Natural Heritage, including protected sites, and (3) Green Infrastructure / Recreational Use of Natural Resources and therefore these are addressed to follow.

### Architectural Heritage

Blessington has a range of buildings of heritage value located throughout the plan area, but primarily within the historic core of the settlement. Though little built fabric survives from the 17<sup>th</sup> century establishment of the modern settlement, the urban structure of the original 'estate town' survives, and fine estate buildings and vernacular structures from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries can be found on Blessington Main Street and in adjacent areas. This architectural heritage, while of value in and of itself, also contributes to placemaking qualities and improves the attractiveness of the town for residents and visitors alike.

Individual developments, which may involve the demolition of buildings of architectural and historic interest, can have a negative visual impact, as can the cumulative impact of a number of small-scale developments. Inappropriate alterations such as the removal of historic sash windows, alteration to traditional shopfronts, the addition of inappropriate signage and lighting, or the unsympathetic extension of structures, can detract from the character of individual buildings and have a cumulative negative impact on the streetscape. It is the aim of this local area plan to protect the valuable architectural heritage assets throughout the plan area.

**Record of Protected Structures (RPS)** - There are a total of 7 No. entries in the RPS within this plan area, largely consisting of heritage buildings clustered on Blessington Main Street and nearby areas. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is set out in Appendix 4 of the County Development Plan. Additionally, a number of buildings within the plan are listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

**Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)** - The historic core of Blessington, centred around Blessington Main Street and Kilbride Road, is designated an 'Architectural Conservation Area', with a character of architectural, historical, and archaeological special interest. The supporting 'Blessington Architectural Conservation Appraisal'<sup>9</sup> study details the features that contribute to this area which are worthy of protection.

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<sup>8</sup> To view the heritage schedules / lists, they are all set out in the County Development Plan. Click on the link here or the QR code at the beginning of the plan document. [Wicklow County Development Plan](#)

<sup>9</sup> This document is available on [wicklow.ie](http://wicklow.ie).



**Figure B.6.1: Blessington Architectural Conservation Area**

### Archaeological Heritage

There are a number of sites within the plan area that are listed on either the 'Record of Monuments and Places' or the 'Sites and Monuments Register'. These sites represent a variety of features from different time periods, for example the remains of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Blessington House or Rath Turtle Moat in Glen Ding Forest. While there are no 'Areas of Archaeological Potential and Significance' located within the plan area, immediately to the south of the plan area is such an area located at the deserted medieval borough at Burgage. Within the plan area, there are two 'Major Sites of Archaeological Importance in State Ownership or Guardianship', namely Rath Turtle Moat and St. Mark's Cross. Many archaeological features in the area were either moved or submerged during the creation of the Poulaphouca Reservoir.

### Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity requires the suitable and sustainable protection of designated habitats and facilitating linkages between natural sites (whether they are natural or man-made). This is increasingly important in areas of biodiversity value within an urban setting, as they are becoming increasingly threatened by development pressure in addition to other anthropogenic impacts due to their proximity to large centres of population.

**Special Protection Areas (SPA)** – There are no Special Protection Areas within the plan area. However, the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA immediately adjoins the plan area and purposefully demarcates the settlement boundary around much of the lakeshore. The Wicklow Mountains SPA is located further to the east of the plan area.

**Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** – There are no Special Areas of Conservation within the plan area. However, immediately to the north of the plan area, in Co. Kildare, is located the Red Bog SAC. The Wicklow Mountains SAC is located further to the east of the plan area.

**Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)** – The Poulaphouca Reservoir proposed NHA is found within the plan area around much of the lakeshore, and extends beyond the plan boundary around the entirety of the reservoir. The Red Bog proposed NHA is located immediately to the north of the plan area in Co. Kildare.

**Local Habitats** – A number of areas within the plan boundary have been the subject of previous studies<sup>10</sup>, on foot of which several were identified as 'Local Biodiversity Areas' of varying levels of biodiversity value. While not a statutory designation, the identification of these areas has informed the crafting of this plan as a guide to the creation of 'ecological corridors' within the plan area.

<sup>10</sup> In 2006, a report by Natura Environmental Consultants was prepared in advance of the preparation of a local area plan at that time. This provided baseline information that remains worthy of consideration to this day. This report is available on [wicklow.ie](http://wicklow.ie)

**Woodlands and trees** – There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the plan area, though there are substantial areas of managed and unmanaged woodland, with Glen Ding Forest representing a significant wooded area worthy of protection within the plan boundary.

**Water systems** – The Poulaphouca Reservoir is fed by the River Liffey and the King’s River, forming one of the main water sources for the Dublin region. Though largely outside the plan area, the reservoir contributes to low-lying wetland areas within the plan boundaries. Conversely, development patterns within the plan area must be considered in relation to any potential effect on the reservoir. Within the plan area, a number of watercourses are present, including streams flowing through the plan area from Deerpark and Newtown Park. In line with the County Development Plan, riparian zones of generally 25m on either side will be maintained free from appropriate development, and such lands will be zoned with an appropriate open space zoning where the land is largely undeveloped.

**Views and Prospects** – There are no views, as listed in the Wicklow County Development Plan, currently within the plan area. However, to the immediate south of the plan boundary, View No. 33 originating from the N81 at Burgage More, South of Blessington, has views of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and inlet. Areas of the plan area would be within this view and other more peripheral views. Furthermore, localised views within the plan area, where relevant, will be addressed by general or specific objective in this plan.

### **Green Infrastructure (GI) & Recreational Use of Natural Resources**

In drafting this plan, all key green infrastructure assets and resources have been identified, as well as areas where improvements and new green infrastructure resources should be provided in the future, in particular to provide for linkages between green assets. The County Development Plan sets out the requirement for consideration of GI in Local Area Plans. This plan is accompanied by a Key Green Infrastructure map (see Map No. 3) which has informed the zoning provisions and objectives of this plan. In the creation of the GI mapping, primarily watercourse-based green corridors were identified to form the core of ecological corridors in the area. Other areas of potential biodiversity value were also identified, and thereafter potential linkages between same were evaluated in order to connect the individual sites into a coherent, interlinked network of ecological corridors and ‘necklace’ effect routes. Other standalone features (which could include residential open space, cemeteries, etc.) could act as important ‘stepping stones’ between different branches of ecological corridors have been included in the GI map. Where the designated open space of a residential estate is adjacent to a GI asset, this space has been zoned OS1 to strengthen the GI asset<sup>11</sup>.

The lands identified as OS2 ‘Natural Areas’ shall be reserved in as natural a condition as possible with appropriate undeveloped buffer zones. Any development on such lands shall protect natural habitats, water courses, mature trees and hedgerows as identified in the GI Audit; road / cycleway / footpath crossings over / through OS2 lands shall be minimised to that absolutely necessary for access; any such crossing of OS2 lands shall be carried out in a manner that maintains ecological connectivity and maintains a natural character.

The crossing of watercourses, on OS2 lands or otherwise, shall be in line with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and in particular, shall avoid interference with the stream bed, banks and channel and maintaining a core riparian buffer zone of at least 25m along each side free from development.

The Council is committed to ensuring sustainable recreational use of the outdoors. Natural areas provide opportunities for passive and active activities such as picnicking, playing, running and walking. Given that much of the plan area is already built-up, any opportunities for use of smaller pockets of open spaces / natural areas and the corridors that link them should be exploited. In particular, there are a number of existing / potential natural ‘green corridors’ along the course of the watercourses within the settlement.

**Public rights of way** – there are no public rights of way as listed in the Wicklow County Development Plan within the plan area. This does not preclude the possibility that public rights of way may exist within the plan area.

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<sup>11</sup> Designated open space within residential estates is generally zoned Existing Residential RE, in line with the CDP objectives.

## Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Objectives

<b>BLESS31</b>	To consolidate and safeguard the historical and architectural character of Blessington through the protection of individual buildings, structures, shopfronts and elements of the public realm that contribute greatly to this character <sup>12</sup> .
<b>BLESS32</b>	To protect those features that have been identified in the Architectural Conservation Area Appraisal as contributing to the town centre's overall appearance and heritage value and to ensure that new development contributes positively to the designated Architectural Conservation Area.
<b>BLESS33</b>	To promote the sustainable use and re-use of heritage vernacular buildings along Blessington Main Street/N81, Market Square, and Kilbride Road, and to resist the demolition of any such building unless absolutely necessary.
<b>BLESS34</b>	Protect and enhance the character, setting and environmental quality of natural, architectural and archaeological heritage assets, and in particular those features of the natural landscape and built structures that contribute to their special interest. The natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the area shall be protected in accordance with the objectives set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. In particular, the heritage assets of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and Glen Ding Forest shall be rigorously protected.
<b>BLESS35</b>	To protect the listed views and prospects, as they relate to the plan area, from development that would either obstruct the view / prospect from the identified vantage point or form an obtrusive or incongruous feature in that view / prospect. Due regard will be paid in assessing development applications to the span and scope of the view / prospect and the location of the development within that view / prospect. Particular regard will be had to listed (and other) views and prospects to and from the Poulaphouca Reservoir.
<b>BLESS36</b>	To protect the following additional views: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- From St. Mary's Church to Bastion Wood and Glen Ding Forest.</li><li>- From side streets/laneways east (to the Poulaphouca Reservoir/Wicklow Mountains) and west (to Glen Ding) from Blessington Main Street.</li><li>-</li></ul>
<b>BLESS37</b>	To reinforce the lakeshore character of the settlement and to provide for the enjoyment of the Poulaphouca Reservoir, Glen Ding Forest, and other natural areas as recreational and natural assets.
<b>BLESS38</b>	<p>To promote and support the development of enhanced or new greenways and amenity walks at the following locations and require development in the vicinity of same to enhance existing routes and / or provide new links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Poulaphouca Reservoir (Blessington Greenway/future tourism projects in the Lakeside area)</li><li>- Glen Ding Forest</li><li>- Wooded areas at Doran's Pit</li><li>- Blessington Demesne (Town Park)</li></ul> <p>The enhancement of existing, and development of new, recreational facilities along the lakeshore area, such as walking routes, car parking areas, signage, changing / toilet facilities and water based clubs/facilities, will be considered subject to compliance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive and other planning considerations.</p>
<b>BLESS39</b>	To require development proposals to have regard to existing green infrastructure assets (as identified within this local area plan <b>or otherwise</b> ), including trees and hedgerows, that may exist within a subject site, and to consider how the biodiversity value and ecological connectivity of such assets may be maintained.

<sup>12</sup> The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage can be utilised as a source of information with regard to the architectural value of any such features, but should not be considered an exhaustive list of buildings worthy of protection.

	<p>Where existing GI assets or green corridors within a site have been identified on Map No. 3 'Key Green Infrastructure' or the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit, proposals should include measures to preserve and, where necessary, improve ecological connectivity and biodiversity value across said assets/corridors.</p>
<b>BLESS40</b>	<p>To facilitate the development of new green corridors within the plan area where opportunities may be identified, and barriers in ecological connectivity rectified, via the development management process. In particular, the following additional green corridors will be facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The creation of green corridors through Quarry Lands, and where relevant SLO3, to link the Deerpark watercourse and Glen Ding Forest with the plan boundary in the direction of the Red Bog SAC.</li> <li>- The creation of green corridors linking the Deerpark Watercourse to Local Biodiversity Areas and existing wooded areas on the eastern boundary of SLO3 (refer to SLO3 below).</li> <li>- The creation of a green corridor through the grounds of St. Mary's Senior National School to improve the connectivity between existing green corridors along Oak Drive/Blessington Business Park and Blessington Main Street. This link may in turn improve ecological connectivity to the lakeshore via boundary hedging on the grounds of the Church of Our Lady and the 'Priest's Walk' through the Rectory residential development.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS41</b>	<p>To enforce a general presumption against the culverting of watercourses within the plan area, except where absolutely necessary. Where development is proposed within sites that contain culverted watercourses, proposals should be included to restore or 'daylight' said watercourses with an appropriate riparian zoned in line with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan. Similarly, where development includes significant works to existing roads with culverted crossings of watercourses, proposals should be included, where practical, to improve the ecological connectivity of these crossings, e.g. the replacement of culverts with clear span bridges, box culverts with wildlife ledges, etc.</p>
<b>BLESS42</b>	<p>Where relevant, applications for development must demonstrate that the proposal for development would not, individually or cumulatively, affect a water body's ability to meet its objectives under the Water Framework Directive.</p>

## B.7 INFRASTRUCTURE

The provision of adequate infrastructure is critical to facilitate and sustain the growth of Blessington over the lifetime of the plan and beyond. The infrastructure strategies, objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan will apply directly in the plan area. In particular, the County Development Plan addresses:

- Sustainable Transportation
- Water Supply & Demand;
- Wastewater Infrastructure; Storm and Surface Water Infrastructure
- Flood Risk Management
- Waste and Environmental Emissions
- Energy and Information Infrastructure

It is not considered necessary to re-state the majority of the objectives for these areas in this plan; however, priority physical infrastructural concerns in the Blessington area are (1) Sustainable Transportation (2) Flood Risk Management and (3) Wastewater infrastructure, and therefore these are addressed in this chapter.

