



Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Group
Name:	Lakeshore Striders Athletic Club(LSAC)
Reference:	DBLESSLAP-184811
Submission Made	December 11, 2024 7:06 PM

Topic

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

Submission

As part of the Blessington LAP, Lakeshore Striders Athletics Club(LSAC) would be appreciative if WCC consider allocating a site suitable for a permanent home of Athletics in West Wicklow.

Specifically, LSAC request that space is allocated for a standard 400m running track and associated facilities. As well as space for a multipurpose community center.

This would be of immense benefit, not only to LSAC, but also to the wider sporting and social communities of West Wicklow.

Please see attached our full submission and we thank WCC for their consideration.

Kind Regards,
Lakeshore Striders Athletics Club

File

LAP Submission Doc LSAC.pdf, 1.77MB



On Behalf of Lakeshore Striders Athletic Club

Submission In Relation to Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025

Introduction:

Athletics is one of the most popular sporting activities, both in Ireland and the world. The success of Team Ireland on the track during Paris 2024 is a testament to the growing strength of the sport domestically.

The Lakeshore Striders Athletic Club (LSAC) is a long-standing community organisation, promoting health, fitness and social connection for residents of all ages and abilities. We currently lack dedicated facilities and rely on access to the Blessington Community College sports field. We kindly request that Wicklow County Council consider our club's needs within the Blessington Local Area Plan. Particularly the potential of a zoned area for athletics facility and shared community centre.

History of Lakeshore Striders:

Established in 2007, Lakeshore Striders has been a cornerstone of the Blessington and West Wicklow athletic scene for many years. We are the only Athletics Ireland affiliated club in West Wicklow. The club is growing, has over 110 members and is excited to begin junior training from early 2025. We strive to maintain an intergenerational ethos, where older members support newer and younger members. We attract members from the broader West Wicklow corridor, as well as South Kildare. We offer a welcoming environment for individuals and families to participate in running and walking activities, despite the limitations imposed by a lack of dedicated facilities.

We boast a proud history of supporting the local environment and community:

- We organise an annual Couch to 5K, which is a proven entry point to improved physical activity.
- We organise and provide volunteers for the year round Russborough Park Run on Saturdays. This sees between 70 and 100 runners each week.
- We support the Tidy Towns organisation and run an annual collection for the Capuchin Centre.
- We participate and support the annual Goal Mile event.

- We organise the annual Lakes 10K - one of the most popular races on the 10K circuit, with over 350 runners in 2024.
- We work with the Sanctuary Runners and Trail Criú organisations to support refugees and people seeking international protection.

Benefits of LSAC:

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Our club promotes physical activity, a critical factor in combating obesity, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.
 - Regular exercise also has proven benefits for mental health and well-being, reducing stress and anxiety. These are all objectives of the Healthy Wicklow/ Wicklow Health & Wellbeing Strategy/ Wicklow Children & Young Persons Service Plan(CYPP).
- **Accessibility:** Athletics requires minimal equipment and caters to a wide range of fitness levels, making our club inclusive for all residents.
 - Additionally, Athletics is a non-contact sport and provides an opportunity to participate for those who do not wish or can no longer take part in those sports. Increasing access to these activities is a priority highlighted in the Blessington Access Audit and County Wicklow Age Friendly Strategy.
- **Social Connection:** Lakeshore Striders fosters a strong sense of community, providing opportunities for residents to meet, train together, and build friendships.
 - Many new members have come from the significant expansion in housing over recent years. Given the draft LAP envisions further welcome expansions in housing, the club would like to be in a position to serve these residents of the future. The club also serves as a tool for integration, an objective of the Wicklow Migrant Integration strategy.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Running and walking are environmentally friendly activities, promoting a healthy lifestyle with minimal impact.

Current Limitations:

While we are extremely grateful for access to the Community College sports field, our ability to serve the community and expand the club is restricted by:

- **Limited Availability:** We can only utilise the field and its basic floodlights two nights a week, significantly limiting training opportunities.
 - There is also significant uncertainty over the future availability of this facility, given it is due to be taken up with building works during the Community College's redevelopment.
- **Lack of Dedicated Space:** The sports field's primary function is to serve the school and as such availability can be unpredictable. This hinders consistent scheduling and growth.

- A lack of dedicated space also prevents the club from offering athletics disciplines other than running, such as high jump.
- **Lack of Services:** We do not currently have toilets or changing facilities. This limits the attractiveness of the club, particularly to women and those with disabilities.

Club Requests of Wicklow County Council:

As part of this submission, LSAC request that as part of the Blessington Local Area Plan and in line with current Wicklow County Development plan 2022-2028 objectives that Wicklow County Council:

- Recognise the value which the club brings to both Blessington and the wider West Wicklow community.
- Allocates a sufficient site to support:
 - A standard 400 metre running track with internal area for field sports. This will provide a permanent home to athletics in West Wicklow for decades to come.
 - A community centre which contains changing and toilet facilities for LSAC and other community groups to utilise. This would be available to a wide range of sports and community groups who do not currently have suitable facilities. See Note 1 below for background on the Community Centre purpose & ethos. These have been developed per LECP Community Development guidelines and the Community Facilities Hierarchy Model for planning.
 - Parking for up to 30 cars.

Specifically, the club would like to draw WCC's attention to area SLO8 in the Draft LAP. We feel this would be the ideal location for a new athletics facility for the following reasons:

- Proximity to the existing transport infrastructure of the town.
- Proximity to the large majority of schools in the town. LSAC intends for the facility to be available for all schools, as well as organisations such as the Community Games and Special Olympics.
- Proximity to the new Glending Greenway.
- Within easy active transport distance for the majority of residents.
- Proximity to the proposed KARE facility.

