



# Draft Blessington LAP Amendment Stage Submission - Report

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## Topic

Variation 3 - Proposed Material Alterations No 3 Submission

## Submission

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Proposed Material Amendments to the Blessington Draft Local Area Plan 2025.

I would like to make the following observations:

- 1) Existing and future quarry operations in the Blessington areas. I would think it premature of WCC to add in provisions to have additional quarries in the Blessington Areas and I would suggest that there is possibly no further land available in the areas controlled by WCC for future quarrying taking into account the restrictions proposed on developing the Blessington lakes side of Blessington. The other potentially suitable lands rest in Co Kildare which is out of the governance of Wicklow County Council. I would also suggest that a provision be placed into the County Development plan that restricts any expansion of quarrying activities altogether until a complete review of the existing quarries have taken place. This should include an assessment into the successful completion of planning conditions already levied on existing operators, all relevant environmental assessments required eg Dust, noise, Water quality/levels etc. In addition it would appear that there is possible planning issues with a number of the existing quarries as a number of them seem to have yet to make substitute consent applications to regularise their planning status. It would be prudent of the county council to complete and indepth analysis of the existing quarries in consultation with Kildare County Council and An Bord Pleanala prior to adding any provision in the plan for new or expanded quarry operations.
- 2) there is a significant lack of consideration taken regarding the neighbouring SAC Red Bog. I would draw the county councils consideration to a report written by Roger Goodwillie regarding the importance of Red bog in Ireland. This is a protected SAC and should have a significant amount of investigation completed prior to any developments being proposed in the neighbouring areas. Although Red Bog is in County Kildare, WCC have a duty to protect this SAC from any harm in the design and implementation of the local area plans.
- 3) I note from the documents that there is a section on Radon which would appear to contain incorrect or outdated information. A recent study has been completed with regards to Radon under the guideship of Dr Quentin Crowley of Trinity College Dublin and it has been found that the whole area has been updated to a Red status which means a high radon occurance. This means that Wicklow County Council have a responsibility to those living in council houses to install radon monitors and take rectifying measures if Radon levels are high (sump pumps etc) but also to insist that all new and existing developments use the latest technologies available to reduce human harm caused by Radon Gas.
- 4) Having read the documents, it would appear that there is a significant lack of research into water quality in terms of water tables, underground hydrology, pollutants (especially for any potential to harm the water supply provided by the river liffey and also Poulaphuca reservoir). I would suggest the council ensure that significant water studies are completed prior to the completion of the amendment document. I would draw the councils attention to the Water Directive to ensure that all regulations are being adhered to when making the final plans for the area. I would also like the council to bear in mind that there is a significant amount of private wells and water supplies in the area which need to be protected.
- 5) Whilst acknowledging that there is a housing crisis in Ireland, I feel Blessington has really done its part in expanding the town and is now really at bursting point with regards to the facilities available to develop the town further. It is disappointing to see that the sewerage waste from Blessington ends up in County Kildare in the Golden Falls lake which is used as a public amenity for water sports. What plans do the council have to remediate this when talking about developing Blessington further with regards to family homes. If there is no new sewerage/waste water treatment facilities then it is again premature to add provisions for significantly more houses. In addition, Public facilities such as schools need to be expanded and land identified for new schools identified at this point. I believe the schools are beyond bursting point now with a significant number of pupils having to travel to other counties for school places. This is not a sustainable approach to developing Blessington. What SPECIFIC plans has WCC in place to develop public amenities such as schools etc. I see there is an obvious opportunity in Dorans Pit, could this site not be used for a significant primary, secondary and VEC community site which would future proof Blessington for Generations. This would be a sustainable site as students/parents could walk to it from the town if cycle paths were implemented.
- 6) There is information in the plan to promote Glending as a green space for Blessington which is great however whilst promoting sustainable life is well and good in practice, what plans are proposed to deal with car parking for those who live too far away to walk to enjoy Glending. As already known, the carpark on the R410 is dangerous as its so small. Is there land that could be used for car parking, with car charges etc for general use which would raise vital funds for the development of Glending as a wonderful outdoor community space.

7) I would encourage the council to consider the use of the Vacant property Tax on all vacant buildings in Blessington and the surrounding areas. It is a shame to see so many dilapidated buildings on the main street of Blessington. There is a significant need for a hotel/Large B&B in the town to encourage more tourists to stay. A lot of the local hotels are concentrating on weddings these days so there is limited scope for tourists to stay. It should also be encouraged to develop over shop accommodation. Researchers have pointed to the fact that if there are citizens living in main streets there is a less likelihood of anti social behaviour.

8) There is a huge opportunity for a real civic space near the credit union in Blessington. There are a large amount of artisans living around the Blessington area. It would be good to give them exhibition space, space for the arts etc that the public could access. Great work has been made to pedestrianize the space, but the council need to drive the success of this space more.

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