A **Transport Assessment** has been carried out as part of this plan. The key aims of this assessment is to identify ways to facilitate a modal shift away from private vehicles, to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport, and to provide a sustainable and safe transport environment.

The assessment identifies the following:

- Existing infrastructure and services shortfalls that are inhibiting more sustainable movements, in order to ensure that (a) all transport infrastructure and services delivery agencies have a clear programme of action and (b) development strategies set out in the LAP do not reinforce or exacerbate unsustainable transport patterns;
- Future transportation infrastructure improvements that are either underway and / or committed, as well as projects impacting the settlement that are not as yet commenced and / or committed but are identified in higher level plans / programmes are due to be delivered in the short, medium or long term;
- Clear criteria as to how the future spatial development of the settlement will be integrated with the existing or future transportation and movement networks.

The Transport Assessment outlines recommendation to overcome some of the weaknesses and constraints identified in the baseline assessment and achieve the key aims of the assessment.

### Integration of Land-Use and Transportation

While the overarching rationale for the production of a development plan is to guide land-use, the integration of good land use planning with transportation is a key that can unlock significant improvements in the quality of life, in ways that are tangible to many in the settlement, who have long identified car dependency and commuting as being a major drawback to living in the area. Reducing the need to travel long distances by private car, and increasing the use of sustainable and healthy alternatives, can bring multiple benefits to both our environment and communities. Specifically, while the current built-up area of Blessington is generally within walking distance of public transport, future development patterns should not reverse this situation. In that regard, the crafting of land use zoning within this plan has had regard to the walking distance to public transport and a variety of other facilities.

### Active Travel

The provision of walking and cycling routes within Blessington forms an essential part of the linked-up transport system. The compact form of Blessington lends itself to walking and cycling; however a lack of safe, segregated cycling infrastructure and high levels of through traffic passing through the built up area combine to undermine the potential of walking and cycling as popular transport modes. Within the existing built-up area there can also be barriers to pedestrian and cyclist movement that discourage active travel.

The accompanying Transport Assessment collates the variety of cycle routes indicated in higher level plans and projects and newly identified routes into an active travel network for Blessington, which includes the provision of appropriate cycle infrastructure on existing roads as indicated, the development of new pedestrian and cyclist routes through greenfield

and brownfield land, and areas where small permeability improvements could be made within the existing built-up area. Refer to the accompanying Transport Assessment and Map No. 6 Active Travel.

There are a number of factors that will influence whether one will walk or cycle to a destination (rather than taking the car), including distance, weather, safety, topography, bicycle parking facilities and the availability of car parking at the destination. A land-use plan cannot influence many of these factors; therefore it is an objective of the plan to facilitate the improvement of facilities that promote these forms of transport.

### Sustainable Travel

Wicklow County Council recognises the progress made in the national public transport network over the past years, while acknowledging that deficiencies still exist. The key to getting people out of their cars and into public transport is to have a reliable, convenient, frequent and fast service available, that brings people to the places they want to go. Although Wicklow County Council is not a public transport provider, and cannot force providers to deliver services in any particular area, development plans can put in place the necessary policy framework to encourage and facilitate the improvement of public transport.

Public transportation into and within Blessington is available by means of bus routes and taxi services. Bus services are mainly made up of a regular national bus service and a local/rural commuter bus service. There are also a number of local taxi services within the town. Currently, there is no official 'park and ride' facility in Blessington with long stay commuter parking occurring in the town centre, including in the Market Square and along the Main Street, as there are no parking controls. Provision shall be made in this plan for land to be reserved for a future park and ride to the south of the town centre. The delivering of the above road objectives may allow for bus priority along Blessington Main Street via a reduction in the volumes of private vehicular traffic along the street.

### Vehicular movements and road objectives in Blessington

Currently, Blessington Main Street comprises the main route for all north-south traffic passing along the N8, with traffic volumes in peak hours leading to congestion. Road objectives included in this plan aim to provide alternative routes for through traffic, and include the completion of Blessington Inner Relief Road, the provision of a road through Doran's Pit and the completion of a part-constructed link road in Blessington Demesne. In the longer term, the completion of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme will remove volumes of through traffic from Blessington. Upon the completion of various road objectives, traffic management measures (as set out in the Transport Assessment) may be required to ensure the optimal use of the road network through the settlement.

### Flooding

Local Authorities are responsible for implementing the provisions of '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*' Guidelines (2009) in the carrying out of their development management functions and they require a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to be carried out during all plan making processes. A **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment** (SFRA) including flood maps has been prepared as part of this LAP process and is appended to this plan. The guidelines follow the principle that certain types of vulnerable development should not be permitted in flood risk areas, particularly flood plains, except where there are no alternative and appropriate sites available in lower risk areas that are consistent with the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development.

### Wastewater

Uisce Éireann has recently completed upgrades to the Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) that have significantly increased the capacity of the plant. Due to these upgrades, there is sufficient capacity for the growth envisioned for Blessington in the core strategy as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. This plan will support any further required upgrades to Blessington WWTP, or indeed the development of additional WWTPs, subject to the full range of environmental protections necessary in relation to the Poulaphouca Reservoir and associated watercourses.

## Water Protection

The Poulaphouca Reservoir is a critical source of raw water supply to the populations of Dublin, Kildare and parts of Wicklow. Significant measures are required to be taken to protect the water quality in the reservoir, including the management of surface water runoff in adjacent towns and villages.

Uisce Éireann recommends the use of the hierarchy of discharge outlined in the guidance document “Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents” to complement the approach to surface water management set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan.

In particular, Uisce Éireann encourages a specific focus on the water quality of surface water runoff collected in Blessington town and discharged either directly to the reservoir or to watercourses which drain to the reservoir. This is applicable to both new developments and to any planned improvements to existing urban spaces.

Transportation Objectives	
<b>BLESS43</b>	In collaboration and with the support of the relevant transport agencies, to prepare a Local Transport Plan for Blessington and integrate its provisions into the LAP/CDP as appropriate.
<b>BLESS44</b>	Support the implementation of proposed road safety and active travel projects, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Blessington Main Street N81 Road Safety Improvement Scheme</li> <li>- The Blessington Pedestrian &amp; Cyclist Improvement Scheme</li> <li>- The Blessington Gateway Road Safety Improvement Scheme</li> <li>- The possible extension of the existing Blessington Greenway and future tourism projects in the lakeside area, as it relates to the plan area.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS45</b>	Support the implementation of the recommendations of the Transport Assessment with regard to the delivery of new regional/distributor roads and road improvements <sup>13</sup> , including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The completion of the Blessington Inner Relief Road (northern and southern sections).</li> <li>- The provision of a road objective through Doran’s Pit, linking the N81 to Kilbride Road.</li> <li>- The completion of a partly constructed link road in Blessington Demesne, linking the GAA grounds/educational/care facilities with Naas Road.</li> <li>- The delivery of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme. Any development within the preferred route corridor will be assessed for acceptability having regard to the potential effects on the future viability of the proposed road. Active travel routes from the town centre to Glen Ding should be facilitated in the final design of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme.</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS46</b>	Support the implementation of the recommendations of the Transport Assessment with regard to the delivery of safe active travel routes along the existing road network and along new off-road routes, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The delivery of the Greater Dublin Area cycle network, as it relates to the plan area.</li> <li>- The delivery of the National Cycle Network, as it relates to the plan area (exact route from Blessington to Naas to be determined).</li> <li>- The delivery of local/greenway feeder routes within the plan area (refer to Map 6A/6B Active Travel and the accompanying Transport Assessment).</li> <li>- The delivery of identified, and other, permeability improvements within the settlement (refer to Map No. 6A/6B Active Travel).</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> The detail associated with new transport or green/blue infrastructure projects referred to in this Plan and accompanying Transport Assessment, including locations and associated mapping, that are not already permitted or provided for by existing plans / programmes / etc. is non-binding and indicative. Such new projects shall be subject to feasibility assessment, taking into account the environmental constraints and the objectives of the Plan relating to sustainable mobility. A Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken for such projects where appropriate. Proposed interventions will be required to demonstrate that they are consistent with all relevant legislative requirements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The delivery of identified, and other, traffic management measures within the settlement (refer to Map No. 5A/5B Transport Strategy and the accompanying Transport Assessment).</li> <li>- The delivery of new pedestrian and cyclist routes through green field and brownfield lands, as indicatively indicated on Map No. 6A/6B Active Travel.</li> <li>- The delivery of additional pedestrian and cyclist routes where development occurs along the boundaries of green corridors – on sites containing or immediately adjacent to OS2 lands, appropriate pedestrian and cycle routes should be laid out along the OS2 boundary, with permeability improvements and short sections linking to other routes where necessary at site boundaries.</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS47</b>	To ensure that development along the route of the existing Blessington Greenway (and possible extension were such a route to be determined), and along indicated greenway feeder routes (see Map No. 6A/6B Active Travel), minimises the creation of additional entrances/junctions to only those absolutely necessary, in order to reduce potential conflict between greenway users and vehicular traffic.
<b>BLESS48</b>	New development should, where relevant, have regard to the indicated street descriptions shown on Map No. 5A/5B Transport Strategy (refer to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets), subject to the completion of the necessary road objectives to allow that function (as set out in the accompanying Transport Assessment.) Streets without an indicated description should be considered 'local' streets.
<b>BLESS49</b>	Support the development of additional car parking areas within the plan area, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A public transport park and ride in Blessington along the N81.</li> <li>- A car park in Doran's Pit for potential greenway/tourism parking and access to adjacent woodland.</li> <li>- A car park on Active Open Space lands in Blessington Demesne to serve those lands and as an alternative car park for access to Glen Ding.</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS50</b>	To continue to work with the NTA to promote the delivery of improved and new bus services, facilities and infrastructure within the plan area and connecting the plan area to the wider region by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- supporting the development and delivery of bus service enhancement projects, under the Connecting Ireland and Bus Connects programmes and measures to improve bus priority such as additional bus lanes and priority signalling etc as may be deemed appropriate;</li> <li>- facilitating the needs of existing or new bus providers with regard to bus stops and garaging facilities (although unnecessary duplication of bus stops on the same routes / roads will not be permitted);</li> <li>- supporting the development of enhanced bus shelters, of secure covered bicycle parking facilities at key locations along bus routes,</li> <li>- to promote and support the improvement of N81 in a manner capable of facilitating greater free flow of public transport,</li> <li>- to support and facilitate the existing service providers and encourage the further development of the Local Link Rural Transport Programme (and any other or subsequent rural transport programmes).</li> <li>- Enhancing pedestrian and cycling connectivity to public transport services.</li> </ul>
<b>BLESS51</b>	To protect the strategic function of the N81 in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoECLG, 2012) and in compliance with TII Publications.
<b>Flood Management Objectives</b>	
<b>BLESS52</b>	Applications for new developments or significant alterations/extension to existing developments in an area identified as at risk of flooding (Flood Zones A and B) as set out in the SFRA and flood maps appended to this plan <b>OR</b> in Flood Zone C but within an area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- that is deemed by the Local Authority at any time to be at possible risk of flooding having regard to new information with respect to flood risk in the area that has come to light; or</li> <li>- that is identified as at possible future risk of flooding having regard to climate change scenarios</li> </ul>

either on Maps 4C/4D attached to this plan or on any future maps prepared by the OPW during the lifetime of the plan;  
 shall comply with the 'Justification Test for Development Management', as set out in Box 5.1 of 'the Planning System and Flood Risk Management' Guidelines 2009 (as may be amended, supplemented or replaced during the lifetime of this plan) and shall be accompanied by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment. Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments shall be in accordance with the requirements set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and the plan SFRA.

