



Proposed Variation No. 7 to the Wicklow County Development Plan Submission Report

Submission Details

Ref	VAR7-150537
Who Are You?	Private Individual
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Proposed Variation Parts

Topic	Part 1: Proposed Variation to town / settlement zoning maps and, where relevant, proposed new or amended site specific policy objectives.
Submission	1. Level 5: Ashford

Topic	Part 2
Submission	Changes consequent to Chapter 3 (Core Strategy) of the County Development Plan

Write your observations here:

Submission on Proposed Variation No. 7 – ASH2 / SLO6, Ballinahinch North, Ashford

I wish to make a formal submission objecting to the proposed rezoning identified as ASH2 at Ballinahinch North and the associated SLO6.

I am a resident of Ballinahinch Wood. My home is located on the northern edge of the existing development, immediately adjoining the southern boundary of the proposed ASH2/SLO6 lands. The agricultural fields proposed for rezoning currently form the transition between our established residential area and the countryside to the north.

I recognise the need for additional housing in County Wicklow and I am not objecting to housing provision in principle. My concern is whether the scale, location and infrastructure requirements of ASH2/SLO6 represent an appropriate and sustainable expansion of Ashford.

My primary request is that the Council does not adopt ASH2/SLO6 as proposed and retains the existing unzoned status of these lands.

1. Scale and necessity

ASH2 proposes the rezoning of approximately 19.4 hectares of currently unzoned land, comprising approximately 11.3 hectares of New Residential land, 2.1 hectares of Active Open Space and 6 hectares of Open Space. The wider SLO6 extends to approximately 22.2 hectares.

This is not minor infill or a small extension. It represents a substantial outward expansion of Ashford into presently undeveloped agricultural land.

I ask the Council to demonstrate why development of this scale at Ballinahinch North is necessary and appropriate at this time, and why it represents appropriate sequential and sustainable growth when considered against alternative locations and existing zoned land.

2. Direct impact on Ballinahinch Wood

The proposed New Residential zoning extends towards the existing northern edge of Ballinahinch Wood. The proposed open-space areas do not appear to provide a continuous buffer between the existing estate and future residential development.

For residents directly adjoining these lands, future development could introduce significant changes involving building heights, overlooking, ground levels, lighting, drainage, construction activity and loss of the existing rural setting.

These matters should be considered at the strategic zoning stage rather than being left entirely to future individual planning applications after the principle of development has already been established.

3. Existing traffic and road safety

As a resident, I already have concerns about traffic speeds on the roads serving Ballinahinch Wood and the surrounding estates. In my day-to-day experience, vehicles frequently travel at speeds which make exiting the existing residential estates difficult and, at times, unsafe.

The scale of ASH2/SLO6 has the potential to generate substantial additional traffic from housing, community facilities and sporting uses.

Before rezoning, I request a comprehensive assessment of existing traffic speeds and volumes, junction visibility and capacity, collision history, pedestrian and cyclist safety, school-related traffic and the cumulative impact of existing, permitted and proposed development.

Importantly, this assessment should consider the ability of existing residents to safely enter and exit their estates, rather than simply assessing whether satisfactory new entrances can be provided for the proposed development.

4. Proposed link road

SLO6 requires a new link street from the R764 to the L-5063, with a connection to the R763, and envisages that its design could facilitate the potential closure of the existing R763/L-5063 junction.

This is significantly more than a conventional residential access and demonstrates the scale of road intervention required to facilitate development of these lands.

The requirement for such substantial infrastructure should itself be considered when determining whether these lands represent an appropriate and readily deliverable location for additional residential development.

Any necessary road, junction and traffic-calming improvements should be identified and delivered before the additional traffic dependent upon them is generated.

Existing residential estates should not become through-routes or rat-runs serving the new development.

5. Landscape and rural character

The existing fields form the rural edge of Ballinahinch Wood and provide a transition between the established residential area and open countryside.

SLO6 itself acknowledges the sensitivity of the higher lands by requiring mitigation of visual impacts and an appropriate transition between developed land and the unzoned agricultural lands to the north.