While we recognise that SLO8 is currently classified as Open Space in the draft LAP, we feel it would be beneficial to the entire community if it were reclassified as Active Open Space(AOS).

While the club strongly believes that area SLO8 would be the ideal location for an athletics facility, we would also like to draw attention to area SLO4. This location would be ideal for a multi sports facility, of which we would request that athletics is a part.

See Notes 2 & 3 below for accompanying visuals on these proposed sites.

Conclusion:

In summary, LSAC believes that the current LAP presents an ideal opportunity to secure a home for athletics in West Wicklow; as well as provide much needed community centre space. We thank Wicklow County Council for their consideration as part of the LAP process.

Kind Regards,

Lakeshore Striders Athletics Club

The following local, county and national organisations have expressed their support for a permanent athletics facility and community centre for both Blessington and the wider West Wicklow area:

- Lakeside Community Games
- Westside Community Games
- Ballymore Eustace Community Games
- Athletics Ireland
- Wicklow Sports Partnership
- Kildare Sports Partnership
- Local schools (Blessington x6, Ballymore Eustace, Hollywood, Lacken, Kilbride, Vallemount, Rathmore)
- West Wicklow Interagency committee, consisting of 32 statutory organisations, such as Tusla, CWP, CYPSC, Foroige, Garda, INSYNC etc.
- County Wicklow Partnership
- Baltinglass M.D. Councillors
- Blessington and District Forum
- Blessington and District Forum Community Development and social inclusion subgroup
- Blessington Access Group
- Oireachtas members
- Blessington Walking Club
- Blessington Tourist Office



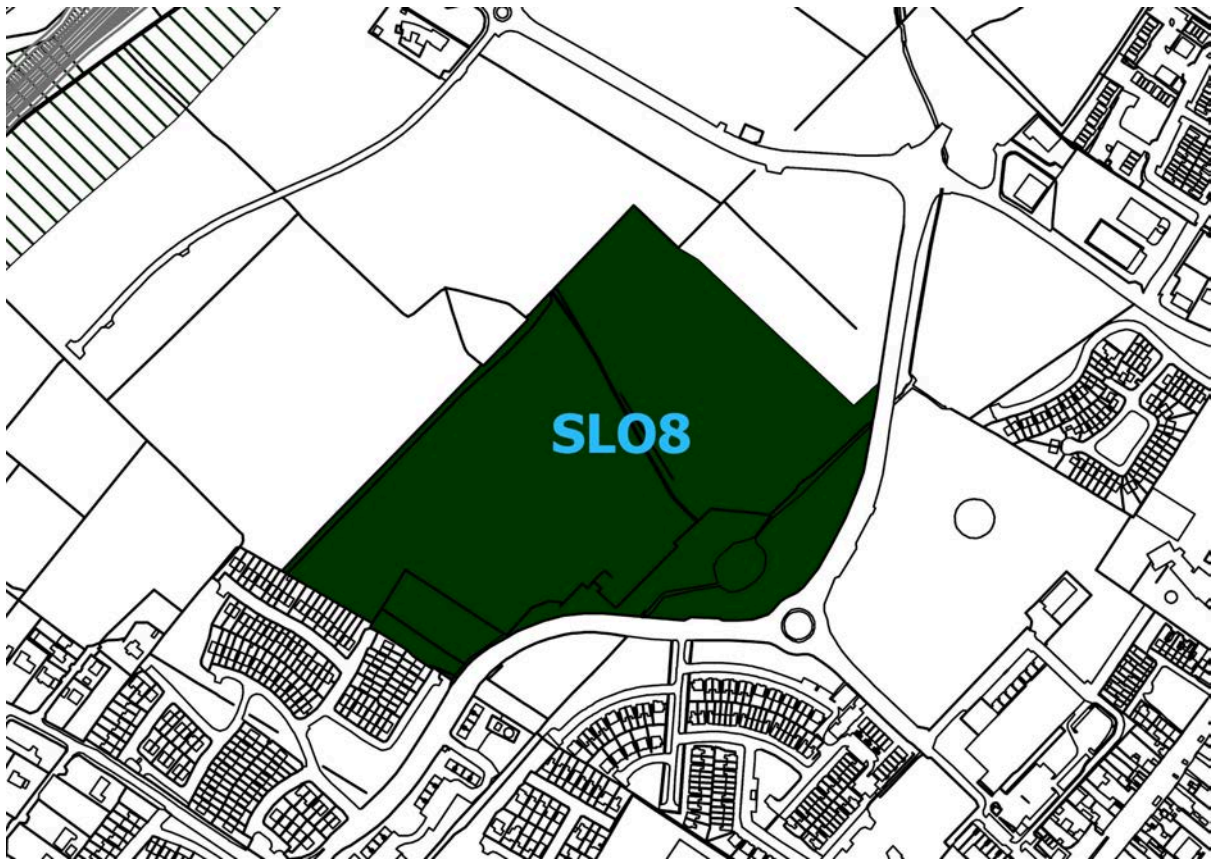
Note 1: Ethos Of proposed Community Centre

We seek to build social cohesion and promote equitable access to services and opportunities for residents in Blessington and indeed the corridor of West Wicklow. We aim to have a successful, vibrant community facility providing a safe and welcoming meeting place.

The community centre should be a hub that exists to improve the quality of life for local people by offering excellent services which provide a range of educational, recreational, cultural, and social opportunities. We have the support of the social inclusion and Community Development subgroup of the forum along with that of the West Wicklow Interagency committee.

This group consists of over 30+ agencies who have a remit to provide services in Blessington and all West Wicklow. These services range from TUSLA-CYPSC WCCC, WCP, Drugs projects, youth projects etc to name a few. All of these are in support of the community centre.

Note 2: SLO8 Proposed Site



Note 3: SLO4 Proposed Site