**Other Infrastructure Objectives**

<b>BLESS53</b>	To support the continued upgrade of Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant and/or additional Waste Water Treatment Plants serving the plan area, subject to the full environmental protection of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and associated watercourses.
<b>BLESS54</b>	To protect both ground and surface water sources, to avoid water quality deterioration and reduce the level of treatment required in the production of drinking water, in accordance with Drinking Water and Water Framework Directives. New developments which could pose an unacceptable risk to drinking water sources will not be permitted.
<b>BLESS55</b>	To support and facilitate the improvement of the quality of surface water runoff that directly (or indirectly) will reach Poulaphouca Reservoir. This shall be applied to both new/expanded developments and to any planned improvements to existing urban spaces. In this regard, developments shall be designed in accordance with the guidance document "Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents" LAWPRO 2024.

## B.8 ZONING

Map No. 1 'Land Use Zoning Objectives' indicates the boundary of the LAP. All lands located outside the settlement boundary are considered to be within the rural area. Within the rural area planning applications shall be assessed having regard to the relevant objectives and standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan.

The purpose of land use zoning objectives is to indicate the Council's intentions for land uses in the town.

### Zoning Objectives

Land use zoning objectives and the associated vision for each zone are as follows:

ZONING	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION
<b>RE: Existing Residential</b>	To protect, provide and improve residential amenities of existing residential areas	To provide for house improvements, alterations and extensions and appropriate infill residential development in accordance with principles of good design and protection of existing residential amenity. In existing residential areas, the areas of open space permitted, designated or dedicated solely to the use of the residents will normally be zoned 'RE' as they form an intrinsic part of the overall residential development; however new housing or other non-community related uses will not normally be permitted.
<b>RN1: New residential Priority 1</b>	To provide for new residential development and supporting facilities during the lifetime of the plan.	To facilitate for the provision of high quality new residential developments at appropriate densities with excellent layout and design, well linked to the town centre and community facilities. To provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet household needs and to promote balanced communities.
<b>RN2: New residential Priority 2</b>	To provide for new residential development and supporting facilities where it can be demonstrated that such development would accord with the Core Strategy housing target for the settlement in accordance with the objectives set out in this plan.	To facilitate for the provision of high quality new residential developments at appropriate densities with excellent layout and design, well linked to the town centre and community facilities. To provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet household needs and to promote balanced communities.
<b>TC: Town Centre</b>	To provide for the development and improvement of appropriate town centre uses including residential, retail, commercial, office and civic use.	To develop and consolidate the existing town centre to improve its vibrancy and vitality with the densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure and residential uses, while delivering a quality urban environment, with emphasise on regeneration, infill town and historic centre conservation; ensuring priority for public transport where applicable, pedestrians and cyclists, while minimising the impact of private car based traffic and enhance and develop the existing centre's fabric.
<b>SLC: Small Local Centre</b>	To provide for small scale local services	To facilitate the development of small scale local shop / retail services and other local scale employment and community service uses that meet only the retail or service needs of residents in the immediate catchment and are not of such a scale or type that would detract or draw trade from the town centre.

ZONING	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION
<b>E: Employment</b>	To provide for the development of enterprise and employment	To facilitate the further development and improvement of existing employment areas and to facilitate opportunities for the development of new high quality employment and enterprise developments in a good quality physical environment.
<b>CE: Community &amp; Education</b>	To provide for civic, community and educational facilities	To facilitate the development of necessary community, health, religious, educational, social and civic infrastructure.
<b>AOS: Active Open Space</b>	To protect and enhance existing and provide for new active open space	Subject to the protection and enhancement of natural biodiversity, to facilitate the further development and improvement of existing active open spaces, formal exercise areas, sports grounds, playing pitches, courts and other games areas and to facilitate opportunities for the development of new high quality active recreational areas.
<b>OS1: Open Space</b>	To protect and enhance existing and provide for recreational open space	Subject to the protection and enhancement of natural biodiversity, to facilitate the further development and improvement of existing parks and casual play areas, to facilitate opportunities for the development of new high quality amenity open areas and to restrict developments / activities (such as the use or development of such lands for formal sports grounds for organisations that are not available for a broad range of the public) that would reduce the opportunities for use by the wider public.
<b>OS2: Natural Areas</b>	To protect and enhance existing open, undeveloped lands	To protect, enhance and manage existing open, undeveloped lands that comprise flood plains, buffer zones along watercourses and rivers, steep banks, green breaks between built up areas, green corridors and areas of natural biodiversity.
<b>PU: Public Utility</b>	To maintain lands providing services infrastructure	To allow for lands to be designated for public utilities such as waste water treatment plants, large ESB sub-stations, gasworks etc
<b>T: Tourism</b>	To provide for tourism related development	To provide for the sustainable development of tourism related structures, uses and infrastructure. To provide for the development of tourism facilities including accommodation of an excellent sustainable design and aesthetic quality. Tourism related office, civic and cultural and commercial development will be facilitated.
<b>MU: Mixed Use</b>	To provide for mixed use development	The nature of the mixed use development envisaged for any particular site is set out in the text of the plan.
<b>AG: Agriculture</b>	To provide for the sustainable development of agriculture, forestry and essential rural development.	Subject to the protection and enhancement of natural biodiversity, the rural landscape, and built and cultural heritage, to facilitate the further development and improvement of agriculture, forestry and essential rural development including rural-related enterprise and amenity / utility related infrastructure, in accordance with the County Development Plan policies and objectives relating to rural areas.
<b>EX: Extractive Industry</b>	To provide for extraction / quarrying and associated activities including processing of extracted materials and land restoration.	To facilitate the development of extraction/ quarrying, associated activities and land restoration.

The box below gives typical appropriate uses for each zone type. The planning authority shall determine each proposal on its merits, and shall only permit the development of uses that enhance, complement, are ancillary to, or neutral to the zoning objective. Uses that are materially inconsistent with and detrimental to the zoning objective shall not be permitted.

Uses generally appropriate for **residential (RN / RE)** zoned areas include houses, apartments, residential open space, education, community facilities, retirement homes, nursing homes, childcare, health centres, guest house, bed and breakfast, places of public worship, home based economic activity, utility installations and ancillary development and other residential uses in accordance with the County Development Plan (CDP) and Local Area Plan (LAP).

Uses generally appropriate for **town centre (TC)** include residential development, commercial, education retail, retail services, health, restaurants, public house, public buildings, hotels, guest houses, nursing / care homes, parking, office, tourism and recreational uses, community, including provision for religious use, utility installations and ancillary developments for town centre uses in accordance with the CDP and LAP.

Uses generally appropriate for **Small Local Centres (SLC)** include small scale retail and retail services, health, education, parking, employment, office, tourism and recreational uses, community, including provision for religious use, childcare/crèche, utility installations and ancillary developments in accordance with the County Development Plan and this LAP.

Uses generally appropriate for **employment (E)** zoned land include general and light industry, office uses, enterprise units, education, appropriate warehousing, petrol filling stations (as deemed appropriate), public transport depots, open space, including sports grounds, community facilities including community and sports centres, utility installations and ancillary developments for employment and industry uses in accordance with the CDP and LAP.

Uses generally appropriate for **community and educational (CE)** zoned land include community, educational and institutional uses include burial grounds, places of worship, schools, training facilities, community hall, nursing homes, health related developments, sports and recreational facilities, utility installations and ancillary developments for community, educational and institutional uses in accordance with the CDP and LAP.

Uses appropriate for **active open space (AOS)** zoned land are sport and active recreational uses including infrastructure and buildings associated with same. Schools are appropriate.

Uses appropriate for **open space (OS1)** zoned land are recreational uses such as formal / informal landscaped parks with off-road walking / cycling paths, as well as playgrounds, skate parks, Mixed Use Games Areas, outdoor gyms, and allotments.

Uses appropriate for **natural areas (OS2)** zoned land are uses that protect and enhance the function of these areas as flood plains, buffer zones along watercourses and rivers, green breaks between built up areas, green corridors and areas of natural biodiversity. The development of these lands for recreational uses may only be considered where such use is shown to not undermine the purpose of this zoning.

Uses generally appropriate for **public utility (PU)** zoned land are for the provision of necessary infrastructure and services such as roads / footpaths / cycleways, carparks, train station, water and waste water treatment plants, large ESB substations, gasworks.

Uses generally appropriate for **tourism (T)** zoned land are tourism accommodation and tourism / recreational uses such as Bed & Breakfast, cultural uses, holiday homes, hotels, recreational facilities.

Uses generally appropriate for any **mixed use (MU)** area will be specified in the plan.

Uses generally appropriate for **agriculture (AG)** zoned land are agricultural uses (and associated buildings) including crop cultivation, horticulture, animal husbandry, forestry, residential (subject to policies in relation to housing in the open countryside as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan), farm shops, agri-business and agri-tourism where required to be in a rural location, equestrian uses, kennels, allotments, sustainable energy installations and utility structures, amenity walks and greenways.

Uses generally appropriate for **extractive industry (EX)** zoned land are extractive industry uses (the winning of all minerals and substances in or under land of a kind ordinarily worked by underground or open cast mining), including value added production, such as concrete, asphalt and block production, and ancillary developments in accordance with the County Development Plan.

Essential infrastructure, including roads / footpaths / cycleways and utilities that are necessary to support development lands, are generally permissible in all zones. Where such infrastructure would be required in OS1 or OS2 zones, and no other routes are viable, such infrastructure shall only be considered where it is shown it will not undermine the purpose of this zoning or give rise to significant adverse environmental impacts.

Many uses exist where they do not conform to the designated zoning objective. When extensions to, or improvements of premises accommodating such uses are proposed, each shall be considered on its merits and permission may be granted where the development does not adversely affect the amenities of properties in the vicinity and does not prejudice the proper planning and development of the area.

Whilst the land-use zoning will give an indication of the acceptability or otherwise of particular uses in particular areas, proposed development will also be assessed in terms of compatibility with the development control guidelines and standards outlined in the Wicklow County Development Plan and this plan. Factors such as density, height, massing, traffic generation, public health regulations, design criteria, visual amenity, availability of services and potential nuisance by way of noise, odour and air pollution are also of importance in establishing whether or not a development proposal conforms to the proper planning and sustainable development of an area.

## Phasing

The lands that are needed to be zoned to meet the current target will be zoned 'New Residential' and identified in this plan as '**RN 1 -New Residential Priority 1**' lands.

In order to ensure a long term supply of zoned residential land, in particular to ensure flexibility in the event of an increase in housing targets during the lifetime of this plan, this plan also provides for additional zoned residential lands, over and above that needed to meet current targets, zoned '**RN2 – New Residential Priority 2**'. Permission will only be considered during the lifetime of this plan for RN2 lands where the following two conditions are satisfied:

- 75% of Priority 1 new residential lands (RN1) lands have been activated (i.e. consent obtained and development initiated) **or** after 3 years following adoption of the LAP, less than 50% of the RN1 lands have been activated;
- It can be shown that the housing / population generated by the proposed development would not result in the prevailing Core Strategy targets at the time of the decision to grant permission being significantly breached.

It is an objective of the Council that development is undertaken in an orderly and sustainable manner. The development of zoned land should generally be phased in accordance with the sequential approach:

- Development should extend outwards from the town centre with undeveloped land closest to the centre and public transport routes (if available) being given preference, i.e. 'leapfrogging' to peripheral areas should be avoided;
- A strong emphasis should be placed on encouraging infill opportunities and better use of under-utilised lands; and
- Areas to be developed should be contiguous to existing developed areas.

Only in exceptional circumstances should the above principles be contravened, for example, where a barrier to development is involved. Any exceptions must be clearly justified by local circumstances and such justification must be set out in any planning application proposal.