Once land of this scale is rezoned and developed, this change is effectively irreversible. I therefore ask the Council to reconsider whether extending the settlement across the entirety of ASH2 represents appropriate compact and sequential growth.

6. Environment, hedgerows and wetlands

SLO6 requires maximum retention of mature trees and hedgerows and specifically identifies the need to avoid significant adverse effects on surrounding wetland features, including Ballycurry Ponds and Nun's Cross Pond.

These requirements demonstrate that environmental constraints exist within and around the proposed development area.

The cumulative effects of housing, roads, drainage, sports facilities, artificial lighting and construction should be assessed across the entire SLO6 area. Environmental suitability should be established comprehensively before rezoning rather than relying predominantly on mitigation through later individual planning applications.

7. Active Open Space and residential amenity

I support appropriate recreational facilities for Ashford. However, SLO6 proposes substantial community sports infrastructure, including pitches, courts or tracks, a MUGA of at least 1,050 square metres, a clubhouse/changing facility of at least 200 square metres, lighting, drainage, access and parking.

These facilities can provide community benefits but may also generate traffic, parking, evening activity, artificial lighting and noise.

If SLO6 proceeds, intensive recreational uses such as floodlit pitches, MUGAs, clubhouses and parking should be appropriately separated from existing homes and provided with adequate landscaping and screening.

8. Drainage

Development of this scale will introduce substantial areas of housing, roads, footpaths, parking and other impermeable surfaces where agricultural land currently exists.

An integrated surface-water and drainage strategy should therefore be demonstrated for the entire SLO6 area before development proceeds, with particular consideration given to existing properties and surrounding wetland features.

9. Comprehensive masterplan

If the Council decides to retain ASH2/SLO6, I strongly request that a single comprehensive masterplan for the entire SLO6 area be required before individual development applications are considered.

The masterplan should establish the overall road hierarchy, housing layout and densities, building heights, pedestrian and cycling connections, open spaces,

sports facilities, drainage infrastructure, ecological corridors, retained trees and hedgerows, landscape buffers and the interface with existing residential properties.

Development of such a large area should not proceed through piecemeal applications which could prejudice the appropriate location of roads, open spaces, community facilities or environmental infrastructure.

10. Safeguards if the rezoning proceeds

If the Council proceeds with ASH2/SLO6 despite my primary objection, I request that SLO6 expressly require:

- A comprehensive masterplan before individual applications are considered.
- Appropriate landscaped separation between existing Ballinahinch Wood properties and new development.
- Controls on building height, orientation, overlooking and ground levels along existing residential boundaries.
- Retention and reinforcement of mature trees and hedgerows.
- Appropriate separation of floodlit sports facilities, MUGAs, clubhouses and parking from existing homes.
- Comprehensive traffic assessment covering existing estate accesses and the surrounding road network.
- Necessary road and junction improvements before additional traffic is generated.
- Existing residential estates not becoming vehicular through-routes.
- Safe pedestrian and cycling connections to existing estates, schools and Ashford village.
- Comprehensive ecological, drainage, landscape and visual assessments.

- Appropriate phasing so that necessary infrastructure and community facilities are delivered alongside residential development.

Conclusion

I recognise the need for additional housing in County Wicklow. However, ASH2/SLO6 represents a major expansion of Ashford onto currently unzoned agricultural land immediately adjoining an established residential community.

As a resident whose home is located on the existing northern edge of Ballinahinch Wood immediately adjoining these lands, I will be directly affected by this change. I also experience first-hand the existing difficulties associated with traffic speeds and safely exiting residential estates in this area.

The proposal itself acknowledges the need for significant road infrastructure, mitigation of development on higher lands, protection of mature trees and hedgerows, protection of nearby wetlands and substantial recreational infrastructure.

Taken together, I believe these matters justify reconsideration of whether development of this scale and at this location represents an appropriate and sustainable next stage in Ashford's growth.

I therefore respectfully request that Wicklow County Council does not adopt ASH2/SLO6 as currently proposed and retains the existing unzoned status of these lands.

If the Council nevertheless proceeds with the rezoning, I request that the safeguards outlined above be incorporated expressly into SLO6.