The Council may, in certain cases, phase permitted development where this is considered necessary for the following:

- i. the promotion of an appropriate balance of employment, residential and service facilities (schools, shopping, community facilities etc.) and other uses that are required to increase the self-sufficiency of the settlement, or
- ii. ensuring the delivery of infrastructural services in tandem with development, including water, sewerage and road infrastructure, that is required to safeguard the environmental quality and public safety of the area.

## European Sites

There are a number of 'European Sites' (SACs / SPAs) located in or in proximity to the plan area. The sites themselves are protected from inappropriate development through the legal provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives, as well as the Planning Act. Such sites, where they are located within the plan boundary, are shown on the land use map and the heritage map associated with the plan as SAC / SPA as appropriate.

In a number of locations, there are lands adjoining European Sites, which while not being included in the legally designated site, are linked to the site in terms of similar or supporting habitats, water flows or other characteristics which render them important to protect from inappropriate development which may have a direct or indirect effect on the designated site itself<sup>14</sup>.

The approach to zoning lands adjoining European Sites has been as follows:

1. No lands within the actual European Site have been zoned.
2. Where there is existing developed areas, the lands have been zoned for their existing use, which will essentially allow for the continuation of the existing use and its enhancement. In accordance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and the Planning & Development Act, any proposed development with potential to impact upon the integrity of a European Site shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment;
3. Where there is existing undeveloped lands, the lands have only be zoned for new development where it can be justified that such zoning and development arising therefrom is essential for the town to achieve its development vision and strategic objectives. In accordance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and the Planning & Development Act, any proposed development with potential to impact upon the integrity of a European Site shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment;
4. Where there is existing undeveloped lands, and the development of these lands is not essential for the achievement of the development vision and strategic objectives for the town, the land will be zoned 'OS2' – **natural areas**. The only developments that will be considered in such area are those which contribute to the objective of the natural areas zone (detailed in this plan) and that can be shown to not diminish the role and function of such areas, will not result in adverse impacts on the integrity of any EU protected site and will not diminish the biodiversity value of the lands or the ability of plants and animals to thrive and move through the area.

### European Sites Objectives

To protect European Sites and a suitable buffer area from inappropriate development.

Projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this plan<sup>15</sup>.

Ensure that development proposals, contribute as appropriate towards the protection and where possible enhancement of the ecological coherence of the European Site network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the EU Habitats directive. All projects

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<sup>14</sup> In accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, the aim is to protect and maintain linear landscape features which act as ecological corridors, such as watercourses (rivers, streams, canals, ponds, drainage channels, etc), woodlands, hedgerows and road and railway margins, and features which act as stepping stones, such as marshes and woodlands, which taken as a whole help to improve the coherence of the European network

<sup>15</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

and plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

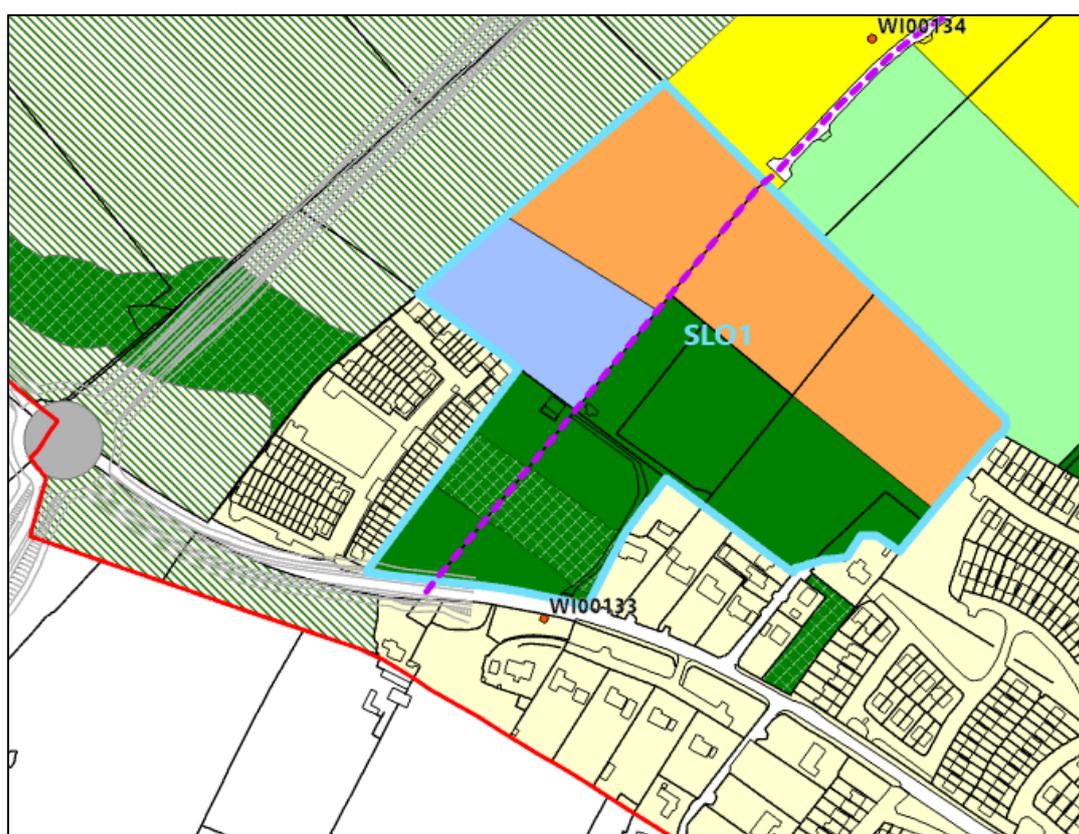
In order to ensure the protection of the integrity of European Sites, the planning authority is not limited to the implementation of the above objectives, and shall implement all other relevant objectives of the CDP and LAP as it sees fit.

## Specific Local Objectives

### Specific Local Objectives (SLO)

The purpose of an SLO is to guide developers as to the aspirations of the plan regarding the development of certain lands where more than one land use is proposed, where there is a new infrastructure necessitated on the subject lands or where the lands are zoned for 'mixed use' to give more detail on the development objective of these lands. A masterplan for the entire SLO area may be required to be submitted as part of the first application within the SLO.<sup>16</sup> All masterplans / development applications shall have regard to the requirements of the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoECLG, 2012) and in compliance with TII Publications.

### Specific Local Objective 1 – Lands at Naas Road



**Figure B.8.1: Specific Local Objective 1**

This SLO is located in the townland of Blessington Demesne. This SLO measures c.10 ha and comprises c3.9 ha zoned OS1 'Open Space', c.0.7 ha zoned OS2 'Natural Areas', c.1.3 ha zoned CE 'Community and Education', and c4.1 ha zoned RN2 'New Residential Priority 2'. In the previous Blessington Local Area Plan 2013, lands within this SLO were zoned for Active Open Space uses. However, future scenario flood mapping undertaken under the CFRAM programme indicates significant areas of potential flood risk in this area. While Active Open Space may be permissible under the current flood zones set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan, other locations within the settlement not subject to flood risk are preferable for such uses. Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- The restoration of the culverted watercourses within the SLO to open watercourses with associated riparian zones corresponding to lands zoned OS2 'Natural Areas'. This must not increase flood risk in adjacent areas, e.g. Glen Ding estate.

<sup>16</sup> For a number of the SLOs / OPs concept sketches are shown in this plan. These are conceptual only, did not include complete site surveys/analysis, and should not be taken as a definitive guide as to the acceptability or otherwise of any access points, road layouts or building positions/designs. Any application for permission on said lands must conform to all standards and requirements of the Planning Authority, as set out in this plan and the Wicklow County Development Plan.

- The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value.
- The delivery of the road objective linking the Naas Road to the Blessington GAA grounds, as located within SLO1. The design of this road objective should aim to minimise the loss of trees and existing hedgerows. The road objective may only cross watercourses in line with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. The development of structures along this road objective should provide a **strong** sense of enclosure as per Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, subject to the adequate protection of visual/landscape amenity from Blessington Main Street/Blessington Inner Relief Road to Glen Ding Forest. **No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN2 zoning may be occupied until this road is completed in full and is available for public use.**
- CE zoned lands measuring not less than 1.3 ha shall be serviced as part of the development of the SLO and reserved for future education use.
- The reservation of land for a bus stop along the Naas Road (to serve bus services to/from Naas/Sallins).
- Any remaining OS1 lands shall be laid out as a public park. Particular support will be given to the development of part of this park for allotments (both individual plots and an area of 'community garden'). An appropriate buffer shall be provided between any allotments and existing housing along the Naas Road, with pedestrian/cyclist **only** access into the laneway serving Finner House to the south east of the SLO. **Permission for residential development in this SLO will not be considered unless this OS1 area has been laid out and is available for use upon the occupation of the 1st house.**
- Development within the SLO should aim to maximise pedestrian/cyclist permeability between the allotments and the (under construction) green link to Glending Wood that passes along the northern boundary of the SLO, and provide strong passive surveillance to both of these elements.

#### Specific Local Objective 2 – Blessington Demesne (West)

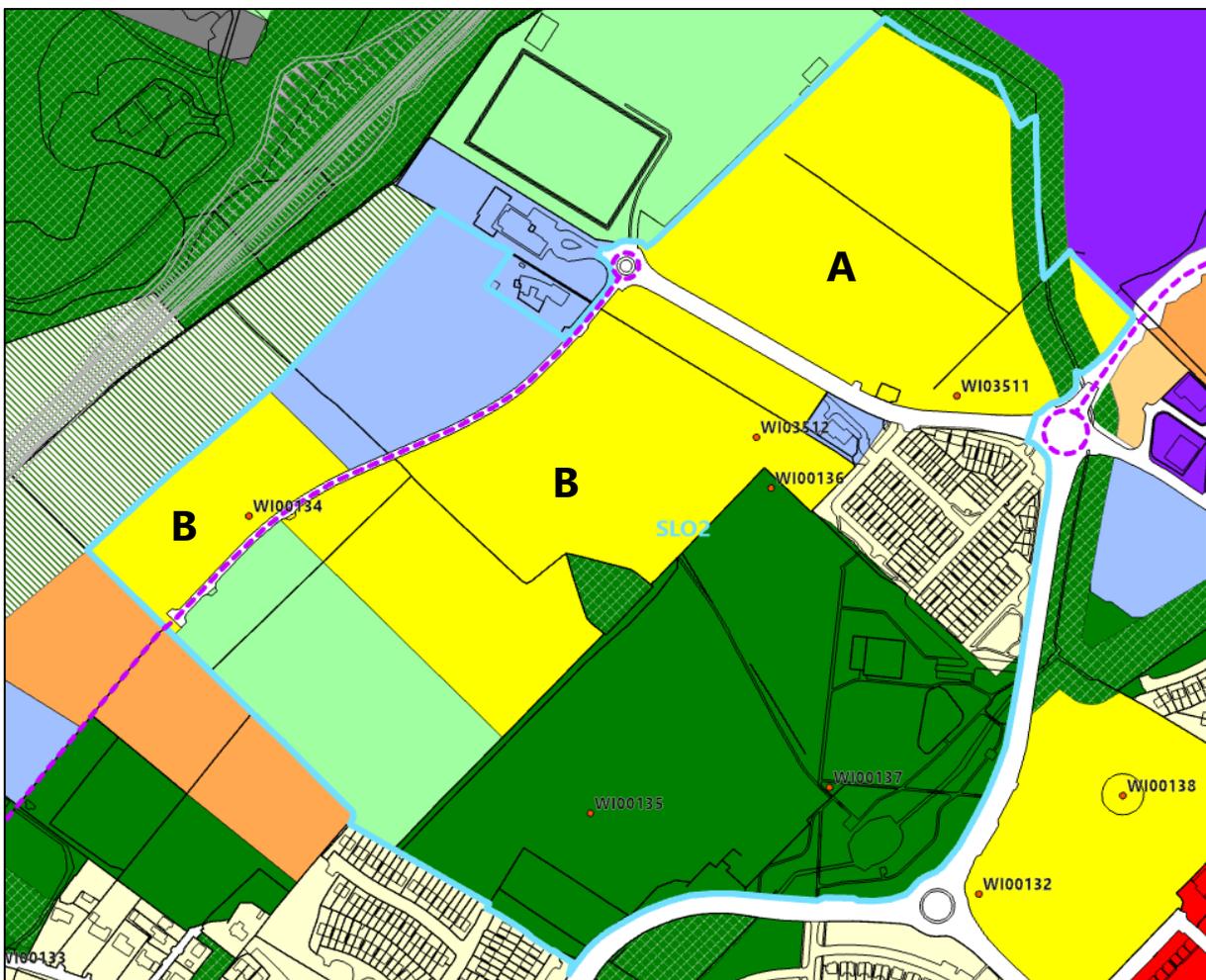


Figure B.8.2: Specific Local Objective 2

This SLO is located in the townland of Blessington Demesne. This SLO measures c. 51ha and comprises

- c. 4.5ha zoned for AOS 'Active Open Space',
- c. 15.3 ha zoned OS1 'Open Space',
- c. 1.4 ha zoned for OS2 'Natural Areas';
- c. 3.8 ha zoned CE 'Community & Education',
- c. 21.8ha zoned RN1 'New Residential Priority 1' and
- c. 3.3 ha zoned RE 'Existing Residential'.

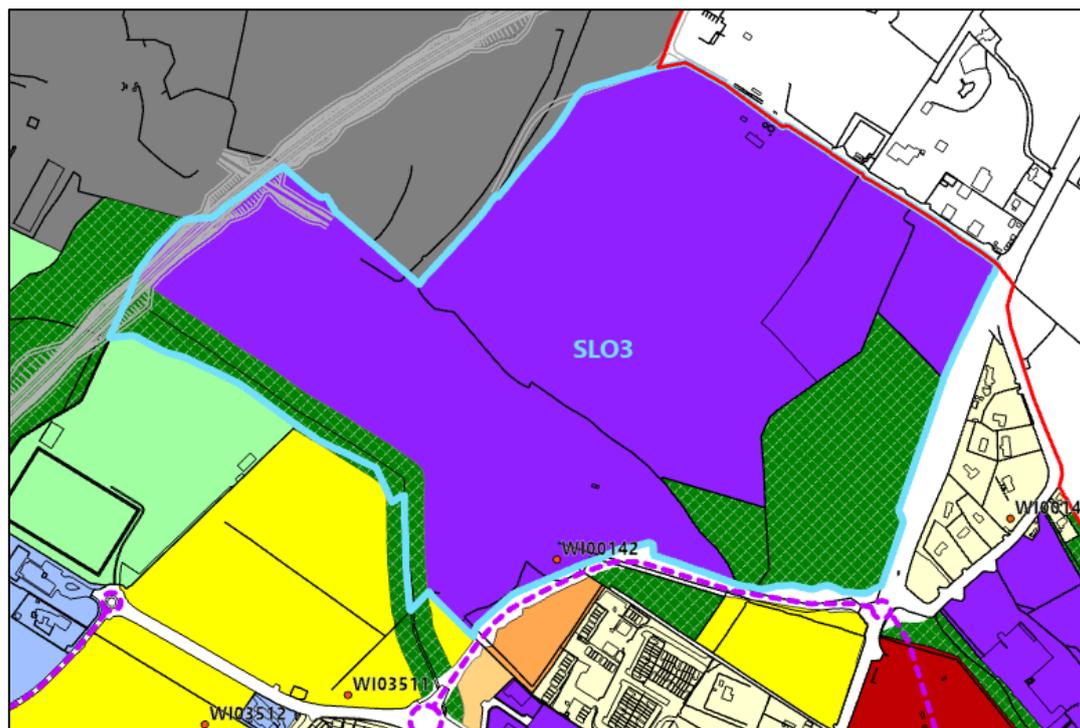
The RN1 zones are located in two parcels – A and B (A being the parcel to the north of Oak Drive and B comprising two RN1 sites to the south of Oak Drive/west of the new park).

Any development proposals for this SLO shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following requirements:

- No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 (Parcel A) zoning may be occupied until the new town park, which shall include a dog park, located on lands zoned OS1, is completed in full. The development of the town park should have regard to and integrate demesne features and other heritage elements associated with the former Blessington Demesne, and should include appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures in relation to habitats of biodiversity value (including areas identified as Local Biodiversity Areas).
- Any new residential development proposals for the RN1 (Parcel B) lands shall be accompanied by proposals for the concurrent development of community sports facility on lands zoned AOS measuring not less than 4.5ha, of a design and layout and including such facilities and support buildings to be agreed with the Planning Authority but which shall include at a minimum a full size polyurethane 400m 8-lane running track, with field athletics space within, a separate full size (i.e. 90mx145m) multi sport all weather pitch, mixed use all weather sports courts (suitable in size and finish for a range of uses) and an all-weather 7-a-side pitch
- Car parking to serve the AOS lands should also be of a sufficient size, layout, and location to serve as an alternative car park for access to Glen Ding via the (under construction) green link that passes through the SLO from the town park. The scale of this car parking should not exceed that necessary to serve the AOS lands and alternative access to Glen Ding (noting the limited existing provision of parking spaces at the entrance to Glen Ding), and should not detract from the efficient use of the AOS lands for the primary purpose of active open space/sports/recreation uses.
- No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 (Parcel B) zoning may be occupied until this community sports facility is fully developed suitable for community sports use (including necessary buildings/structures, layout, drainage, surfacing, lighting, access and car parking) and is available for community use;
- This community sports facility shall be suitable for the needs of, and shared use by, potential future educational uses on the site reserved for such within this SLO.
- CE zoned lands (excluding the under construction childcare facility) measuring not less than 3.56ha shall be serviced as part of the development of the SLO and reserved for future education use.
- The development of structures along all existing and proposed arterial and link roads should provide a **strong** sense of enclosure as per Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, subject to the adequate protection of visual/landscape amenity from Blessington Main Street/Blessington Inner Relief Road to Glen Ding Forest.
- Adequate areas should be left free of development to preserve the view from St. Mary's Church to Bastion Wood and Glen Ding Forest.

- The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value including area identified as LBAs.
- Any new residential development proposals for the RN1 (Parcel A) lands shall be accompanied by proposals for the concurrent development of northern sections of the BIRR. No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 (Parcel A) zoning may be occupied until the northern section of the BIRR is completed in full and is available for public use.
- Any new residential development proposals for the RN1 (Parcel B) lands shall be accompanied by proposals for the concurrent development of link road between Blessington GAA and the Naas Road. No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 (Parcel B) zoning may be occupied until this road is completed in full and is available for public use.
- Development within the SLO shall ensure maximum pedestrian/cyclist permeability into the (under construction) green link that passes through the SLO, and provide strong passive surveillance to this link.
- The following pedestrian/cyclist links shall be provided, alongside general good permeability via pedestrian/cyclist linkages through and between the SLO lands and surrounding areas :
  - from Blessington Inner Relief Road along the southern boundary of the SLO towards Glen Ding Forest (under construction), refer to Map No. 6 Active Travel.
  - from the town park northwards towards the SLO boundary, joining with links within SLO3, refer to Map No. 6 Active Travel. This link should cross watercourses in line with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. Elements of this link are under construction.
  - along the boundary of OS2 lands around the Deerpark watercourse, as relevant, as per objective BLESS46.

### Specific Local Objective 3 – Quarry Employment Lands

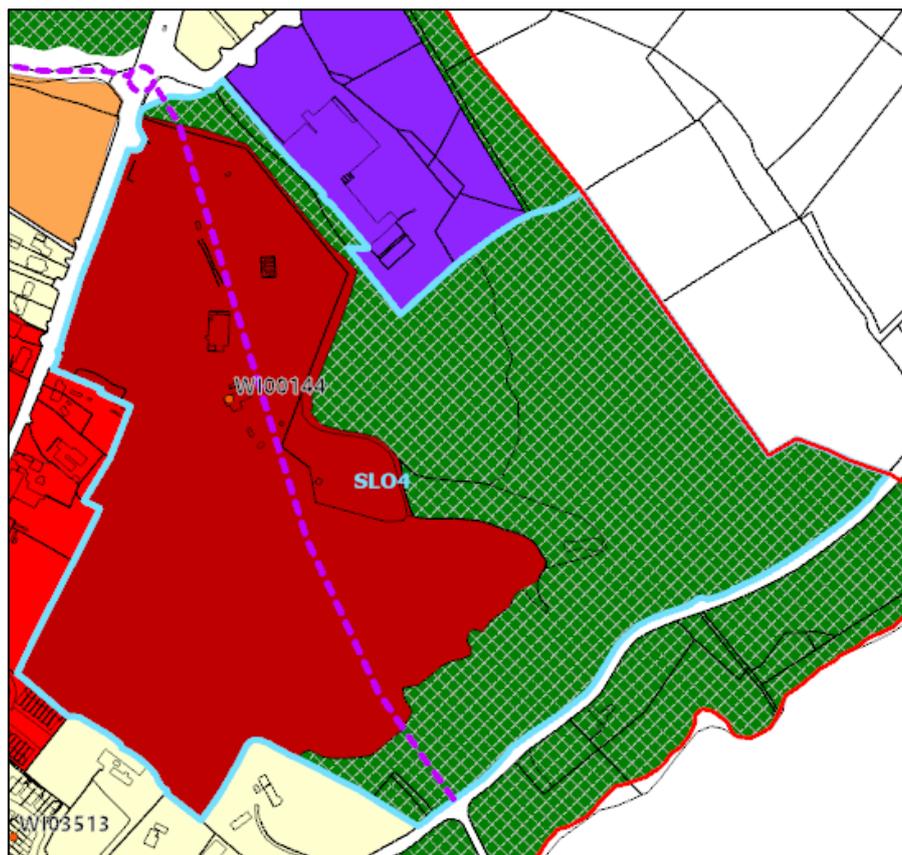


**Figure B.8.3: Specific Local Objective 3**

This SLO is located in the townlands of Santryhill, Newpaddocks, Dillonsdown, and Blessington Demesne. The SLO measures c.51.5 ha and comprises c.41.9 ha zoned E 'Employment' and c.9.6 ha zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' zonings. Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- The development of an integrated (not piecemeal) scheme for employment use on former quarry lands. The development of infrastructure (e.g. full extent of road network, services, park and landscape elements) to allow for the later disposal of employment plots will be considered in this regard.
- The making safe of former quarrying areas and the laying out of an open public amenity nature park through the SLO along the boundary of OS2 lands along the Deerpark Stream, linking to areas of existing woodland zoned OS2 on the eastern boundary of the SLO. This park should be capable of facilitating pedestrian and cycle access to Glen Ding Forest from the N81 and the Blessington Inner Relief Road. An active travel link should also be provided through the SLO northwards towards Crosscoolharbour/Crosschapel (refer to Map No. 6 Active Travel)
- The development of employment units within this area shall be designed and finished in a manner capable of fully integrating into the surroundings of the amenity lands, whilst also providing passive supervision of surrounding walks and cycle routes. Where structures are proposed along the boundary of the Blessington Inner Relief Road or N81, they should provide a **strong** sense of enclosure as per Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.
- Filtered permeability measures should aim to direct the majority of vehicular traffic (including HGVs) away from the built up area of Blessington, with an appropriate entrance onto the N81 to the northeast of the SLO. The proposed entrance into this area proposed as part of the northern section of the Blessington Inner Relief Road may be used for local vehicular traffic accessing the park area or a car park for the overall scheme but should minimise the use of this entrance for direct access to employment units by HGVs.
- The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value including Local Biodiversity Areas. A management plan for the phased regeneration of plantation woodland into native woodland within the SLO shall be included as part of any planning application.
- Development should have regard to the proposed N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme.

## Specific Local Objective 4 – Doran’s Pit



**Figure B.8.4: Specific Local Objective 4**

This SLO is located in the townlands of Haylands and Holyvalley. The SLO measures c.33.4 ha and comprises c.18 ha zoned MU 'Mixed Use' and c.15.4 ha zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' zonings. For the avoidance of doubt, residential development within the area shall be considered RN2 'New Residential Priority 2' for the purposes of phasing and in relation to the Core Strategy as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. The vision for this SLO is of a new compact urban residential/mixed use neighbourhood bounded by a link street linking the N81 and Knockieran Bridge, with a range of community, sporting, and tourism facilities adjacent to an area of recreational woodland, in proximity to the Poulaphouca Reservoir. In relation to SPPR 1 of the Urban Development and Building heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018, this area is explicitly identified as an area where height increases may be suitable, subject to adequate screening from the Poulaphouca Reservoir. Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- The delivery of the road objective linking the N81 to Kilbride Road/Knockieran Bridge. The layout of this road should form an arm off the planned roundabout at the northern end of the Blessington Inner Relief Road, while the road from Blessington Mart should terminate in a junction onto this road objective, with the exact layout to be agreed with the Planning Authority. Permission will not be considered for any development within these SLO unless accompanied **by delivery of this road in full before any development is occupied / brought into use.**
- The development of a pedestrian/cyclist **only** street (with two-way segregated cycle track) running southwest-northeast through the SLO. Modal filters should be employed to restrict vehicular access onto this street. This street should link to Blessington Main Street in the south directly via OP8 with ancillary access via the public road serving the Tramway residential development.
- The MU zone shall be developed as follows:
  - (a) Predominantly residential development, as per the RN2 zoning objective, shall be provided to the south/southwest of the road objective through this SLO, pending the agreement of the exact route of this road objective and in any event shall not exceed 12 ha in total area. This predominantly residential area should be laid out as urban streets and squares with a well-enclosed central park/plaza focal point and appropriate buffers to existing adjacent residential areas. Only 50% of the predominantly residential area may be developed without the complete provision of the above active travel link to Blessington Main Street via OP8.

(b) the following additional infrastructure shall be provided within the predominantly residential area:

- A multi-purpose community building fronting onto the central park/plaza.
- A childcare facility of a sufficient size fronting onto the central park/plaza.

(c) The development of at least c.5 ha of active open space / sport uses and ancillary facilities on the north-eastern side of the road objective in the vicinity of the N81. The exact type and layout of active open space uses shall be agreed with the Planning Authority. **Permission for residential development within this SLO will not be considered unless this sport ground will be completed and available for use upon the occupation of the 1<sup>st</sup> house.**

(d) The reservation of land of not less than c. 1ha for the possible future development of an amenity car park and other tourism infrastructure. The location of this reserved land shall allow for easy access to both the above wooded area and the Blessington Lakes (via the road objective), while minimising the interaction between parking cars and cyclists/pedestrians.

- The development of structures along the above road objective, pedestrian/cyclist street and Blessington Main Street/N81 should provide a **strong** sense of enclosure as per Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, subject to adequate screening from the Poulaphouca Reservoir.
- The lands identified as OS2 'Natural Areas' shall be reserved in as natural a condition as possible with appropriate undeveloped buffer zones. Any development on such lands shall protect natural habitats, mature trees and hedgerows as identified in the GI Audit; road / cycleway / footpath crossings over / through OS2 lands shall be minimised to that absolutely necessary for access; any such crossing of OS2 lands shall be carried out in a manner that maintains ecological connectivity and maintains a natural character.  
The large wooded area within this SLO, located on the northern part of the lands zoned OS2 shall be made safe for public access with a series of low impact trails, which should include a trail leading to Kilbride Road at the eastern extent of the SLO. The above pedestrian/cyclist route should also continue through this area in the direction of Holyvalley while maintaining a level route, and include a spur north to the SLO boundary in the direction of Blessington Educate Together (refer to Map No. 6 Active Travel). A management plan for the phased regeneration of plantation woodland into native woodland in this area shall be included as part of any planning application.
- The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value, including Local Biodiversity Areas.

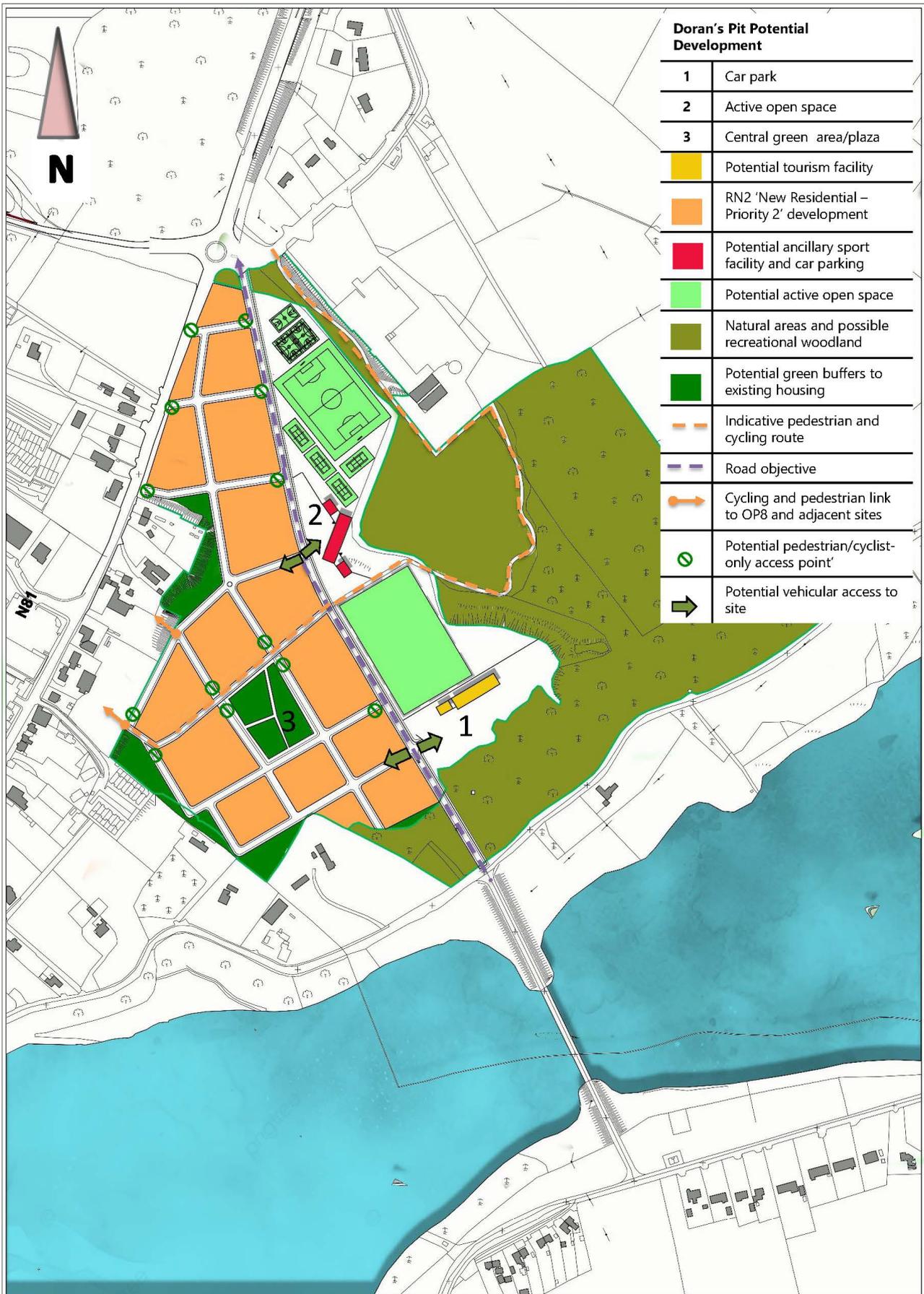
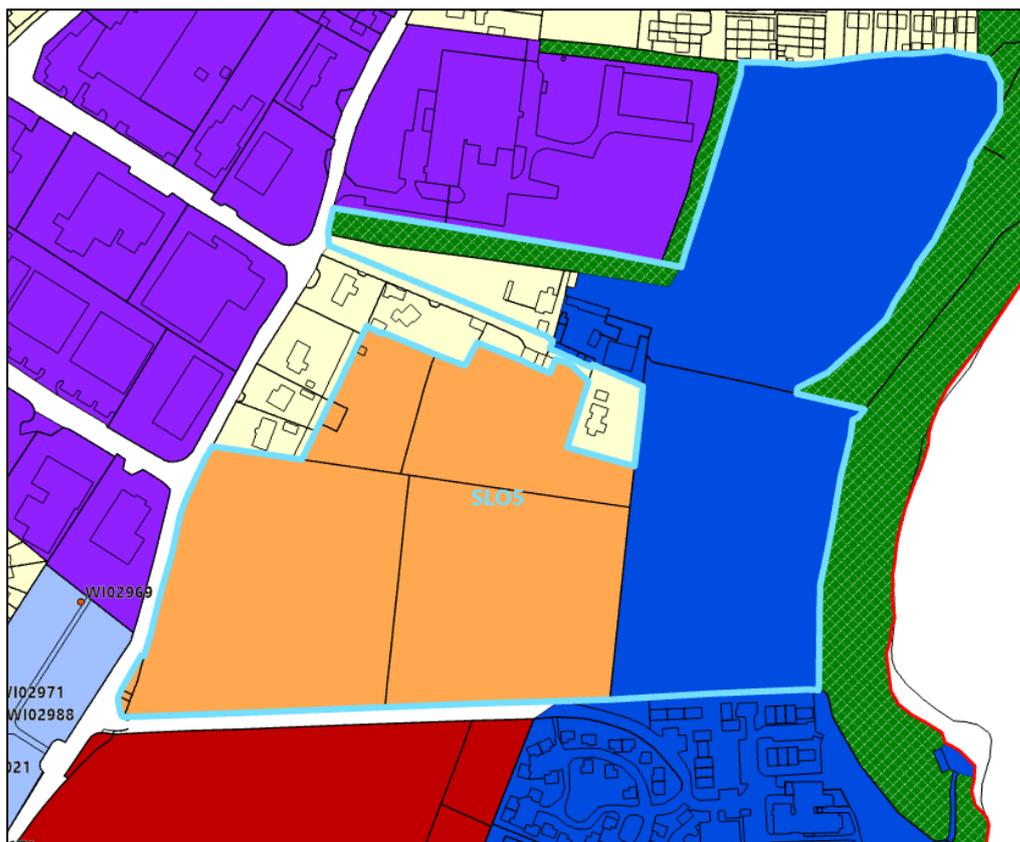


Figure B.8.5: Specific Local Objective 4 Concept Plan

## Specific Local Objective 5 – Burgage More (North)

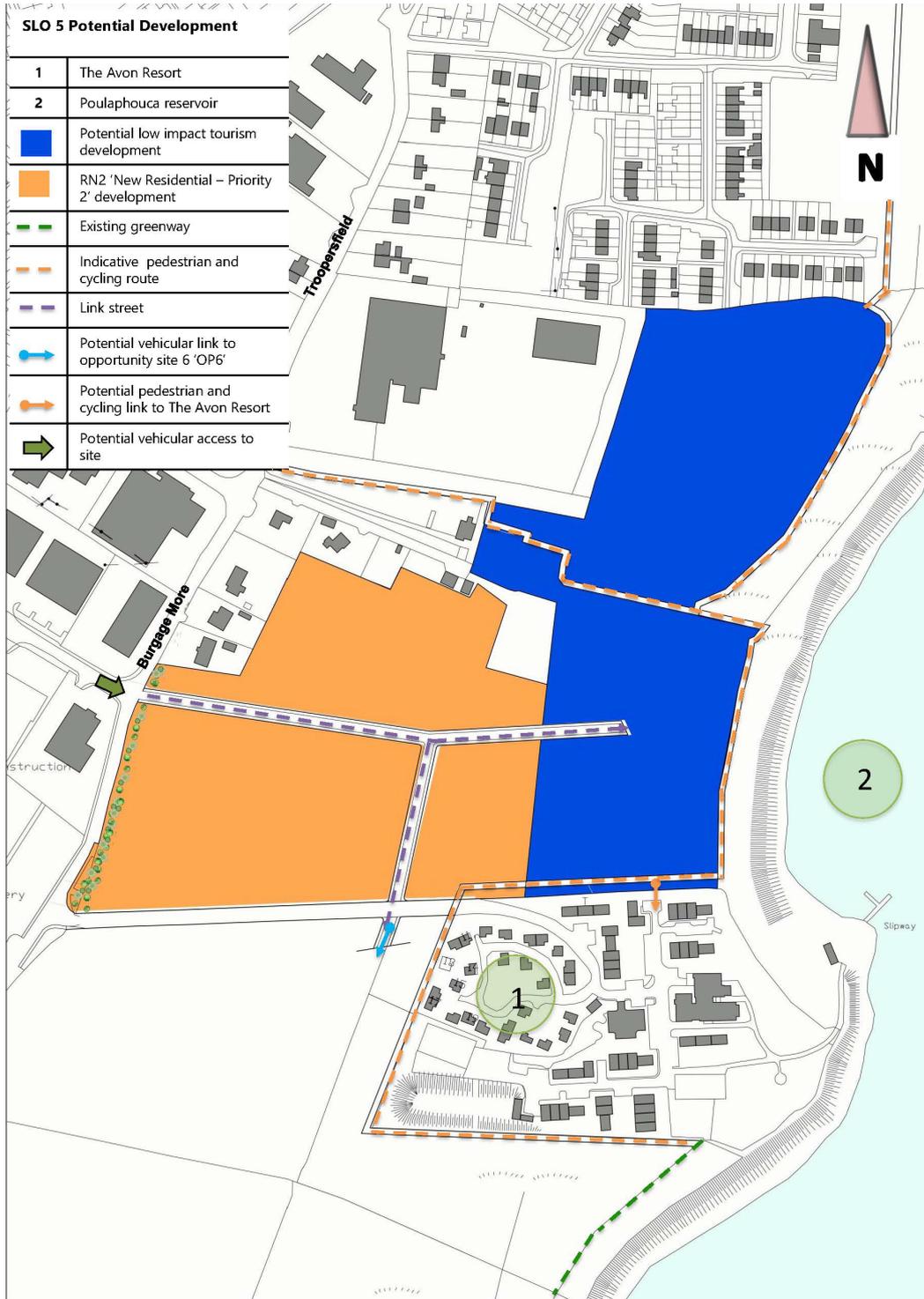


**Figure B.8.6: Specific Local Objective 5**

This SLO is located in the townland of Burgage More. The SLO measures c.12.2 ha and comprises c.5.6 ha zoned RN2 'New Residential Priority 2', c.0.4 ha zoned RE 'Existing Residential', c.5.9 ha zoned T 'Tourism', and c.0.3 ha zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' zonings. Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

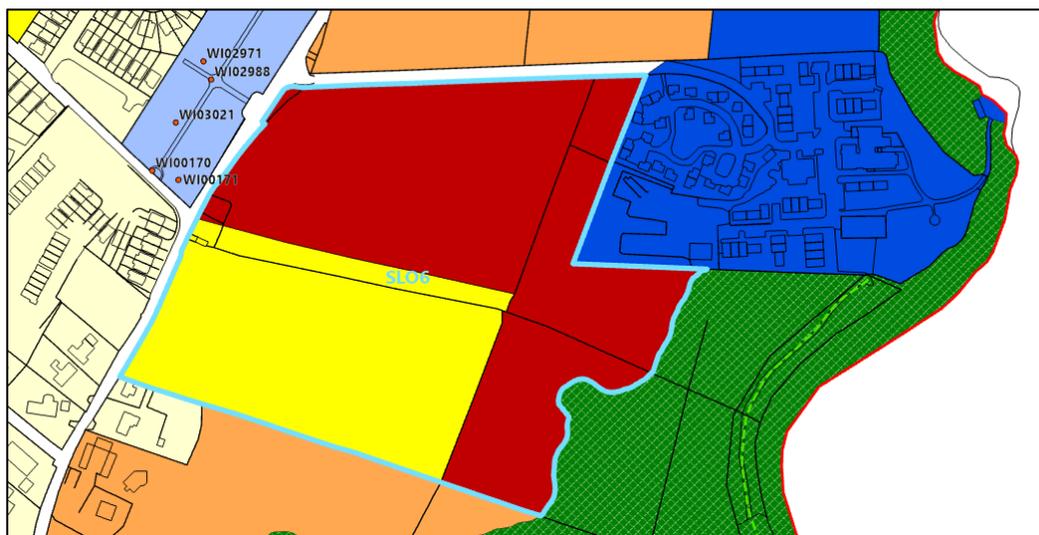
- The development of a link street through the SLO leading from Blessington Industrial Estate via the 'Sturdy Pipe' roundabout. This link street should continue southwards to the boundary of the SLO to potentially serve SLO6 in the future. The location of a potential future crossing point at the boundary of SLO6 shall be agreed with the Planning Authority.
- The development of vehicular road access from this link street into the T 'Tourism' zoned lands.
- The development of appropriate buffer zones/mitigating measures which shall have regard to the setting and curtilage of structures and sites of heritage value, and habitats of biodiversity value. In particular, lands zoned for tourism purposes should be developed for low density and 'low impact' uses without a substantial number of structures, e.g. campsites, aires parks, etc, with the following mitigation measures at a minimum:
  - Limitation on the size of development versus retained green space, with no more of 50% of the zone occupied at full use.
  - Ancillary buildings and service structures for the tourism uses shall re-use or be clustered around the existing farmhouse and outbuildings on lands zoned T 'Tourism' and RE 'Existing Residential'.
  - Minimal landscaping of undeveloped areas within the development, other than low impact access paths to site facilities.
  - Connectivity must be fully retained (corridors through any physical barriers)
  - Lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines
  - Mature trees retained; compensatory tree planting programme for ash trees lost due to die-back
  - Biodiversity plan developed (for example, ponds, pollinator friendly planting)

- The development of pedestrian/cyclist access through an existing laneway to the farmhouse and outbuildings or, if the former is not possible, via a wooded strip in the centre of the SLO that connects onto Troopersfield Road.
- The development of a pedestrian/cyclist link along the boundary of OS2 lands to the eastern side of the SLO (refer to Map 6 Active Travel) as a potential future off-road greenway segment. Insofar as possible this link should remain 'off-road' other than where may be necessary for the potential crossing point into SLO6.



**Figure B.8.7: Specific Local Objective 5 Concept Plan**

## Specific Local Objective 6 – Burgage More (Central)



**Figure B.8.8: Specific Local Objective 6**

This SLO is located in the townland of Burgage More and is in Local Authority ownership. The SLO measures 9.4 ha and comprises c.5.8 ha zoned MU 'Mixed Use' and c.3.6 ha zoned RN1 'New Residential Priority 1'. Consent is already in place for the development of the RN1 lands for residential purposes. The boundary of the OS2 zone is generally defined by the 194m contour. Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- Lands measuring 0.8ha within the MU zone shall be reserved for cemetery and associated car parking development unless an alternative cemetery is developed elsewhere in the Blessington town or environs within the lifetime of this plan;
- Lands zoned MU may be developed for a range of uses, including (but not limited) to tourism (including tourism accommodation), sport, community (including cemeteries), employment and residential use, subject to the following criteria:

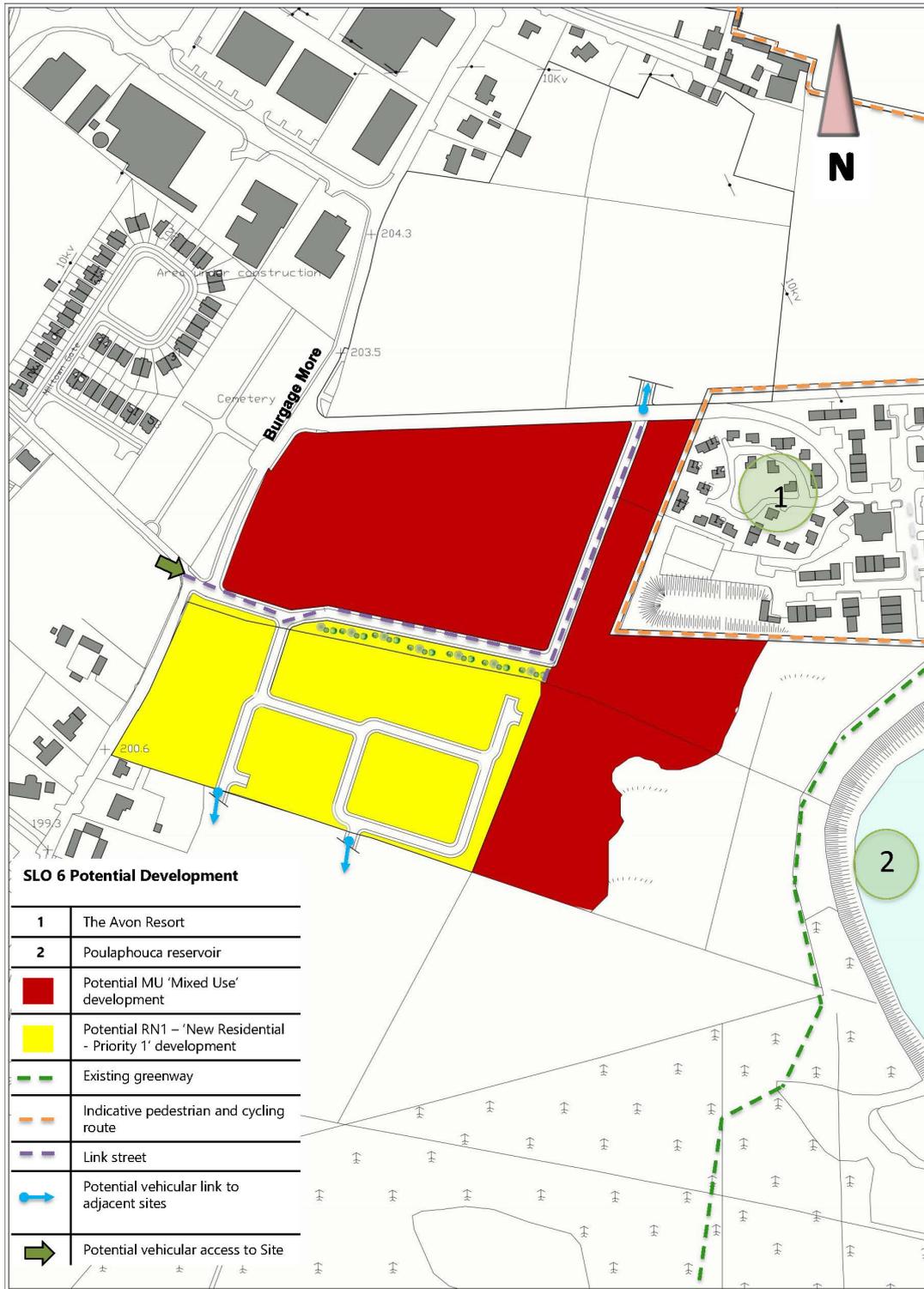
### 1. Lands to the west of the north-south hedgerow / tree line:

- a) The development of a link street through the SLO leading from an agreed future potential crossing point from SLO5. This link street should continue south and west through the SLO to join to the junction at Burgage Castle estate/Burgage Cemetery.
- b) Development in this SLO shall provide vehicular access from this link street into SLO 7 to the south.
- c) The development of an active travel link from the potential crossing point from SLO 5 to meet the existing Blessington Greenway to the south of the Avon resort. Such a link should not include the levelling or draining of the low lying area zoned OS2 'Natural Areas'.

### 2. Lands to the east of north-south hedgerow / tree line:

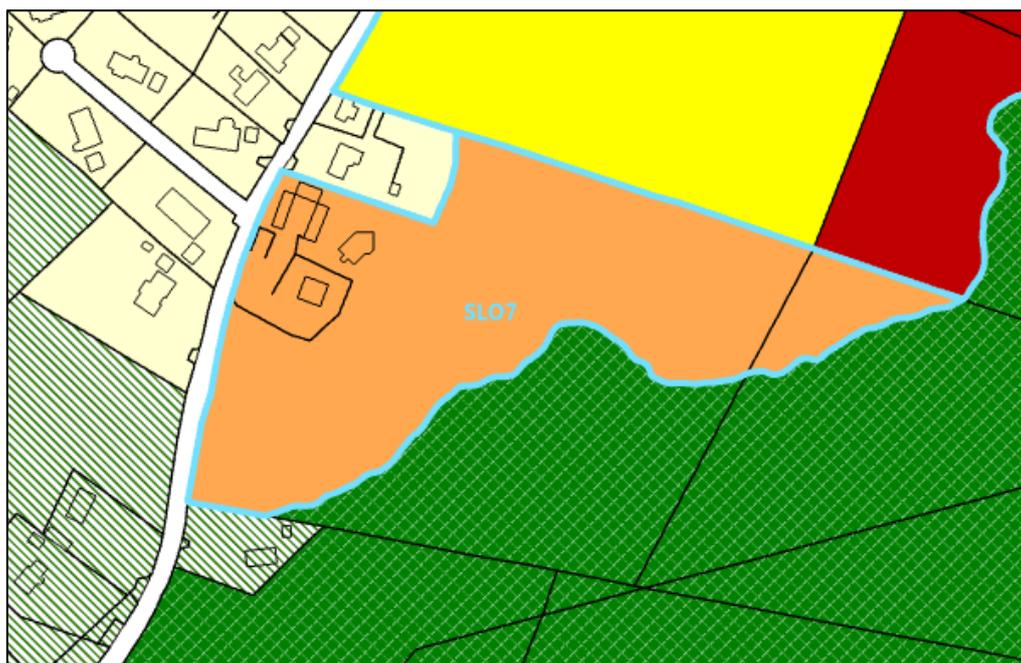
- a) All mature trees and hedgerows on the lands shall be maintained other than where strictly required to facilitate appropriate development and detailed compensatory landscaping and tree planting to account for any loss due to the development and natural die back shall be provided
- b) No uses will be considered that require floodlighting; street lighting and residential lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines

Any development shall be designed following detailed ecological evaluation to ensure no adverse impacts, either directly or indirect, on biodiversity, protected species, European Sites or ecological corridors arise.



**Figure B.8.9: Specific Local Objective 6 Concept Plan**

## Specific Local Objective 7 – Burgage More (South)

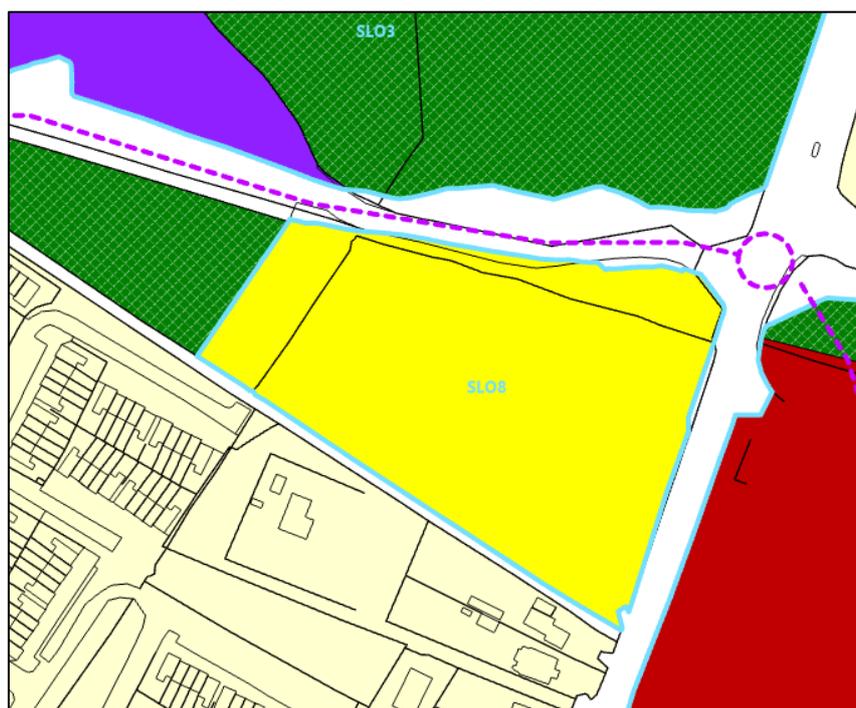


**Figure B.8.10: Specific Local Objective 7**

This SLO is located in the townland of Burgage More. The SLO measures c.3.6 ha and comprises c.3.6 ha zoned RN2 'New Residential Priority 2'. The boundary of the SLO and OS2 zone to the east is defined by the 194m contour. Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- Development within this SLO shall be accessed via SLO6 to the north **only**.
- Development within this SLO shall maintain the hedgerows and rural character of Burgage More lane to the west and provide an appropriate buffer to this lane for such purposes.
- The development of a pedestrian and cyclist link along the boundary of OS2 lands as per objective BLESS46, which should continue through land zoned RN2 to Burgage More lane to the west.
- Lighting must be bat friendly as per Dark Sky guidelines.

## Specific Local Objective 8 – Santryhill



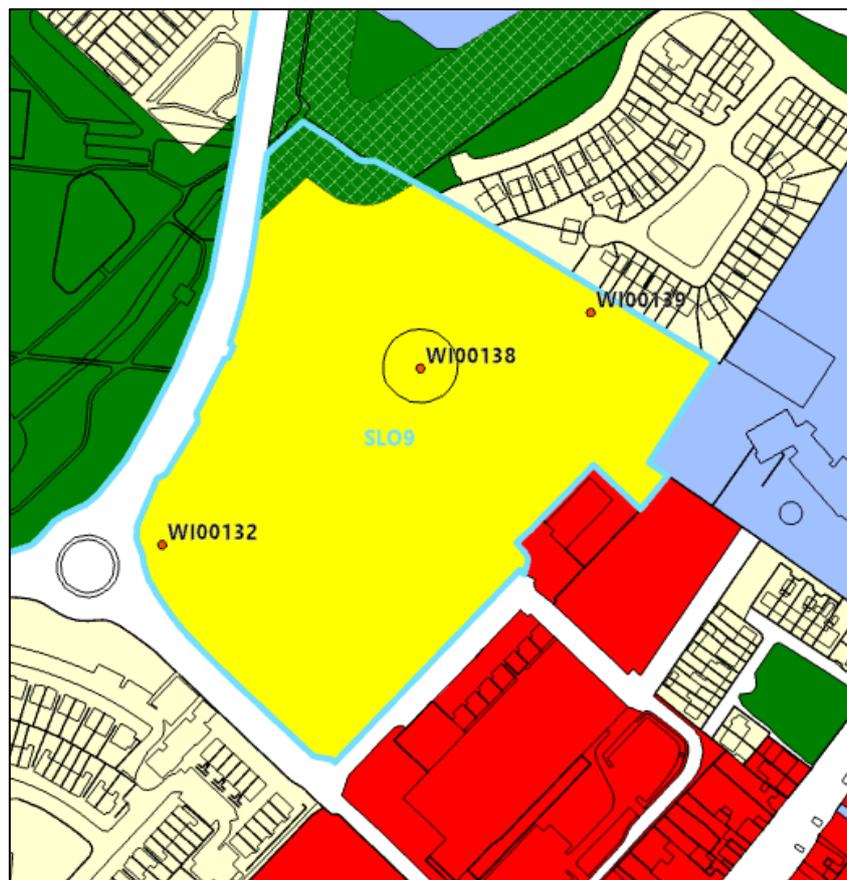
**Figure B.8.11: Specific Local Objective 8**

This SLO is located in the townland of Santryhill and measures c. 2.4ha. The SLO comprises lands zoned 'New Residential' (RN1 – Priority 1).

Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- Access into the SLO shall be via the planned Blessington Inner Relief Road. No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 zoning may be occupied until (a) the northern section of the Blessington Inner Relief Road is completed in full from the Naas Road to the N81 and (b) continuous footpaths along the N81 from the town centre to the BIRR-N81 roundabout to the north of the site are completed.
- The design of any development in this SLO shall provide a high quality design and a strong sense of enclosure and passive surveillance along all road facing frontages i.e. along the planned BIRR and N81, as per Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.

## Specific Local Objective 9 – Blessington Demesne (East)



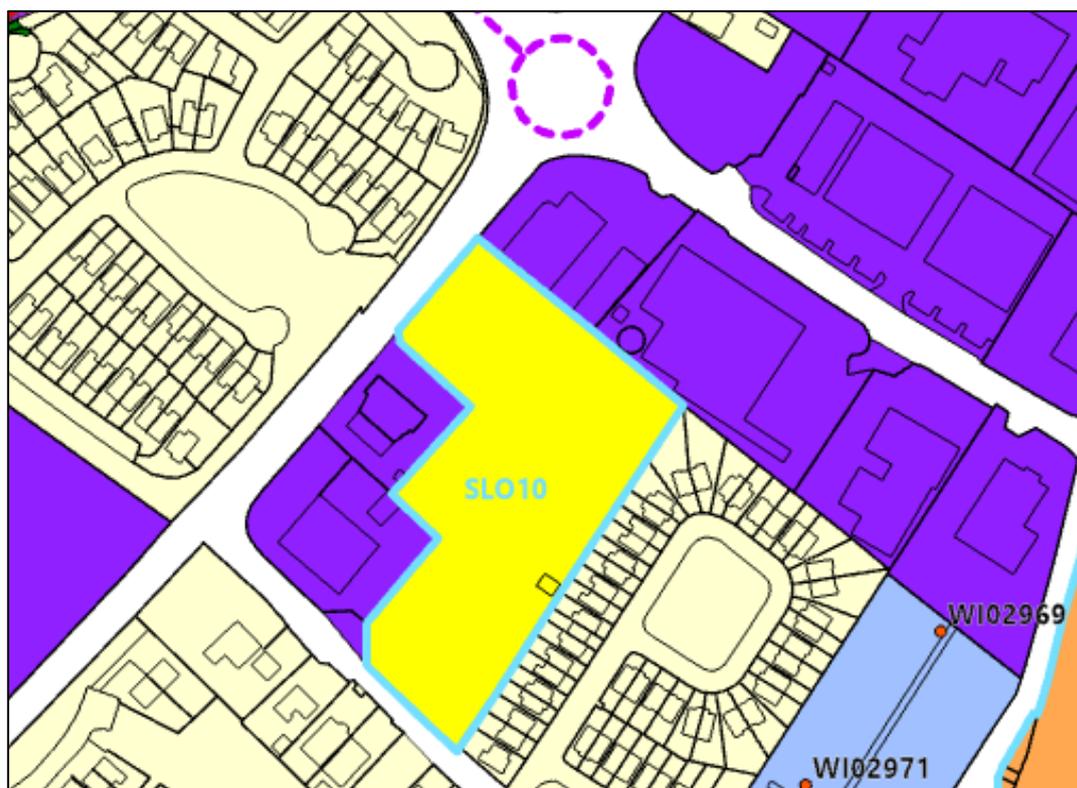
**Figure B.8.12: Specific Local Objective 9**

This SLO is located in the townland of Blessington Demesne and measures c. 5.6ha. The SLO comprises lands zoned 'RN1 – New Residential (Priority 1)' and 'OS2 – Natural Areas'

Any development proposals on these lands shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- Any residential development proposals for the RN1 lands shall be accompanied by proposals for the concurrent development of a community building on the lands of not less than 300sqm GFA;
- No residential units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 zoning may be occupied until this community facility is fully developed suitable for a range of community uses (e.g. community meeting / activity rooms, youth clubs, scouts, mens' / womens' shed) and is available for community use;
- Lands identified as OS2 shall be retained and maintained in a natural condition; no development proposed on foot of this plan shall interfere with river / stream beds, banks and channels.

## Specific Local Objective 10 – Milltown Gate



**Figure B.8.13: Specific Local Objective 10**

This SLO is located in the townland of Burgage More and measures c. 1.3ha. The SLO comprises lands zoned 'New Residential' (RN1 – Priority 1).

Any development proposal shall comply with the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and the following:

- Any new residential development proposals for the RN1 lands shall be accompanied by proposals for the concurrent development of a small public car park of not less than 12 spaces located on the Burgage More Road along the southern boundary of the site. No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 zoning may be occupied until this car park is fully provided, with suitable access, layout, durable surface and marking, and is available for general public use;
- No dwelling units that may be permitted on foot of the RN1 zoning may be occupied until the 'Blessington Gateway' road safety improvement scheme along the N81 is completed.



W I C K L O W

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ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES