

SECTION 4.3 GENERAL SUBMISSIONS

Part A Strategy

A.1 General Comments on Plan Structure

No.	Name	Issues Raised
86	Stephen Deegan Ref 144918	With regard to the zonings for Public Utility, Community and Recreation, Tourism, Active Open Space, Open Space, Natural Areas, Extractive Industry, Blessington is situated in a hugely scenic area of very high amenity but the LAP lacks any kind of vision in that regard. No sense of joined up thinking as each zoning is fragmented and isolated.
134	Eimear Deegan Ref 164517	Blessington straddles two counties, there would be merit in developing a joint LAP with the current plans not covering areas such as Kilmalum
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	Requesting that Wicklow County Council to consider extending the remit of the plan to includes lands situated in County Kildare and adjacent to the town of which any development will have a profound impact on the integrity of the Local Area Plan under consideration. Submits that the Council are doing themselves a disservice by not producing a joint Local Area Development Plan with Kildare County Council. Having an integrated plan will accurately portray the aspirations of both Councils in facilitating orderly growth. For example, the population targets on page 7 (table 2.2) are very conservative as they exclude developments that are or will take place on the southern edge of the town or close to the route of the bypass near the Cairn Homes site.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>Land use zonings have been located having regard to location, existing adjoining land use zonings, environmental and other sensitivities on the site and adjoining site and access to public utilities and services. Land ownership is not considered in the zoning of lands.</p> <p>In the drafting of the LAP, the existing and future projected population of the area of Blessington located within the boundary of Kildare County Council was included in the existing and future population figures in the Social Infrastructure Audit. The land use zonings in this area of Blessington are under the remit of Kildare County Council and were adopted as part of the 2023-2029 Kildare County Development Plan process. Wicklow County Council gave full consideration to the land use zonings located in the Kildare jurisdiction of the settlement of Blessington in the crafting of the draft LAP.</p> <p>With regard to the drafting of a cross county plan, is noted that the area of Blessington located in the jurisdiction of Kildare County Council is currently relatively small in comparison to the area of the settlement located in the jurisdiction of Wicklow County Council. There are a number examples of town plans of towns in Ireland where cross county collaboration has been implemented however it is noted that these plans generally relate to much larger settlements in excess of 20,000 people or involve a settlement where greater distribution of the settlement across the two jurisdictions. Wicklow County Council and Kildare County Council work is close collaboration with one another and the Blessington LAP has been drafted in consultation with Kildare County Council. It is acknowledged that in the future there may be a need to establish a joint plan for Blessington between Kildare and Wicklow if the population of the town significantly increases and/or the portion of the settlement in Kildare significantly increases.</p> <p>For clarity the zoning provisions of the Kildare County development plan, as they relate to Blessington can be shown on the plan maps.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
Amend Map 1 to include zoning objectives for Blessington from Kildare County Development Plan.		

A.2 Core Strategy, Population and Housing Targets

Submissions which relate to the rezoning/zoning of lands area addressed under **Part B.8 Zoning** of this report.

	Name	Issues Raised
16	Lesley McGuire Ref 151322	<p>The draft Local Area Plan proposes to divide the housing land that is needed to accommodate the predicted housing need under the CDP core strategy, into two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Lands within the existing built up area: min. 30% no limit on the number of units ii. Lands outside the existing built up area: max. 70%. <p>Noted that the Local Area Plan does not provide any quantitative targets or capacities in relation to the zoned lands.</p>
19	Ballymore Eustace Community Development Association Ref 133645	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disagree with the residential targets shown in the draft plan. The population is already at 5,611 according to the 2022 census. ▪ Blessington should remain close to Level 4 settlement. The current population is below the 6,000 threshold for Level 3 settlements. ▪ Wicklow County Council is playing with population and population equivalent numbers. Blessington WWTP is authorised to treat for 6,000pe. It's been illegally upgraded to 9,000pe by Uisce Éireann, without approval from EPA.
21	Thomas Deegan, Honorary Secretary, Ballymore Eustace Trout and Salmon Anglers' Association Ref 144509	
130	Embankment Plastics Ref 163003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The core strategy of the CDP 2022-2028 has allocated very limited housing growth figures to Blessington between Q3, 2022 and Q2, 2028 which conflicts with the overarching need to deliver housing. ▪ The targeted housing growth is based on a population target for Blessington of 6,145 by Q2 2028. However, County Wicklow's population growth has outstripped national change in recent years, with Blessington's population already reaching 5,611 by Q3 2022. ▪ Encourage the Council to allocate adequate housing units and by extension, zoned land, to Blessington in order to meet continued growth. ▪ Evident shortcomings in the Development Plans Core Strategy
136	Ventac & Company Ltd Ref 181627	
153	Dunmoy Properties Ltd Ref 212157	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is noted that that existing NPF growth estimates and housing targets are under review. This is subsequent to the 2022 Census of Population. The existing NFP estimated the annual rate of population growth in the Country would be 0.9% per annum. The Census indicated that the growth rate was actually 1.3% p.a., with Wicklow growing at 1.5% p.a. ▪ Provision will also have to be made for pent up demand which has grown considerably over the last few years as access to the housing market has proved impossible for large numbers of people. This has been heavily influenced by lack of supply.
174	Kelland Homes Ref 101833	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section A2.4 (Population and Housing) of the Draft LAP confirms the proposed population and housing targets for Blessington are derived from the County Development Plan 2022-2028. ▪ Noted that the County Development Plan was prepared and adopted in advance of the more recent publication of the Draft National Planning Framework in July 2024 (updated November 2024) and in advance of any NPF Roadmap that would identify how the housing growth targets to 2030

		<p>are to be allocated through the RSES and statutory development plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As such, the growth target allocation of 519 no. units takes no account of the Draft NPF (2024) and Implementation Roadmap, and yet is proposed to remain the growth target for the life of the Blessington LAP to 2031. Submitted that the level of RN1 lands could therefore be increased to address pent up demand.
208	Belgard Estates Ltd Ref 153614	Submitted that residential zoning should be increased as the core strategy will need to be revised as a result of new housing targets published in November 2024 (Updated Draft Revised National Planning Framework).
225	Belgard Estates Ltd Ref 204227	
219	Cairn Homes Properties Ltd Ref 172755	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned that the Draft Blessington LAP de-zones or down-zones significant areas of residential lands as a result of using out of date and inaccurate data and therefore the draft LAP is not robust enough to facilitate adequate housing growth for the town. The County Development Plan inferred that there are potentially 31ha of land that needs to be de-zoned in the LAP, or defer development beyond the period of the Plan. This is contrary to national policy, as outlined in the Development Plan Guidelines, which clearly states that existing zoned and serviceable lands should not be downzoned. This assertion was also made in the context of flawed ESRI population projections. It has been acknowledged by the ESRI that the forecasts and population targets on which the core strategy figures are based are fundamentally flawed, having regard to the overall level of population growth between 2016 and 2022. The NPF targets will be reviewed which will necessitate amendments to the RSES and the core strategies of development plans. The quantum of development land provided in the draft LAP is based on the WCC Settlement Strategy and Core Strategy, using housing targets based on 2016 Census data. The ESRI's revised population projections (2024) for annual housing demand in Wicklow are 66% to 78% higher than their 2020 estimates, demonstrating that housing demand has surpassed the Core Strategy's population targets and estimates of residential zoning need. Submitted that the 'Priority 1' and 'Priority 2' Residential Zonings should be more flexible and support early delivery in accordance with need. Submitted that the Priority 1 lands include many sites that are more expensive and less feasible to deliver. The LAP's phasing strategy does not account for unforeseen impediments and could rule out significant areas from development The phasing of infrastructure delivery must be feasible and connected to development delivery. It is largely based on private sector investment, yet there is no policy connection that appreciates that without development the infrastructure will not be realized. The draft LAP should provide longer term certainty over the development of zoned residential land rather than the incremental approach proposed.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>Blessington has been identified as a Level 3 Settlement 'self-sustaining growth town' in the County settlement hierarchy having regard to its projected population during the lifetime of the 2022-2028 County Development Plan.</p> <p>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 Valleymount (in County Wicklow), Rathmore, Eadestown, Ballymore (in County Kildare) and Brittas in County Dublin. The town is a hub for social, economic and administrative functions in addition to providing places for recreation, worship and</p>		

leisure for its local community and wider rural catchment.

The key design aim in delivering sustainable communities is to reduce, as far as possible, the need to travel, particularly by private car, by facilitating mixed-use development and by promoting the efficient use of suitable land. The sequential approach specifies that zoning shall extend outwards from the centre of an urban area, with undeveloped serviced lands closest to the core and public transport routes being given preference, encouraging infill opportunities, and that areas to be zoned shall be contiguous to existing zoned development lands.

The residential zoning provisions of the draft LAP have therefore been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with the NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the population and housing targets of the Core Strategy, as set out in the County Development Plan.

The development of phase 2 'RN2' lands is not solely linked to the full / majority development of RN1 lands; the key factor affecting the developability of RN2 lands is consistency with the housing targets of the Wicklow Core Strategy.

Increasing the amount of lands zoned New Residential – Priority 1 (RN1) as suggested in a number of submissions would exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended).

It should be noted that any revised population figures set out in national policy documentation, including the Draft National Planning Framework 2024, have yet to be finalised and will further need to be transposed through the relevant Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy before a variation to the Core Strategy of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 can be considered. Therefore, only the current prevailing Core Strategy can be considered at this time.

Note that issues raised in relation to the capacity of Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plan are addressed in **Part B.7 Infrastructure** and **Part B.8 Housing**.

Land ownership is not considered in the zoning of lands.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

Part B.1 Town Centre Regeneration and Opportunity Sites

B.1.1 Town Centre Regeneration

No.	Name	Issues Raised
6	Dan Halpin Ref 161448	Suggests shopfronts in the town centre are tired and inconstant. Suggest a 'brand' look and feel is developed for the town whereby all shopfront must adhere to a set of standards.
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	Suggests a shopfront strategy should be introduced to improve aesthetics of businesses. Suggests the use of vacant buildings should be prioritised before new built housing projects. Vacant sites should be re-branded as outlined in the TCF plan. Suggests Town Square should be pedestrianized
195	Gerard Garvey Ref 140548	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Puts forward that the physical composition of the Main Street currently is that it has its back to both the lake and the Newtown shopping centre and that the loss of the main anchor-The Downshire Hotel has had a major impact to the general footfall on the street. Suggest that large-scale reduction in through traffic will facilitate more adventurous use of the road space for pedestrians and cyclists and a re think on parking spaces. There is considerable potential to revitalise the main street and make strong physical connections to the lake and the shopping centre- rather than being hidden out of sight. ▪ Suggest ESB cables be undergrounded to transform the appearance of the main street and that future trunk electricity network improvements be placed underground around the bypass.
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	Suggests addition of seating and undergrounding of cables. Suggests vacant sites, especially along the Main Street should be prioritised for housing and urban development, in order to meet housing demand and avoid urban sprawl
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The majority of the concerns raised and suggestions made would be more relevant for consideration in the development of projects and programmes of the Town Team and Town Regeneration Office under the Town Centre Plan implementation programme and will be brought to the attention of that team.</p> <p>With respect to shopfronts, it is agreed that more consistent and attractive shopfronts can add to the overall look and vibrancy of the town centre; in this regard the County Development plan provides detailed shopfront design standards that are applied where new or revised shopfronts are proposed as part of a development proposals. However, it would not be within the powers of the Planning Authority to require existing and possibly less attractive shopfronts to undertake revisions / upgrades; as above a programme of incentives could be considered under the TCF implementation programme.</p> <p>With respect to vacant buildings and sites, both the TCF and this draft LAP detail support for the regeneration of such sites and the Local Authority will continue to use any powers or supports available to it to tackle vacancy and dereliction, including (but not limited to) the application of the RZLT and Derelict Sites Act.</p> <p>With respect to public realm improvements, including but not limited to the regeneration of Market Square, improved pedestrian / cycling facilities along Main Street, seating, undergrounding of cables etc, this is being driven forward under the TCF programme.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.1.2

Retail Strategy and Objectives

No.	Name	Issues Raised
252	<p>Lidl Ireland GmbH Ref 114350</p> <p>Other issues raised in this submission are addressed under Part B.1.3.4 below.</p>	<p>It is requested that objective BLESS4 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>To direct retail development into the Core Retail Area as a first priority, as set out in the town centre, following the sequential approach, and having regard to its role and function 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:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Core Retail Area will be prioritised for high order comparison retail, specialist / niche and small-scale convenience, experiential / leisure retail, non-retail services and associated activities.</i> ▪ <i>There will be no quantitative restriction on the development of retail floorspace within the Blessington Core Retail Area. Town Centre</i> ▪ <i>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.</i> ▪ <i>The development of retail floorspace outside of Blessington Town Centre (as zoned for such purposes) will not be facilitated unless absolutely necessary.</i> <p>In support of this request, the following case is put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The emphasis in relation to a number of town centre and retail policies is unduly weighted towards the core retail area rather than the town centre as a whole ▪ The core retail areas is particularly small in size, and is heavily developed and occupied such that its capacity to absorb additional development should not be overestimated; ▪ Where retail priorities are not clear, this may lead to opportunities for retail the core retail area for higher order function being lost.
198	<p>Tesco Ireland Ltd Ref 152659</p>	<p>It is requested that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retail policies support future opportunities for retail development ensuring that both existing and future facilities can meet local demand; ▪ Flexibility with regard to zoning policies be provided in order to facilitate the provision of scale-appropriate retail floorspace at appropriate locations; ▪ While objective BLESS4 is broadly supported, it is requested that flexibility be incorporated to address evolving needs of modern convenience retailers ; ▪ While the promotion of the core retail areas is important, it is equally important to allow for the development of appropriately scaled convenience floorspace at suitable locations outside of the town centre, where modern convenience floorplates cannot be accommodated within the established core (having regard to plot size, site layouts, parking requirements, delivery access, flooding etc considerations). In this regard, edge-of-town centre sites must be considered with flexible zoning objectives; ▪ In order to attract retailers, it will be important for retail policies to support modern stores are designed to be efficient, spacious and provide a pleasant environment for both colleagues and consumers alike; ▪ The plan provides policies and objectives that can spur investment in the convenience retail sector and provides for adequate convenience floorspace within the town;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The plan acknowledges the requirements of modern retailers including appropriate floorplates, car and bicycle parking and servicing access, where possible.
Chief Executive Response	
<p>Having carefully considered the contents of these submissions, the CE is satisfied that the TC zoning extent, the core retail area boundary, and the various objectives of both the CDP and the draft LAP are generally appropriate and necessary into order to ensure the immediate and long term protection and enhancement of the centre of Blessington.</p> <p>It is considered wholly appropriate and in accordance with retail planning guidelines and the County Development Plan to emphasize the Core Retail Area as the priority for new retailing in the town. This emphasis does not preclude new retail development outside the core retail area, subject to justification for same via Retail Impact Assessment.</p> <p>In this regard, the proposition that larger scale retailing should be open to consideration outside the town centre zone is not supported as it could undermine the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre, and its role as the heart of the settlement, by diverting trade and activity away from the centre. In this regard, it is clear that there are a number of sites within the TC zone that would be of adequate scale to accommodate larger scale retailing, particularly in the area immediately west of Market Square, subject to appropriate justification. .</p> <p>Therefore the CE is satisfied that the objectives of the CDP and the draft LAP, as set out in the published draft, should be maintained and no change is recommended.</p>	
Chief Executive's Recommendation	
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.	

B.1.3 Opportunity Sites

Submissions that are seeking the rezoning of specific sites area addressed under **Part B.8 'Zoning'** of this report. This section addresses submission which raised issues/concerns specific to the objectives relating to Opportunity Sites identified in the draft LAP.

B.1.3.1 OP1

No.	Name	Issues Raised
219	Cairn Homes Properties Ltd Ref 172	<p>It is indicated that the submitter is the owner of 0.5ha in OP1, adjacent to Dunnes Stores. While the submitter is supportive of the objective to realise the potential of the town centre site it is requested that the plan be amended so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mixed use or a specific commercial content is not required;▪ There should be no requirement for active uses to all frontages; this requirement is unnecessary, restrictive and may undermine the feasibility of the site and its regeneration potential;▪ The text '<i>subject to the provision of active uses to all frontages</i>' be omitted
Chief Executive Response		
<p>OP1 is located in the very core of the settlement and it a vital bridging site between the Market Square and modern mixed use (shopping / community) development and school further west. It is desired that a significant 'landmark' type development be progressed in this space that attracts people and activity into this area, so that an inactive, unsupervised area does not continue to persist in this central area between two active commercial zones.</p> <p>In this regard therefore it is deemed that active frontages are essential on this site, especially given that this site has frontage onto existing streets and developments that are suffering from inactivity and are in urgent need of revitalisation; therefore it is considered that this objective should be retained. It should be noted however that the plan does not specify that 'active frontages' cannot comprise residential use or must comprise commercial / community use.</p> <p>The objectives for OP1 do not specify a certain quantum of commercial or mixed use in OP1 but given the town centre location and the objectives of the CDP and LAP, non-residential uses (e.g. commercial, retail, tourism, community etc) will be an expected significant component of any such development, particularly at ground floors. Therefore no changes are recommended to the text in this regard.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

No.	Name	Issues Raised
191	Clonmel Enterprises Ltd Ref 132647	<p>It is indicated that the submitter is the owner of the lands identified as OP6. It is indicated that the submitter is preparing a development proposal for the lands which accords with all objectives set out in the draft plan, other than the objective that the building line be informed by that the Newtown Square apartment to the immediate east – the proposed development's building line is shown further forward (north).</p> <p>It is requested that this provision be amended so that the building line objective is brought forward for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The desired building line would create further enclosure and passive surveillance of the public realm ▪ The desired building line would maximize meaningful 'active frontages' ▪ The desired building line is taken from the established building line to the west and maintains line of sight from St. Mary's Church to Glen Ding.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The CE has very carefully considered this request and reviewed the objectives for these lands. In this regard, a particular objective for the town's future development overall is to preserve and enhance connectivity between the town and the natural / historical areas surrounding it, in particular Glen Ding Hill and woods. It is apparent that development on this site, along the building line requested, would likely block views of Glen Ding Hill from Market Square and St. Mary's Church and this is not supported.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

No.	Name	Issues Raised
8	Blaize Whelan Ref 223353	<p>A number of submissions were received with regard to access via Lakeside Downs to OP7. These submissions have been grouped together and summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitters object to access to Main Street via Lakeside Downs Requested that any suggestion of access to the vacant land as described in OP7 via Lakeside Downs be removed from the plan. Submitted that the incidental space in question is in fact private land and the property of the residents of Lakeside Downs. Submitted that it would be grossly unfair as it would impact negatively on those residents who have worked to maintain and improve their own local space. No permission has been requested for such an access not will any such permission be granted. Submitted that the proposal to use private land at Lakeside Downs to permit vehicular access to the rear area of the Horseshoe Arch on Main Street would have a major impact to the tranquility of the estate, one of the reasons it is so attractive to its residents. It is also put forward that this would have a negative impact on the property value of the estate, and should it be proposed to proceed, this would be detrimental in introducing traffic and pedestrians into an existing cul de sac where there are mixed aged property owners including elderly and children Traffic on the Kilbride road has already increased hugely resulting from the development of the nearby Rectory, allowing for additional development so close to the town centre will only exacerbate the situation. Access through Lakeside Downs would significantly increase traffic into the cul-de-sac Suggested that should additional vehicular access be required to the area behind the Horseshoe, maybe the car park directly to the rear of the AIB building directly off the Main Street would be a better idea. The estate is already subject to significant numbers of non-resident vehicles using the development to turn vehicles. Illegal parking is prevalent outside the entrance to Lakeside Downs. This illegal parking can make it difficult and dangerous for vehicles to take a left turn into Lakeside Downs; If further traffic is added, coming from the west of the entrance, this could cause congestion and safety issues for Lakeside Downs and the Kilbride Road. If an access point from Lakeside Downs into OP7 were provided, this would result in residents have to cross a road to exit Lakeside Downs and this would have resulting safety issues, particularly from large vehicles.
9	Blaize Whelan Ref 225750	
10	Blaize Whelan Ref 225858	
17	Lakeside Downs Residents Association CLG Ref 192450	
18	Dermot Eustace Ref 122557	
48	Philip Keleghan Ref 110219	<p>The submitters indicate that they are owners of a property on Main Street that runs to Lakeside Downs, encompassing the archway. The submitters object to the potential development of the OP7 lands for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the lands are privately owned including laneway, gardens and green space at Lakeside Downs; the laneway is a right of way to preceding properties, not a public road; The lands are made up of multiple private properties, many of which are in use and are not infill / brownfield sites, and are not abandoned or underused; The draft plan proposes removing their out outdoor space including private
117	Ciara McLoughlin Ref 085256	
125	Jacqueline Somers Ref 145722	
114	Cruise family Ref 122537	

		<p>parking, sheds and garden; if the space is taken from them it would make it virtually impossible to continue living in their home;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No permission has been requested from them for access to the lands and no permission will be granted. It is requested that the suggestion of access to the vacant site their lands should be removed from the plan.
235	Patrick Quinn Ref 204850	It is suggested that the Horseshoe Arch be closed off and protected by an aesthetic gate and railing limiting access/egress of the 4 directly adjoining properties thus providing a safe and secure area for them because of the proposed inclusion of two alternative access/egress points for the whole of Opportunity Site OP7.

Chief Executive Response

The purpose of the identification of 'Opportunity Sites' and associated 'concept plans' is clearly set out in the draft plan as follows: (**emphasis added**)

*'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**. 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'.*

*'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'.*

It is very clear that the draft LAP does not 'propose' any development on the OP7 lands. There is no suggestion that the Council or any other party is proposing 'taking' or developing any private party's lands, for buildings or access roads, or any other infrastructure, without their consent.

The aim of the plan is to identify that these lands may present a development opportunity for infill at this ideal location in the centre of the town, and to set out that design principles / objectives that would apply should any landowner come forward with plans to develop some or all of these lands.

The concept sketch is simply one representation of what could be possible, but clearly this would only be feasible if all landowners were coordinated.

In order to allay the concerns expressed, it is recommended that the concept sketch be omitted from the final LAP and the wording of the objectives for OP7 be amended.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the plan as follows:

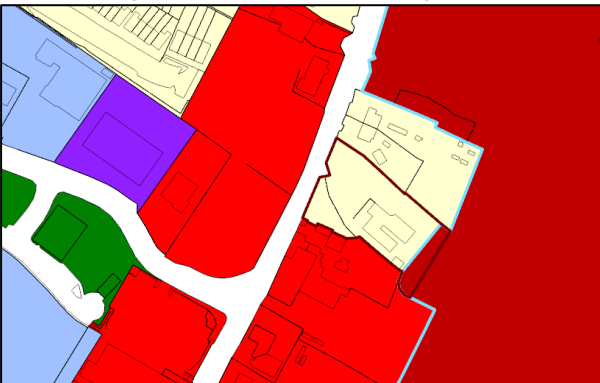
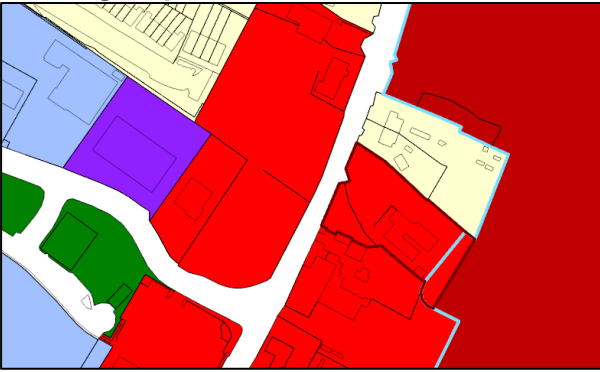
BLESS OP7 Horseshoe Arch & Backlands

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. ~~Some alternative access points could be created through Lakeside Downs (c. 13m at the narrowest point) or directly from Kilbride Road (c. 7m at the narrowest point).~~

Objectives BLESS OP7

- To support the development of these lands for provide for mixed use town centre infill development (which could include residential use). Indicative block formats are provided in the below concept plan. 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, and ancillary pedestrian/cyclist access ways from Lakeside Downs and to the rear of the AIB.
- ~~Vehicular access (and ancillary pedestrian/cyclist access) into these backlands shall be either via the north-eastern corner of the opportunity site through incidental green space in Lakeside Downs, or directly via Kilbride Road. This vehicular access should also service the rears of existing premises on Blessington Main Street adjoining this opportunity site and allow for potential future access to backlands to the south, while site layouts should allow the development of both vehicular entrances.~~
- The development of any individual landholding, or plot therein, should not 'land lock' or prejudice the development of adjacent/intervening plots. ~~No individual development proposal for any part of the Opportunity Site will be approved unless accompanied by an overall proposal for the accessing of the entire Opportunity Site.~~

Omit Figure B1.9 Concept Plan for OP7

No.	Name	Issues Raised
252	Lidl Ireland GmbH Ref 114350	<p>Request 1:</p> <p>It is requested that lands of c. 0.3ha, zoned RE 'Existing Residential' and MU 'Mixed Use' in the Draft Plan, be zoned TC 'Town Centre'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Draft LAP proposes to preserve the pre-existing zoning, and includes the subject lands in opportunity site OP8. ▪ The zoning pattern is less than optimal for the future development of the subject lands, with both the existing residential and mixed use areas being subsidiary in area and function to the primary town centre element. ▪ The additional area to be zoned town centre is 0.4ha, and TC 'Town Centre' lands have been omitted elsewhere in the draft LAP (e.g. lands to the north of the existing Dunnes stores site), reducing the town centre footprint. ▪ The TC 'Town Centre' zoning extends further north (by c.120m) opposite the subject site, up to and including Blessington Tyre Centre, creating an imbalance in this regard. ▪ Haylands House has been acquired and assembled within the overall subject lands. The TC 'Town Centre' zoning should be extended to reflect the subject lands potential and to encourage the redevelopment of the Haylands House element. The existing residence on the site represents a low intensity form of development and does not contribute to the creation of streetscape at the gateway to the town. ▪ Preservation of the existing character should not be encouraged while also including the lands in OP8 indicating that the lands should be redeveloped. <p>Draft LAP (RE lands in dark brown):</p>  <p>Rezoning Request (site outlined in dark brown):</p> 

Request 2:

It is requested that the opportunity site designation for the subject lands OP8, be amended to reflect an extended TC 'Town Centre' zone, and be split in two to facilitate staged development of the overall Haylands landbank, as follows:

BLESS OP8 East of Main Street (North)

This site is comprised of a combination of a 20th century suburban dwelling with a commercial complex of outbuildings and older vernacular building north of the Maxol service station on Blessington Main Street / N81. The lands have been assembled in single ownership and are currently in vacant possession pending redevelopment proposals being brought forward.

The primary focus of redevelopment for this opportunity site should be to provide town centre activities, specifically retail (with associated ancillary elements where feasible), to improve the activity and visual appearance of the area, and contribute to Blessington town centre fulfilling its strategic role and function as an important service centre in the region.

Objectives BLESS OP8 East of Main Street (North)

- To provide for town centre infill development. Indicative block formats are provided in the below concept plan including potential for a Foodstore Supermarket floor plate.
- Redevelopment of this site should have a degree of regard to vernacular features that are present and consider an element of incorporation or interpretation in any proposed scheme.
- New buildings along the western boundary should also providing strong urban and active frontages to Blessington Main Street.
- Redevelopment of this site should consolidate the multiplicity of existing access points to Main Street and have regard to the Blessington Main Street N81 Road Safety Improvement Scheme.



	<p>In support of this change, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The OP site inadvertently ties a large landbank to a singular phase of regeneration. ▪ The approach of the OP includes desire lines east (non-vehicular) and south, a multiplicity of roads/streets, preservation of existing vernacular buildings, public open space, and a function link to the landbank to the south. This approach could materially undermine its developability for a foodstore, and for substantive development of most forms. ▪ It appears that the Draft LAP renders the available subject lands as somewhat sacrificial to the unavailable southern extents of the opportunity site, which is not appropriate or proportionate. The subject lands should be able to contribute positively to the provision of development and services needed in the town. The assembly of the current extents into a single opportunity site is typically not something that can be realistically mirrored in terms of actual site assembly. ▪ The subject lands are the assembly of two parcels, the addition of 5 No. additional parcels is not considered to be reasonably likely. ▪ Presenting OP8 as a heavily integrated development concept, that lacks any particular modular or phased approach, including significant ancillary/infrastructure elements, will likely stymie the realization of town centre regeneration. ▪ The majority of OP sites in the Draft LAP are aspirational and complicated in nature. Lidl Ireland GmbH is not in a position to take on the role of large scale property developer as would be required to deliver the same. Lidl have been seeking to secure lands in Blessington for over 20 years to date, with the evolution of food shopping in Blessington being relatively stagnant. In this context the subject lands are the only suitable, available, viable location. ▪ The Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 set out policy in relation to the location of retail development and the use of the sequential approach test, which is pertinent in relation to overlapping TC 'Town Centre' zones and Core Retail Areas.
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Chief Executive Response

Request 1:

Noting the extent of the TC 'Town Centre' zoning on the opposite side of the N81 from the subject lands, the Chief Executive is not opposed to the rezoning request to extend the TC 'Town Centre' zoning to include the entire landholding. Furthermore, considering the relatively small residual RE 'Existing Residential' zoning to the north of the subject landholding, with MU 'Mixed Use' lands on two sides and with TC 'Town Centre' lands opposite, it would be appropriate to extend the TC 'Town Centre' zone further north.

On the basis of the above, it is recommended to zone the subject lands, and the immediately adjacent RE 'Existing Residential' lands to the north, as TC 'Town Centre'.

Request 2:

In relation to OP8, the Chief Executive rejects the assertion that the inclusion of the subject lands within opportunity site OP8 ties a large landbank to a singular phase of regeneration, and that the northern lands are 'sacrificial' to the southern lands. Individual development sites within an opportunity site may be developed, as long as the development objectives of the overall opportunity site are delivered where relevant, or are not rendered unachievable by later stages of regeneration as part of such development. In order to allay concerns however the CE recommends that the 'Concept Plan' for OP8 be omitted.

The Chief Executive is amenable to the inclusion of text to clarify the matter of incremental development in relation to opportunity sites.

In relation to the apparent conflict between the TC 'Town Centre' zoning and the description of OP8 including 'high intensity residential and mixed use development', attention is directed to CPO 5.3 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, which states (in part) the following:

'Other than in the retail core area, residential development shall be the primary development objective for lands zoned town centre or village centre. This shall not preclude commercial development on lands zoned town centre or village centre when suitable sites are not available in the core retail area.' As such, the description of the primary focus of redevelopment for OP8 is consistent with the TC 'Town Centre' zoning.

In relation the issue of the opportunity site potentially undermining the developability of the subject lands for a foodstore, the Chief Executive notes that the subject lands remain outside the Blessington Core Retail Area as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, in which an application for a foodstore may be subject to a retail impact assessment. Furthermore, block formats as included in **concept plans are indicative only**, whereby the overall objectives of OP8 may still be achievable with alternative layouts that may facilitate such a development. In relation to the recommended concept plan as included in the submission, attention is drawn to CPOs 5.3, 5.4, 5.17 and 5.21 of the Wicklow County Development Plan, which state the following:

5.3 To particularly promote and facilitate residential development in town and villages centres:

- *Promote the 'active' use of above ground floor levels, and in particular to promote the concept of 'living over the shop' in centres. Where a 'living over the shop' use is proposed, a relaxation in density, car parking and open space standards will be considered, where the development meets very high quality of design and accommodation.*
- *[...]*

5.4 To limit the concentration or clustering of uses that have bland inactive frontages and that fail to interact with the streetscape including car parks, blank shop frontages and ground floor offices. Such uses undermine the vitality of the town or village centre.

5.17 To harness and integrate the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive reuse, recognising its important contribution to placemaking. New development should respect and complement the historic fabric of existing towns and villages – the traditional street patterns, plot sizes, mix of building types, distinctive paving and attractive street furniture.

5.21 To strengthen the urban structure of towns and villages by ensuring that any new development contributes to a coherent urban form, focused on a high quality built environment of distinct character. New development shall incorporate a legible and permeable urban form that protects and complements the character of the street or area in which it is set in terms of proportion, enclosure, building line, design and by the marrying of new modern architecture with historic structures.'

The submitted concept plan, with a large area of surface car parking and a single-use large structure dominating the subject lands, may not accord with the above objectives.

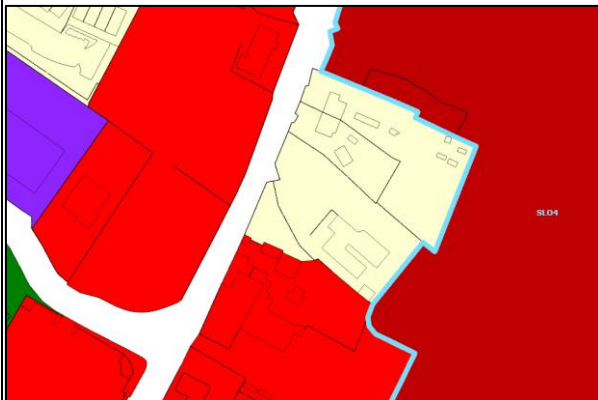
On foot of the above, it is not recommended to split/amend OP8. It is recommended to amend the text in relation to opportunity sites as set out below.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the plan as follows:

1. Amend Map No.1 Land Use Zoning Objectives (and any changes consequent) as follows:

Draft LAP:



Recommended Amendment (including Amended SLO4 boundary):



2. Amend Section B.1 of the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 Written Statement as follows:

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.

'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'.

3. Amend OP8 as follows:

Omit OP8 'Concept Plan' Figure B1.11

Part B.2 Housing Development

Numerous submissions raised the issue of 'residential development' in many forms. This section deals with the residential development issues raised in relation to the content of Section B.2 'Housing Development' of the draft LAP. Submissions that are seeking their land zoned to a form of residential development are dealt with under **Part B.8 'Zoning'** of this report while submissions which relate to the core strategy, population and housing targets and the level of residential zoned lands are addressed under **Part A 'Strategy'** of this report.

B.2.1 Zoning for Residential Development

No.	Name	Issues Raised
5	Marcin Jurkowski Ref 183854	Housing development should be done in tandem with supporting infrastructure e.g. shops, schools, GPs, roads.
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	No further housing estates should get planning permission before there is supporting infrastructure for additional residents.
19	Ballymore Eustace Community Development Association Ref 133645	Not in support of additional residential development until the waste water treatment plan situation is addressed. Zoning needs to be realistic in this regard.
21	Thomas Deegan, Honorary Secretary, Ballymore Eustace Trout and Salmon Anglers' Association Ref 144509	
86	Stephen Deegan Ref 144918	
75	Declan Kelly Ref 213607	Not in support of any further housing development by the Avon and the Greenway due to loss of natural habitat.
127	Blessington & District Forum Ref 145547	Derelict buildings – Derelict Sites Act has not been enforced previously and should be enforced by WCC.
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure sufficient land is zoned for housing, with emphasis on the development of houses close to town centre. ▪ Prioritize the utilization of vacant buildings before introducing new housing projects. ▪ Housing developments must be planned to meet demand while avoiding urban sprawl.
149	N.Foley Ref 210018	More affordable housing is needed.
169	Pat O'Sullivan Ref 221745	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports recent housing developments. ▪ More housing developments would be beneficial to all, especially young people.
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zone sufficient land for housing near the town centre. ▪ Prioritise vacant sites (especially along mainstreet). ▪ Meet housing demand and avoid urban sprawl.
Chief Executive Response		
Blessington has been identified as a Level 3 Settlement 'self-sustaining growth town' in the County settlement hierarchy and is considered to be 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 is a hub for social, economic and administrative functions in addition to providing places for recreation, worship and leisure for its local community and wider rural catchment. In this regard it is prioritised to accommodate a significant level of population growth, 20%-25% range, between 2016 and 2031. It is therefore necessary to zone an appropriate amount of land for development to cater for this growth.

The draft LAP has included the relevant objectives and land use zonings to facilitate the delivery of the necessary infrastructure and amenities alongside new residential development. In order to ensure key infrastructure, like roads and schools, are delivered in tandem with residential development, the delivery of such infrastructure is tied into 'Specific Local Objectives' SLO areas that require the delivery of the key infrastructure alongside the delivery of housing.

The residential zoning provisions of the draft LAP have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with the NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the population and housing targets of the Core Strategy, as set out in the County Development Plan.

The development of phase 2 'RN2' lands is not solely linked to the full / majority development of RN1 lands; the key factor affecting the developability of RN2 lands is consistency with the housing targets of the Wicklow Core Strategy. Increasing the amount of lands zoned New Residential – Priority 1 (RN1) as suggested in this submission would exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended).

With regard to the utilisation of vacant buildings, both the Town Centre First plan and this draft LAP detail support for the regeneration of such sites in Blessington and the Local Authority will continue to use any powers or supports available to it to tackle vacancy and dereliction, including (but not limited to) the application of the RZLT and Derelict Sites Act.

The utilisation and regeneration of derelict or vacant sites in the Town centre is further supported by CPO 5.13 of the County Development Plan which specifically refers to sites which are considered to be vacant or derelict and identifies the Town Centre of Blessington as an area in need of renewal and regeneration. This is supported by Blessington Town Centre First Plan included in the Draft LAP and identifies 8 opportunity sites in the town centre with a view to improving the public realm in the Town Centre and in time reducing the level of vacant buildings in the town. This is further supported by Objectives BLESS 1- BLESS5 in the draft LAP.

Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan 2022-2028 refers to Town and Village Centres – Placemaking and Regeneration. Section 5.6, Town and Villages Centre Objectives (CPO 5.1-5.5) relate to targeting the reversal of declines in towns and villages, increasing the quality, vibrancy and vitality of our town and village centres and controlling uses that may have a detrimental impact on the vitality of the streetscape and the public realm.

Objective CPO 5.3 specifically refers to promoting and facilitating residential development in town and village centres including promoting the concept of living over the shop in centres by considering a relaxation in density, car parking and open space standards where the proposal meets a very high quality of design and accommodation for residents while CPO 5.6 relates to Regeneration and Renewal and includes specific objectives for the Regeneration and Renewal of Blessington Town Centre which is reflected in the draft LAP as outlined above.

Concerns regarding the impact of residential development on biodiversity are noted. The plan has been subject to numerous environmental assessments including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, to ensure that significant adverse impacts can be identified and avoided in the crafting of the plan. Every effort is made through the application of sound planning and environmental protection principles to (i) minimise the amount of 'greenfield' land designated for new housing and (ii) to assess and put in place design and management measures when new development is allowed to occur to

ensure the impact is minimal and can be absorbed by the receiving environment.

With regard to the capacity of the waste water treatment plant Uisce Éireann have indicated in their submission to this Draft LAP that there is currently sufficient capacity available in the WWTP to service the level of growth envisaged in the County Development Plan Core Strategy for Blessington. WCC constantly liaises with Uisce Éireann with regard to the capacity, maintenance and running of the sewage network and sewerage treatment plants in the County and will continue to do so into the future.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

Part B.3 Economic Development

A number of submissions refer to the development of tourism and the greenway with regard to supporting/enhancing the future economic development of the settlement. These submissions are addressed under **Part B.4 'Tourism'** of this report. A number of submissions are seeking rezoning of sites either to or from Employment. These submissions are addressed under **Part B.8 'Zoning'** of this report.

B.3.1 Creation of Employment

No.	Name	Issues Raised
6	Dan Halpin Ref 161448	Need to stimulate innovation to create sustainable jobs
12	Annuschka Wiesemann, Danielle O'Farrell, Patrick Brien Directors of Deerpark Court, on behalf of 53 units in Deerpark Court housing estate Ref 110731	Rerouting the N81 would result in the economic suffering of businesses along the current N81 such as petrol stations and local cafes. These would suffer economically due to reduced traffic, impacting the local economy.
103	JP & M Doyle Ltd Ref 140434	A comparison between the draft LAP and the 2013 LAP shows that it is now proposed to significantly reduce the extent of employment zoned land at Blessington from 94.4ha to 62ha. This results in a loss of 34% of the existing employment zoned land and will material affect the opportunities for new employment in Blessington. There is no planning justification for this.
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	Attract businesses by improving transportation links and connectivity
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	Enhance the liveability, infrastructure and community services in Blessington to support growth

Chief Executive Response

Quantum of Employment Zoned Lands

With respect to the zoning of land for 'employment' uses, the amount of zoned employment land has been reduced in the draft plan by changes in zoning at some locations to more appropriate uses, including identifying additional lands active open space and for the protection of watercourses and biodiversity. In this regard the CE is satisfied that the draft LAP provides for an appropriate amount of employment zoned land for the lifetime of the plan. It should also be noted that employment generating uses are not restricted to Employment Zoned lands. In this regard the Draft LAP identifies that Blessington Town Centre, has the highest density of jobs (per square metre of employment floorspace) and where the highest absolute numbers of jobs are located. Employment generating development may also be located on lands zoned for Mixed Use.

Creation of Jobs

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 of the draft LAP.

Impact of N81/BIRR Bypass on Employment

The development of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme and/or the completion of the town inner relief road, would contribute significantly to the enhancement of the overall quality of the town centre by reducing through traffic levels through the town.

This approach is consistent with national policy as set out in 'Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns', which states the following: *'The dominance of vehicles within the public realm has contributed to the decline of many town centres, making them unattractive places in which to live or visit for extended periods.'*

With this re-routing of regional traffic out of the Main Street, a significant opportunity arises to regenerate the historic town centre of Blessington, which is also an Architectural Conservation Area, and to reclaim and reassert the Main Street as a place for the people rather than as a through route for vehicular traffic making it more attractive to locals, visitors and investors, to create new employment and wealth generating activities.

Chief Executive's Recommendation
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

Part B.4 Tourism

B.4.1 Blessington Greenway

No.	Name	Issues Raised
1	Claire Robinson Ref 210146	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully in support of the Greenway Noted that the health of the lake water is paramount to the success of the Greenway
58	Sara Clancy Ref 181107	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In support of the Greenway around the lake It will allow more people to engage with nature and they will then be more likely to protect it
75	Declan Kelly Ref 213607	In support of the Greenway
140	Luke Timmins Ref 190159	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This submission suggests an extension of the Greenway to create a continuous loop around the Blessington Lakes, incorporating the areas of Lacken, Valleymount, Ballyknockan and other surrounding towns Noted that an extension would transform Blessington Greenway into a landmark destination for tourist and locals while fostering economic growth, sustainability and community wellbeing
169	Pat O'Sullivan Ref 221745	The Greenway would be a hugely beneficial development for the town
247	Keith Burke Ref 232311	Supports the extension of the Greenway around the lake. It presents an opportunity to attract thousands of visitors to the area annually
250	Tony Shone Ref 134938	Urges an urgent resolution to the refusal of the Blessington Greenway

Chief Executive Response

The CE notes the support expressed for the Blessington greenway.

While the recently proposed greenway extension project has been refused consent by An Bord Pleanála, the 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.

In this regard it is recommended that all references in the draft plan for the Blessington Greenway should be amended to '.....future tourism projects in the Blessington Lakes area...'

It is also recommended that any text relating to the specifics of the refused greenway project should be reviewed and amended as necessary.

The provisions of the draft LAP, such as those relating to visitor centres, visitor car parking etc are proposed to be maintained in the plan, even in the absence of current greenway project, as such facilities would support a wide range of tourism project and activities.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the plan as follows:

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.

~~The proposed Blessington eGreenway, While An Bord Pleanála refused permission in 2024 for an extension of the existing greenway to a route of 33km, will linking the settlements of Ballyknockan, Valkeymount, Lackan, as well as other attractions and tourist facilities at Russborough (proposed to be accessed via an underpass through a currently disused tunnel) 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.~~

~~This proposed extension to the Greenway has the potential to draw significant numbers of visitors to the area and have a transformative effect on the tourism economy in Blessington.~~ On this basis, the priority tourism issue in the settlement is the provision of adequate tourist facilities to cater ~~to the impending proposed extension to the Blessington Greenway,~~ future tourism projects in the Blessington lakeside area including facilitating tourist accommodation within the settlement.

1. Wicklow County Council has purchased the former HSE building on Kilbride Road to act as a hub for ~~the eGreenway~~ 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 eGreenway lakes area by private vehicle. See Map No. 7 'Supporting Tourism Greenway Infrastructure'.

BLESS18

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 ~~proposed Blessington eGreenway as an expansion~~ to the existing Blessington Greenway.

BLESS19

To facilitate the redevelopment of the former HSE building on Kilbride Road as an eGreenway Visitor Hub supporting future tourism projects in the Blessington area.

BLESS20

To facilitate and encourage the delivery of supporting greenway tourism infrastructure as indicated on Map No. 7 Supporting Greenway Tourism Infrastructure.

B.4.2 Blessington Lakes

No.	Name	Issues Raised
1	Claire Robinson Ref 210146	The lake is a hugely important site of recreation for locals and an area of natural beauty
127	Blessington & District Forum Ref 145547	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disconnect with the lake needs to be addressed. Surrounding lands should be zoned tourism and allow access to the lake ▪ Recommends 'tourism' zoning of lands to the west of Knockieran Bridge. ▪ Suggested uses include Kayak/Paddle Board hire, small coffee shop, dredging and sectioning off an area of the lake for a natural swimming pool for swim related activities.
179	Sumanth Varaganti Ref 105431	Proposes a club house facility with meeting rooms, showers and changing rooms and a community gym as an extension of the existing recreational facility on Blessington Lake
250	Tony Shone Ref 134938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consideration should be given to establishing a blue way route for visiting kayakers ▪ Disagrees with precluding activity from the lakes. Safe spots should be designated for use by the public
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The CE notes the suggestions made with respect to the use of the lake and surrounds for recreational and tourism purposes. While the LAP provides objectives that would support such activity, the LAP is not the sports / tourism development plan for the area and it is considered that these suggestion would be more appropriately considered in the formulation of the new Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan (public consultation commencing Feb 2025) and the County Wicklow Local Sports Plan that is being developed during the course of 2025.</p> <p>With respect to extension of existing or development of new tourism / recreation facilities on the lakeshore or at Knockieran Bridge, while the draft LAP does provide policy support for relational and tourism development, namely:</p> <p><i>'BLESS8 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',</i></p> <p>it does not make provision for zoning for such use in order to ensure utmost protection of the lake, which is a designated European Site (Special Protection Area).</p> <p>In this regard, the draft plan provides that lands between the Kilbride Road and lakeshore are zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' given their proximity to the lake and the likelihood that any development thereon, including tourism / recreation development, has the potential to give rise to adverse impacts on water quality or disturbance of the bird population using the lake. Tourism zoning is however provided for in the area around Burgage, subject however to limitations and controls to ensure no adverse impacts arise, including setbacks from the lakeshore.</p> <p>The LAP does not extend to the east side of Knockieran Bridge and any proposals for development in that area would fall to be evaluated under the provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan, which supports appropriate located an designed tourism/ recreation projects.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.4.3 Tourist Accommodation & Visitor Facilities

No.	Name	Issues Raised
124	Blessington Tourist Office Ref 142036	Lack of accommodation options for tourists, costing local businesses potential revenue
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop accommodation options including hotels, B&B's and Air B&B's. Establish a tourist information centre and include Blessington in the Wicklow Tourism Action Plan
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop accommodation options. Establish a Tourist Information Centre
Chief Executive Response		
<p>It is agreed that additional tourism accommodation would benefit the Blessington area. The LAP provisions, in conjunction with the provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan and the various tourism strategies of the tourism agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and Wicklow Tourism, all aim to support the development of appropriate tourism accommodation in the plan area. In particular the draft LAP sets out the following objectives:</p> <p>BLESS1 <i>To support opportunities to improve the tourism product in Blessington and to facilitate appropriate tourism development within the settlement.</i></p> <p>BLESS7 <i>To positively consider the development of:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>new hotels in Blessington;</i> <i>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;</i> <i>the development of hostels along established walking routes, the route of the proposed eGreenway within the settlement, and adjacent to existing tourism facilities;</i> <i>the improvement of, and extension to, existing tourist accommodation related developments, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</i> <p>In addition, the County Development plan provides objectives which all support the development of tourism accommodation: County Policy Objectives 11.10, 11.11, 11.12, 11.13, 11.14, 11.15, 11.16, 11.17, 11.18, 11.19, 11.20.</p> <p>With respect to tourism office / information services, while Blessington has a tourist office, the provisions of the draft LAP in conjunction with the provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan and the various tourism strategies of the tourism agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and Wicklow Tourism, would all support the enhancement of tourism infrastructure including visitor and information services.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.4.4 Tourist attractions / infrastructure

No.	Name	Issues Raised
124	Blessington Tourist Office Ref 142036	Lack and irregularity of public transport to nearest attractions leaves tourists stranded, a regular shuttle bus that runs between the town and Russborough House should be introduced during the summer months
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance tourism through historical walks, highlighting Blessington's rich history Developing Glen Ding Forest as a walking destination
Chief Executive Response		
<p>Transport: While the suggestion of a shuttle bus is supported, the delivery of transport services is not within the remit of an LAP. For further responses to issues raised with regard to transports services generally, please see Part B.7 Infrastructure of this Report.</p> <p>Walks / Glen Ding Forest: The provisions of the draft LAP support the further development of walks around the area and in particular links between the town and Glen Ding forest. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective BLESS17 <i>'To facilitate and support the development of improved linkages between areas of tourist attractions within the settlement of Blessington, as follows:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lakeshore and tourist facilities at Burgage More/Burgage Castle. Blessington Town Centre/Architectural Conservation Area/Greenway Hub. Glen Ding Forest and Rath Turtle Moat. Possible woodland attractions, lake views, and tourist services at Doran's Pit. the draft plan requires that development in SLO1, SLO2, SLO3 and SLO8 makes provision for links to Glen Ding. <p>The Council will continue to support and deliver (where within its remit) improved walking routes and trails to local amenities and attractions.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031		

Part B.5 Community Development

A number of submission were also received from landowners in the area requested that the level of AOS on their holding be reduced, changed or relocated. A number of submissions were also received from members of the public or community groups seeking the relocation of AOS zoning to other sites in the LAP boundary. These rezoning requests area addressed under **Part B.8 Zoning** of this report. A number of submissions also raised questions with regard to how the level of AOS and OS1 lands were calculated for the settlement. These submissions are addressed under **Appendix 3 –Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit**, of this report.

B.5.1 Sports and Recreation –Athletics and Ball Sports

No.	Name	Issues Raised
3	John Burke Ref 122534	A large number of submission were received seeking the provision of an athletics facility to serve Blessington and West Wicklow noting the number of athletics clubs in the area, in particular Lakeside Community Games and the Lakeshore Striders. A number of submissions were also received with regard to the need for the provision of a permanent base for Blessington Rugby Club and Blessington AFC. A number of submissions were also received seeking to increase the level of lands around the existing GAA to allow for expansion.
5	Marcin Jurkowski Ref 183854	
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	
14	S. Connolly Ref 113556	
20	Frank Smyth	The many achievements of local sports clubs and their athletes are outlined in a number of submissions and it is noted that is a strong link to athletics in the area.
22	Teresa Reardon Ref 194909	
23	Emma Edgeworth Ref 203506	Submitted that a scout den is also needed and that the old HSE building should be repurposed as a Scout Den.
24	Lauren Richardson Ref 204809	
25	Daniel Doran Ref 205341	The following is a summary of the main points raised in this significant number of submissions: Need for Additional Sports Facilities and AOS Zoned Lands
26	Mary Glennon Ref 210622	
27	Fiona Bassett Ref 211805	Submitted that there is insufficient active open space zoned. The area badly needs more sports facilities to serve Blessington and West Wicklow. A multi sports complex open to all sports and the general community is requested by a number of submission. Access to sports facilities should not be contingent if membership of a club, nor should an amateur sporting organisation be responsible for providing sports facilities to a town. Submitted that this is the responsibility of local and national government.
28	Sean Nolan Ref 211715	
29	Margaret Geoghegan Ref 212529	
30	Louise Clay Ref 212333	Athletics – Multi Sports Facility A large number of submissions refer to athletics in particular and state that the area badly needs an athletics grounds with a 400m running track and space for field events (long jump, shot put, javelin etc) to allow athletes to emulate the success of athletes in the recent Olympics. Noted that this is not possible if there is nowhere to train. Requested that such a facility would be available to all the community- school, clubs, community games etc.
31	Vikki Murphy Ref 205637	
32	Elaine O'Donnell Ref 214925	
33	Rebecca Kelly Ref 220402	
34	Amaya Cowan Ref 221417	Requested that the facility include changing rooms, toilets, showers etc. Noted that local clubs including Lakeshore Striders and Lakeside Community Games
35	Lisa Bothwell Ref 224721	

36	Surita van Zyl Ref 234323	badly needs an all-weather running track and that there are also other athletics clubs in the area also but no suitable, safe or proper athletics track to train and/or compete on. These groups have a significant number of members across all ages but are reliant on borrowing grounds from schools etc on which to train.
37	Kate Kidd Ref 075309	
38	Jim Scott Ref 084640	Noted that West Wicklow is very under resourced in athletics facilities and having a designated area on which to build future facilities would be a huge help to local groups such as lakeside community games, lakeshore striders, community walking groups and would help revive a youth running club such as Blessington Valley. Such a facility would provide a safe place for people to train/exercise, especially children and female members of the community.
39	Jim Walsh Ref 084928	
40	Aine Moran Ref 090328	
41	Colm Seville Ref 090413	
42	Gavin Dooley Ref 091440	Concerns also raised at the loss of sports grounds at Blessington Community College due to an expansion of the school building and what this will mean for local clubs who are currently reliant on these facilities.
43	Tracie Hughes Ref 091540	
44	Jane Nolan Ref 091833	Also noted by a number of local schools that they would benefit from the construction of a multi sports facility as a facility to use but also in terms of the children's physical and mental wellbeing. It would support local schools in delivering comprehensive physical education and offer a dedicated space for community games and sports events.
45	James Woods Ref 095719	
46	Shane Mullaney Ref 102455	Submitted that this is a detriment to the ever growing population of Blessington, noting the level of new housing in the town and the level of new housing proposed. Also a detriment to current athletes who train here, many of which are very talented and not reaching their full potential or are leaving the local sports clubs for those with better facilities in Naas and Dublin which is a loss to the community.
47	Lacken National School Ref 105141	
49	James Grace Ref 133816	
50	St. Mary's Senior National School - (Gerry Brown-principal) Ref 124421	Submitted that children need more than just access to GAA pitches. Noted that Shoreline Leisure in Greystones recently got their track resurfaced. West Wicklow has never had an athletics track. Athletes have to travel over one hour to get to a useable track. This is a deterrent in developing our athletes of the future and providing a safe environment and location for individuals to train.
51	Tom Gormley Ref 125926	
52	Alana McMahon Ref 131059	This lack of this facility is also a deterrent for children and adults alike, from being active and healthy. Such a development would also have benefits for the locality in terms of mental and physical health, bringing communities together, integrating new residents to the area into the local community and keeping children and teenagers playing sports, especially girls where there is a high dropout rate from sports into the teenage years. May also help divert young people away from anti-social behaviour.
53	Maria Murphy Ref 142036	
54	Steven Pettigrew Ref 142922	
55	Anna-May Woods Ref 172909	
56	Thomas Healy Ref 173834	Noted that parents currently have to drive at least 45mins to access proper training facilities for the children. If there was a facility in Blessington to serve the area, this would mean less of an environmental burden due to reduced car travel and less of a time burden on busy parents.
57	Patrick Hunt lakeshore Striders Running Club Ref 181319	
58	Sara Clancy Ref 181107	Submitted that this facility would also assist with tourism for Blessington noting have a superb location with stunning views of the mountains and lakes. This

59	Antoinette Connolly Burke Ref 181553	would bring money to the track facility itself, but also the cafes, restaurants, shops and to accommodation and transport services providers, in the locality giving an economic boost to the area. Submitted that this is a significant opportunity for Blessington.
60	Shania Cashin Lakeshore Striders Ref 181923	A healthier community means less strain on local healthcare, a stronger sense of belonging for everyone involved, and a positive impact on our local economy through events and activities.
61	Alvin Pieterse Ref 182609	
62	Gemma Rodgers Ref 183111	
63	Orlagh Deegan Ref 183345	
64	Anthony O Rourke Ref 185802	Basketball Serpents Basketball Academy Blessington which was established in 2024 needs a full size basketball court on which to train. The club is currently hiring the gym in the No.1 School Blessington however this is only half the size of a full basketball court. There is an outdoor court but it cannot be utilized in winter or bad weather. The club currently has 100 members with approx. 100 kids still on the waitlist. This is a very popular hobby with school children but they have nowhere to play formally should they wish to join a team.
65	Lisa Dempsey Ref 190420	Soccer, Rugby, GAA and Tennis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blessington needs more pitch space for children's sports group in the town. ▪ Rugby is played on the grass at Russborough as there are no proper pitches; there are no public football pitches or park for a kick about, and not tennis courts. Need a dedicated Rugby Facility. At present, the rugby teams in Russborough House lack essential facilities such as changing rooms, dedicated toilets, and adequate lighting for night training. These limitations significantly hinder the development and enjoyment of the sport for our young athletes ▪ Blessington AFC, which was established in 1968, needs its own facilities. The club is limited with what facilities they can provide at their current location as the lands are leased. AFC would like some allocation of land in the town to allow them develop more playing pitches, possibly an astro and a club house. ▪ Blessington GAA Club was founded in 1909 and originally located on lands adjoining Burgage cemetery. Due to increasing demand for additional playing pitches the club relocated in 2007 to its current location at Blessington Demesne which has served the club well for a number of years and has acted as a key focal point for the wider community. Need to expand the facilities at the GAA site facilities noting the increase in population in the area.
66	Pamela Mc Loughlin Ref 192709	
67	Anne Doyle Ref 193547	
68	Olwyn Sheehan Ref 193505	
69	Robert Brett Ref 195407	
70	Gillian Moore Ref 200954	
71	Niamh Sheridan Ref 202534	
72	Janet Deegan Ref 205732	
73	Lisa Veighey Ref 211448	
74	Julie Winder Ref 213853	
75	Declan Kelly Ref 213607	
76	Jim Haide Ref 222054	
77	Daragh O Callaghan Ref 220405	
78	Seamus Kelly Ref 221642	
79	Nadine Walsh Ref 223803	Zoning General <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zone additional lands AOS to give sports clubs more options to acquire lands. ▪ Submitted that there is a significant decrease in the areas of lands zoned AOS. ▪ In full agreement with the planners SLO2 & SLO4 that sports facilities should be completed first before any residential development. ▪ Regarding "Map No. 1 Land Use Zoning Objectives" - great to see open space under SLO8 and active open space under SLO02, close to town
80	Stephen Ref 225114	
81	Niall Salmon Ref 231754	
82	Ciara Irvin Ref 090154	

83	<u>Scoil Mhuire NS, Ballymore Eustace</u> <u>Ref 092410</u>	<p>center, instead of building new houses and apartment everywhere (especially if there is plenty of space not too far away). Everything else on the maps looks quite good as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requested that the green area at Blessington Demesne, across from Downshire Park and close to the new Town Park, be considered for AOS noting it is within walking distance for all who live in the town. Submitted that it should be considered to be a Sports Amenity Area, similar to other that exist - Ennis has a great example. The LAP is not being proactive in any way when it comes to a joined up approach for community, sport and recreation. The Blessington LAP should cater for a significant 20 to 30 acre development, future proofed for decades, to cater for Soccer, Rugby, Athletics, Running Track, Boxing, Playground, Water Sports such as Kayaking, Rowing, Swimming (Even if its years off. Reference made to the lack of AOS zoning in the portion of Blessington under the control of Kildare County Council. Relocate AOS to SLO8 where it is more accessible to all. Noted that the lands zoned AOS are owned by a residential developer and by a business using the land as a quarry. This does not give a lot of opportunity for any club in the town to purchase their own land. Therefore further lands should be zoned. Noted that none of the lands zoned AOS under the previous LAP were utilised. This is 11 to 12 years of zero growth for any of the clubs in the area. Submitted that the lands at Burgage Mór owned by ESB OR AT Haylands or Doran's Pit should be zoned AOS. Submitted that there is a lack of AOS lands zoning the LAP. The only section of lands to be zoned AOS are the lands owned by Cairn Homes in Blessington Demesne. Noted there are sections of AOS lands within the Mixed-Use zoned areas but submitted that there is still a need for further lands to be zoned AOS. Neither of these currently zoned AOS gives any opportunity to the local clubs of the town to purchase and developed their own amenities. From the previous 2013-2019 LAP none of the zoned AOS lands were utilised throughout the town. Further to this point this shows the need for the right lands need to be zoned AOS in order for them to be utilised, otherwise the zoning may as well not be changed. Submitted that lands at Burgage More should be zoned AOS however these have been zoned Natural Open Space. Requested that lands at Haylands and Santryhill be altered also for the new LAP with increased lands for sporting facilities and a park and ride located here. These lands are currently zoned mixed use with a portion for sports facilities. Submitted by a number of landowners that there is too much AOS zoned in the Draft LAP. Requested that the quantum of AOS zoning is reduced. Submitted by some land owners that there is insufficient justification provided in the Draft LAP for the level of land zoned AOS. Submitted that the LAP needs to differentiate between Open Space and Space for sport, recreation and amenity use. The current open space plans, whilst extensive on the face of will give no comfort to sports groups when they are told the open space is parklands and not for sports pitches.
84	<u>Juliet Rouse</u> <u>Ref 114252</u>	
86	<u>Stephen Deegan</u> <u>Ref 144918</u>	
87	<u>Jason Moroney</u> <u>Ref 145052</u>	
88	<u>Sarah Byrne</u> <u>Ref 165224</u>	
89	<u>Derek Reid</u> <u>Ref 210538</u>	
90	<u>Caoimhe O'Brien</u> <u>Ref 214816</u>	
91	<u>Keira Eva Mooney</u> <u>Ref 120714</u>	
92	<u>John Dooley</u> <u>Ref 134344</u>	
93	<u>Raymond Cummins</u> <u>Ref 151458</u>	
94	<u>Sue Finn</u> <u>Ref 150824</u>	
95	<u>Liam Mooney</u> <u>Ref 181048</u>	
96	<u>Tony Griffin</u> <u>Ref 112053</u>	
97	<u>Jerome Mooney Griffin</u> <u>Ref 112351</u>	
98	<u>Joan Rose Mooney</u> <u>Ref 112513</u>	
99	<u>Jesse Mooney Griffin</u> <u>Ref 112707</u>	
100	<u>Michael Mooney</u> <u>Ref 113101</u>	
101	<u>Joanne Mooney</u> <u>Ref 113233</u>	
102	<u>Caroline Byrne</u> <u>Ref 191825</u>	
105	<u>Teresa Parke</u> <u>Ref 181104</u>	
106	<u>Kieran Veighey</u> <u>Ref 212615</u>	
109	<u>Blessington No. 1 School</u> <u>Ref 112509</u>	
110	<u>Carmel Cashin</u> <u>Ref 163114</u>	
111	<u>Marian Tutty</u> <u>Ref 180322</u>	

112	Laura Querl Ref 190437	
113	Glenn Querl Ref 191429	
116	Margaret Keogh Ref 000203	
120	Niamh Brophy Ref 082217	
122	Nicola Byrne Ref 125823	
123	Steven Byrne Ref 125227	
126	Niamh O Toole Ref 150610	
127	Blessington District Forum Ref 145547	
128	Deirdre Grogan Ref 154955	
129	Philip Byrne Ref 140555	
132	Noelle Moore Ref 155635	
133	Mark McCarville Ref 171908	
134	Eimear Deegan Ref 164517	
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	
139	Supporter of Blessington AFC Ref 190049	
140	Luke Timmins Ref 190159	
141	Eugene Tyrrell Ref 192751	
142	Charlie Johnston Ref 193153	
143	Lakeshore Striders Ref 202709	
147	Veerle Van der Velpen Ref 203805	
148	Maura Robinson Ref 205201	
149	N. Foley Ref 210018	
151	Anne Byrne Ref 210732	

152	<u>Lakeside Community Games</u> <u>Ref 212312</u>	
153	<u>Dunmoy Properties Ltd</u> <u>Ref 212157</u>	
154	<u>Jane Jameson</u> <u>Ref 213348</u>	
156	<u>Catherine Broe</u> <u>Ref 212907</u>	
157	<u>Terry Gale</u> <u>Ref 214106</u>	
158	<u>Christina Browne</u> <u>Ref 212917</u>	
159	<u>Colin Browne</u> <u>Ref 215339</u>	
163	<u>Michelle Mooney</u> <u>Ref 220308</u>	
164	<u>Kevin reid</u> <u>Ref 220957</u>	
165	<u>Claire Reid</u> <u>Ref 221016</u>	
166	<u>Paul Maloney</u> <u>Ref 220548</u>	
168	<u>Elaine Mackenzie-Smith</u> <u>Ref 223210</u>	
169	<u>Pat O'Sullivan</u> <u>Ref 221745</u>	
170	<u>Adam Warren</u> <u>Ref 223943</u>	
171	<u>Tina Stacey</u> <u>Ref 231440</u>	
172	<u>N McHugh</u> <u>Ref 222050</u>	
175	<u>Lakeside Community Games</u> <u>Ref 103344</u>	
178	<u>St Brigid's National School, Manor Kilbride, Blessington</u> <u>Ref 105615</u>	
180	<u>Claire Behan</u> <u>Ref 111853</u>	
181	<u>Robert Cummins</u> <u>Ref 114804</u>	
182	<u>Joanne Mooney</u> <u>Ref 115608</u>	
183	<u>Orna Donoghue</u> <u>Ref 113047</u>	

185	<u>Michael O'Mahony</u> <u>Ref 112517</u>	
187	<u>Jonny Mullen</u> <u>Ref 125519</u>	
190	<u>Laura Daly</u> <u>Ref 132218</u>	
192	<u>Niall McKeon</u> <u>Ref 134334</u>	
193	<u>Noel Gallagher</u> <u>Ref 134622</u>	
196	<u>Catherine Kehoe</u> <u>Ref 140503</u>	
197	<u>Aoifanna Phibbs</u> <u>Ref 144100</u>	
200	<u>Lise-Marié du Preez</u> <u>Ref 155318</u>	
201	<u>Edwina & John Hardy</u> <u>Ref 160233</u>	
202	<u>Al Moore</u> <u>Ref 170449</u>	
203	<u>Helen O'Shea</u> <u>Ref 162139</u>	
204	<u>Derek keogh</u> <u>Ref 163303</u>	
205	<u>Serpents Basketball Academy</u> <u>Blessington</u> <u>Ref 163620</u>	
206	<u>Supporter of Blessington AFC</u> <u>Ref 163731</u>	
207	<u>Radek Dulny</u> <u>Ref 173746</u>	
208	<u>Belgard Estates Ltd.</u> <u>Ref 153614</u>	
209	<u>Caitriona Mc Keon</u> <u>Ref 171546</u>	
210	<u>Turlough Kinane</u> <u>Ref 170650</u>	
211	<u>Naomi Dempsey</u> <u>Ref 173201</u>	
212	<u>David Broderick</u> <u>Ref 173025</u>	
214	<u>Blessington GAA</u> <u>Ref 180116</u>	
217	<u>Lakeshore Striders Athletic Club (LSAC)</u> <u>Ref 184811</u>	
219	<u>Cairn Homes Properties Ltd.</u> <u>Ref 172755</u>	

220	Colm Dolan Ref 191615	
221	Will Blumlein Ref 190908	
223	Margo Griffin Ref 202347	
224	Paul cullen Ref 203806	
225	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 204227	
227	Blessington AFC Ref 204711	
231	Adam Cullen Ref 205914	
233	Niamh Craul Ref 213207	
234	Niamh Craul Ref 214705	
246	Aine Quinn Ref 233007	
239	Maggie Schofield Ref 224919	
241	Karen Brady Ref 230207	
243	Mary Paton Ref 230751	
245	Laura McGlade Ref 231435	
246	Eamonn Deegan Ref 233007	
247	Keith Burke Ref 232311	
Chief Executive Response		
<p>While the issues and concerns raised in the above submissions are noted and the success and commitment of local sports clubs in the area is commended, it should be noted that the development of AOS (Active Open Space), the purchase of lands and provision / development of sports facilities by the Local Authority is outside the remit of the LAP.</p> <p>The draft LAP, in combination with the Social Infrastructure Audit appendix of the LAP has carried out a full audit of sports and recreation future land use needs within the settlement. The draft LAP has zoned the required amount of land for Active Open Space (AOS) and Community (CE), which allows for sports facilities to be developed, for the future needs of the population of the settlement and its catchment. For further detail on the calculation of the AOS requirements for the settlement, please refer to Appendix 3 –Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit, of this report.</p> <p>It is noted that under the 2013 Blessington Local Area Plan a total of c.25ha of AOS was zoned. The 2013 Blessington LAP had a 2022 target population of 7,500 for the settlement of Blessington (Co. Wicklow). The target population for the settlement of Blessington (Co. Wicklow) under the draft LAP to the year 2031 is lower at 6,313 with c.27ha specifically reserved for the development of AOS.</p> <p>A number of submissions have requested that lands at Burgage in the ownership of ESB are rezoned to AOS however these lands have been zoned OS2 on environmental grounds. In this regard please refer to Part B.8</p>		

Zoning and Section 5 SEA and AA of this report.

A number of submissions have also requested that a multi-use sports facility be developed on SLO6. While such a facility would be open for consideration on lands zoned Mixed Use, there are concerns regarding the proximity of this site to the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA and the impact that noise and lighting, including floodlighting, could have on the qualifying interests of this SPA.

In this regard the draft LAP has been carefully crafted to zone for the required quantum of AOS lands to serve the existing and future population of Blessington and its catchment in accordance with National Guidance and the has located proposed AOS on sites where the development of such facilities would not have an adverse impact on any protected sites while still located closes to the town centre and existing and proposed residential areas and schools.

The LAP includes three categories of open space provision in the draft LAP and outlines under Section B.8 the types of recreation and amenity development associated with each category of open space zoning:

- AOS –Active Open Space. This zoning generally seeks the improvement of existing active open spaces, formal exercise areas, sports grounds and associated buildings, playing pitches, courts and other games areas and to facilitate opportunities for the development of new high quality active recreational areas.
- OS1 – Open Space – generally refers to the further development of and improvement of existing landscaped parks including off-road walking / cycling paths, casual play areas, including playgrounds, skate parks, mixed use games areas, outdoor gyms, and allotments.
- OS2 –Natural Areas. This zoning refers to natural green spaces in the settlement boundary which need to be protected, enhanced and managed appropriately and generally comprise flood plains, buffer zones along watercourses and rivers, steep banks, 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.

It is considered that these three categories make it clear as to what type of recreation facilities are expected on each zoning.

A number of submissions have made comparisons to sports facilities provided in Kildare in Particular Naas. In this regard is should be noted that Naas is a settlement with a much larger population of c. 26,000 at the time of the 2022 Census while Blessington has a population of c. 5,600.

A number of submissions refer to the lack of AOS zoning on the Kildare side of the town. In this regard it noted that this portion of Blessington is within the remit of Kildare County Council however the social infrastructure audit has accounted for the existing and future population within the portion of Blessington located in the constituency of Kildare County Council.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

B.5.2 Provision of a Swimming Pool

No.	Name	Issues Raised
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	<p>A number of submissions were also received with regard to the need for a swimming pool in Blessington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted that a swimming pool is needed. A pop up pool was located here temporarily last year. Requested that a swimming pool and an athletics track be zoned together along with funding provided to secure this much needed infrastructure for local residents and visitors. Blessington needs a swimming pool. It is ironic that the children living around the largest inland body of water in the greater Dublin area cannot avail of swimming lessons in their locale. Request for a public swimming pool to serve Blessington and West Wicklow. There is no swimming pool to serve West Wicklow. The identification of a site for a swimming pool would be great for the town). Requested that the LAP priorities the provision of a swimming pool in Blessington. Requested that BLESS30 is amended as follows (new text in red): To prioritise, facilitate and support the development of a swimming pool/leisure centre within Blessington. The previous two submissions made by Wicklow County Council to the Large Scale Sports and Infrastructure Fund did not prioritise a swimming pool for West Wicklow accordingly. It is therefore imperative that the Blessington Local Area Plan includes a specific action to prioritise the provision of a swimming pool. The demand for local swimming facilities was demonstrated with the popularity of the Swim Ireland Pop-Up Pool when it was located in Blessington for 3 months in 2022. There is a clear need for a swimming pool in Blessington to serve the West Wicklow area.
30	Louise Clay Ref 212333	
37	Kate Kidd Ref 075309	
39	Jim Walsh Ref 084928	
41	Colm Seville Ref 090413	
43	Tracie Hughes Ref 091540	
46	Shane Mullaney Ref 102455	
47	Veerle Van der Velpen Ref 203805	
49	James Grace Ref 133816	
58	Sara Clancy Ref 181107	
67	Anne Doyle Ref 193547	
75	Declan Kelly Ref 213607	
82	Ciara Irvin Ref 090154	
86	Stephen Deegan Ref 144918	
87	Jason Moroney Ref 145052	
106	Kieran Veighey Ref 212615	
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	
149	N. Foley Ref 210018	
154	Jane Jameson Ref 213348	
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	
207	Radek Dulny Ref 173746	
213	Rachel Murphy Ref 174017	
228	Community Pool for West Wicklow Ref 203426	

229	Deirdre McCormack Ref 210236	
239	Maggie Schofield Ref 224919	
Chief Executive Response		
<p>With regard to the development of a swimming pool, it should be noted that the purchase of lands and provision / development of sports facilities by the Local Authority is outside the remit of the LAP however such a development could be facilitated on a number of land use zonings in the draft plan area including AOS, TC and CE.</p> <p>The 2022-2028 County Development Plan recognised the need for such a facility in West Wicklow and includes objective CPO 7.43 which seeks <i>"To prioritise, facilitate and support the development of a community swimming pool facility and a sports complex within the western region of the County, so located to achieve maximum accessibility to the residents of West Wicklow"</i>.</p> <p>This is further support by Objective BLESS30 of the draft plan which seeks <i>"To facilitate and support the development of a swimming pool/leisure centre within Blessington"</i>.</p> <p>It is noted that a number of submissions are seeking that the wording of BLESS30 is amended as follows: <i>"To prioritise, facilitate and support the development of a swimming pool/leisure centre within Blessington"</i>.</p> <p>In 2025, as part of the National Sports Policy, the Wicklow County Council will be developing a Local Sports Plan for the County, which will identify infrastructure needs as well as a project delivery programme for new facilities. In this regard it is considered that the Local Sports Plan will identify which facilities will be prioritised in each settlement. It is therefore considered that the wording of BLESS30 as included in the draft LAP is appropriate at this time. All of the submissions made with respect to sports infrastructure to this LAP will be considered in the preparation of the Local Sports Plan.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.5.3 Sports and Recreation -Water Sports

No.	Name	Issues Raised
86	Stephen Deegan Ref 144918	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity for water sports such as rowing on the reservoir however water sports and recreation do not feature in the plan. ▪ Seeking a permanent site for Poulaphouca Paddlers Kayak Club who are affiliated with Canoeing Ireland. ▪ The club has a growing membership. Potential growth of the club is hindered by a lack of a permanent base/clubhouse. The club had 70 applications in December 2023 but only 22 spots available, leaving 40 on the 2025 waitlist. ▪ This project will benefit not only the club, but the community at large and the surrounding region, by serving as a welcoming hub where participants of all ages will gather, connect and continue to develop a shared passion for the outdoors. ▪ The Poulaphouca Paddlers are working out of three metal containers at Russelstown bay with approximately 103 members from east Kildare and west Wicklow. ▪ The club organizes 2–5 weekly activities between April and September and runs summer camps for juniors. It also hosts the Liffey Lakes Race, part of the national canoe/kayak marathon series, and plans to expand into canoe polo and freestyle kayaking by 2025. ▪ Please consider investing in an adequate boathouse and recreational facility for the club to continue its great work for the years to come. ▪ Noted that the club is incredibly well run and organised with a very dedicated management. ▪ Club needs a sheltered bay location, preferably in the Burgage area, to maximize usage with a slipway as this would be most accessible and include appropriate parking to facilitate transport of kayaks. Would also need changing rooms, boat store, workshop, tea room/kitchenette and gym area. ▪ Having an established relationship with the ESB, Poulaphouca Paddlers respect the environment and follow a leave no trace approach. ▪ Provide a safe man made swimming area in the lake. ▪ The ESB's monopoly over the lake needs to be addressed once and for all - The lakes are an amazing resource which should be available to all to use, and the ESB's attitude of precluding activity is arrogant and short sighted - the lakes are for everyone and constantly using 'insurance' as a reason for depriving people of a public amenity is unacceptable. Yes there are dangerous parts to the Lakes, so let's designate safer areas so that for the people who do try and swim in the lake do so only in these safer spots. ▪ Planners could seek to re-orientate / open up the town to the lakes more. The area opposite the back of the Downshire could be developed to encourage tourists to move easily between lakeside facilities and the town; e.g. boat hire facilities towards the bridge - even a few pontoons on the water for fishing boats / day sailor type boats could bring business to the town.
104	Canoeing Ireland Ref 181738	
107	Ryan McGloin 122010	
108	Elizabeth Doyle Ref 111644	
115	Neil Tilley Ref 213724	
133	Mark McCarville Ref171908	
144	Member of Poulaphouca Paddlers Ref 200443	
145	Teresa Parke 202810	
146	Donal O'Brien Ref 203934	
150	Lisa Byrne Ref 210403	
155	Debbie McCarthy Ref 212222	
160	Peter Harney Ref 215045	
162	Poulaphouca Paddlers Committee Ref 194723	
179	Sumanth Varaganti Ref 105431	
186	Samuel Stack Ref 123217	
215	Orlagh Deegan Ref 180650	
216	Ciaran Deegan Ref 183059	
222	Ciara O'Dwyer Ref 200912	
223	Margo Griffin Ref 202347	
232	Kathleen Elliott Ref 212828	
238	Emer Maloney Ref 225409	
250	Tony Shone Ref 134938	

Chief Executive Response

While the issues raised in these submissions are noted and the success and commitment of local sports club in the area should be commended, the purchase of lands and provision / development of sports facilities by the Local Authority is outside the remit of the LAP.

There are also environmental sensitivities to consider with regard to any development along the Lakeshore noting the protected status of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and the impact such development could have on the qualifying interests of this SPA. In this regard please refer to **Section 5 SEA and AA** of this report.

It is noted that the Poulaphouca Reservoir is a manmade structure originally formed for the generation of electricity and is therefore in the ownership of the ESB. The ownership/maintenance and access to the lake/reservoir is outside the remit of the LAP.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

B.5.4 Schools, Services and General Community Facilities

No.	Name	Issues Raised
5	Marcin Jurkowski Ref 183854	It is hoped that housing development will be done together with supporting infrastructure such as new shops, school places, GPs and road markings. We are getting new houses without anything new around them to support extra population.
20	Frank Smyth	More school/education and childcare infrastructure is required. General community infrastructure has not kept up with the level of housing development.
22	Teresa Reardon Ref 194909	A dog park is also badly needed. Somewhere for dogs to exercise safely without endangering themselves or others. It is a disgrace that a town of this size doesn't have one yet.
29	Margaret Geoghegan Ref 212529	Need more Schools.
37	Kate Kidd Ref 075309	As far as Secondary schools go, many people would not choose Blessington Community College for their children if they had the choice. Many travel outside the area to access high quality Secondary education or move out of the area completely. This is a major issue for the town and one which is a continuous topic of conversation for all primary school parents.
89	Derek Reid Ref 210538	The town badly requires more infrastructure and facilities within the community given the level of planning permission granted for new estates granted in the last couple of years.
110	Carmel Cashin Ref 163114	Blessington needs a community centre/community hub at an accessible location in the settlement. This space should be a central hub where individuals from a wide range of backgrounds come to socialise, learn, and enjoy and benefit from services and opportunities which meet the changing needs of Blessington and wider West Wicklow communities including supports and education, to help those experiencing social isolation and to encourage active participation within the community
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	Blessington needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional crèches are needed to accommodate the growing population. ▪ Need to prioritize the development of the new 1000 student secondary school without delay and also zone land for a second secondary school. ▪ A new doctors' surgery or additional doctors should be provided to meet the demands of the growing community. ▪ Additional land is needed for an extension to the cemetery. Develop car parking facilities at the Avon Ri, Burgage Cemetery to improve access. ▪ Develop a larger skate park and upgrade playground facilities to accommodate the growing population. ▪ Introduce dog litter bins in strategic locations around the town.
154	Jane Jameson Ref 213348	Local secondary school is full and no sign of new school.
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Childcare: Additional crèches needed. ▪ Schools: Develop a new secondary school and zone land for a second one. ▪ Health Services: Provide a new doctors' surgery or additional doctors. ▪ Zone land for a new cemetery. Create a carpark opposite the current graveyard in Burgage (on Avon land). ▪ Skate Park and Playground: Develop a larger skate park and upgrade playground facilities. ▪ Dog Litter Bins: Introduce bins in strategic locations.

Chief Executive Response

Primary and Secondary School Provision

The draft LAP, in combination with the Social Infrastructure Audit appendix of the LAP has carried out a full audit of primary and secondary school capacity in the settlement of Blessington and its catchment. The Social Infrastructure Audit recommends zoning sufficient lands for an additional primary and a secondary school to provide for and futureproof the provision of primary and secondary education facilities serving Blessington and its catchment. It is further noted that planning permission has been granted for a primary level Gaelscoil on portion of Blessington located within the jurisdiction of Kildare County Council. This Gaelscoil is currently operating on a temporary site. The new school building will allow this school to increase its capacity by circa 30%.

While the LAP as a land use plan can facilitate the provision of new schools through appropriate land use zoning, it should be noted that the purchase of lands and provision / development of schools is outside the remit of the LAP and the Local Authority. The provision of primary and secondary school facilities in Ireland is determined on an area specific basis by the DoEd, having regard to available school capacity, demographic projections, an analysis of child benefit records, and local travel pattern modelling.

The DoEd is monitoring the demand for and provision of schools in the LAP area on an ongoing basis and WCC will continue to consult and liaise with the DoEd in this regard.

Childcare/Crèches

The draft LAP, in combination with the Social Infrastructure Audit appendix of the LAP has carried out a full audit of childcare/crèche capacity in the settlement of Blessington. The Social Infrastructure Audit identified that Childcare facilities in Blessington are at or near capacity. It is noted that since finalising the Social Infrastructure Audit a new crèche facility has been completed by Cairn Homes on the Sorrell Wood residential development however this facility is not yet operational and is currently seeking an operator. It is further noted that this crèche will likely only serve the childcare needs of the population generated by this associated residential development.

The future provision of childcare facilities to serve future residential development in Blessington is underpinned by objective CPO 7.5 of the CDP, which requires that a Social Infrastructure Audit has to be carried out alongside any planning application for a new housing development of a significant number of units, to determine the need / capacity of a childcare facility.

In addition Objective CPO 7.29 of the CDP requires that *"where considered necessary by the Planning Authority, to require the provision of childcare facilities in all residential developments comprising 75 houses or more (including local authority and social housing schemes). In accordance with Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government guidelines, childcare places shall be provided at a ratio of 20 places per 75 residential units, having regard to cumulative effects of permitted development, (unless it can be demonstrated that having regard to the existing geographic distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of the area that this level of childcare facilities is not required). Without substantial cause, it is the policy of the Planning Authority not to allow a change of use of these premises within five years"*.

It is noted under Section B.8 Zoning of the Draft LAP that childcare/crèches can be developed on all Residential (RN/RE) zoned lands in the plan area, however childcare/crèche facilities are also open for consideration on other land use zonings including TC (Town Centre), (E) Employment, (CE) Community and Education.

It should be noted the Local Authority cannot control the type of childcare spaces (baby, toddler, pre- school) to be provided in each facility. This is determined in terms of viability of a business for the end user. With respect to who is generally responsible for delivering childcare facilities, this is very much so developer led.

Having regard to the projected growth in the settlement, the capacity and number of childcare facilities needs

to be increased to meet demand. The location of these facilities should follow in new residential areas or at appropriate locations near schools.

Healthcare

There are no national standards for health provision in Ireland relating to the provision of primary care facilities, residential care facilities or the number GPs practising per head of population.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) estimates that a typical primary care centre can serve a population of between 10,000– 20,000. Blessington Primary Care Centre is located in the north of the settlement with both HSE and private services operating from this facility however the Social Infrastructure Audit indicates that there is a need for further GP services in Blessington.

In this regard the provision of health facilities and GP surgeries are a matter for the Health Service Executive (HSE), however the LAP endeavours to facilitate the provision of such facilities through flexible zoning provisions and development objectives / standards; in particular the development of new health care facilities that is supported in a wide range of land use zone categories and Objective BLESS29 which seeks *“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).*

Cemeteries

The concerns raised in a number of submissions with regard to the need to expand the existing and/or provide a new cemetery are noted. The Social Infrastructure Audit identifies that cemeteries/burial grounds in the settlement of Blessington are near capacity and there is a need for additional cemetery space within the Blessington area.

CPO 7.55 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 states that it is an objective of Wicklow County Council *‘To facilitate the development of new, improved or expanded places of worship and burial grounds including natural burial grounds at appropriate locations in the County, where the demand for the facility has been demonstrated.’*

This objective applies countywide including the Blessington plan area and surrounds. This objective does not require burial grounds to be developed within the built up area of a settlement and supports the development of such uses in the vicinity of Blessington including outside the LAP boundary. In this regard it is noted that many new cemeteries are now locating outside settlements, for example Kiltarnan Cemetery Park in South Dublin, which is an excellent example of a modern cemetery park noting its rural location and peaceful surrounds and where there is little development pressure from other active land uses.

It is noted that cemeteries are open for consideration on lands zoned for Mixed Use (MU) and Community & Education (CE), and therefore a new cemeteries or a cemetery car park are not ruled out for the Council’s land at Burgage. However, the options for the future development of these lands have not been finalised at this time.

Playgrounds and Dog Park

The Social Infrastructure Audit has identified that there is a shortfall of equipped playspaces in the settlement and it is recognised that there is currently no dog park. Casual play space and equipped play space are most usually permissible under an OS1 ‘Open Space’ land use zoning objective. The Social Infrastructure Audit identified that c.13.6ha of OS1 would be required to accommodate amenity areas and play spaces to serve the projected population of Blessington (Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare) and its catchment during the lifetime of the plan. A total of c.23ha of land has been zoned OS1. OS1 lands have been zoned to complement the location of existing OS1 facilities and close to residential areas and the Town Centre

In this regard the recent opening of phase 1 of the new town park developed by Cairn Homes is a positive and much welcomed asset to the town by Wicklow County Council and includes an excellent new playground with greenspaces and walks.

Dog Litter Bins

It is not within the remit of the draft LAP to deliver such infrastructure; this is the responsibility of Baltinglass Municipal District (offices located in Blessington). This request will be brought to the attention of the Municipal District team.

On foot of this submission, no amendments to the LAP are deemed necessary.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

B.5.5 Community Gardens/Allotments

No.	Name	Issues Raised
167	Blessington Allotments Campaign Ref 221637	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Blessington Allotments Campaign welcomes the inclusion of allotments and community gardens in the draft Local Area Plan for Blessington. ▪ While Open Space (OS1) is appropriate for the inclusion of allotments and community gardens, flexibility should be built in to the Local Area Plan so as to not constrain temporary use of this land. As an example, during the most recent recession in Ireland, community gardens were located temporarily on land zoned residential throughout Ireland. ▪ The Blessington Allotments Campaign would also like to highlight that community gardens are now defined in law, as per the Planning and Development Act 2024
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	Requesting that allotments are developed.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>With regard to the development of allotments it should be noted that the purchase of lands and provision / development of such as facility by the Local Authority is outside the remit of the LAP.</p> <p>With regard to the development of allotments the benefits of such as use in villages, towns and cities are acknowledged in particular with regard to mental health, general wellbeing and community building. The Draft Blessington Local Area Plan indicates that allotments are considered to be an appropriate use on lands zoned Agriculture (AG) and OS1 with a specific objective supporting the development of allotments and/or a community gardens on the OS1 lands zoned under SLO1. The Draft Local Area Plan does not indicate that once such a use is permitted on lands zoned AG or OS1 that it would be temporary only.</p> <p>In addition the 2022-2028 Wicklow County Development Plan recognises the importance of allotments and community gardens as an important element of sustainable communities. This is further supported by the following objectives of the 2022-2028 Wicklow County Development Plan which states that is an objective:</p> <p>CPO 7.48</p> <p><i>"To support and facilitate the development of allotments and community gardens, of an appropriate scale, on lands which meet the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Land situated within or immediately adjacent to the edge of towns/villages;</i> ▪ <i>Land that is easily accessible to the residents of a particular town or village;</i> ▪ <i>Where an adequate water supply can be provided;</i> ▪ <i>Where adequate road infrastructure and access exists/can be provided; and</i> ▪ <i>Where adequate parking facilities can be provided".</i> <p>CPO 9.38</p> <p><i>"To encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification into suitable agri-businesses. Subject to all other objectives being complied with, the Council will support the alternative use of agricultural land for the following alternative farm enterprises:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Specialist farming practices, e.g. organic farming, horticulture, specialised animal breeding, deer and goat farming, poultry, flower growing, forestry, equine facilities, allotments, bioenergy production of crops and forestry, organic and speciality foods; and</i> ▪ <i>suitable rural enterprises</i> 		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

Part B.6 Heritage/Biodiversity

B.6.1 Ecosystems

No.	Name	Issues Raised
1	Claire Robinson Ref 210146	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns expressed about dangerously high levels of blue green algae in the lake water Suggests objectives included for protection of the lake in the plan
19	Ballymore Eustace Community Development Association Ref 133645	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The block on development within 100m from a stream rule is something that Dublin City Council (now Úisce Éireann) stipulates in planning for the protection of the reservoir within the catchment, and this rule should be followed through into LAP There must be a horizontal buffer distance to the lake to give space for nature, erosion and open space Have not considered the buffer to the SAC and SPA The Natural Environmental Consultants report should be updated in full or a new report completed Glen Ding should be protected and a significant portion of the boundary closest to the reservoir should be reserved for a Native Woodland within the development buffer In order to protect riparian lands and reservoir, the 25m buffer is too small and should be at least 50m with additional space for wider parkland areas. Undeveloped lands that have the potential to impact on the integrity of a European Site must not be zoned in any case, with the exception of open space. That goes for SLO5, SLO6 and SLO7 – submitter disagrees with the zoning of the lands in these SLO's.
188	Kieran Doyle Ref 123556	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about the ecosystems around Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir/Golden Falls Reservoir needs to be protected from further algae bloom damage from pollution Lakes catchment of rivers leading into it should be monitored as the lake is supposed to be protected Blessington Waste Water capacity is full and has no capacity for new zoned lands The discharge into Golden Falls needs to be assessed The risk to users has not been taken into account and should be investigated further as it will have an impact on River Liffey Towns further down the river not just Ballymore Eustace where bathers are swimming in very poor water quality

Chief Executive Response

In relation to the requests for an increased buffer around watercourses/waterbodies, the CE is satisfied that the 25m buffer generally applied throughout the plan area is consistent with guidance from Inland Fisheries Ireland, and with CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan. Lands zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' considerably exceed 25m from watercourses in many cases, including around the Lakeshore, and Glen Ding has been protected with that zoning, as referenced.

In relation to buffers around European sites, the Draft Plan has undergone Appropriate Assessment, as addressed in **Section 5 SEA and AA** of this report.

In relation to the report by Natura Environmental Consultants, the draft plan states the following: *'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' The report is not intended to represent a current day biodiversity study of Blessington. Rather, it is considered a point-in-time snapshot that feeds into the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit and the recommendations of the WCC Biodiversity Officer.

Issues in relation to the referenced SLOs are addressed in **Section B.8.2 Specific Local Objectives** of this report.

With respect to algae blooms and the monitoring of water quality within the lake catchment, Wicklow County Council, along with a number of state agencies, including but not limited to the EPA, NPWS and Uisce Éireann is committed to working to ensure water quality is improved and no development that might arise on foot of this land use plan would contribute to water quality deterioration.

Attention to drawn to the range of objectives with respect to water quality and environmental protections already set out in the Wicklow CDP which will apply directly in the plan area such as;

'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.'

However on foot of these submissions and those of other state agencies, the CE recommends some additional text and objectives be included in the Blessington LAP as set out to follow.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the plan as follows:

Add the following text and objectives to Section B.7:

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.

BLESS-XX: 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.

BLESS-XX: 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.6.2 Architectural Heritage

No.	Name	Issues Raised
127	Blessington & District Forum Ref 145547	Blessington is an Architectural Community. It should be an objective of the LAP for the removal of derelict/unused signage and the introduction of sympathetic and suitable placed signage throughout the town, including storyboards/art installations/murals.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>It is considered that an objective requiring the removal of derelict/unused signage and the introduction of sympathetic and suitable placed signage throughout the town, including storyboards/art installations/murals is outside the remit of the draft plan which is a land use plan – this would be more a matter for the projects and programmes of the Town Team and the implementation of the Town Centre First plan.</p> <p>The following objectives are included in the County Development Plan to promote the regeneration of Town and Village Centres and ensure that any proposed development in an ACA is carried out in an appropriate and sympathetic manner. In this regard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 5 of the County Development Plan 2022-2028 refers to Town and Village Centres – Placemaking and Regeneration. Section 5.6, Town and Villages Centre Objectives (CPO 5.1-5.5) and relates to targeting the reversal of decline in towns and villages, increasing the quality, vibrancy and vitality of our town and village centres and controlling uses that may have a detrimental impact on the vitality of the streetscape and the public realm. ▪ Objective CPO 5.6 of the County Development Plan relates to Regeneration and Renewal and includes specific objectives for the Regeneration and Renewal of Blessington Town Centre which is reflected in the draft LAP under OP3 Market Square which seeks to regenerate 3 Opportunity sites in the town centre. The development objectives for OP3-Market Square as outlined in the draft LAP seeks that any development proposals in this area should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area. <p>Any development in the ACA will also be assessed under Chapter 8 of the County Development Plan which refers to Built Heritage. Objectives CPO 8.10-8.12 refer to the protection and conservation of built heritage in Co. Wicklow while Objectives CPO 8.21-8.24 refer directly to any development proposed in an ACA. In particular Objective CPO 8.22 seeks that a high standard of shopfront design relating sympathetically to the character of the building and the surrounding area will be required as part of any proposed development in an ACA that includes revisions, upgrades or the installation of a shopfront and/or shop signage.</p> <p>Section 6.4 of Appendix 1 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 also sets out shopfront design standards that will be implemented at development management stage. Furthermore, the Blessington Town Centre First Plan includes shop front improvements within a range of placemaking projects, which would be a matter for the WCC Town Regeneration Officer.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

Part B.7 Infrastructure

B.7.1 Road network

B.7.1.1 Blessington Inner Relief Road (BIRR)

No.	Name	Issues Raised
12	Annuschka Wiesemann, Danielle O'Farrell, Patrick Brien Directors of Deerpark Court, on behalf of 53 units in Deerpark Court housing estate Ref 110731	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns expressed regarding proposed re-routing of the N81 to the Blessington Inner Relief Road as outlined in the LAP. Rerouting would funnel traffic increased traffic volumes onto roads adjacent to Deerpark Court creating severe access challenges and pose serious safety risk for pedestrians Rerouting would result in a substantial increase in both noise and air pollution and endanger the protected green wildlife area adjacent to Deerpark Court Estate. Proximity of the road raises privacy concerns for residents. Re-routing is likely to result in the devaluation of properties in Deerpark Court and neighbouring estates, affecting residents' investments and financial security. Suggest alternative route behind Sorrel Wood and past the GAA grounds.
20	Frank Smyth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission has been granted for several new housing developments abutting the BIRR. BIRR has become progressively busier with the natural expansion of existing families and the development of Sorrel Woods The majority of housing developments rest on the Blessington town side of the BIRR. Newly proposed housing developments along the BIRR will exacerbate traffic, potentially causing gridlock in estates which will in the long run have a negative impact on the monetary value of existing properties Were the BIRR to be formally linked up to the N81, thereby turning it into a national secondary road, it would be a recipe for disaster Permission being granted for hundreds of family units with play parks, walkways, schools, GAA etc on both sides of the BIRR, yet it is considered fit to turn this into a national secondary road that children are then expected to safely negotiate their way across New entrance from Sorrell Wood onto the BIRR questionable in relation to supporting N81, this section of roadway has been governed by white lines since day 1 The route proposed previously through Doran's Pit or the GAA grounds would have been the least troublesome option
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of the Inner Relief Road is needed. Requested that along the main street, parking is changed to parallel parking bays and that transient traffic is rerouted along the inner relief road.
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening of the northern section would reduce heavy traffic on Oak Drive which was designed as an access road- not a thoroughfare. The southern section poses more of a problem, as the steep incline by Blessington Abbey/Orchard is not suitable for HGV's, most quarry related traffic carrying 44 tonnes. Such vehicles cannot build up enough speed to safely enter traffic flows at the adjacent roundabout from effectively a hill start. Suggests re-routing of the BIRR around Blessington Manor to join the N81 near the waste water treatment plant Merit in actively building the park and ride, particularly to coincide with the

		opening of the BIRR
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete the inner relief road ▪ Reroute traffic around town rather than through it
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The Local Authority is committed to delivering the BIRR project and continuing to work with the various transport agencies to progress this project in the short - medium term including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the Blessington Inner Relief Road - It is intended that upon completion of the BIRR, the speed limit from the new roundabout at the northern end of the BIRR on the N81 and the existing southern roundabout at Blessington Industrial Estate, will be reduced as traffic not bound for Blessington is diverted onto the BIRR. This will allow for significant town centre / public realm / public transport improvements to be carried out in Blessington - While there may be some increased traffic along the BIRR, this route offers a more efficient alternative to traveling through the town centre. Furthermore, it will be designed with modern infrastructure that addresses potential traffic concerns, and will be subject to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets in terms of speed/pedestrian crossing points/safety/etc. <p>In relation to the design / gradients of this route, such matters have been considered in both the consent granted for the sections already constructed and in the design to the final sections to be completed.</p> <p>With regard to the potential impact on residents along this route, these developments were only possible to develop with the opening up of lands by the construction of the first phases of this road, which was always intended to be a complete route around the town centre, and the road was designed to have adequate capacity and to be of a design that accommodated both these new housing areas and 'through' traffic.</p> <p>With regard to concerns raised regarding the impact of the BIRR on biodiversity in Blessington, in particular nearby/adjoining green spaces, the draft plan has been subject to numerous environmental assessments including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, to ensure that significant adverse impacts can be identified and avoided in the crafting of the plan. Every effort is made through the application of sound planning and environmental protection principles to ensure the impact is minimal and can be absorbed by the receiving environment.</p> <p>Following the adoption of this LAP, the Local Authority is committing to preparing a Local Transport Plan, which will further detail an overall strategy and programme for addressing any existing transportation issues and supporting further development with appropriate infrastructure.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.1.2 Condition of the N81

No.	Name	Issues Raised
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	These submissions raise some or all of the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Condition of the N81 Blessington to Dublin is inadequate for a national road, quality needs to be improved▪ Trucks are destroying the road▪ Poor road markings/no cats eyes making it dangerous to drive at night▪ An upgrade of the N81 is needed to improve connectivity
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	
213	Rachel Murphy Ref 174017	
Chief Executive Response		
The maintenance of national roads is not a matter for a Local Development Plan, however these concerns have been noted and will be brought to the attention of the state agency responsible - Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).		
Objective BLESS44 supports the delivery of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme.		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.1.3 Local Roads

No.	Name	Issues Raised
5	Marcin Jurkowski Ref 183854	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor road markings around the town centre, especially near Dunne Stores – very dangerous and confusing ▪ Roads management presumably outsourced by WCC
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	Regular pothole maintenance and improvements to smaller roads needed
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The completion of the local unnamed distributor road from Oak Drive to the Naas Road will in effect become a town bypass for traffic to and from Kildare. Will there be traffic-controlled signals or a roundabout at the Naas Road junction ▪ Such large-scale reduction in through traffic will facilitate more adventurous use of the road space for pedestrians and cyclists and a re-think on parking spaces
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The Local Authority is committed to addressing local transportation issues and following the adoption of this LAP, the Local Authority is committing to preparing a Local Transport Plan, which will evaluate and address all the issues detailed above.</p> <p>Issues in relation to the exact configuration of traffic signals, junction design, crossing points, etc., are design considerations which are a matter for project-stage consent procedures. Submissions in this regard are best made to these individual projects when brought forward for consent. Note that roads within the 60kmh zone will be subject to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.</p> <p>Road maintenance is not a matter for a land use framework such as a local area plan. However, these concerns have been noted and will be brought to the attention of the department responsible.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.2 Bus/Train Services

B.7.2.1 Direct service to Dublin City

No.	Name	Issues Raised
7	Gemma Corridan Ref 154430	<p>These submissions raise some or all of the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An express bus to Dublin is required 65 bus service is infrequent/overcrowded/insufficient The town is lacking in public transport, irregularity of buses and lack of routes
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	
30	Louise Clay Ref 212333	
49	James Grace Ref 133816	
124	Blessington Tourist Office Ref 142036	
134	Eimear Deegan Ref 164517	
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	
200	Lise-Marié du Preez Ref 155318	
207	Radek Dulny Ref 173746	
235	Patrick Quinn Ref 204850	
87	Jason Moroney Ref 145052	<p>These submissions raise similar issues as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local shuttle buses should be provided throughout the day/evening between smaller villages surrounding the town A regular shuttle bus that runs between town and Russborough House during the summer months would be a great asset School shuttle buses to Newbridge College and other nearby secondary schools are suggested Direct bus service to Maynooth University or local link going directly from Blessington to Naas is suggested
124	Blessington Tourist Office Ref 142036	
200	Lise-Marié du Preez Ref 155318	
213	Rachel Murphy Ref 174017	
221	Will Blumlein Ref 190908	Requests WCC to allocate sufficient space and infrastructure to support the efficient running of public transportation, specifically increased volume of buses which the bus connect strategy envisions
7	Gemma Corridan Ref 154430	These submissions all suggest Luas line needs to be extended to Blessington.
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	
200	Lise-Marié du Preez Ref 155318	

Chief Executive Response

The Local Authority is committed to continuing to deliver all services / infrastructure within its remit to support the provision of improved public transport services in Blessington and to work with the various transport agencies to progress improvement projects.

While the provision of public transport services is beyond the remit of a land use framework such as a local area plan, objective BLESS49 supports the improvement of public transport services and infrastructure, including the delivery of the BusConnects Programme and Connecting Ireland programme as relevant to Blessington.

The Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2024 does not include the extension of the LUAS to Blessington. As such, it would be inconsistent for the Blessington Local Area Plan to include such an objective.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

B.7.3 Parking

B.7.3.1 Town Centre public realm improvements & car parking

No.	Name	Issues Raised
127	Blessington & District Forum Ref 145547	<p>These submissions raise similar issues with respect to parking in the town centre as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further parking required within the town for cars and bikes e.g. bicycle parking near Market Square or beside the Moody Rooster. ▪ Concerns about the removal of parking from the town square and the eastern side of main street ▪ Detrimental impact on business operation and the town commercial vitality ▪ Parking is already at capacity, removal of spaces will exacerbate this problem ▪ Further limiting parking options could hinder efforts to attract new tenants or revive important vacant properties in the town centre ▪ Limited parking will disproportionately impact individuals with reduced mobility/the elderly/families with young children in accessing services. ▪ Needs to be a parking masterplan in place before losing more spaces
138	Peter Eustace Ref 183830	
161	Catherine Roche Ref 214258	
177	J. P. & M Doyle Ltd Ref 105309	
226	Peter Doyle, Doyle Fox & Associates Solicitors. Ref 202622	
235	Patrick Quinn Ref 204850	
218	Sraith Fhada Housing Ltd. Ref 190036	<p>This submission concerns lands on Main Street comprising the former Downshire Hotel. It is requested that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the LAP does not include any policies and/or objectives that would interfere with the accessibility of the property from Main Street, including preservation of vital existing on-street parking and also access/egress to and from the property for delivery and other vehicles – Objective BLESS3 and Section B.1 in particular should be amended accordingly; ▪ any public realm / active travel or related projects includes on-street and drop off type parking at the frontage to the property; and ▪ the LAP clarify that the 'Improving the Visitor Accommodation Offer' chapter of the Blessington Town Centre First Plan is not an objective of the Planning Authority, being incompatible with the owners intentions for the lands and the live planning permission in situ on the lands. ▪ BLESS3 be amended as follows: <i>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:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Reductions in through traffic along Blessington Main Street</i> ▪ <i>The rationalisation and reconfiguration of car parking within Blessington Town Centre.</i> ▪ <i>The reconfiguration of traffic movements around Newtown Square.</i> ▪ <i>Improvements to the spatial and visual connectivity between Blessington Main Street, Market Square and Newtown Square</i> ▪ <i>The implementation of a comprehensive public realm scheme on Market Square and adjacent areas of Blessington Town Centre.</i> ▪ <i>The undergrounding of cabling along Blessington Main Street.</i>

		<p>In support of these request, it is put forward that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ loss of car parking spaces in this area would have a disproportionate impact on the subject lands; the subject lands should be a priority in terms of encouraging regeneration of buildings and land use; ▪ ease of access to the subject lands is of crucial important given the hospitality use planned, as is access for service and deliveries ▪ safety issues regarding perpendicular parking on Main Street should not be used as rationale for changes to parking arrangements on the subject lands ▪ while the plan has numerous objectives promoting intensification of the town centre, changes in car parking capacity on the Main Street could stymie investment ▪ parking demand management measures should be a priority with permanent changes as last resort ▪ In light of the planned greenway and its associated car parking demand, no diminution of car parking in Blessington should be considered in the absence of need, evidence and stakeholder support.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The LAP clearly details that the regeneration of the town centre, including public realm improvements in and around Market Square, is a key objective and is essential in order to maintain the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre as the heart of the settlement. With the future diversion of traffic flows onto the completed BIRR, an opportunity exists to carry out significant enhancement to Blessington Main Street and Market Square, with the objective to make the area more user friendly with safe pedestrian and cycling facilities, more pleasant spaces to dwell and recreate and more opportunities to do business.</p>		
<p>The LAP does not provide the detail with respect to the design of any future public realm improvements, including any changes to car parking that might be proposed as part of any such future project. The plan only sets out the aims, objectives and standards that any future public realm projects will be required to meet, and any future programme of public realm improvement will be subject to the necessary consent process including where necessary public consultation. This would be the appropriate time for the submitters to give input with respect to changes that are of concern / interest to them or that might be proposed close to their properties. In this regard, it is clear that BLESS3 does not proscribe the design of any future improvements at or around any particular property.</p>		
<p>It should be noted that objective BLESS48 of the Draft LAP supports the development of multiple additional car parking locations that could compensate for any rationalisation of car parking on Blessington Main Street/Town Centre.</p>		
<p>With respect to clarify or confirming elements the Town Centre First plan, that is not a function of an LAP.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
<p>No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.</p>		

B.7.3.2 Car parking - General

No.	Name	Issues Raised
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	Suggest the development of additional parking in new estates at key locations.to prevent congestion and illegal parking on main roads.
138	Peter Eustace Ref 183830	These submissions raise similar issues with respect to parking in the town centre as follows:
161	Catherine Roche Ref 214258	Suggestion introduction of paid parking (with a limited time free of charge).
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	Suggest new car parks needed at locations such as Burgage Cemetery and Avon Rí.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The quantum of car parking within new residential estates must have regard to the development and design standards as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, with consistent standards throughout Co. Wicklow. Details such as level of car parking are to be assessed at planning application stage.</p> <p>The control of parking is not within the remit of a land use framework such as a local area plan. Note that the accompanying Blessington Town Centre First Plan makes reference to the potential implementation of paid parking within the town; 'Section 1 - Strategic Transport Improvement' sets out the recommended objectives including the introduction of paid parking in the long term (3+ years). Such a project would be a matter for the Town Regeneration Office/Municipal District.</p> <p>Section B.1 of the Draft Blessington LAP Written Statement states the following: '<i>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.</i>' On this basis, no change is required.</p> <p>In relation to the need for additional car parking, objective BLESS48 of the Draft LAP supports the development of multiple additional car parking locations to the south, west, and north of the built-up area.</p> <p>Following the adoption of this LAP, the Local Authority is committing to preparing a Local Transport Plan, which will further detail an overall strategy and programme for addressing any existing transportation issues and supporting further development with appropriate infrastructure.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.4 Footpaths and Cycleways

No.	Name	Issues Raised
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	N81 needs significant investment to safe for cyclists
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved cycle paths are needed around the town connecting Blessington to surrounding areas More pedestrian crossings are needed to improve safety, especially on the N81 near the Texaco garage
169	Pat O'Sullivan Ref 221745	Any new road development should incorporate bike friendly features
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	Such large-scale reduction in traffic on Main Street will facilitate more adventurous use of the road space for pedestrians and cyclists
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	Improve cycle paths and pedestrian crossings
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The Local Authority is committed to addressing local transportation issues and following the adoption of this LAP, the Local Authority is committing to preparing a Local Transport Plan, which will evaluate and address all the issues detailed above including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of facilities and routes for pedestrian and cyclists across the entire settlement; To significantly improve pedestrian infrastructure along all roads within Blessington prioritising all locations within 15 minutes' walk times of school and public transport services and; To significantly improve cycling infrastructure along all main routes (regional roads, primary local roads and other distributor roads) within the Blessington area. <p>The Draft Blessington Local Area Plan includes a range of objectives in relation to the improvement of infrastructure for active travel users, including objectives BLESS43 and BLESS45. Map No. 6 Active Travel Strategy includes those routes included in the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network, additional local and greenway feeder routes, greenfield/brownfield active travel routes, and pedestrian permeability improvements. Works to roads must have regard to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the Cycle Design Manual 2023.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.5 Accessibility & Safety

No.	Name	Issues Raised
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	WCC should aim to take charge of all public roads and footpaths in the town to ensure proper maintenance. Address issues with overgrown tree roots, trip hazards, broken paving and roads
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	WCC should maintain all public roads and footpaths, addressing issues such as overgrown tree roots, broken paving
Chief Executive Response		
<p>Street / road maintenance and taking in charge are not matters for a land use framework such as a local area plan. However, these concerns have been noted and will be brought to the attention of the department responsible. Note that the Draft Blessington LAP Written Statement states the following:</p> <p><i>'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.'</i></p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.6 Electricity Supply, Water and Sewerage Infrastructure

B.7.6.1 Waste Water Treatment Plant

No.	Name	Issues Raised
19	Ballymore Eustace Community Development Association Ref 133645	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blessington reservoir is under significant environmental and infrastructure stress, and the LAP must account for these critical issues to protect water quality and ensure sustainable growth; ▪ The reservoir faces ongoing algal blooms, which authorities have not adequately addressed, and further pressure could cause a situation similar to Lough Neagh's; ▪ Blessington town relies on a 5.5km outfall pipe for wastewater, which is outdated, unassessed and at risk due to its location along the N81, especially with future road upgrades. The discharge into County Kildare was increased without proper consultation or planning approval, making it an illegal discharge; ▪ The wastewater treatment plant's EPA license (D0063-1) is outdated, and no review has been sought for its expanded capacity (9,000pe); ▪ The discharge point is routinely emptied by the ESB for dam overhaul work; ▪ The water treatment plant at Ballymore Eustace already operates above its legal abstraction limit, and the discharge into the River Liffey has non-compliance issues; ▪ Blessington Town's urban runoff, poor surface water quality controls, and misconnected drains exacerbate the pollution risk to the reservoir; ▪ There is insufficient drinking water capacity to support future growth, as Uisce Éireann already exceeds its abstraction limit. The East and Midland (Shannon) Scheme will not resolve this within the lifetime of the LAP; ▪ The draft LAP lacks comprehensive surface water management or mitigation measures, increasing contamination risks to the reservoir; ▪ Blessington Lakes supply 85% of Dublin's drinking water, and the Liffey is already over-abstracted, with projections indicating a future reduction in water availability. <p>It is put forward that reference to surface water infrastructure in the Draft LAP is totally deficient given the very important location of Blessington Town. The LAP should provide data on the current surface water system in Blessington – number of sewer chokes per year, misconnection surveys, Storm Water Overflow statistics, Flood records, stream cleaning work etc.</p>
21	Thomas Deegan, Honorary Secretary, Ballymore Eustace Trout and Salmon Anglers' Association Ref 144509	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorrect statement in the SEA that the River Liffey flows through the Poulaphouca Gorge must be corrected as it is used by Úisce Éireann and WCC to obtain planning permission and waste water discharge licenses; ▪ Planning permission for the upgrade of the WWTP to 9000 P.E. obtained on the false pretense that discharge is into a river of 1.5m³/sec minimum flow when in fact there is no flow pass the Blessington WWTP discharge point up to 97% of the time; ▪ In the year 2000 the EPA described Golden Falls Lake/Reservoir as being Hypertrophic, i.e. a very high level of pollution and a very high level of impairment of use of the Lake. The ESB waste water discharge license agreement for 6000 P.E. has not been updated; ▪ WWTP is already over capacity;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It took a long time for Uisce Éireann to admit that all their data for the Blessington WWTP upgrade and WWDL discharge is false. All the data now needs to be corrected and for Golden Falls Lake/Reservoir to be declared a totally unsuitable location for the Blessington WWTP discharge.
219	Cairn Homes Properties Ltd. Ref 172755	The draft LAP notes there is sufficient wastewater capacity to service the landbank at Blessington Demesne

Chief Executive Response

The operation of Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant, and relevant EPA licencing, is a matter for Uisce Éireann and it outside of the remit of the local area plan. Consultation with Uisce Éireann indicates that the Waste Water Treatment Plan would serve the level of growth envisioned by the Wicklow County Development Plan Core Strategy over the plan period.

In relation to water abstraction and water supply, 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.

With respect to algal blooms and the monitoring of water quality within the lake catchment, Wicklow County Council, along with a number of state agencies, including but not limited to the EPA, NPWS and Uisce Éireann is committed to working to ensure water quality is improved and no development that might arise on foot of this land use plan would contribute to water quality deterioration.

Attention to drawn to the range of objectives with respect to water quality and environmental protections already set out in the Wicklow CDP which will apply directly in the plan area such as;

'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.'

However on foot of these submissions and those of other state agencies, the CE recommends some additional text and objectives be included in the Blessington LAP as set out to follow.

Issues in relation to statements made in the SEA and AA reports regarding the flow of the River Liffey are addressed in **Section 5 SEA and AA** of this report.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the plan as follows:

Add the following text and objectives to Section B.7:

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.

BLESS-XX: 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.

BLESS-XX: 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.7.6.2 ESB network

No.	Name	Issues Raised
195	Gerard Gilvary Ref 140548	Any future electricity trunk network improvements should be placed underground around the bypass
196	Catherine Kehoe Ref 140503	Place cabling underground
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The Blessington TCF Plan shares the view that significant improvements could be made to the public realm by removing electricity poles and placing cables underground. It has identified this objective for implementation within the medium-term timeframe (1-3 years).</p> <p>Section B.1 of the Draft LAP highlights that public realm and other road improvement schemes within Blessington could provide an opportunity to implement underground cabling along Blessington Main Street.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

B.7.7 General

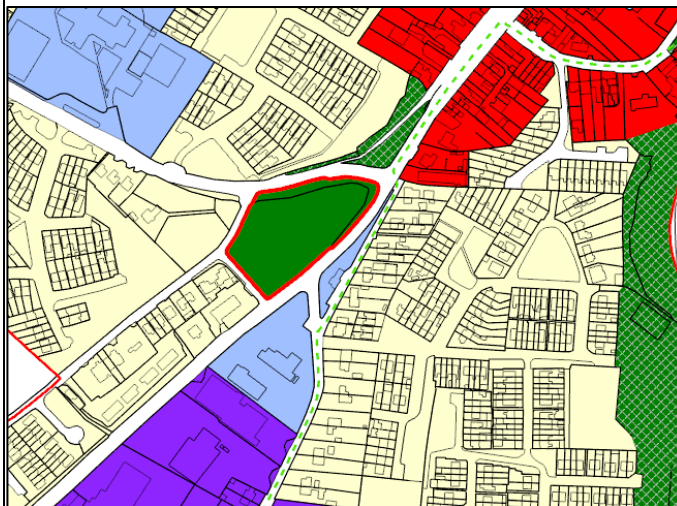
No.	Name	Issues Raised
135	Sue Rossiter Ref 180552	Suggests upgrading of the bridges on the lake in collaboration with the ESB
Chief Executive Response		
Maintenance of bridges across the Poulaphouca Reservoir is a matter for the ESB at the present time.		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

Part B.8 Zoning

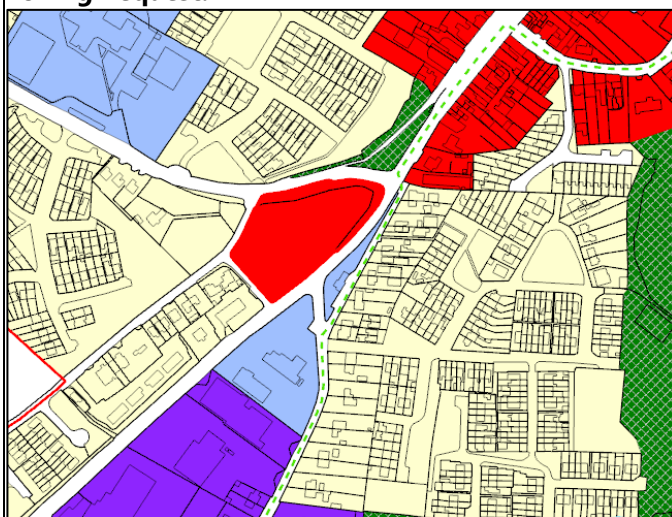
B.8.1 Zoning Requests

No.	Name	Issues Raised
15	Joan and Billy Flynn Ref 150523	<p>It is requested that c. 1ha of lands at Blessington, zoned OS1 'Open Space' in the draft LAP, be zoned TC 'Town Centre'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on the description of the OS1 zoning and its appropriate uses, it is clear that the draft LAP envisages a public use on the land. However, the land is privately owned. ▪ No rationale is provided in the written statement to explain the need for adding the subject site to the land that was previously zoned open space, and removing the current town centre zoning objective. ▪ Based on a calculated shortfall the Social Infrastructure Audit concludes that 9.3ha should be zoned for additional OS1 use. However, this analysis is flawed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An open space audit of open space needs that is related to the catchment population should take into account the available open space facilities within the catchment area both inside and outside the town. Many of the existing open space facilities are provided outside the town as acknowledged on pg. 52 of the Audit. - The Audit fails to include a qualitative assessment of current open space facilities provided in the town, in contrast to the report into the community and recreational needs of the Baltinglass Municipal District. - The recommended figure of 9.3ha to be zoned for additional OS1 use is flawed because it is based on comparison with existing zoned lands rather than existing facilities. The future additional supply needed to accommodate the increased population can be more than adequately met with the new town park and the SLO1 area. ▪ The fact that planning permission was relatively recently refused (WCC Reg. Ref. 23/60307) for reasons relating to the single retail use, design issues and traffic and transport assessment, should not form a reason to abandon the objective to seek an active town centre use on the subject site. ▪ Zoning the land for open space removes the future development of this site as an opportunity site within the town with potential for a landmark building or buildings to 'frame' the Main Street Town Centre core at its south western end. ▪ The site is not of special value in terms of biodiversity that would justify its retention in its current natural state or include it in the Green Infrastructure for the town. The designation of Local Biodiversity Area is not justified. An Ecological Impact Assessment was carried out in September 2023 and concluded: <i>'The construction and operation mitigation proposed for the development satisfactorily addresses the mitigation of potential impacts on the sensitive receptors through the application the standard construction and operation phase controls. The overall impact on the ecology of the proposed development will result in a long term minor adverse not significant residual impact on the ecology of the area and locality overall'</i>. The refusal reasons for the recent proposed development did not include concerns about impact on ecology or biodiversity.

Draft LAP:



Zoning Request:



Chief Executive Response

The rationale for the zoning of this land OS1 'Open Space' is set out in some detail in the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit. The Audit includes the report of the WCC Biodiversity Officer, which made reference to the Ecological Impact Assessment raised in the submission, and clearly states that uses such as substantial numbers of structures, hard surfacing, etc. would be considered inappropriate with regard to the essential biodiversity quality and ecological function/connectivity of the lands.

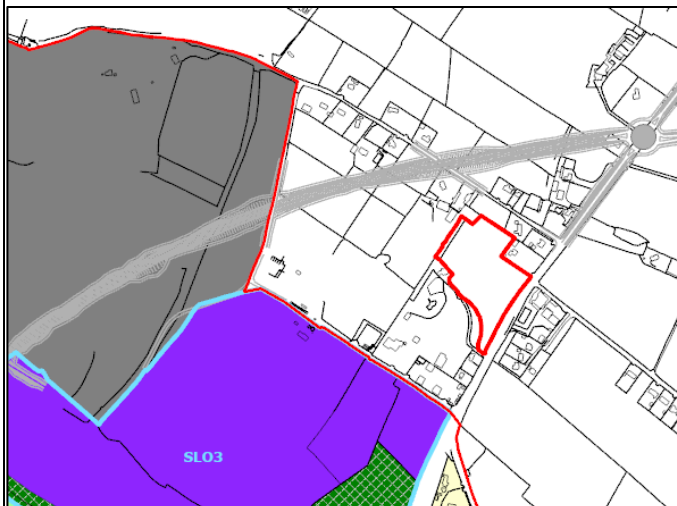
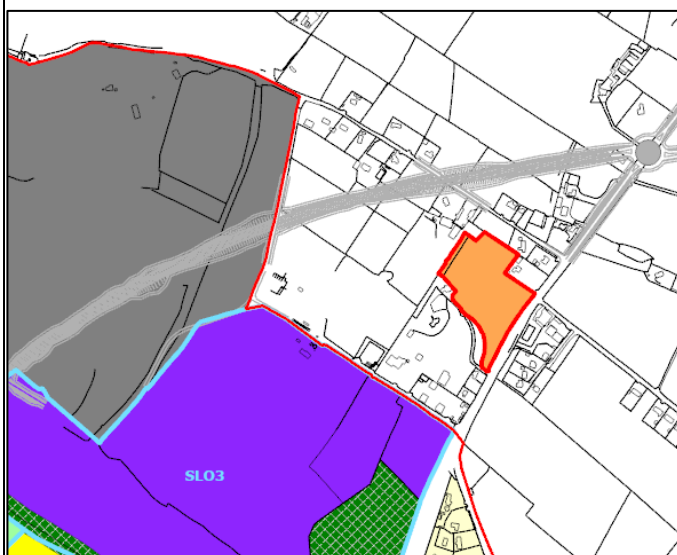
In relation to the Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit, while issues are raised in relation to the exact calculation of required areas, the areas required are stated as **minimum** areas (e.g. pg. 58 of the audit). On this basis, if another reason arises for lands to be zoned OS1, beyond the needs of social infrastructure that may be taken into account regardless of any area requirement. Recommended Objective 5 of the Social Infrastructure Audit states the following: *'Additional OS1 'Open Space' land may be required to account for the recommendations of the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit and Blessington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, where relevant.'* This is restated as having been taken into account in a footnote on pg. 70 of the Audit. As indicated above, the rationale for the zoning of the subject lands was indeed informed by the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit.

On this basis, it is not recommended to zone the subject lands TC 'Town Centre'.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
16	Lesley McGuire Ref 151322	<p>It is requested that lands of c. 2.9ha at Edmondstown, outside the settlement boundary and without a specific land use zoning objective in the Draft LAP, be zoned for residential development. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Local Area Plan is deficient as no rationale is provided for the revision of the settlement boundary of the town, other than in relation to the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA. In the absence of such a rationale, the settlement boundary of the current LAP should be re-adopted. ▪ It is noted that the Local Area Plan fails to examine the reasons why previously zoned lands have not been developed, e.g. Doran's Pit, lands west of the N81. In the absence of such development alternative approaches including zoning alternative lands, should be considered. ▪ The Development Plan Guidelines highlight the need to take stock of existing zoned land that has remained undeveloped before a new development plan is prepared, with Section 10.8 of the Planning Act stating that there shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan. The draft Local Area Plan fails to provide evidence that this was done. ▪ Given the importance that is attached in both the county development plan and the draft Local Area Plan to the outer bypass, it is surprising to note that a large section of the bypass route falls outside the settlement boundary. This bypass was also included as an objective in the previous LAP. ▪ The Draft LAP proposed to divide the housing land that is needed between lands within the existing built up area (30%) and lands outside the existing built up area (max. 70%). However, it is noted that the Local Area Plan does not provide any quantitative targets or capacities in relation to the zoned lands. ▪ Examination of the Specific Local Objectives demonstrates that no additional lands have been zoned in the new Local Area Plan that were not already zoned in the previous Local Area Plan but have remained undeveloped since 2013. There is no information to suggest that these lands will be developed during the period of the draft local area plan. ▪ The lack of delivery of housing development on zoned lands during the lifetime of the previous Local Area Plan is a matter of concern. The planning authority is requested to consider the subject site for rezoning given the commitment of the landowner to develop the land and given the location of the subject site within the route of the future bypass for the town, alongside the N81 within the town boundary.

Draft LAP:**Zoning Request¹****Chief Executive Response**

The residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In particular, the key design aim in delivering sustainable communities is to reduce, as far as possible, the need to travel, particularly by private car, by facilitating mixed-use development and by promoting the efficient use of suitable land. The sequential approach specifies that zoning shall extend outwards from the centre of an urban area, with undeveloped serviced lands closest to the core and public transport routes being given preference, encouraging infill opportunities, and that areas to be zoned shall be contiguous to existing zoned development lands.

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission

¹ Issues in relation to phasing were not raised in the submission, therefore the request is illustrated as RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2'

would:

- Exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended)
- Comprise extension and sprawl of the settlement into the unzoned countryside surrounding the settlement; comprise unacceptable 'leapfrogging' given the existence of other unzoned lands between the site and the plan boundary and would therefore contravene compact and sustainable growth principles; and would result in a car dependent residential zone having regard to the lack of active travel infrastructure along the N81 in this area.

It is agreed that a rationale for the alteration of the settlement boundary is not explicitly stated in the Draft Blessington LAP 2025 Written Statement; therefore the inclusion of text setting out this rationale is recommended, as indicated below.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend plan as follows:

Add new text to **Section A.4**

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

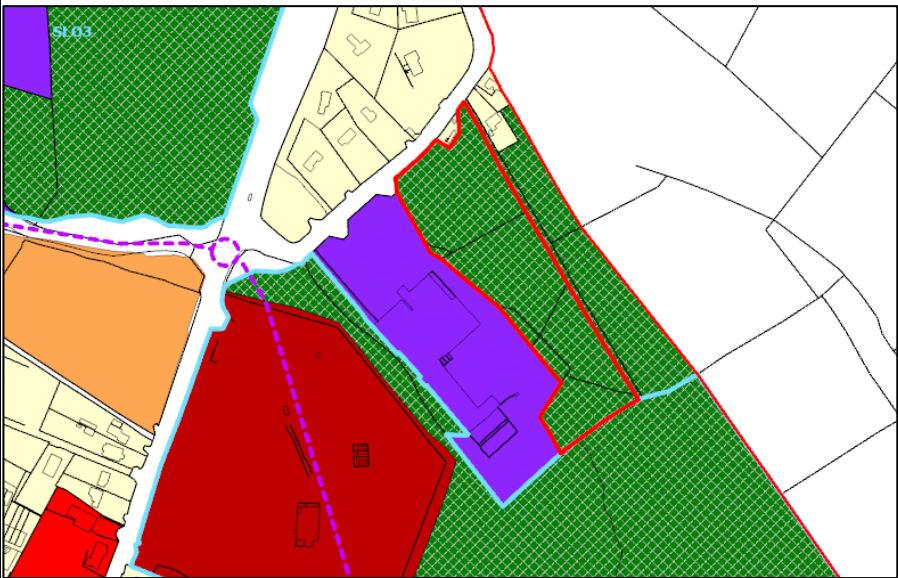
link roads to the west of the town centre, south from the GAA grounds and towards Naas Road.

- 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.*

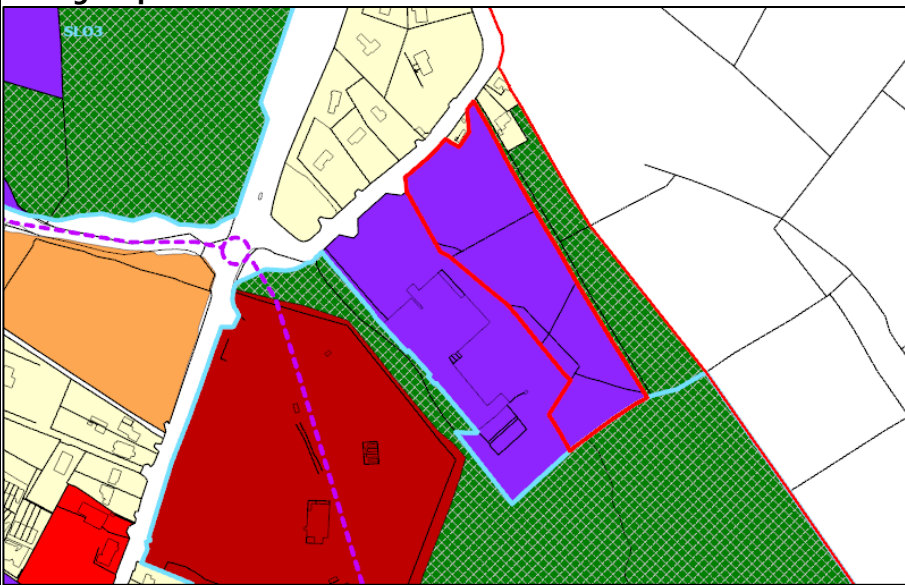
No.	Name	Issues Raised
103	J. P. & M. Doyle Ltd. Ref 140434	<p>It is requested that c. 2.2ha of lands at Holyvalley, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' in the draft LAP, be zoned E' Employment'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The significant reduction in the existing zoned land directly affects the submitter's ability to address and implement future growth requirements at the Mart. The site was specifically selected over 60 years ago for potential expansion and it remains critical to the on-going viability of the Mart. ▪ The proposal to dezone is not consistent with the draft LAP's recognition that 'economic development and employment is one of the key elements in delivery sustainable communities' and the LAP seeking 'to promote the intensification of activities on existing employment sites and to take advantage of the existing economic assets of the town'. A high rate of commuting out of Blessington will continue without sufficient employment land. ▪ The draft LAP proposes to reduce employment land in Blessington from 94.4ha to 62ha (Table 4.1), a loss of 34%. There is no planning justification for this reduction, which would prevent Mart expansion and reduce the market for employment growth due to fewer sites and the inequitable provision of 41.9h at former quarry lands. ▪ The provision of undeveloped employment zoned land at the Mart provides for potential development of over 10,000sqm additional floor area with a consequent 130-150 additional employers/persons attending the Mart. The Mart is a longstanding employer in Blessington. ▪ That rationale for the OS2 zoning is stated that as being where there are 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 proposed OS2 lands at the Mart form part of the historic planning unit of the Mart, they are actively used in the operation of the Mart, foul drainage and water services are within the proposed OS2 lands. The existing employment zoning is essential for the future economic opportunities with the Mart and therefore should not be considered for OS2 zoning. <p>It is further requested that the indicative cycling and pedestrian link at the southern/rear boundary Blessington Mart be omitted from Figure B.8.5 and moved off the Blessington Mart site and onto the adjoining OS2 lands to the northeast on Map No. 6: Active Travel Strategy. In support of this change, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Following on from the request to reinstate the employment zoning at the Mart, there is no planning reason to retain an indicative pedestrian and cycling link into the Mart. If the OS2 zoning to the northeast of the Mart is retained, it would be more appropriate to show the indicative link into that OS2 land. ▪ There is no key green infrastructure in the historic planning unit of the Mart – see Map No. 3 Key Green Infrastructure. There is a green corridor

adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the site. It would be more suitable for the indicative route as opposed to through the Blessington Mart site, which is not compatible with active travel proposals.

Draft LAP:



Zoning Request:



Chief Executive Response

Having reviewed this request and the land condition, the CE is satisfied to recommend that the additional area of land as proposed be zoned for employment use. It is essential however that these lands are the limit to development zoning at this location as the lands adjoining same to the north and east are steeply sloping in the direction of a watercourse which feeds directly into the Poulaphouca Reservoir European Site SPA to the east. Development on these lands for development purposes would likely require significant land form changes and changes to the natural drainage patterns. It is considered that such changes would present an unacceptable risk of adverse impacts on the SPA downstream, and therefore development zoning is not considered appropriate.

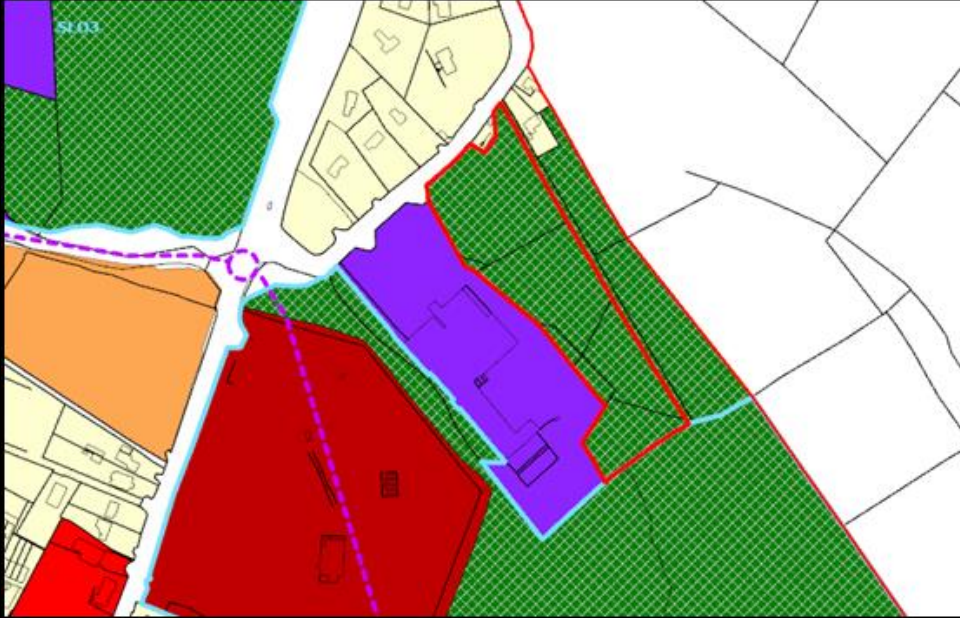
The CE is not opposed to the omission of the active travel route through the lands.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

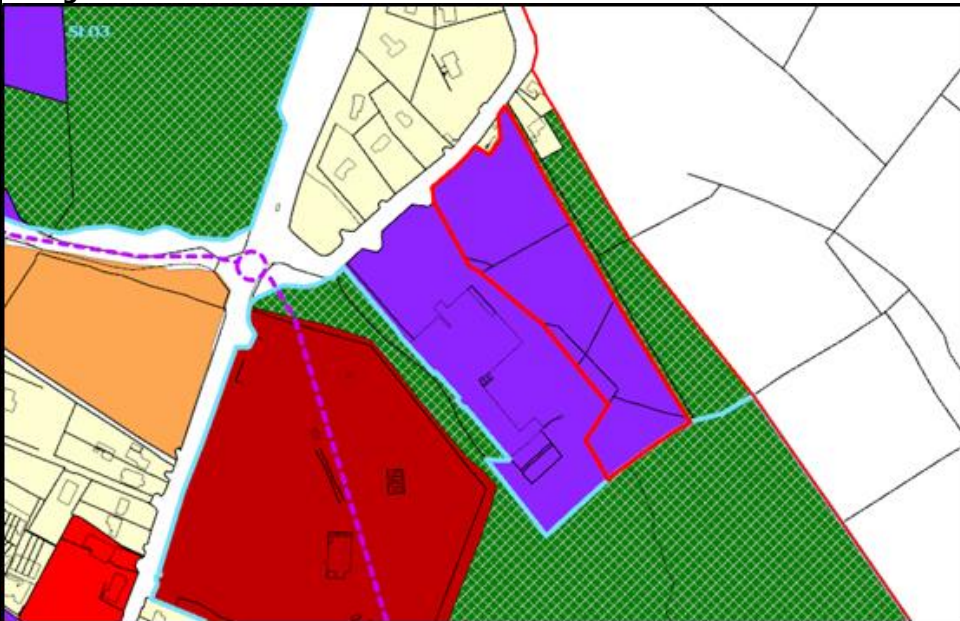
Amend plan as follows:

Map No. 1 Land Use Zoning Objectives

Change from:

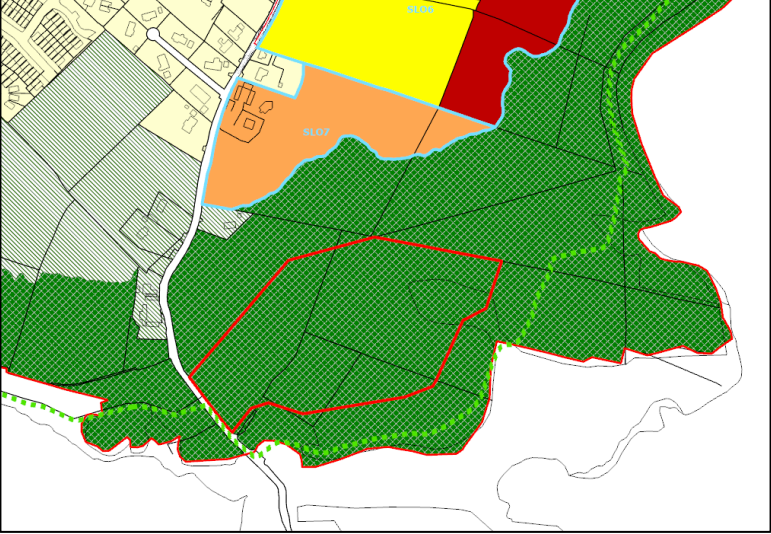


Change to:

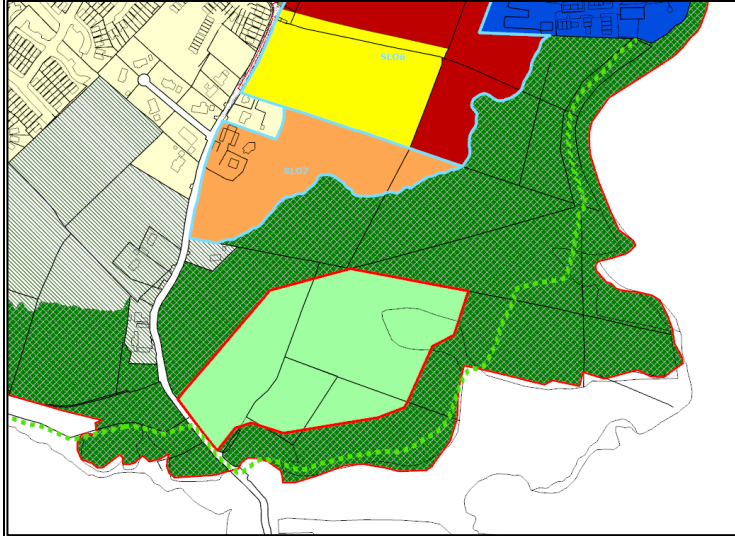


Map No. 6 Active Travel Strategy

Omit the relevant active travel objective through the lands.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
127	Blessington & District Forum Ref 145547	<p>Request 1: It is requested that c. 6.6ha of land at Burgage More, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The only section of lands to be zoned AOS are owned by Cairn Homes, other than mixed-use areas. Neither gives any opportunity to the local clubs of the town to purchase and develop their own amenities. ▪ None of the previous AOS lands from the 2013-2019 LAP were utilised. There are 4 local clubs with no facilities within the town and the GAA is at full capacity. ▪ Lands at Burgage More should be zoned AOS. The lands are owned by ESB so are state-owned and would offer clubs a greater chance of purchasing these lands than other sites. ▪ Zoning these lands as Natural Open Space is a huge waste of lands, where there are constraints already (lake, N81 upgrade, quarries). ▪ These lands, from previous Bird Surveys and Ecological Assessments, have not encountered Greylag Goose or Lesser Black Backed Gull. An ecological Assessment conducted for NDFA & WCC on lands to the north explains that the main area for the Greylag Goose is outside the town. A Winter Bird survey Report in 2021 by MKO reviewed these lands at Burgage More and reported no Graylag Goose sightings or droppings within a 500m surrounding area. The increase for biodiversity areas do not need to be located here. ▪ The requested AOS zoning includes the doubling of biodiversity lands in this area compared to the Blessington LAP 2013-2019. ▪ Greenway parking in these proposed AOS lands is much needed in this area, with the only parking within the Avon being full and cars being abandoned by Burgage Graveyard. ▪ The lands are not in areas of flood risk as per Map No. 4 Flood Risk. <p>Draft LAP:</p> 

Zoning Request 1:

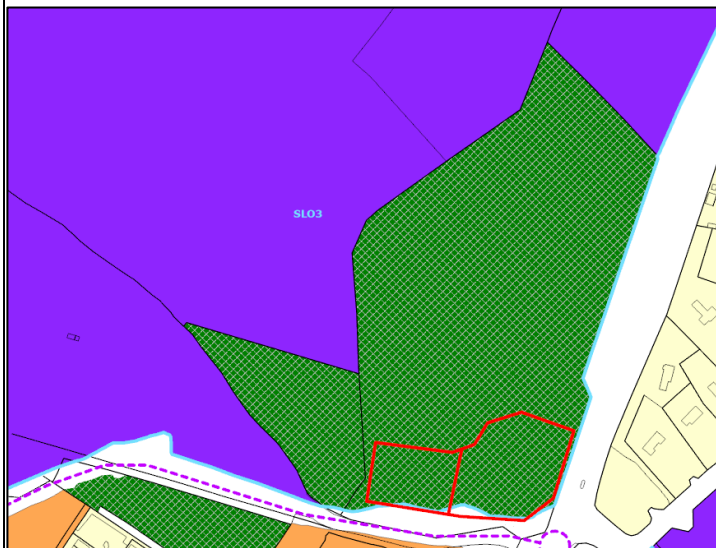


Request 2:

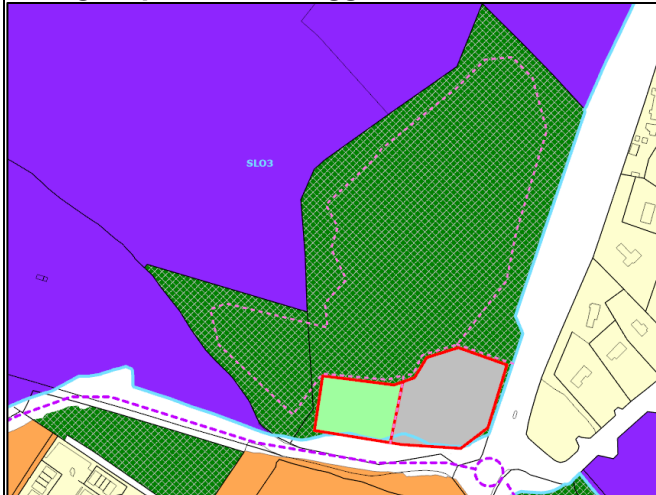
It is requested that c. 0.9ha of lands at Santryhill, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned for a Park & Ride (c. 0.6ha) and a playground (c. 0.3ha) [The exact requested zonings are unclear, however the most appropriate to suit the requested uses would be PU 'Public Utility' and AOS 'Active Open Space']. A possible 1km forest trail is also indicated. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:

- The Park & Ride for Blessington should be located to the north of the town purely from a cost point of view. If the LUAS/other infrastructure goes ahead in the future, it would not be built through or around the town, locating the P&R on the Dublin side will aid the feasibility of such projects, and could also be used for commuters using express buses.
- Playground area has residential zoned land to the south.
- Removal of a small section of biodiversity area for Park & Ride to be exchanged to adjacent lands.

Draft LAP:



Zoning Request 2 (incl. suggested active travel route):

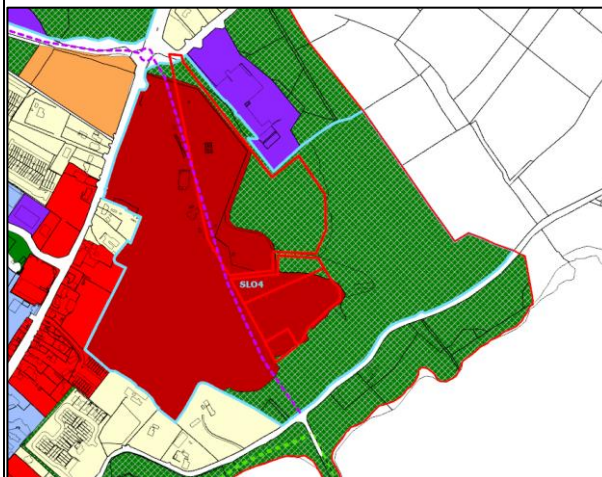


Request 3:

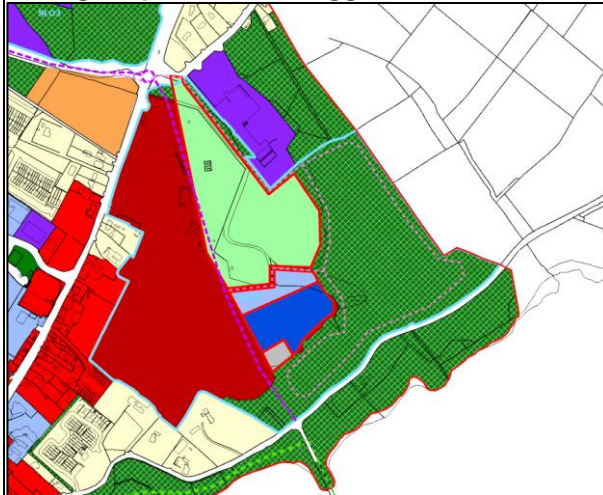
It is requested that c. 8.6ha of lands at Haylands, zoned MU 'Mixed Use' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space', CE 'Community & Education', T 'Tourism', and PU 'Public Utility' [The exact requested zonings are unclear, however the most appropriate zoning to suit the requested uses would be those above]. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:

- The rezoning would see an increase in AOS lands but the retaining of biodiversity areas which could be utilised as a forestry walkway with a walkway linking Haylands & Santryhill.
- Multiple infrastructure projects could be completed on these lands including the N81-Knockieran Bridge road, tourism centre and glamping facility (with possible viewpoint with lake views), community centre, greenway parking in a central location close to the proposed Greenway, all while earmarking lands for much-needed sports facilities.
- Lands should be zoned as such for the upcoming LAP with the AOS lands to be developed before any residential development can take place.
- In conjunction with the lands at Santryhill, CPO should be considered. RZLT may not be implemented and will have no impact on a company with very large revenue/profits.

Draft LAP:



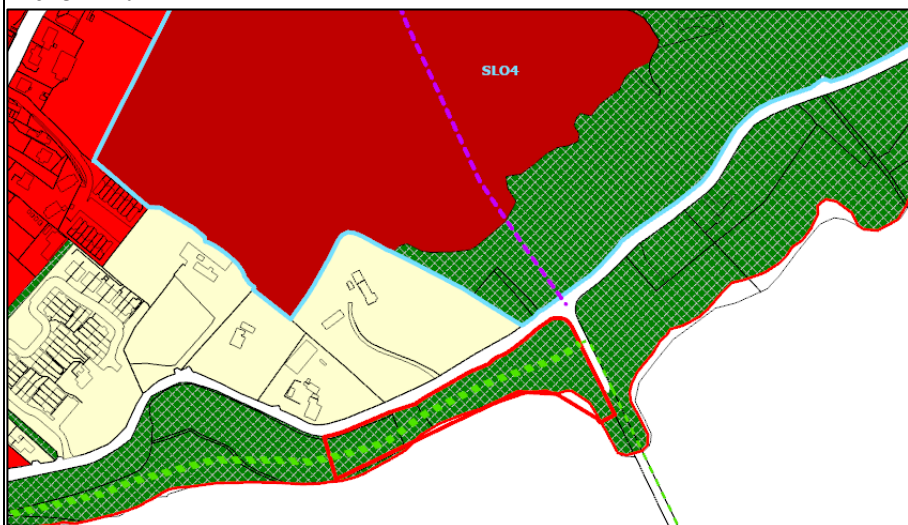
Zoning Request 3 (incl. suggested active travel route):



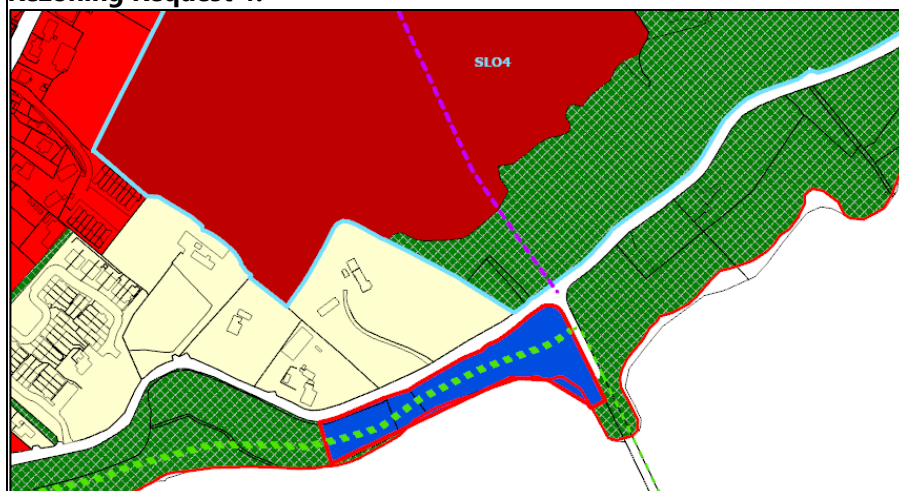
Request 4: It is requested that c. 1ha of lands at Haylands, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' and partially without a specific land use zoning in the Draft LAP, be zoned T 'Tourism'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:

- The lands are owned by ESB and so have a greater chance of being utilised to benefit tourism.
- The lands are located along the proposed Greenway, close to the town and proposed greenway hub, proposed greenway parking and possible tourist centre.
- The other areas zoned tourism in the Draft LAP do not have any access point to the lake.
- The lands could be used for Kayak or Paddle Board hire, a small coffee shop, and a section of the lake to be dredged/sectioned off for a natural small swimming pool/plunge area. Others access the lake at the Avon/Baltyboys. Further areas can be safe and could be excellent assets to the town.

Draft LAP:



Rezoning Request 4:



Chief Executive Response

Request 1

In relation to Request 1, the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the OS2 'Natural Areas' zoning of the lands. These lands are situated in close proximity to the Poulaphouca SPA and are below the 194m contour, which is the area which is most linked to the protected site in terms of land form / topography, drainage and accessibility for fauna. The Draft Plan has been crafted with a view to zoning the **appropriate** area as OS2, as opposed to arbitrary buffer zones of 100m, 200m etc and this 194m contour line has been carefully evaluated to confirm that this is the appropriate limit in this area for any development zoning.

Please see additional assessment of this request detailed in **Section 5 SEA & AA** of this report, prepared by the Council's environmental / ecological expert consultants, which addresses any submission with potential to impact on the environment or European Sites. This assessment states:

'Burgage Bay is an area of valuable shallow wetland habitat and one of the key areas within and surrounding the Plan area for wintering waterbirds such as Teal, Wigeon and Goldeneye. It is part of the Poulaphouca Special Protection Area, which is designated and afforded high levels of protection under the European Habitats Directive and transposing Regulations. The preparation of the Plan was informed by the fact that this area is susceptible to disturbance from human encroachment on the surrounding subject lands. Furthermore, lands in this area form Key Green Infrastructure (see Draft Plan Map No. 3), being part of an Ecological Corridor that provides functional connectivity for habitats and species and a Local Biodiversity Area (a site of local biodiversity value that is not within designated areas).

The land use zoning provided at these lands is consistent with the ecological sensitivities present and higher-level objectives requiring the protection and management of ecological sensitivities.'

The requested AOS 'Active Open Space' zoning and any active sports use that could arise on foot of same, would require significant changes to the natural condition of these lands, including but not limited to, significant contour remodeling, removal of a significant area of existing woodland and extensive drainage, erection of structures and extensive hard surfaced areas for car parking, flood lighting etc. Such development works would pose a high risk of creating significant adverse impacts on the integrity and conservation interests of the adjoining protected European Site and therefore cannot be recommended.

The CE would also have serious concerns in relation to access to the requested AOS lands, noting that the proposal includes car parking for c. 78 vehicles. The access along Burgage More is constrained, being single carriageway in places. Any widening of this road would involve the removal of significant lengths of hedgerows

and mature trees. Map No. 5 Transport Strategy indicates the road in question as operating as a local street only, and the text of SLO7 states the following: *'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.'* It is not the view of the CE that this road should be significantly widened in the near future.

Furthermore, the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the quantum of AOS lands within the draft plan. Issues have not been raised in relation to any shortcoming in the Social Infrastructure Audit, with the Draft Plan providing for an increase in the quantum of lands reserved for AOS in comparison to the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019.

On the basis of the above, the requested change is not recommended.

Request 2

In relation to Request 2, the proposed creation of AOS lands and a park and ride would result in the removal of significant areas of existing woodland, contrary to the recommendations of the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit.

Map No. 5 Transport Strategy indicates a potential car parking location a short distance away in Doran's Pit, alongside other locations to the south and west of the town. An additional car parking area in this location is therefore considered not warranted.

Furthermore, the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the quantum of AOS lands within the draft plan. Issues have not been raised in relation to any shortcoming in the Social Infrastructure Audit, with the Draft Plan providing for an increase in the quantum of lands reserved for AOS in comparison to the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019.

Please see additional assessment of this request detailed in **Section 5 SEA & AA** of this report, prepared by the Council's environmental / ecological expert consultants, which addresses any submission with potential to impact on the environment or European Sites. No amendments to the draft plan on foot of this request are recommended in that assessment.

On the basis of the above, the requested change is not recommended.

Request 3

In relation to Request 3, the use of the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning objective in this location is to ensure flexibility to the location of the desired different uses within this block, having regard to the uncertain final route of the road objective through Doran's Pit.

The quantum of uses within this MU 'Mixed Use' zone is set out in text within SLO4 and the accompanying concept plan. Zoning for each individual requested use in this area is not recommended.

The increase in AOS zoning suggested would remove an area of OS2 'Natural Areas' lands in conflict with the recommendations of the Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit. Furthermore, the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the quantum of AOS lands within the draft plan. Issues have not been raised in relation to any shortcoming in the Social Infrastructure Audit, with the Draft Plan providing for an increase in the quantum of lands reserved for AOS in comparison to the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019. On this basis, the above request is not recommended.

Please see additional assessment of this request detailed in **Section 5 SEA & AA** of this report, prepared by the Council's environmental / ecological expert consultants, which addresses any submission with potential to impact on the environment or European Sites. No amendments to the draft plan on foot of this request are recommended

in that assessment.

On the basis of the above, the requested change is not recommended.

Request 4

In relation to Request 4, the lands requested to be rezoned are immediately adjoining to the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA and slope steeply down to the lakeshore. This area was previously within the buffer zone to the reservoir as per the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019, and has been zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' in line with Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit. Any development on this land, which would necessitate land form changes / site leveling and changes to natural drainage, as well as risk of run-off and overspill impacts from public lighting, would have a very high likelihood of resulting in adverse impacts on the integrity and conservation objectives of the European Site adjoining.

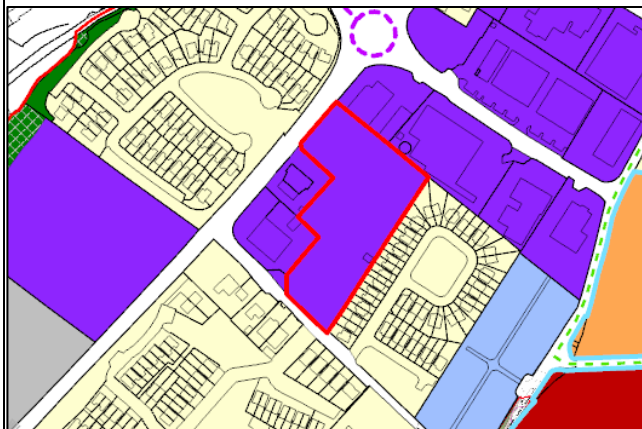
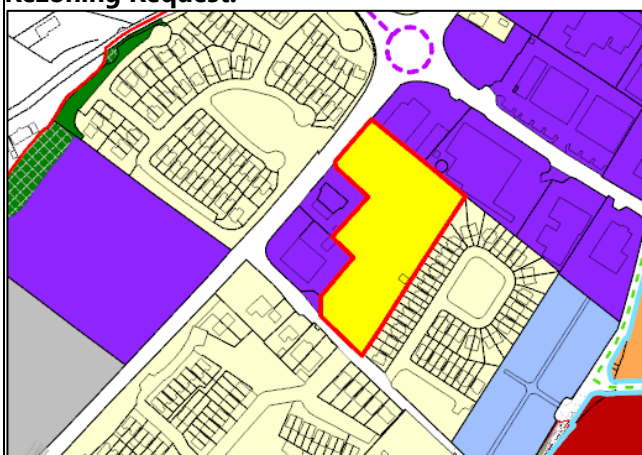
Please see additional assessment of this request detailed in **Section 5 SEA & AA** of this report, prepared by the Council's environmental / ecological expert consultants, which addresses any submission with potential to impact on the environment or European Sites. No amendments to the draft plan on foot of this request are recommended in that assessment.

On the basis of the above, the requested change is not recommended.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
130	Embankment Plastics Ref 163003	<p>It is requested that c. 1.3ha of lands at Burgage More, zoned E 'Employment' in the Draft LAP, be zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subject lands are bound by development on 4 sides, making it an infill site. ▪ The lands are within short walking/cycling distance of a range of services and amenities - retail, childcare, healthcare, schools, and personal services. ▪ It is immediately adjacent to a bus stop and short walking distance of Blessington town centre. ▪ The Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 Core Strategy has allocated very limited housing growth figures to Blessington, conflicting with the need to deliver housing in existing settlements of scale. ▪ Co. Wicklow's population growth has outstripped national change in recent years. A slightly lower level of growth in Blessington may be due to a shortage of residentially zoned sites that are readily deliverable.. Noted that ESRI has been tasked with revising their methodology for population projections and housing growth allocations in Core Strategies. ▪ <i>Housing for All 2021</i> greatly underestimated the actual housing demand, identifying 33,000 units p.a required. Current studies calculate the demand to be 74,000 units p.a. Requested that WCC take an authoritative and progressive stance on its housing requirements and distribution across the County. It is acknowledged that this may require a variation and it is submitted that such an approach is required. ▪ Of the 11 sites with 'proposed residential' designations in the Blessington LAP 2013-2019, 2 No. sites have been developed, 3 have planning permission, and 1 site is awaiting a decision on a planning application. Additionally, 5 sites are very unlikely to be suitable for housing delivery in the foreseeable future due to infrastructure deficits, access issues, or phasing requirements. This does not leave any 'proposed residential' sites in Blessington which can realistically be brought forward in the near future. There is significant merit in rezoning the lands at Burgage More from E 'Employment' to R1 'Proposed Residential'. The proposed lands are ready for development as it is submitted that they require no significant offsite infrastructure and are infill in nature. ▪ While the desire to provide employment space in the town is laudable, there is currently a glut of commercial properties in the Greater Dublin Area, which is leading to high rates of vacancy of commercial properties. ▪ Developing this site will fill a void in the Built-Up Area, can improve pedestrian access to existing footpaths on the N81, and will add to the interconnectedness between existing and future developments. ▪ The submitter has a genuine interest in delivering housing on the subject lands. A high-level masterplan has been developed which incorporates pedestrian/cyclist linkages through the site, a sensitive transition from employment to residential lands with appropriate screening, attractive and function landscaping/open space, increased permeability for the existing neighbourhood, convenient access to adjacent bus service, varied densities that respect site attributes and sensitivities.

Draft LAP:**Rezoning Request:****Chief Executive Response**

The residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission would

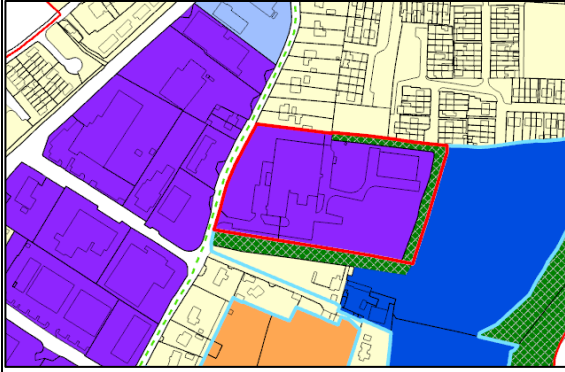
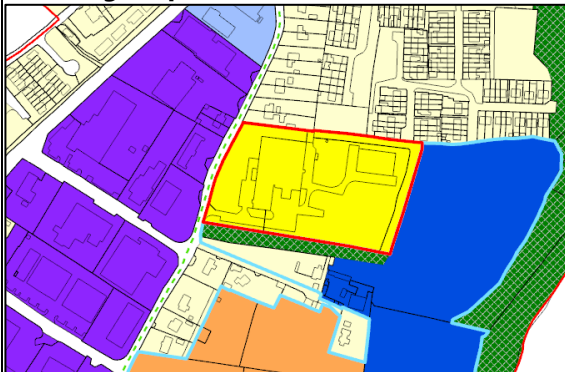
- Exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended)
- Result in a reduction in E 'Employment' zoned lands. These are essential zonings that are necessary to support the sustainable development of the plan area, and the location and area of these zones has been carefully determined in order to meet Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and sustainable development principles. The subject lands represents one of a relatively small number of undeveloped employment sites within the built-up area, and as such its rezoning may undermine the expansion of existing businesses in Blessington or the establishment of new businesses requiring employment lands of this scale.

Therefore, the CE does not recommend the zoning of these lands for residential development.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
136	Ventac & Company Limited Ref 181627	<p>It is requested that c. 2.7ha of lands at Burgage More, zoned E 'Employment' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned 'RN1 New Residential – Priority 1'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are out forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The site is bounded by existing development on 3 no. sides and land zoned for Active Open Space to the east. It is within the Built Up-Area and presents an opportunity to deliver housing within a short distance of all the amenities of Blessington town centre. ▪ The site is within short walking/cycling distance of a range of services, including retail, childcare, healthcare, schools, and personal services. ▪ The Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 Core Strategy has allocated very limited housing growth figures to Blessington, conflicting with the need to deliver housing in existing settlements of scale. ▪ Co. Wicklow's population growth has outstripped national change in recent years. A slightly lower level of growth in Blessington may be due to a shortage of residentially zoned sites that are readily deliverable. ESRI has been tasked with revising their methodology for population projections and housing growth allocations in Core Strategies. ▪ <i>Housing for All 2021</i> greatly underestimated the actual housing demand, identifying 33,000 units p.a. Current studies have calculated the demand to be 74,000 units p.a. Requested that WCC to take an authoritative and progressive stance on its housing requirements and distribution across the County. It is acknowledged that this may require a variation and it is submitted that such an approach is required. ▪ Of the 11 sites with 'proposed residential' designations in the Blessington LAP 2013-2019, 2 sites have been developed, 3 sites have planning permission, and 1 site is awaiting a decision. Additionally, 5 No. sites are very unlikely to be suitable for housing delivery in the foreseeable future due to infrastructure deficits, access issues, or phasing requirements. This does not leave any 'proposed residential' sites in Blessington which can realistically be brought forward in the near future. ▪ There is significant merit in rezoning the lands from E 'Employment' to R1 'Proposed Residential due to its sustainable location, accessibility and availability of services. ▪ Ventac & Company Limited are currently in the process of identifying suitable alternative premises within Blessington that better suits their needs, with the current premises (a former meat processing plant) being no longer suitable. ▪ The site present a logical and sequential pattern of urban development, filling a void within the existing Built-Up Area, with the potential creation of a new pedestrian access through the site into the Active Open Space land to the east, presenting the opportunity for passive surveillance of this space. ▪ The submitter has a genuine interest in delivering housing on the subject lands. A high-level masterplan for the site incorporates pedestrian/cyclist linkages through the site (which would create a new, safer access from existing residential neighbourhoods to AOS lands to the east), a sensitive transition from employment to residential lands with appropriate screening, attractive/functional landscaping and open space, increased permeability for the existing neighbourhood, convenient access to public transport, and varied densities that respect site attributes and sensitivities.

	<p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Rezoning Request:</p> 
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Chief Executive Response

The residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission would

- Exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended)
- Result in a reduction in E 'Employment' zoned lands. These are essential zonings that are necessary to support the sustainable development of the plan area, and the location and area of these zones has been carefully determined in order to meet Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and sustainable development principles. In this case, the subject lands comprise an existing commercial building which could be suitable for range of employment uses were the current occupiers to relocate.

Furthermore, the submission has not addressed the updated context of the subject lands in light of the zoning provisions of the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025. Namely, the Draft Plan zones a part of the subject lands OS2 'Natural Areas', for which no justification for rezoning has been set out. Additionally, lands to the east of the subject lands are no longer zoned AOS 'Active Open Space'.

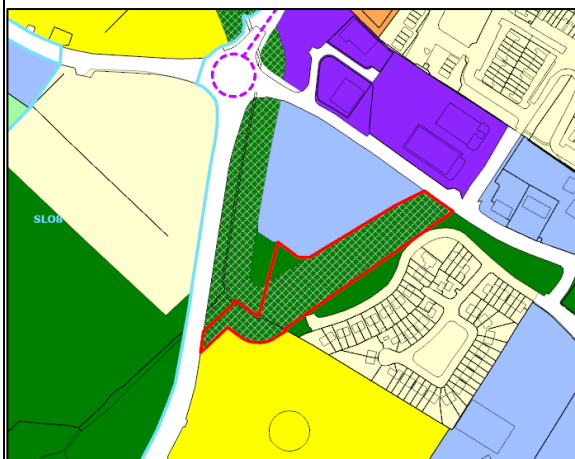
Therefore, the CE does not recommend the zoning of these lands for residential development.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

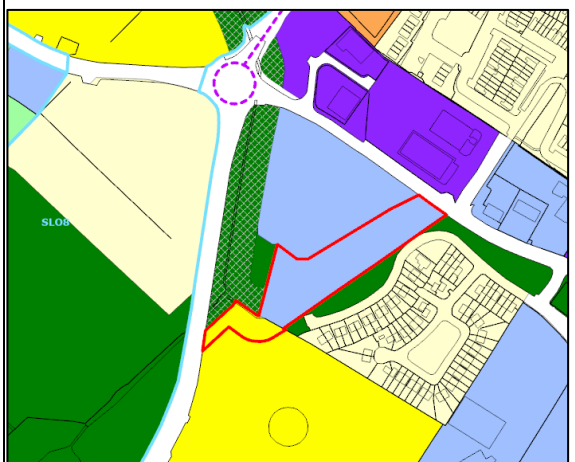
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
137	Marshall Yards Development Company Ltd. Ref 183806	<p>It is requested that c. 1ha of lands at Blessington Demesne, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' and OS1 'Open Space' in the Draft LAP, be zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1' and CE 'Community & Education'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notwithstanding the welcoming of the RN1 zoning on lands owned by the submitter to the south of the lands that are the subject of this submission, the submitter has concerns with respect to the increased area zoned OS2 'Natural Areas'; ▪ The OS zoning extends c. 25m from the watercourses to correspond with the provision of the Development Plan such as CPO 13.3 and CPO 17.26. However, using zoning designations to define riparian areas introduces unnecessary rigidity to the planning system. Rather, the pragmatic and practical flexibility provided by those CPOs is more appropriate. ▪ The Ecological Impact Statement prepared for the LRD planning application on the residential land to the south highlighted that the Deerpark watercourse has a 'good status' under the Water Framework Directive, no identified species of note/concern/protection, drainage ditches on the site are of low fisheries value, with the culvert along the Deerpark stream being not fish passable. The additional zoned area may not have substantial ecological benefits as there are culverts to the south and north. Table 2 of the statement identifies the Deerpark stream as having 'low local value'. Reverting the zoning to the same extent as the Blessington LAP 2013-2019 will ensure the immediate protection of the watercourse but will not result in the undermining of the riparian zoned due to the above CPOs and the findings of the Ecological Impact Statement. ▪ Increasing the OS zoning to keep development out of flood risk areas is not required to the extent shown. An overlay demonstrates that the area at risk of flooding is much more contained than the OS area in the Draft LAP. Therefore, it is not necessary to increase the extent of OS lands to prevent development encroaching on flood risk areas, reducing the site's development potential and the opportunity to delivery housing. ▪ The lands have increased OS zonings, with OS2 zoning now extending c. 25m from the Newpaddocks watercourse along the eastern stretch of the site and OS1 'Open Space' extending where flood risk is identified. In terms of flood risk, an overlay exercise demonstrates that the area at risk of flooding is much more contained than the OS area zoned in the Draft LAP, therefore it is not necessary to increase the extent of OS lands to prevent development encroaching on flood risk area, reducing the site's development potential and, due to the primary CE 'Community & Education' zoning, impacts the prospects of delivering a range of social/community/recreational uses.

Draft LAP:



Rezoning Request:



It is further requested that the text of 'typical appropriate uses' for the OS1 'Open Space', OS2 'Natural Areas', and AOS 'Active Open Space', be amended to include the following:

"Additionally, consideration will be given to appropriate 'ancillary urban and residential development', such as site accesses and roads (including vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian infrastructure) and utilities".

In support of this text amendment, the following grounds are raised:

- Consideration must be given to facilitating ancillary urban and residential development on OS1, OS2, and AOS lands where such development is necessary to serve or unlock sites which may otherwise be 'landlocked' or prejudiced by way of the zoning of lands, topography or the existing provision of services.
- This approach is used in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- This removes the ambiguity of uses potentially materially contravening a development plan.

Chief Executive Response

It is noted that CPO 13.3 and 17.26 include a degree of flexibility, in that a riparian buffer of 'generally' 25m shall be free from inappropriate development along watercourses (or other width, as determined by the Planning Authority). However, it is the position of the Chief Executive that zoning a riparian buffer of 25m is the most

effective method in ensuring the protection of riparian buffers of the recommended general minimum width as per CPO 13.3 and 17.26. Flexibility remains in the implementation of the above CPOs for a riparian buffer **greater** than 25m where deemed necessary by the Planning Authority.

The Water Framework Directive 'good status' of the Deerpark Stream is noted. However, this good status does not infer that a reduced riparian buffer is appropriate. Furthermore, in relation to issues relating to culverts, ecological value, and the fishery value of the watercourse, the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan includes objectives in relation to the improvement of ecological connectivity along green corridors and watercourses that include culverts, including BLESS39 and BLESS 41, such that a reduced riparian buffer on the assumption of reduced permeability is not warranted, noting that riparian zones can also act as ecological corridors for non-waterborne species, e.g. land based mammals.

On this basis, it is not recommended that zonings corresponding to riparian buffers be reduced or omitted.

In relation to flood risk, note that the **Office of Public Works** has made a submission in relation to the subject lands. Please refer to **Section 6 Addendum, to SFRA** of this report.

It is correct that the indicated OS2 lands in some cases have a greater extent than flood risk. However, as it is not recommended above that zonings corresponding to riparian zones be reduced/omitted, it is immaterial as to whether the indicated flood risk is of a lesser extent on OS2 lands, noting that future scenario flood mapping actually shows a greater extent at risk of flooding than the relevant OS2 lands.

In relation to the OS1 lands, this zoning does correspond to an area of flood risk. The CE 'Community & Education' zoning suggested permits uses that would be considered 'highly vulnerable' in relation to *'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management'* Guidelines 2009, and are appropriately zoned OS1 'Open Space'.

Areas in the subject lands are indicated as being at risk of flooding under future scenario flood mapping. As BLESS51 requires that future scenario flood mapping be taken into account, the lands may face development limitations were the rezoning to occur.

On this basis, it is not recommended that zonings corresponding to areas of flood risk be zoned for RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1' or CE 'Community & Education'.

In relation to the requested text amendment, the Chief Executive is not opposed and recommends that the amendment be made as set out below.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the plan as follows

Section B.8 Zoning Objectives

Insert new sentence at end:

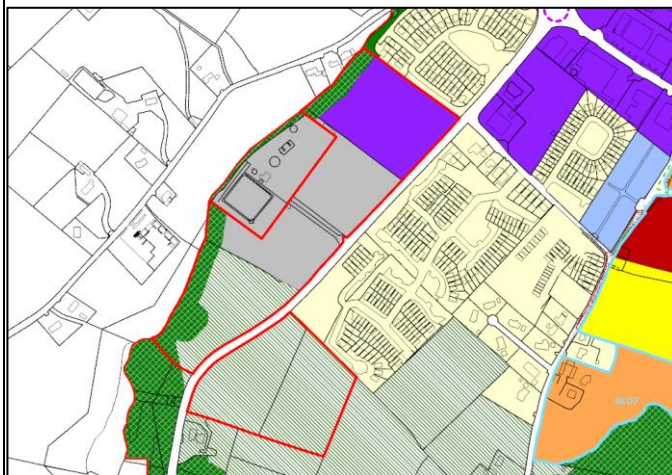
Essential infrastructure, including roads / footpaths / cycleways and utilities that are necessary to support development lands, are generally permissible in all zones. Where such infrastructure would be required in OS1 or OS2 zones, and no other routes are viable, such infrastructure shall only be considered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

No.	Name	Issues Raised
153	Dunmoy Properties Ltd. Ref 212157	<p>It is requested that c. 12.3ha of lands at Burgage More, zoned E 'Employment', PU 'Public Utility', AG 'Agriculture', and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1', E 'Employment', and AOS 'Active Open Space'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NPF, Ministerial Guidelines, , the Wicklow CDP, and the Draft LAP set out an approach to zoning land which can be summarized as follows: <i>Those sites to be zoned for residential development should be within the built-up footprint or contiguous to or existing development in the town. The current and anticipated role of housing delivery should be considered in a decision to zone lands. Priority in phasing should be influenced by site location and the availability or proximity to provide off site services, facilities and infrastructure. Sites of equivalent merit to be zoned. Plans must build in sufficient flexibility to allow suitable sites, which may be developed, to come forward during the lifetime of the plan.</i> ▪ The subject lands are within the settlement boundary, contiguous to existing residential development to the north, east, and under construction/zoned lands in Kildare to the west. The omission of zoned lands in Kildare from LAP maps make the subject lands appear peripheral though this is not the case. ▪ Existing NPF housing targets are under review subsequent to the 2022 Census, to account for higher than estimated population growth and pent-up demand. There is an urgent need to facilitate the development of lands that will increase housing supply in the short term on lands that can most quickly and appropriately provide new houses. ▪ The proposed re-zoning of lands constitutes a range of uses that will fulfill several key objectives of the national planning policies and guidelines. ▪ Site 1 [requested residential] meets all of the above criteria for the land to be zoned for residential development. ▪ In the Draft LAP, there are 3 sites zoned RN1, 5 zoned RN2 (3 of which are subject to specific local objectives). SLO1 has not been the subject of any planning application, is c.1000m from the town centre, is reliant on a road objective and the development of a 4ha open space. SLO5 is 1000m from the centre and SLO7 1500m from the same. Two RN2 sites are small in area, with a refusal on the larger of the two. Doran's Pit requires extensive remediation, a road objective, and sports grounds. ▪ Submitted that the zoning proposals in this submission are realistic, can be delivered in the short term (with c. 150 dwellings), that the lands are serviced, are within walking distance of the town centre and are contiguous to existing development and infill between east and west (Kildare). ▪ Further submitted that the proposals include employment with good access to the road network, active open space and will not require flood lighting which could impact the reservoir as the use could be limited to daylight hours. ▪ Submitted that the development would bring much needed improvements to the N81 for traffic safety and access to the lands. ▪ The submitter also considers that the volume of dwellings possible on these lands would not have any material impact on the target of housing units for Blessington, which it is noted, will be revised in the near future. ▪ The Draft Plan fails to account for the shortcomings of the sites that are proposed for zoning which will impact negatively on delivery. The PU zoning is assumed to allow for the future expansion of the Waste Water

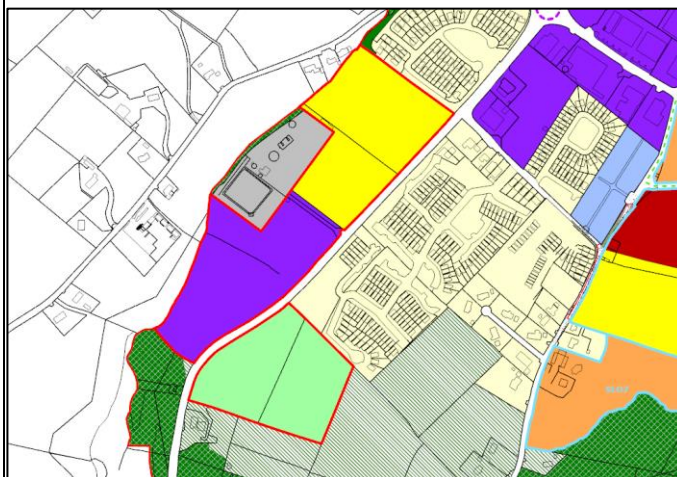
Treatment Plant in the future. However, the capacity of the existing plant can be expanded to a population equivalent of 15,000 people within the existing plant site area. Blessington will never grow to such a level. The Council is urged to confirm with Irish Water that the capacity of the plant can be substantially increased without the need to expand the site of the site. The total PU lands would allow the WWTP to expand to 54,000PE

- The need for employment and parking provision in this part of the town can be better met on the lands indicated of this submission [lands to the south].
- The submission includes an extensive presentation on the rezoning of the subject lands that restates the above grounds for rezoning and sets out the various provisions of the Draft LAP that apply to the subject lands. Additional grounds set out in the document include the following:
 - Additional detail on proposed AOS uses:
 - Additional detail on road realignment/upgrade proposals
 - Additional detail in relation to proposed residential uses (c.153 homes) and employment uses (30 light industrial units, with additional 93 car parking spaces for commuter use).

Draft LAP:



Rezoning Request:



Chief Executive Response

The residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission would exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended).

Similarly, the employment provisions of the draft plan are substantial at 44.2ha of undeveloped land zoned for such purposes. While it is noted that the requested employment zoning would be in lieu of the draft E 'Employment' zoning on the northern site, as outlined above the residential rezoning is not recommended. As such, additional employment land is not required at this time.

The requested residential and employment zonings would result in a reduction in PU 'Public Utility' zoned lands. These are essential zonings that are necessary to support the sustainable development of the plan area, and the location and area of these zones has been carefully determined in order to meet Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and sustainable development principles. While commentary in the submission argues that the full use of these lands for the treatment of waste water would provide up to 54,000PE, the zoning of these lands as PU 'Public Utility' allows for a wide variety of infrastructure to be developed and allows a degree of flexibility in the eventual use, including the potential of the provision of a park and ride facility along the N81. The rezoning of these lands could therefore undermine the achievement of objective BLESS48.

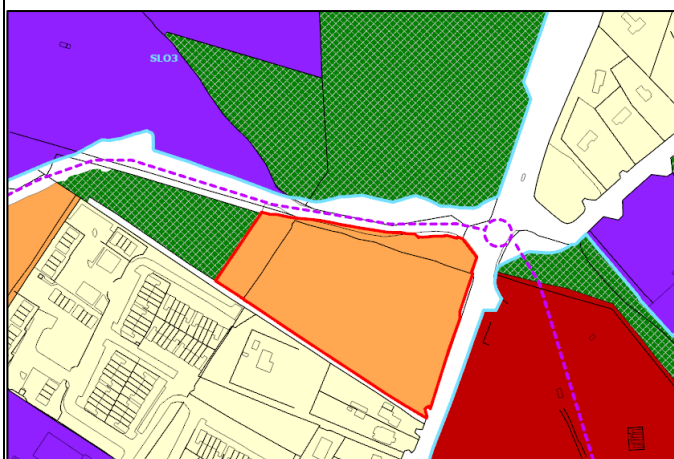
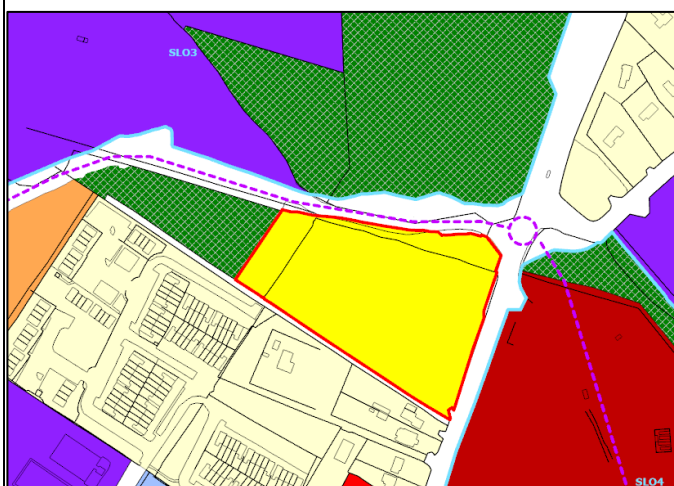
The accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit appendix includes an audit of sports and recreation future land use needs within the settlement. The draft LAP has already zoned the appropriate amount of land for Active Open Space (AOS), which allows for sports facilities to be developed, for the future needs of the population of the settlement and its catchment. No commentary has been provided in the submission in relation to the any shortcomings Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit or the zoning of lands for AOS 'Active Open Space' purposes in the Draft LAP. Furthermore, the submission provides an assurance that no floodlighting will be used and that any facility developed will be open only during daylight hours. While this is welcomed, it does indicate that it may be a more efficient use of resources for such a facility to be developed in an area where floodlighting would have less of an impact of the reservoir, as during winter months the use of such a facility would be severely curtailed.

On foot of the above, it is not recommended to rezone the subject lands as requested.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
174	Kelland Homes Ref 101833	<p>It is requested that c. 1.8ha of lands at Santryhill/Newpaddocks, zoned RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' in the Draft LAP, be zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neither WCC nor An Bord Pleanála objected in principle to previous residential development proposals at these lands on grounds of Core Strategy or housing allocation for Blessington. The RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' zoning effectively downzones the lands. ▪ The recently granted Blessington Inner Relief Road (BIRR) can provide access to the site, which can be connected to public water and waste water. The potential of the site to support the delivery of the BIRR or part thereof. ▪ Increased working from home changed the need for more housing outside Dublin. ▪ The scale of the ongoing housing crises, in particular affecting the Greater Dublin Area. ▪ The publication of the Draft NPF and agreement of housing targets equivalent to 50,500 new homes per annum, with 30% in settlements beyond the five cities. ▪ The enhanced frequency of Dublin Bus services to Blessington, connecting with Tallaght, Dublin City Centre, and the Luas Red Line. ▪ The lack of other environmental constraints to the immediate development of the site. ▪ The potential of an acceptable housing scheme to be delivered at the site, subject to successfully addressing previous design based refusal reasons. ▪ The site is only 12 minutes' walk from Blessington town centre, with active travel modes possible via the BIRR and Woodleigh (reducing carbon emissions), a shorter distance than lands zoned RN1 at Oak Drive, and similar to RN1 lands at Burgage More. ▪ Reasons for refusal under WCC Reg. Ref. 21/1396 can be addressed, with issues in relation to the BIRR resolved since permission was granted. ▪ The planning authority is minded to grant permission on other lands at Santryhill subject to FI being resolved, where no issue in relation to Core Strategy/housing allocation has been raised. The granting of permission at Burgage Manor under WCC Reg. Ref. 22/574 did not raise issues of the Core Strategy or housing allocation. Therefore there remains capacity in Blessington to absorb modest development. The Wicklow CDP 2022-2028 provides for a flexible application of housing targets to zoned land in case of revision to targets. This acknowledges that the plan does not take account of the Draft NPF 2024. Pending the translation of same into local development plans, the housing allocation of 519 dwellings is overly conservative, despite a housing crisis and those of household forming age leaving Blessington (30.1% drop in those aged 30-39 between the 2016 and 2022 Census). ▪ It would be viable to integrate Santryhill with OP8, 200m to the south. ▪ Doran's Pit does not have existing sewer connections and would likely require a pumping station and are subject to a specific local objective. The lands at Santryhill are not constrained in any way and should take precedence.

Draft LAP:**Rezoning Request:****Chief Executive Response**

The residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

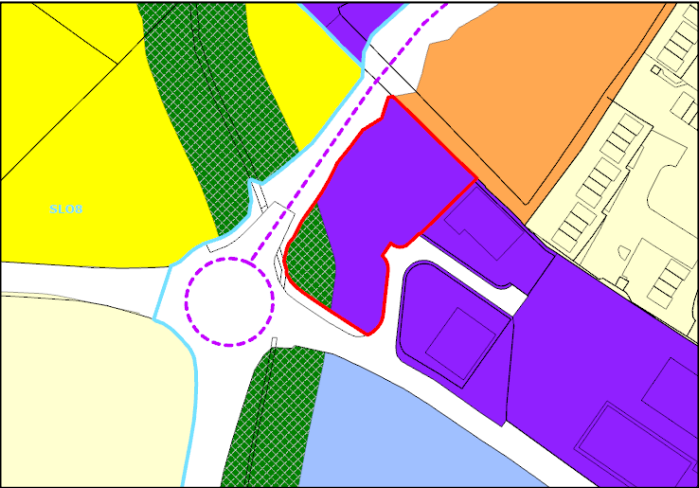
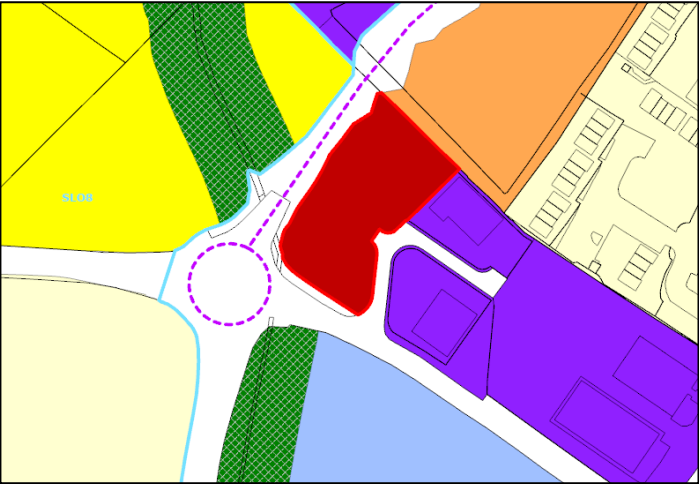
- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1' as detailed in this submission would exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended).

On foot of the above, it is not recommended to amend the zoning as requested.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
176	Jason & John Kelly Ref 102307	<p>It is requested the lands of c. 0.5ha at Blessington Demesne, zoned E 'Employment' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned MU 'Mixed Use'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing the site would create employment in various sectors, with MU 'Mixed Use' zoning allowing the development of businesses that could generate more high-density employment than would be possible under the current zoning. ▪ The site is ideally positioned close to new/planned housing developments, schools, GAA pitches, and adjacent to the proposed Blessington Inner Relief Road. There is excellent and safe accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. ▪ Rezoning to Mixed Use would allow us to transform the site into a thriving local amenity, offering much needed services such as retail and other community oriented facilities. ▪ While the submitters agree that the Main Street should remain the focus for retail activities, they believe a well-planned, convenient, retail and childcare facility at this location would benefit residents and help alleviate some of the parking congestion in the town. <p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Rezoning Request:</p> 

Chief Executive Response

In relation to the lands zoned OS2 'Natural Areas', no justification has been put forward for the rezoning of such lands. This zoning is necessitated to fulfil CPO 17.26 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 which states the following:

'Protect rivers, streams and other water courses by avoiding interference with river / stream beds, banks and channels and maintaining a core riparian buffer zone of generally 25m along watercourses (or other width, as determined by the Planning Authority having particular regard to 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' by Inland Fisheries Ireland for urban locations) free from inappropriate development, with undeveloped riparian vegetation strips, wetlands and floodplains generally being retained in as natural a state as possible. Structures such as bridges should be clear span, and designed and built in accordance with Inland Fisheries Ireland guidance.'

On this basis, it is not recommended to rezone the relevant OS2 lands to MU 'Mixed Use'.

In relation to the lands zoned E 'Employment', the subject lands are located outside the Blessington Core Retail Area as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and outside of lands zoned TC 'Town Centre' in the Draft LAP. The Draft Blessington LAP 2025 Written Statement states the following: *'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.'* Therefore, rezoning the subject lands to allow for retail uses would undermine objective BLESS4, which states the following:

'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:


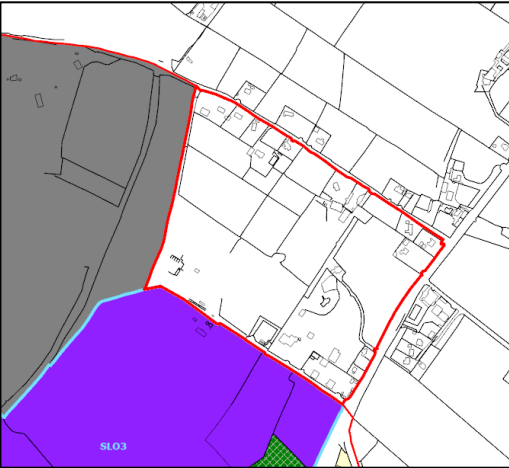
- *There will be no quantitative restriction on the development of retail floorspace within the Blessington Core Retail Area.*
- *All developments for additional retail floorspace, which are **both outside** the Core Retail Area **and within** Blessington Town Centre (as zoned for such purposes), will 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.'*

Note that childcare uses, as raised in the submission, may be permissible under the E 'Employment' zoning. Furthermore, attention is drawn to objective BLESS14, which facilitates and supports the incremental reconfiguration of Blessington Business Park/Oak Drive toward a secondary 'people'-based employment area, which would allow for the development of higher density employment, as raised in the submission.

On the basis of the above, it is not recommended to rezone the subject lands as requested.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
189	Bryko Ltd Ref 130126	<p>It is requested that the settlement boundary be reinstated to the extent of the Blessington town boundary shown on the LAP 2013-2019 Map No.1 around the subject lands, or that lands of c. 1.7ha at Edmonstown, outside the settlement boundary and with no specific land use zoning in the Draft LAP, be zoned E 'Employment'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reference made to text of the Draft LAP and CDP that is an aim of the Wicklow CDP to increase the County's job ratio to 70% by 2031, and that 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. ▪ Bryko Ltd. is principally involved in the bagging of sand and gravel and operates a rural retail unit located at the premises, including the sale of domestic fuels and animal feeds. ▪ The company employs c. 22 people. To support the sustainable and future development of their business, Bryko request that the employment land use zoning area SLO3 be extended northwards to cover their existing premises at Edmonstown. <p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Rezoning Request: Settlement boundary extension to include indicated area, with no specific land use zoning requested.</p> 

Or

Zoning of indicated lands to E 'Employment'



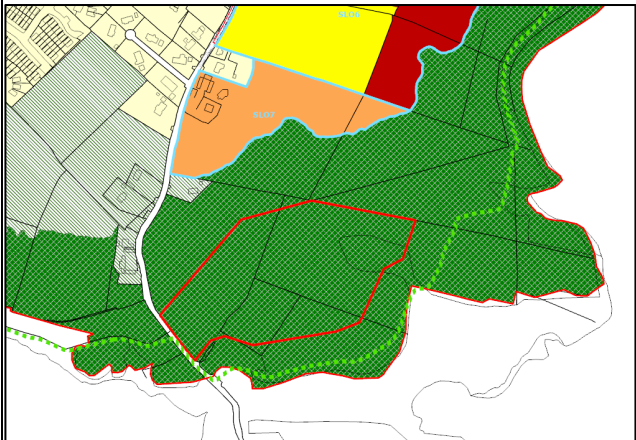
Chief Executive Response

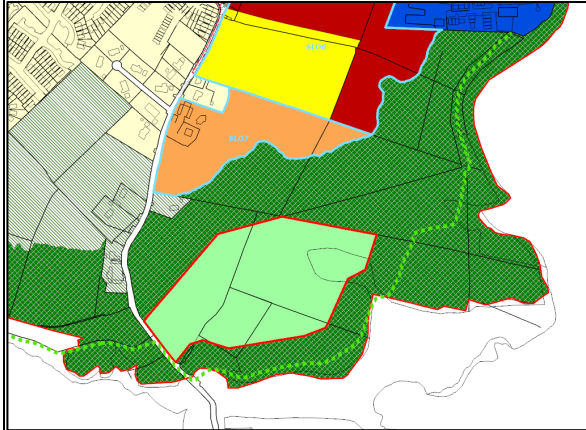
Refer to the recommended amendment set out in response to Submission No. 16 above, in relation to the rationale for the extent of the settlement boundary in the Draft LAP.

While it is noted that the subject lands are immediately adjacent to an area of E 'Employment' lands, the lands to the south are largely undeveloped for this purpose. Therefore, the rezoning of the subject lands to allow for development or intensification of employment uses would constitute peripheral and 'leapfrog' employment development. The policy context of the subject lands remain largely unchanged from the previous Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019, as the subject lands were previously under an AG 'Agricultural Lands' zoning and subject to objectives relating to employment development as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

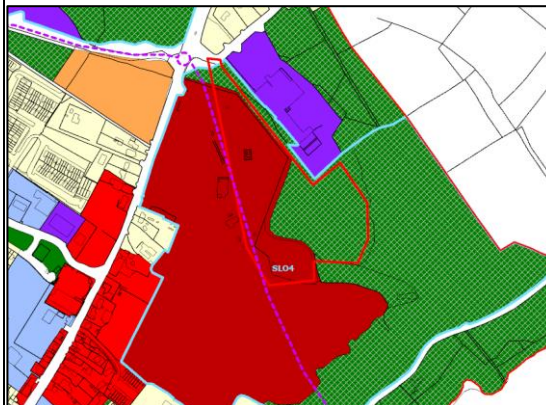
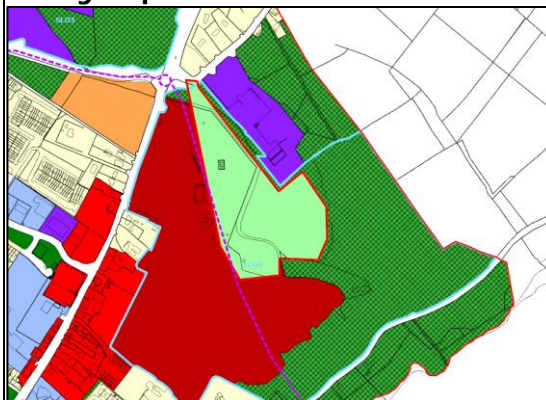
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
205	Serpents Basketball Academy Blessington Ref 163620	<p>These 2 No submissions are very similar in content and, alongside background information on each club, request the following:</p> <p>In relation to the overall quantum of AOS 'Active Open Space' lands within the Draft LAP, the following is stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lands zoned AOS are owned by a developer and a quarry operator and does not give much opportunity for a club to purchase their own land. ▪ None of the AOS lands from the Blessington LAP 2013-2019 were utilised. ▪ Blessington AFC has outgrown their facilities at Crosschapel, with the club having 800 members ▪ The GAA have also outgrown their facilities. ▪ Serpents Basketball Academy has c.100 members with c.100 on a waiting list, and rents outdoor and indoor space (with the indoor space being too small). ▪ The submitters agree that sports facilities should be developed first before any residential development (with regard to SLO2 and SLO4). <p>Request 1: It is requested that c. 6.6ha of land at Burgage More, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lands are not in areas of flood risk as per Map No. 4 Flood Risk. ▪ The submitters are aware of the report made by the biodiversity office for Wicklow but these lands cannot just be zoned natural open space if it is in any way possible for similar surveys of these lands to show that they can be used for sporting facilities. ▪ The lands are owned by the ESB and so are state owned, with a greater chance of purchasing these lands. ▪ The lands could be developed for multi-sport astro pitches/running track, soccer/rugby pitches, external/internal basketball courts, paddle courts, parking (for greenway and organised runs) <p>Draft LAP:</p> 
227	Blessington AFC Ref 204711	

Zoning Request 1:**Request 2:**

It is requested that c. 6ha of lands at Haylands, zoned MU 'Mixed Use' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are raised:

- SLO4 highlights that the road from the N81 to Knockieran Bridge are to be development before residential areas, and this is supported.
- The lands could become a community hub with sports facilities, a community centre, playground, and parking.

Draft LAP:**Zoning Request 2:**

Chief Executive Response

Request 1

In relation to Request 1, the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the OS2 'Natural Areas' zoning of the lands. These lands are situated in close proximity to the Poulaphouca SPA and are below the 194m contour, which is the area which is most linked to the protected site in terms of land form / topography, drainage and accessibility for fauna. The Draft Plan has been crafted with a view to zoning the **appropriate** area as OS2, as opposed to arbitrary buffer zones of 100m, 200m etc and this 194m contour line has been carefully evaluated to confirm that this is the appropriate limit in this area for any development zoning.

Please see additional assessment of this request detailed in **Section 5 SEA & AA** of this report, prepared by the Council's environmental / ecological expert consultants, which addresses any submission with potential to impact on the environment or European Sites. This assessment states:

'Burgage Bay is an area of valuable shallow wetland habitat and one of the key areas within and surrounding the Plan area for wintering waterbirds such as Teal, Wigeon and Goldeneye. It is part of the Poulaphouca Special Protection Area, which is designated and afforded high levels of protection under the European Habitats Directive and transposing Regulations. The preparation of the Plan was informed by the fact that this area is susceptible to disturbance from human encroachment on the surrounding subject lands. Furthermore, lands in this area form Key Green Infrastructure (see Draft Plan Map No. 3), being part of an Ecological Corridor that provides functional connectivity for habitats and species and a Local Biodiversity Area (a site of local biodiversity value that is not within designated areas).'

The land use zoning provided at these lands is consistent with the ecological sensitivities present and higher-level objectives requiring the protection and management of ecological sensitivities.'

The requested AOS 'Active Open Space' zoning and any active sports use that could arise on foot of same, would require significant changes to the natural condition of these lands, including but not limited to, significant contour remodeling, removal of a significant area of existing woodland and extensive drainage, erection of structures and extensive hard surfaced area for car parking, flood lighting etc. Such development works would pose a high risk of creating significant adverse impacts on the integrity and conservation interests of the adjoining protected European Site and therefore cannot be recommended.

The CE would also have serious concerns in relation to access to the requested AOS lands, noting that the proposal includes car parking for c. 78 vehicles. The access along Burgage More is constrained, being single carriageway in places. Any widening of this road would involve the removal of significant lengths of hedgerows and mature trees. Map No. 5 Transport Strategy indicates the road in question as operating as a local street only, and the text of SLO7 states the following: *'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.'* It is not the view of the CE that this road should be significantly widened in the near future.

Furthermore, the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the quantum of AOS lands within the draft plan. Issues have not been raised in relation to any shortcoming in the Social Infrastructure Audit, with the Draft Plan providing for an increase in the quantum of lands reserved for AOS in comparison to the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019.

On the basis of the above, the requested change is not recommended.

Request 2

In relation to Request 2, the use of the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning objective in this location is to ensure flexibility to the location of the desired different uses within this block, having regard to the uncertain final route of the road objective through Doran's Pit.

The quantum of uses within this MU 'Mixed Use' zone is set out in text within SLO4 and the accompanying concept plan. Zoning for each individual requested use in this area is not recommended.

The increase in AOS zoning suggested would remove an area of OS2 'Natural Areas' lands in conflict with the recommendations of the Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit. Furthermore, the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit sets out the rationale for the quantum of AOS lands within the draft plan. Issues have not been raised in relation to any shortcoming in the Social Infrastructure Audit, with the Draft Plan providing for an increase in the quantum of lands reserved for AOS in comparison to the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019. On this basis, the above request is not recommended.

Please see additional assessment of this request detailed in **Section 5 SEA & AA** of this report, prepared by the Council's environmental / ecological expert consultants, which addresses any submission with potential to impact on the environment or European Sites. No amendments to the draft plan on foot of this request are recommended in that assessment.

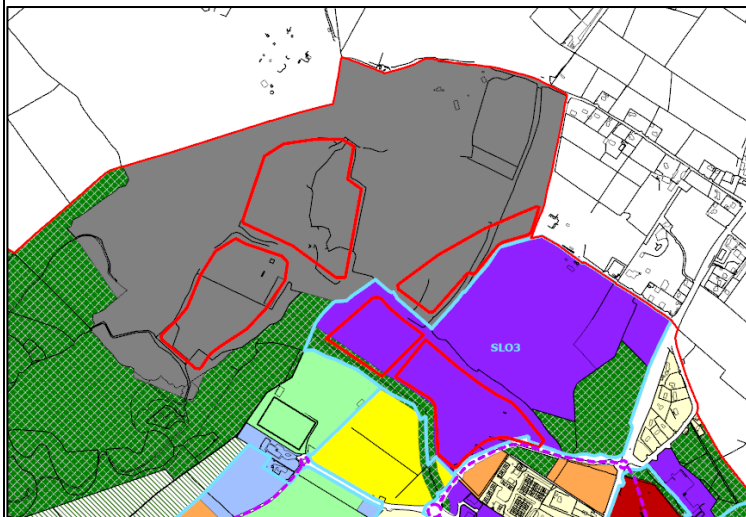
On the basis of the above, the requested change is not recommended.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

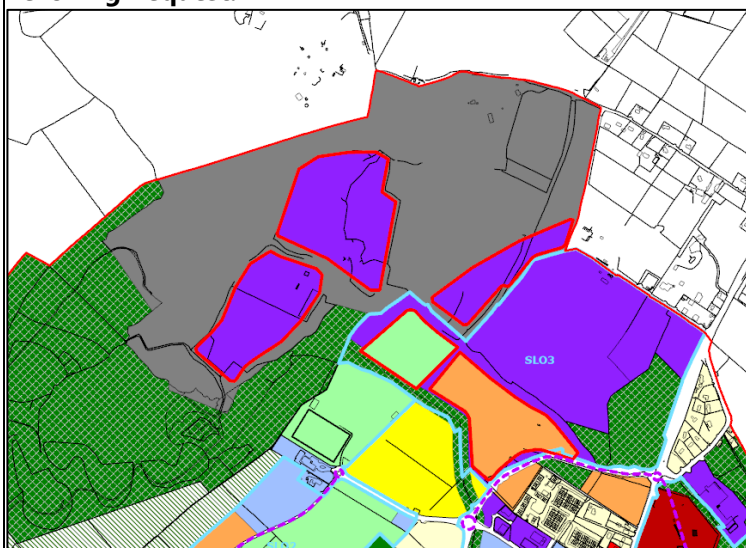
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
208	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 153614	<p>Request 1 Quarry lands wets of existing N81/SLO3</p> <p>It is requested that lands of c. 36.6ha at Deerpark, Dillonsdown, Blessington Demesne, and Newpaddocks, zoned EX 'Extractive Industry' (c. 24.8ha), E 'Employment' (c. 11.7ha) and OS2 'Natural Areas' (c. 0.2ha) in the Draft LAP, be zoned E 'Employment' (c. 24.8ha), RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' (c. 7.8ha), and AOS 'Active Open Space' (c. 3.98ha). In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The addition of employment land use zoning north of SLO3 corresponds to lands east of the proposed N81. ▪ Sand and gravel extraction is virtually completed at the quarry located west of the proposed N81 and the area currently zoned EX 'Extractive Industry' is available for other beneficial use. ▪ Rezoning land as requested in SLO3 would have the benefit of creating additional land for residential purposes together with an ancillary area of Active Open Space and facilities which would be complementary to an existing sporting/recreational hub. ▪ It is acknowledged that additional residential areas would be RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2', this proposed residential area can be justified on the basis of site suitability and compatibility with other nearby residential areas, providing additional residential capacity in light of the recent increase in housing targets. This area within SLO3 can be considered on the basis that it can form part of wider integrated housing/community facility/open space scheme that will be well connected to the existing built-up area. ▪ The additional AOS lands in SLO3 would balance the requested reduction in SLO4 (addressed in relation to SLO4 in Section B.8.2 Specific Local Objectives) and would also ensure that the delivery of AOS is not dependent on the development of a singular opportunity site. ▪ Additional employment land is requested within the EX 'Extractive Industry' area, with the balance of the lands being considered strategic land for future development. The additional employment land would replace the employment land being removed by the proposed residential and active open space zoning requested for SLO3. ▪ Given the strategic importance of Blessington in the context of employment provision, this area is ideally suited to further development for employment purposes. Land at this location can be re-graded as needed to provide for future development. There would be a net increase of 17.04ha of E 'Employment' lands.

Draft LAP:



Rezoning Request:



Request 2 Doran's Pit SLO4

It is requested that the **SLO4 Concept Plan** be omitted. In support of this change, the following grounds put forward:

- The concept plan shows the zoned area to the east of the new road as green space/undeveloped land which is wholly inconsistent with the zoning map, and is a vast area and unsuitable location for active open space/tourism/car parking with no indication of a viable end user for these facilities. This is inconsistent with CPO 11.53 of the WCDP, which states the following:
'Where projects for new tourism projects identified in this chapter 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.'
- The delivery of infrastructure at this location will depend on market conditions and development viability. Inconsistencies between the zoning map and this concept plan will lead to developer uncertainty.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The reservation of c.2.7ha for amenity car parking/other tourist infrastructure is also a completely unsustainable model for tourism given the traffic it would generate, and is inconsistent with the need to facilitate modal shift to sustainable transport options as per Chapter 12 of the WCDP and the Climate Action Plan 2024, and CPOs 11.33 and 11.51, which state the following: <i>'CPO 11.33 To encourage eco-tourism projects² or those tourism projects with a strong environmentally sustainable design and operational ethos.'</i> <i>'CPO 11.51 Ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.'</i> ▪ The location is completely unsuited to creating safe and secure neighbourhoods with overlooking from surrounding uses, the required facilities should be integrated within the fabric of the urban extension as opposed to vast areas of car parking with poor design outcomes and adverse effects on the local biodiversity area. The location of open space/tourism facilities is at odds with the requirements of Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads which requires a strong sense of enclosure along roads/pedestrian streets. ▪ The proposed link road through SLO4 may attract a significant amount of traffic, the placement of this tourism facility may also add further pressure to this road and have negative implications on the proposed residential development. <p>It is further requested that the quantum of Active Open Space be reduced in SLO4, from 3.3ha to 2ha. [Note that Section 4.4 of the submission indicates that no land use zoning is requested in this area, only amendments to SLO requirements/concept plans]. In support of this change, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is noted that pre-draft consultation indicated a considerable shortfall in the provision of active open space, and the lack of a football field for Blessington AFC is acknowledged. ▪ No rational is provided for 3.3ha at this location. ▪ 2ha is more than sufficient to provide for the average football pitch (0.714ha) and MUGA area. ▪ A smaller area of Active Open Space will also facilitate development that is in keeping with the development of a compact urban extension. ▪ A replacement area of active open space of 3.98ha as requested above on lands zoned EX 'Extractive Industry', a net increase of 2.68ha.
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Chief Executive Response

Request 1 Quarry lands wets of existing N81/SLO3

In relation to the requested additional area of land zoned for residential purposes in SLO3, the residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission would exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended).

On the basis of the above, it is not recommended to zone lands for residential use as requested.

In relation to the requests for additional E 'Employment' and AOS 'Active Open Space' zonings to the west of the existing N81, these zonings are largely compensatory to losses of such lands from the above rezoning/SLO requests, though in both cases there would be net increases in E 'Employment' and AOS 'Active Open Space' lands. As the above zoning requests are not recommended, the need for compensatory zonings is unnecessary.

Furthermore, the development of additional E 'Employment' and AOS 'Active Open Space' lands in a more peripheral location, as represented by the net increased area of both areas as requested, would be premature pending the development of undeveloped/brownfield lands within the landholding zoned for such purposes in the Draft LAP. On this basis, it is not recommended to rezone the lands as requested.

Request 2 Doran's Pit SLO4

In relation to the requested reduction in AOS 'Active Open Space' lands in SLO4, the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit clearly sets out the requirements for Active Open Space lands within the plan area. The submission has acknowledged the need for active open space facilities in Blessington, and has not raised issues in relation to any shortcomings/figures within the Social Infrastructure Audit. Attention is also directed to other submissions made to the Draft LAP which request and increase in the quantum of Active Open Space lands within the SLO (assessed separately). On this basis of the above, it is not recommended to reduce the quantum of land designated for Active Open Space use within SLO4. Issues in relation to layouts of Active Open Space within the SLO will be addressed below in response to the request for the omission of the SLO4 concept plan.

In relation to the request to omit the concept plan from SLO4, the CE is of the opinion that the concept plan is entirely consistent with the lands zoned MU 'Mixed Use', in that the uses permitted under the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning is expanded upon within the text of SLO4, and for which the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning was intended in determining the zoning of the lands in the Draft LAP. The purpose of the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning in this case was a practical concern in that the final route / design of the road objective is indicative only, and setting out precise zoning boundaries in relation to this road may not be appropriate/possible. The CE is amenable to amending the text of SLO4 to clarify the uses that are intended for development within the MU 'Mixed Use' zoned area.

In relation to the location of the car park, the traffic generated, and the need to promote modal shift, the CE does not agree that the location of such a car parking facility would promote car usage. Map No. 7 indicates objectives that may aid supporting the previously planned extension of the Blessington Greenway, with the map showing the reserved land as potentially operating as a greenway supporting car park.

While the recently proposed greenway extension project has been recently refused consent by An Bord Pleanála, the 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. In this regard, the development of a tourism related car park, in close proximity and with direct access via the new road to the Blessington Lakes is an objective that is essential to retain. SLO4 is the optimal location in Blessington and in the wider area for providing supporting infrastructure for the future development of the tourism and recreation sector associated with the lakes.

Blessington serves a wide rural catchment population. Considering the current level of service of public transport in Blessington, many visitors to the lakes area and other amenities asset in Blessington, as well residents of Blessington's rural catchment will likely use the private car in some part of their journey. The location of the

reserved land, and other locations intended for car parking as set out in BLESS48, is intended to facilitate modal shift to active travel in accessing the town centre, by diverting those entering the town from parking in the built-up area, allowing for road space reallocation and active travel infrastructure in central areas. Furthermore, any such facilities of large surface car parking could potentially be redeveloped in the future were the level of public transport service in Blessington to be significantly improved.

The provisions of the draft LAP, such as those relating to visitor centres, visitor car parking etc are recommended to be maintained in the plan, even in the absence of the current greenway project, as such facilities would support a wide range of tourism project and activities.

In relation to urban design consideration raised with regard to the concept plan, the description of SLO4 states the following: *'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 proposed Blessington eGreenway.'*

The submission states that AOS/other facilities should be integrated into urban extensions as opposed to vast areas of car parking with poor design outcomes, lacking overlooking, at odds with the strong enclosure required by the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets. The text of SLO4 explicitly refers to providing a strong sense of enclosure, and the above vision for SLO4 explicitly states that it is intended that the predominantly residential part of the mixed use development be 'bounded' by the planned link street. To do so serves to provide a strong boundary and gateway function between the 'town proper' immediately adjacent to the town centre and the relatively open active open space/tourism/parking uses transitioning into OS2 lands and the settlement boundary/rural area. The layout in the concept plan also avoids a significant resident population having to cross the link street to access the town centre (with the possibility that residents may choose to drive), and avoids the link street being perceived as the 'centre' of the regenerated area over the central green area/plaza indicated in the concept plan. Passive surveillance can be provided to the eastern side of the link street by any tourism/accommodation/clubhouse structures, passing traffic on the active travel route, and by residences providing the strong enclosure to the western side of the street.

In relation to adverse impacts on the local biodiversity area, the text of SLO4 requires the development of appropriate buffer zones from site of biodiversity value.

On foot of the above, no changes are recommended to the concept plan of SLO4.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Amend the text of SLO4 as follows:

Specific Local Objective 4 – Doran's Pit

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 proposed Blessington eGreenway. 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

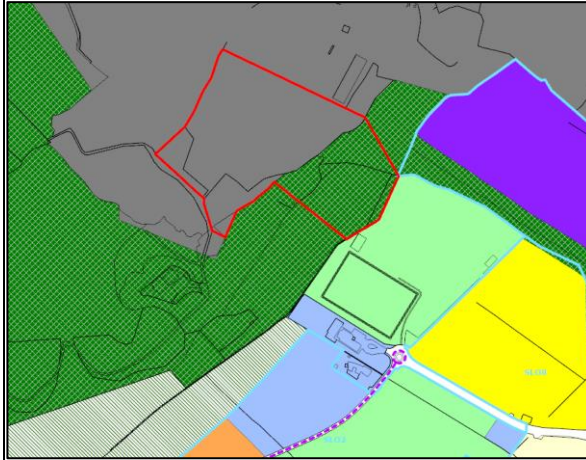
should form an arm off the planned roundabout at the northern end of the Blessington Inner Relief Road, while the road from Blessington Mart should terminate in a junction onto this road objective, with the exact layout to be agreed with the Planning Authority. Permission will not be considered for any 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 ~~edment~~ 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.3.3 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 1st house.
 - (d) ~~The reservation of land of not less than c.2.7 ha 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 proposed Blessington eGreenway (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 reservation of land of not less than c.2.7 ha 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 proposed Blessington eGreenway (via the road objective), while minimising the interaction between parking cars and cyclists/pedestrians.~~
- 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.

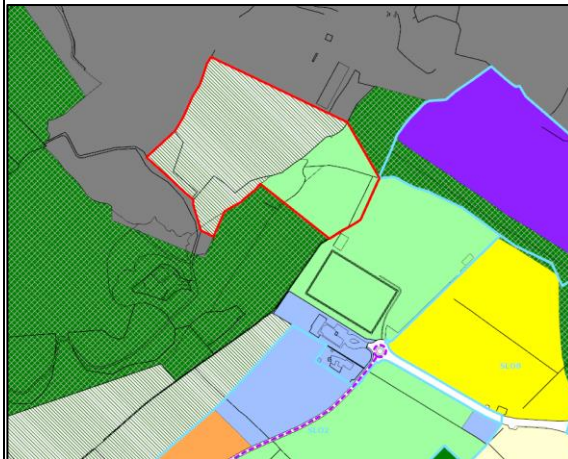
No.	Name	Issues Raised
214	Blessington GAA Ref 180116	<p>The following zoning changes are requested (two options presented):</p> <p>Option 1: It is requested that c. 10ha of lands at Deerpark, zoned EX 'Extractive Industry' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space' and AG 'Agriculture' (with the provision of playing fields permitted in principle).</p> <p>Option 2: It is requested that c. 6.9ha of lands at Deerpark, zoned EX 'Extractive Industries' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AG 'Agriculture' (with the provision of playing fields permitted in principle) and that a looped walkway objective be included in the plan.</p> <p>In support of these requests, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since 2007 (when the current grounds acquired), the population of Blessington has increased by 40% with further growth envisioned, with c. 1500 people within the 5-19 age cohort, with resultant demand for facilities. There is a membership of 800 people. ▪ The existing housing units and population result in an average household size of c. 3 people, higher than the national average. Taking a reduced household size of 2.7 and the housing target, the plan provides for an additional 1,401 people, almost double the population target. Does not include population or zoned land in Co. Kildare, potential combined growth of 2,500 to 8,000 people. Now is the time to allocate sufficient lands. ▪ The Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit, in detailing projected demand, identifies Blessington GAA as 8.72ha. However, there is only 4ha of actually play space once car parking, storage, club facilities and circulation space has been factored in. 4ha of the allocated 18.5 ha comprises this car parking, etc. ▪ 14.9ha within SLO2 is welcomed however is in a single ownership and will be difficult to delivery with limited housing provision on these lands. ▪ The above suggests significant shortfall in AOS 'Active Open Space' provisions. ▪ The GAA grounds are constrained with regard to expansion considering adjacent land uses/zonings. The natural option is north-west into quarry lands, where quarrying has long ceased and is now in agricultural use. ▪ The N81 corridor is noted and access could be facilitated in detail design. ▪ Option 1: Proposed removal of 19,000sqm bank/planting, provision of 766m x 2m wide perimeter planting, resulting in a deficit of 17,500sqm of planting. ▪ Option 2: looped walk connecting recent Glen Ding walk to GAA grounds, existing parking could be used by walkers. Semi-permeable access for emergency vehicles to agricultural lands, sensitive designed as part of looped walkway with tree loss compensated with new boundary planting. Removal of 640sqm planting, provision 1532sqm planting, resulting in an increase of 892sq.m planting. <p>Suggested new objective for Option 2: <i>'To facilitate playing fields including the provision of 2m deep perimeter planting providing an ecological corridor to the adjoining stream – a new Connected Looped walkway extending the Glen Ding Greenway shall be provided as part of the provision of any new playing fields.'</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reference made to Cabinteely GAA and Ticknock Park as examples of the

sustainable provision of active open space with a sensitively designed connecting walkway through forestry.

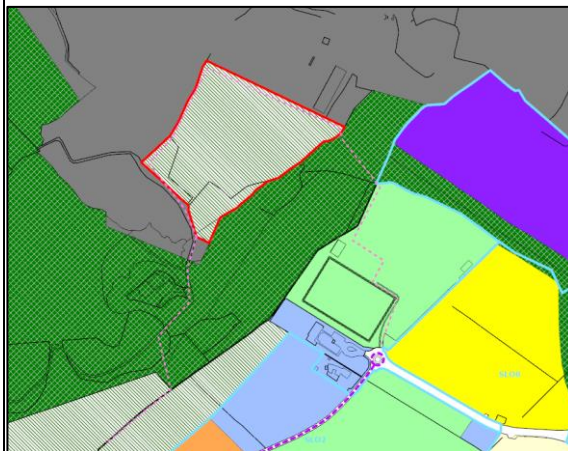
Draft LAP:



Option 1 Rezoning Request:



Option 2 Rezoning Request:



Chief Executive Response

The CE is satisfied, on the basis of the detailed analysis carried out in the Social Infrastructure Audit, that the draft plan makes appropriate provision of land zoned for future sports development in the plan area (land zoned AOS). In relation to the suggested greater than anticipated population growth, the Social Infrastructure Audit has accounted for both the existing population as per the 2022 Census, the planned population growth as per the Wicklow County Development Plan and the population in Blessington within Co. Kildare and the targeted population as per the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029. The CE is satisfied that the recommended area of Active Open Space as set out in the Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit accounts for the planned growth as per the prevailing Core Strategies as relevant to Blessington.

The CE is satisfied that the areas identified, based on sound planning principles, for new AOS in the draft plan are the most suitable to serve the needs of the settlement and its wider catchment, in terms of proximity to the built up parts of the town, existing and planned residential areas, as well as being most accessible to active travel infrastructure and public transport routes. The main areas identified for future AOS use are located in very close proximity to the existing GAA grounds and are better located than the lands suggested in the submission, which are peripheral.

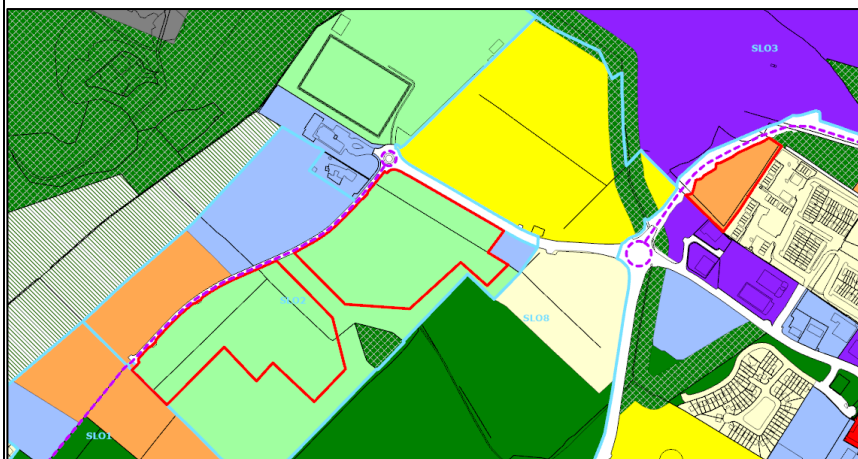
In relation to the request for playing fields to be included as permitted in principle under the AG 'Agriculture' zoning, the CE would have no issue with such a use being included as 'permitted in principle' but this would appear to be an unnecessary recommendation given that the request to zone additional lands in this submission for AG is not supported.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

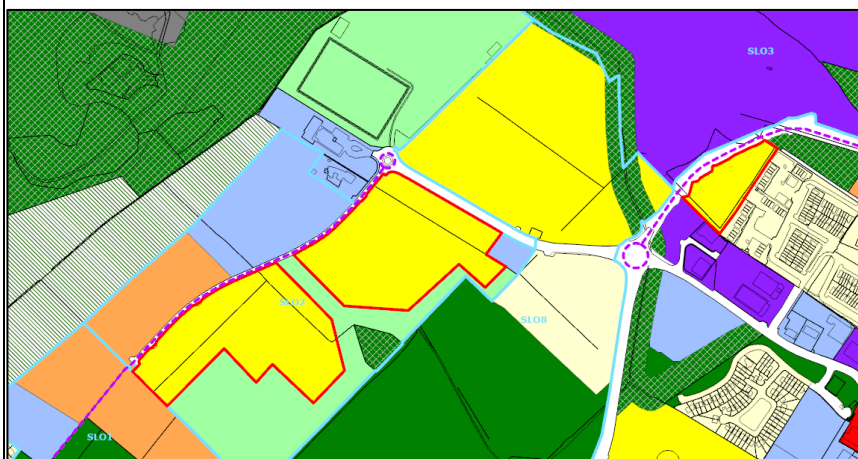
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
219	Cairn Homes Properties Ltd. Ref 172755	<p>This is a lengthy submission, which is difficult to summarise succinctly without omissions and the interested reader is therefore directed to the full submission (hyperlink to left)</p> <p>This submission raising the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cairn Homes has an extensive land holding in Blessington zoned for a range of uses under previous LAO ▪ The primary concern with the draft plan is that it de-zones or down-zones significant areas of residential lands as a result of using out of dated and inaccurate data, reducing the area of new residential land by 38ha (67%), equivalent to 1,508 homes/4,072 people. ▪ The LAP's proposed re-prioritisation of zoned land and rezoning to non-residential uses will actually compound the difficulties in the delivery of housing. Priority 1 and Priority 2 residential zonings in the Draft LAP should be more flexible and support early delivery in accordance with need. ▪ The phasing of infrastructure delivery must be feasible and connected to development delivery. It is largely based on private sector investment, yet there is no policy connection that appreciates that without development the infrastructure will not be realised. ▪ The draft LAP needs to be recognise that Blessington Demesne is an integral part of the town and the park is a significant public amenity which is a major attraction for living and working in the town. At a strategic level the draft LAP is too focused on Main Street and adjoining plots. SLO8 - Blessington Demesne (East) is fundamental to delivery of the BIRR and Town Park. The draft LAP should champion the lands' early delivery to unlock these key public assets. ▪ The draft LAP seeks to zone Cairn's lands in SLO2 for Active Open Space. This is entirely unfeasible as presented and can only be implemented with development to support the significant investment required.. The allocation of AOS has been grossly miscalculated based on flawed analysis for the town. ▪ The submission includes extensive masterplan documentation, which highlights the urban design opportunity to provide a vision of an urban edge to the Parklands and improved recreational amenity for the town, shown with a running track, sports pitches, and allotments. ▪ The change to OS2 'Natural Areas' of lands at Newpaddocks is warranted in the interest of local biodiversity and amenity, but lands zoned RN2 should be zoned 'Priority 1' RN1 Residential (Ref. Map No. 1 Land Use Zoning Objectives). ▪ Opportunity Sites 1 Blessington Town Centre should be simplified so as not to add additional conditions or onerous obligations that would undermine feasibility (i.e. commercial ground floor use). <p>As part of this overall submission, the following requests are made:</p> <p>Request 1: It is requested that lands of c. 9.5ha at Blessington Demesne, zoned AOS 'Active Open Space' in the Draft LAP, and c. 1ha at Newpaddocks, zoned RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' in the Draft LAP, be zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1'.</p>

Draft LAP:



Rezoning Request:



Request 2: It is further requested that the below text of Section B.2 be amended, as follows:

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 ~~not~~ be considered during the lifetime of this plan for RN2 lands ~~unless where~~ the following conditions are satisfied:

- ~~75%~~ 50% of Priority 1 new residential lands (RN1) lands have been activated (i.e. consent obtained ~~and development initiated~~ or it is demonstrated that RN1 sites cannot not be implemented in the short term as Priority 1 and should be assessed as Priority 2 lands;
- 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 and that the RN2 lands will deliver residential output in lieu of non-delivery of Priority 1 lands.

Request 3: It is further requested that objective BLESS7 be amended as follows:

BLESS7 Notwithstanding the zoning / designation of land for new 'greenfield' residential development (RN), permission will ~~not~~ be considered for RN2 Priority 2 lands ~~unless where~~ the following conditions are satisfied:

- Priority 1 new residential lands (RN1) lands have been activated (i.e. consent obtained ~~and development initiated~~ or it is demonstrated that RN1 sites cannot be implemented in the short term as Priority 1 and should be assessed as Priority 2 lands);
- 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 application being significantly breached and that the RN2 lands will deliver residential output in lieu of non-delivery of Priority 1 lands.

Request 4: It is further requested that the below text from Section B.2 is amended as follows:

It is an aim of this plan to focus 30% of new residential development into the serviced existing built envelope of the settlement.

Request 5: It is requested that the below text of Section B.8, in relation to phasing, be amended as follows:

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 ~~not~~ be considered during the lifetime of this plan for RN2 lands ~~unless where~~ the following conditions are satisfied:

- ~~75%~~ 50% of Priority 1 new residential lands (RN1) lands have been activated (i.e. consent obtained ~~and development initiated~~ or it is demonstrated that RN1 sites cannot not be implemented in the short term as Priority 1 and should be assessed as Priority 2 lands;
- 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 and that the RN2 lands will deliver residential output in lieu of non-delivery of Priority 1 lands.

~~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.

Request 6: It is requested that the below text of SLO8 be omitted:

~~Permission for additional residential development within this SLO will not be considered unless this town park will be completed and available for use, in full, upon the occupation of the 1st house.~~

Request 7: It is accepted that the zoning of lands at Newpaddocks as OS2 'Natural Areas' is warranted in the interest of local biodiversity and amenity, however it is further submitted that these lands may serve as public open space,

	<p>for the adjoining lands, allowing public access, pathways, or indeed road access through the site.</p> <p>Request 8: It is requested that the Objectives for BLESS OP1-3 be amended to omit the following text: Subject to the provision of adequate active uses to all frontages.</p> <p>Request 9: It is requested that the objective of the RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' zoning be amended as follows:</p> <p>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 that settlement after the activation of 50% of Priority 1 lands or it is demonstrated that RN1 sites cannot be implemented in the short term as Priority 1 and should be assessed as Priority 2.</p> <p>Request 10: It is requested that objective BLESS27 be amended as follows:</p> <p>BLESS27 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, - To require the delivery of significant appropriate areas of outdoor play space on lands zoned AOS as part of SLO-2 and SLO-4. - To require the delivery of public parks on lands zoned OS1 in SLO-1 and SLO-8.</p> <p>Request 11: It is requested that the Section A.3.1 of the LAP acknowledge that Blessington Demesne was set out in accordance with a previous masterplan (2001), and is appropriately conceived as a neighbourhood rather than 'peripheral development beyond'</p>
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Chief Executive Response

In relation to **Request 1**, the residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission would

- Exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended).
- Result in a reduction in AOS 'Active Open Space' zoned lands. These are essential zonings that are necessary to support the sustainable development of the plan area, and the location and area of these zones has been carefully determined in order to meet Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and sustainable development principles. The CE rejects the assertion that the inclusion of the population of Blessington within Co. Kildare is a 'crass calculation' to bring Blessington over the threshold of Level 2 of the Community Facility Hierarchy Model. The issue of the population, existing and targeted, within Co. Kildare is one raised at pre-draft stage and frequently is raised at public consultation meetings.

On this basis, the requested rezoning is not recommended.

In relation to **Requests 2,3,5 and 9**, it is clear from the Proposed Variation and draft LAP text that residential zoning provisions in the new set of LAPs will provide for additional provision i.e. a quantum of residential zoning over and above what we be needed to meet current County Development Plan targets, in order to future proof the LAPs in the event that the Core Strategy is amended and targets are increased.

In the preparation of LAPs, cognisance has and will be taken of the 2022 Development Plan Guidelines, in particular the following provisions:

"It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that zoned housing land in an existing development plan, that is serviced and can be developed for housing within the life of the new development plan under preparation, should not be subject to de-zoning.

Should it be the case that there is a surplus of well-located zoned and fully serviced land to meet population and housing supply targets already zoned for development in any local authority area when reviewing a development plan, it is recommended best practice that a phased approach be taken to prioritise the preferred sequence of development of such sites. However, phasing should be applied where there is a sound planning rationale for doing so, based on factors such as site location, the availability or proximity of, or capacity to provide, off-site services, facilities or infrastructure. This should also be viewed in the context of the urgent need to increase housing supply."

On this basis, the requested amendments are not recommended.

In relation to **Request 4**, it is considered that the delivery of infill development can be hard to predict such that a quantitative percentage is not warranted in Section B.2

In relation to **Request 6**, it is considered that the text is entirely appropriate and will not hinder the granting of permissions with conditions requiring such. On this basis, the requested amendment is not recommended.

In relation to **Request 7**, the uses appropriate are as follows: *'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.'* While limited trails may be considered, it is not considered appropriate that the lands be used as public open space.

In relation to **Request 8**, OP1 is located in the very core of the settlement and it a vital bridging site between the Market Square and modern mixed use (shopping / community) development and school further west. It is desired that a significant 'landmark' type development be progressed in this space, which attracts people and activity into this area, so that an inactive, unsupervised area does not continue to persist in this central area between two active commercial zones.

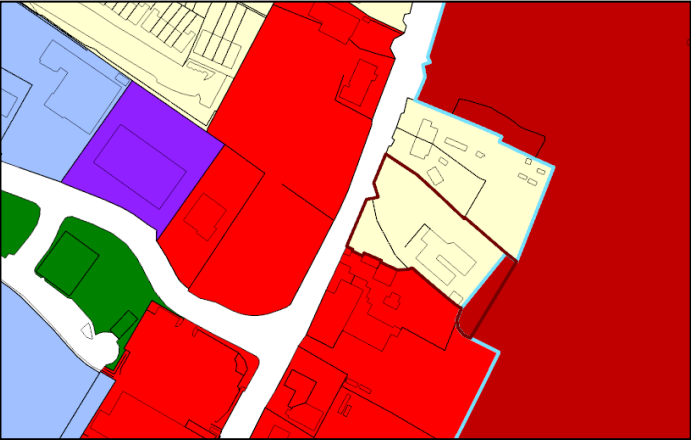
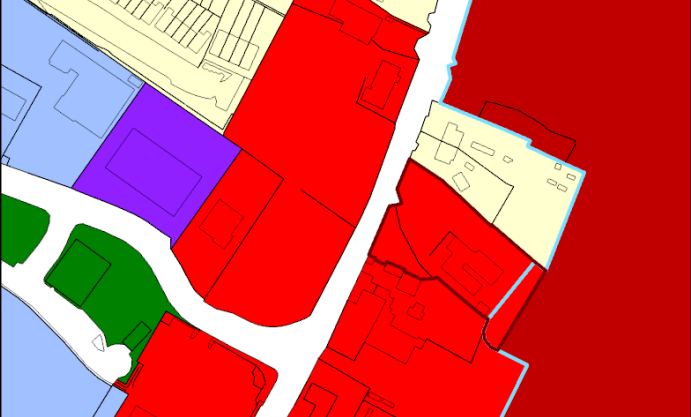
In this regard therefore it is deemed that active frontages are essential on this site, especially given that this site has frontage onto existing streets and developments that are suffering from inactivity and are in urgent need of revitalisation; therefore it is considered that this objective should be retained. It should be noted however that the plan does not specify that 'active frontages' cannot comprise residential use or must comprise commercial / community use.

The objectives for OP1 do not specify a certain quantum of commercial or mixed use in OP1 but given the town centre location and the objectives of the CDP and LAP, non-residential uses (e.g. commercial, retail, tourism, community etc) will be an expected significant component of any such development, particularly at ground floors. Therefore no changes are recommended to the text in this regard.

In relation to **Request 10**, as Request 1 above has not been recommended, it is considered that the wording of

<p>objective BLESS27 is appropriate, considering the quantum of AOS lands zoned in these areas.</p> <p>In relation to Request 11, the CE is of the opinion that no negative connation or viewpoint is put forward in Section A.3.1. The description of 'peripheral development beyond' is an outcome of the previous masterplan not being fully implemented, and does not infer that any development that had taken place was poorly designed on inappropriate.</p>
Chief Executive's Recommendation
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
225	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 204227	This submission is a duplicate of Submission No. 208 above.
Chief Executive Response		
This submission is assessed under Submission No. 208 above.		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
As per Submission No. 208 above.		

No.	Name	Issues Raised
252	Lidl Ireland GmbH Ref 114350	<p>It is requested that lands of c. 0.3ha, zoned RE 'Existing Residential' and MU 'Mixed Use' in the Draft Plan, be zoned TC 'Town Centre'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Draft LAP proposes to preserve the pre-existing zoning, and includes the subject lands in opportunity site OP8. ▪ The zoning pattern is less than optimal for the future development of the subject lands, with both the existing residential and mixed use areas being subsidiary in area and function to the primary town centre element. ▪ The additional area to be zoned town centre is 0.4ha, and TC 'Town Centre' lands have been omitted elsewhere in the draft LAP (e.g. lands to the north of the existing Dunnes stores site), reducing the town centre footprint. ▪ The TC 'Town Centre' zoning extends further north (by c.120m) opposite the subject site, up to and including Blessington Tyre Centre, creating an imbalance in this regard. ▪ Haylands House has been acquired and assembled within the overall subject lands. The TC 'Town Centre' zoning should be extended to reflect the subject lands potential and to encourage the redevelopment of the Haylands House element. The existing residence on the site represents a low intensity form of development and does not contribute to the creation of streetscape at the gateway to the town. ▪ Preservation of the existing character should not be encouraged while also including the lands in OP8 indicating that the lands should be redeveloped. <p>Draft LAP (Site outlined in dark brown):</p>  <p>Rezoning Request (Site outlined in dark brown):</p> 

It is further requested that the opportunity site designation for the subject lands, OP8, be amended to reflect an extended TC 'Town Centre' zone, and be split in two to facilitate staged development of the overall Haylands landbank, as follows:

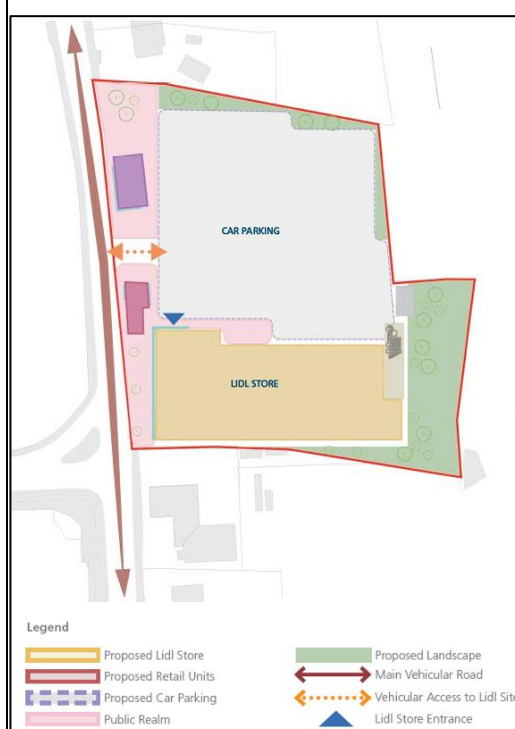
BLESS OP8 East of Main Street (North)

This site is comprised of a combination of a 20th century suburban dwelling with a commercial complex of outbuildings and older vernacular building north of the Maxol service station on Blessington Main Street / N81. The lands have been assembled in single ownership and are currently in vacant possession pending redevelopment proposals being brought forward.

The primary focus of redevelopment for this opportunity site should be to provide town centre activities, specifically retail (with associated ancillary elements where feasible), to improve the activity and visual appearance of the area, and contribute to Blessington town centre fulfilling its strategic role and function as an important service centre in the region.

Objectives BLESS OP8 East of Main Street (North)

- To provide for town centre infill development. Indicative block formats are provided in the below concept plan including potential for a Foodstore Supermarket floor plate.
- Redevelopment of this site should have a degree of regard to vernacular features that are present and consider an element of incorporation or interpretation in any proposed scheme.
- New buildings along the western boundary should also providing strong urban and active frontages to Blessington Main Street.
- Redevelopment of this site should consolidate the multiplicity of existing access points to Main Street and have regard to the Blessington Main Street N81 Road Safety Improvement Scheme.



		<p>In support of this change, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The OP site inadvertently ties a large landbank to a singular phase of regeneration. ▪ The approach of the OP includes desire lines east (non-vehicular) and south, a multiplicity of roads/streets, preservation of existing vernacular buildings, public open space, and a function link to the landbank to the south. This approach could materially undermine its developability for a foodstore, and for substantive development of most forms. ▪ It appears that the Draft LAP renders the available subject lands as somewhat sacrificial to the unavailable southern extents of the opportunity site, which is not appropriate or proportionate. The subject lands should be able to contribute positively to the provision of development and services needed in the town. The assembly of the current extents into a single opportunity site is typically not something that can be realistically mirrored in terms of actual site assembly. ▪ The subject lands are the assembly of two parcels, the addition of 5 No. additional parcels is not considered to be reasonably likely. ▪ Presenting OP 8 as a heavily integrated development concept, that lacks any particular modular or phased approach, including significant ancillary/infrastructure elements, will likely stymie the realization of town centre regeneration. ▪ Difficulties anticipated include: incremental/modular development is prevented/frustrated; highly aspirational in nature; the potential for redevelopment is only as strong as the weakest link; primary focus (high intensity residential and mixed use development) contrary to the underlying TC 'Town Centre' zoning objective; pedestrian/cyclist permeability to Doran's Pit only feasible to southern portion due to topography changes to north; balancing massing of vernacular buildings with strong urban and active frontages; and that there is no real north-south desire line, with the existing main street providing this axis, hence the inclusion of a north-south within the block further fragments potential development blocks. ▪ The majority of OP sites in the Draft LAP are aspirational and complicated in nature. Lidl Ireland GmbH is not in a position to take on the role of large scale property developer as would be required to deliver the same. Lidl have been seeking to secure lands in Blessington for over 20 years to date, with the evolution of food shopping in Blessington being relatively stagnant. In this context the subject lands are the only suitable, available, viable location. ▪ The Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 set out policy in relation to the location of retail development and the use of the sequential approach test, which is pertinent in relation to overlapping TC 'Town Centre' zones and Core Retail Areas.
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Chief Executive Response

Request 1:

Noting the extent of the TC 'Town Centre' zoning on the opposite side of the N81 from the subject lands, the CE is not opposed to the rezoning request to extend the TC 'Town Centre' zoning to include the entire landholding. Furthermore, considering the relatively small residual RE 'Existing Residential' zoning to the north of the subject landholding, with MU 'Mixed Use' lands on two sides and with TC 'Town Centre' lands opposite, it would be appropriate to extend the TC 'Town Centre' zone further north.

On the basis of the above, it is recommended to zone the subject lands, and the immediately adjacent RE 'Existing Residential' lands to the north, as TC 'Town Centre'.

Request 2:

In relation to OP8, the CE rejects the assertion that the inclusion of the subject lands within opportunity site OP8 ties a large landbank to a singular phase of regeneration, and that the northern lands are 'sacrificial' to the southern lands. Individual development sites within an opportunity site may be developed, as long as the development objectives of the overall opportunity site are delivered where relevant, or are not rendered unachievable by later stages of regeneration as part of such development. In order to allay concerns however the CE recommends that the 'Concept Plan' for OP8 be omitted.

The Chief Executive is amenable to the inclusion of text to clarify the matter of incremental development in relation to opportunity sites.

In relation to the apparent conflict between the TC 'Town Centre' zoning and the description of OP8 including 'high intensity residential and mixed use development', attention is directed to CPO 5.3 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, which states (in part) the following:

'Other than in the retail core area, residential development shall be the primary development objective for lands zoned town centre or village centre. This shall not preclude commercial development on lands zoned town centre or village centre when suitable sites are not available in the core retail area.' As such, the description of the primary focus of redevelopment for OP8 is consistent with the TC 'Town Centre' zoning.

In relation to the issue of the opportunity site potentially undermining the developability of the subject lands for a foodstore, the Chief Executive notes that the subject lands remain outside the Blessington Core Retail Area as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, in which an application for a foodstore may be subject to a retail impact assessment. Furthermore, block formats as included in **concept plans are indicative only**, whereby the overall objectives of OP8 may still be achievable with alternative layouts that may facilitate such a development. In relation to the recommended concept plan as included in the submission, attention is drawn to CPOs 5.3, 5.4, 5.17 and 5.21 of the Wicklow County Development Plan, which state the following:

'5.3 To particularly promote and facilitate residential development in town and villages centres:

- *Promote the 'active' use of above ground floor levels, and in particular to promote the concept of 'living over the shop' in centres. Where a 'living over the shop' use is proposed, a relaxation in density, car parking and open space standards will be considered, where the development meets very high quality of design and accommodation.*
- *[...]*

5.4 To limit the concentration or clustering of uses that have bland inactive frontages and that fail to interact with the streetscape including car parks, blank shop frontages and ground floor offices. Such uses undermine the vitality of the town or village centre.

5.17 To harness and integrate the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive reuse, recognising its important contribution to placemaking. New development should respect and complement the historic fabric of existing towns and villages – the traditional street patterns, plot sizes, mix of building types, distinctive paving and attractive street furniture.

5.21 To strengthen the urban structure of towns and villages by ensuring that any new development contributes to a coherent urban form, focused on a high quality built environment of distinct character. New development shall incorporate a legible and permeable urban form that protects and complements the character of the street or area in which it is set in terms of proportion, enclosure, building line, design and by the marrying of new modern architecture with historic structures.'

The submitted concept plan, with a large area of surface car parking and a single-use large structure dominating the subject lands, may not accord with the above objectives.

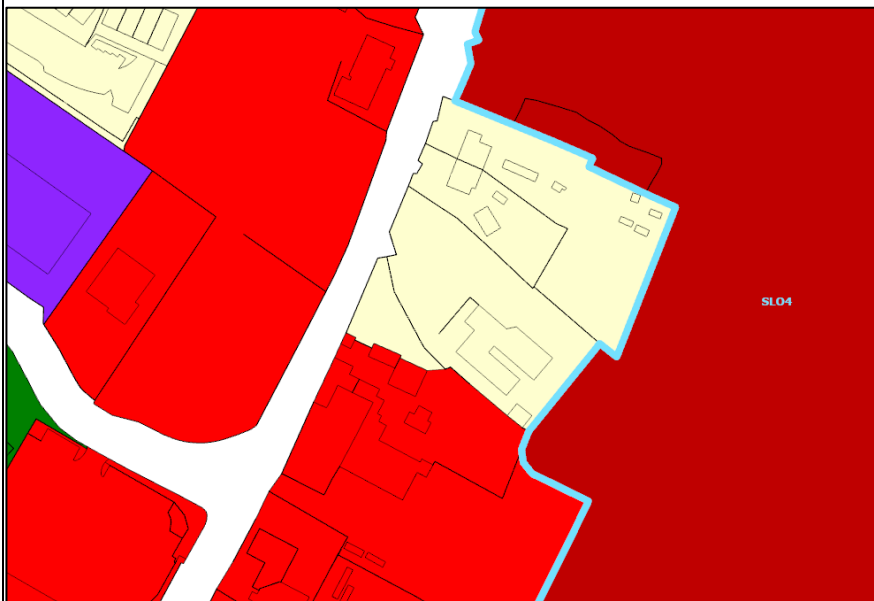
On foot of the above, it is not recommended to split/amend OP8. It is recommended to amend the text in relation to opportunity sites as set out below.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

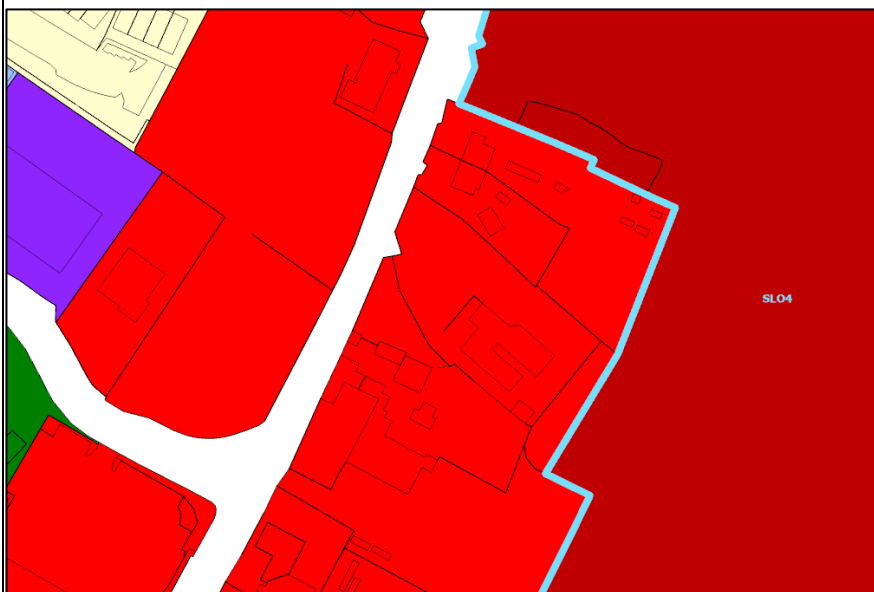
Amend the plan as follows:

4. Amend Map No.1 Land Use Zoning Objectives (and any changes consequent) as follows:

Draft LAP:



Recommended Amendment (including Amended SLO4 boundary):



5. Amend Section B.1 of the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 Written Statement as follows:

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.

'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'.

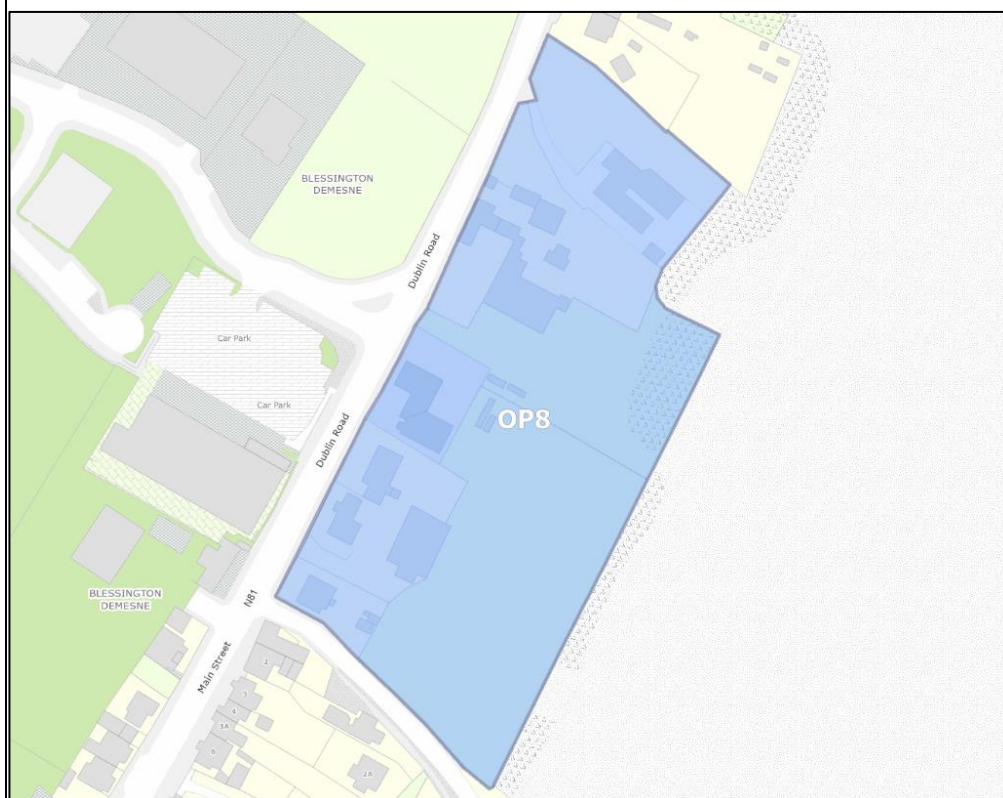
6. Amend OP8 as follows:

Omit OP8 'Concept Plan' Figure B1.11

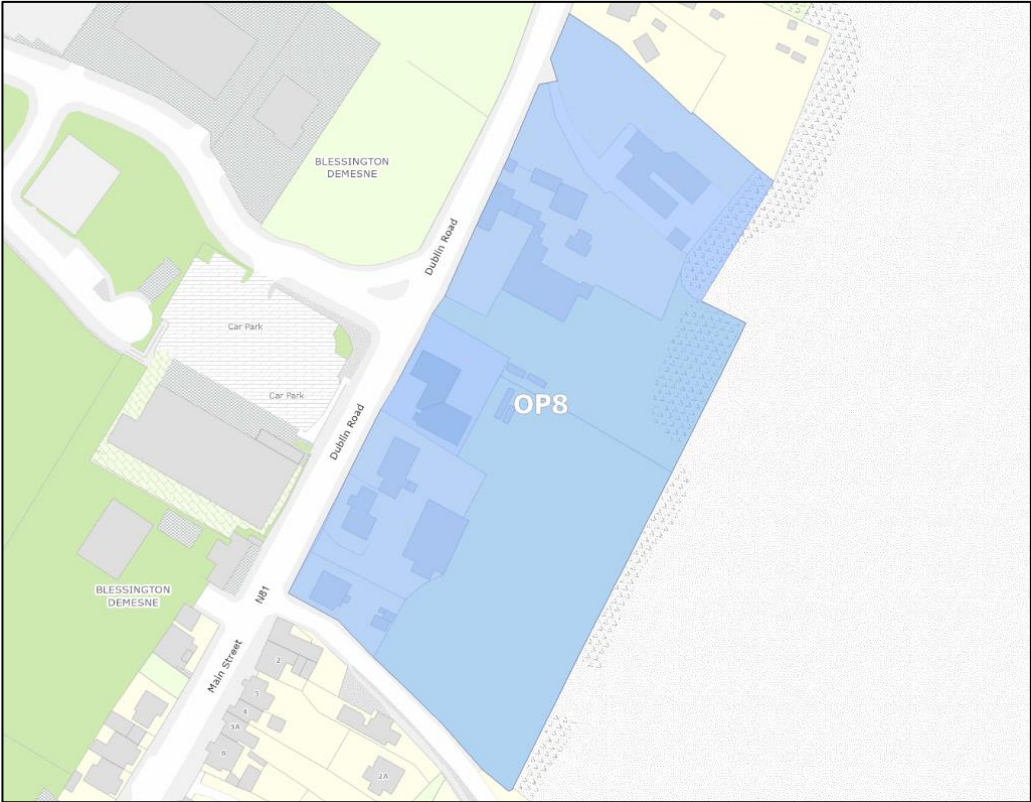
&

Amend OP8 Boundary as follows:

Change from:



Change to:



B.8.2: Specific Local Objectives

Specific Local Objective 1 – Lands at Naas Road.

No.	Name	Issues Raised
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	Submitter objects to land in this area being zoned residential given there is a flood risk associated in the future with SLO1.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>The land use zoning provisions of the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 have undergone a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), which accompanies the draft plan. Consultation with the Office of Public Works has been undertaken with respect to the usage of the 'future scenario flood mapping' data. SFRA is carried out on the basis of the current flood zones; however additional measures have been included in the draft LAP with respect to any future risk of flooding.</p> <p>Objective BLESS51 states the following, noting the referencing of future scenario flood mapping:</p> <p><i>'Applications for new developments or significant alterations/extension to existing developments in an area at risk of flooding shall comply with the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>▪ Follow the 'sequential approach' as set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines;</i> <i>▪ An appropriately detailed flood risk / drainage impact assessment will be required with all planning applications, to ensure that the development itself is not at risk of flooding and the development does not increase the flood risk in the relevant catchment (both up and down stream of the application site), taking into account all sources of flooding;</i> <i>▪ Restrict the types of development permitted in Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B to that which are 'appropriate' to each flood zone, as set out in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines unless the 'plan making justification test' has been applied and passed;</i> <i>▪ Where a site has been subject to and satisfied the 'Plan Making Justification Test' development will only be permitted where a proposal complies with the 'Justification Test for Development Management', as set out in Box 5.1 of the Guidelines.</i> <i>▪ Flood Risk Assessments shall be in accordance with the requirements set out in the Guidelines and the SFRA.</i> <p><i>Where flood zone mapping does not indicate a risk of flooding but the Planning Authority is of the opinion that flood risk may arise or new information has come to light that may alter the flood designation of the land, including the latest future scenario flood mapping, an appropriate flood risk assessment will be required to be submitted by an applicant for planning permission and the sequential approach shall be applied as the 'Plan Making Justification Test' will not be satisfied.'</i></p> <p>Furthermore, the text of SLO1 states the following:</p> <p><i>'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.'</i></p> <p>On this basis, regard has been had to the relevant future scenario flood mapping.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		
<p>Note that an amendment is otherwise recommended to Objective 51 on foot of a submission from the Office of Public Works. Refer to Section 2 Chief Executive Recommended Amendments of this report.</p>		

Specific Local Objective 2 – Blessington Demesne (West)

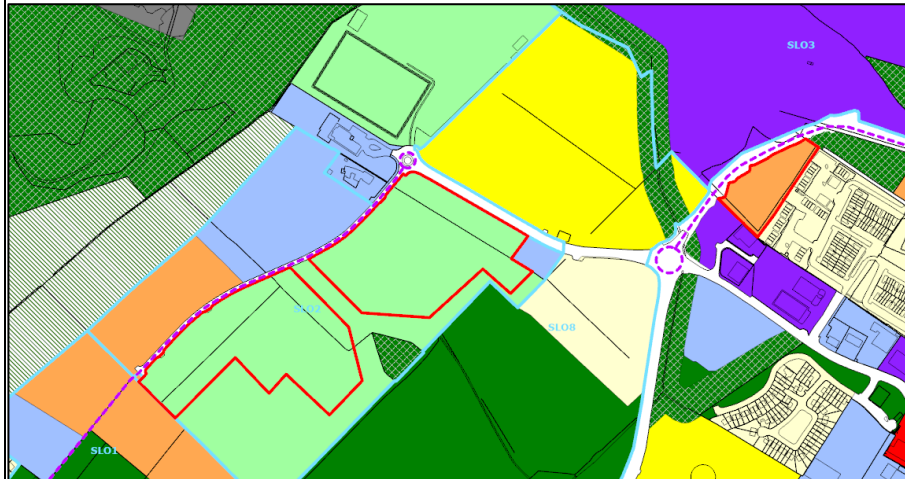
No.	Name	Issues Raised
5	Marcin Jurkowski Ref 183854	Great to see active open space under SLO2, close to town center, instead of building new houses and apartment everywhere (especially if there is plenty of space not too far away).
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	With regards to your active travel map, it is proposed to put car parking in one of the very few active open spaces proposed (map code SL02 refers). Submitter objects to this on the grounds that there is insufficient active open space detailed as it stands. Using some of it for car parking is not acceptable.
120	Niamh Brophy Ref 082217	<p>Suggests amendment of the text of SLO2 as follows:</p> <p><i>'The development of sports facilities, including a 400m athletics track and ancillary facilities on lands zoned Active Open Space, as agreed with the Planning Authority. The active open space should be suitable for the needs of, and shared use by, potential future educational uses on the site reserved for such within this SLO. 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. Permission for residential development will not be considered unless this sport ground will be completed and available for use upon the occupation of the 1st house'</i></p> <p>Rationale – provides clear expectation to a future design team of the requirement to incorporate an athletics track into the AOS zoned lands at SLO 2. Celbridge Athletics track is a good comparison for Blessington. A c2.4ha facility as part of the 14.9ha zoned AOS under SLO2.</p> <p>Also suggests amending the description of the AOS zoning to include direct reference to athletics facilities as a subset of sports grounds, as follows:</p> <p><i>'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 (including athletics facilities), playing pitches, courts and other games areas and to facilitate opportunities for the development of new high quality active recreational areas.</i></p> <p>Rationale – provide clarity that athletics facilities are considered as part of the sports grounds land use.</p>
127	Blessington and District Forum Ref 145547	The Forum is in full agreement with SLO2 & SLO4 that sports facilities should be completed first before any residential development. Neither of these currently zoned AOS lands gives any opportunity to the local clubs of the town to purchase and developed their own amenities.
205	Serpents Basketball Academy Blessington Ref 163620	<p>Regarding the SLO2 & SLO4 in the written statement, submitters would agree that the sports facilities should be developed first before any residential development. Ask for these objectives to remain in the LAP.</p> <p>The town needs various infrastructures to be completed with sporting facilities being a high importance area as they have not been developed over the last 11 to 12 years. This can only be attained with the current SLO2 & SLO4 to remain within the LAP & the written statement.</p>

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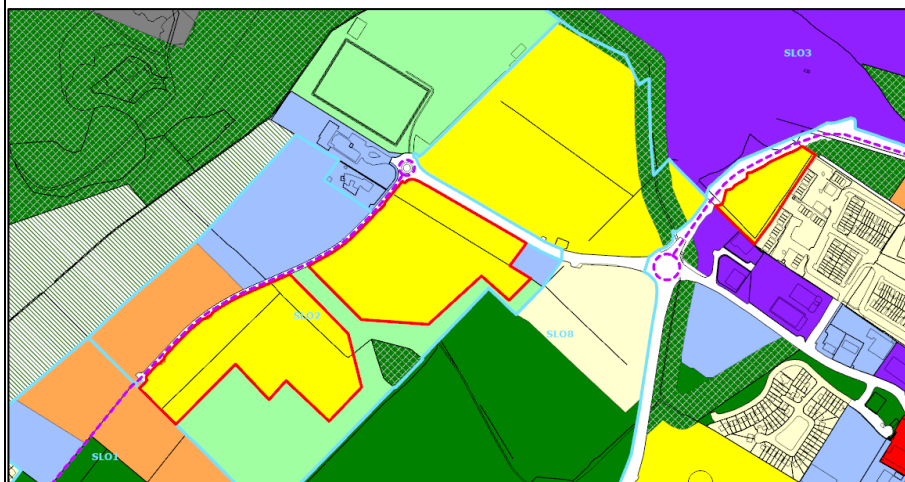
[Cairn Homes Properties Ltd.](#)
[Ref 172755](#)

Request 1: It is requested that lands of c. 9.5ha at Blessington Demesne, zoned AOS 'Active Open Space' in the Draft LAP, and c. 1ha at Newpaddocks, zoned RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' in the Draft LAP, be zoned RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1'.

Draft LAP:



Rezoning Request:



Request 2: It is requested that objective BLESS27 be amended as follows:

BLESS27 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, - To require the delivery of **significant appropriate** areas of outdoor play space on lands zoned AOS as part of SLO-2 and SLO-4. - To require the delivery of public parks on lands zoned OS1 in SLO-1 and SLO-8.

The submission states that the draft LAP completely overestimates the demand for AOS Active Open Space based on flawed analysis in the Social Infrastructure Assessment. Conversely the draft LAP needs to provide additional residential lands to address strategic needs in Wicklow and the Eastern Region generally.

The submission includes a masterplan for the overall landholding (including

		SLO2) which includes <i>'Balance of the Town Park including active open space and athletics track (the latter contingent on the change of zoning to residential in SLO2).'</i>
227	Blessington AFC Ref 204711	Regarding the SLO2 & SLO4 in the written statement, submitters would agree that the sports facilities should be developed first before any residential development. We ask for these objectives to remain in the LAP. The town needs various infrastructures to be completed with sporting facilities being a high importance area as they have not been developed over the last 11 to 12 years. This can only be attained with the current SLO2 & SLO4 to remain within the LAP & the written statement.

Chief Executive Response

Submission No. 5, 205, and 227 are noted.

In response to issues in relation to the quantum of AOS 'Active Open Space' lands within SLO2, it is recognised that some submissions request a reduction in AOS lands, while others support maintaining these AOS lands. The CE is satisfied that the provision of AOS 'Active Open Space' lands within the Draft LAP is adequate and has been informed by the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit, with no change recommended.

In response to requested for additional RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1', the residential zoning provisions of the draft plan have been carefully calibrated to ensure compliance with:

- The NPF, RSES and Wicklow County Development Plan requirements and objectives, in particular consistency with the Wicklow Core Strategy;
- Sound spatial principles in accordance in particular with the requirements of guidance set out in the NPF and Ministerial Guidelines 'Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2022).

In these regards, the request for the zoning of additional land for residential use as detailed in this submission would

- Exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended)
- Result in a reduction in AOS 'Active Open Space' zoned lands, as discussed above.

In response to issues of the lack of opportunities for clubs to purchase and develop their own amenities, the provision of AOS lands is as per the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit. Land ownership and the acquisition/transfer of property is not within the remit of a local area plan. 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. Furthermore, the local area plan has no role in dictating or directing the delivery of private lands to particular sports clubs.

In response to the issue of additional car parking on AOS lands, the text of SLO2 states the following:

'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.'

It is intended that car parking developed in this area be of a level to serve any sports facility developed (as would usually be the case in the development of any such facility) plus an additional level of car parking to serve as an alternative car park for access to Glen Ding. Considering the small number of car parking spaces currently available at the entrance to Glen Ding on the Naas Road, a comparably small number of additional spaces are

intended to be required.

The Chief Executive is amenable to amending the text to clarify the level of additional parking required.

In relation to the exact use and configuration of future sports facilities to be developed in SLO2, at this time, prior to the completion of the forthcoming new **Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan** (public consultation commencing Feb 2025) and the **County Wicklow Local Sports Plan** that is being developed during the course of 2025 it is considered it would be premature to determine a fixed use / users in the LAP. The draft plan zones land for active open space use, with the exact configuration to be determined in agreement with the planning authority at development management/planning application stage.

In 2025, as part of the National Sports Policy, the Wicklow County Council will be developing a Local Sports Plan for the County, which will identify infrastructure needs as well as a project delivery programme for new facilities. All of the submissions made with respect to sports infrastructure to this LAP will be considered in the preparation of the Local Sports Plan.

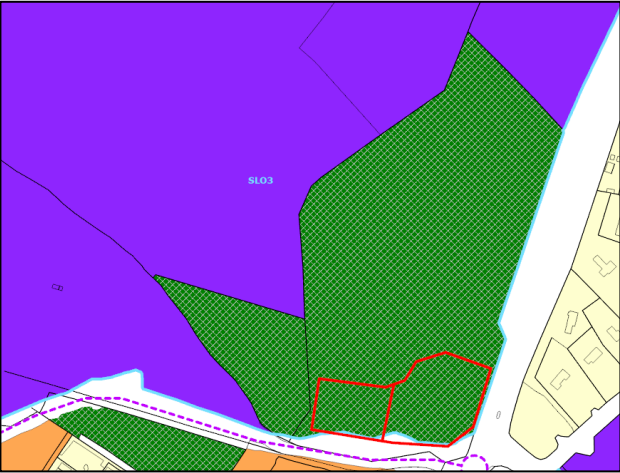
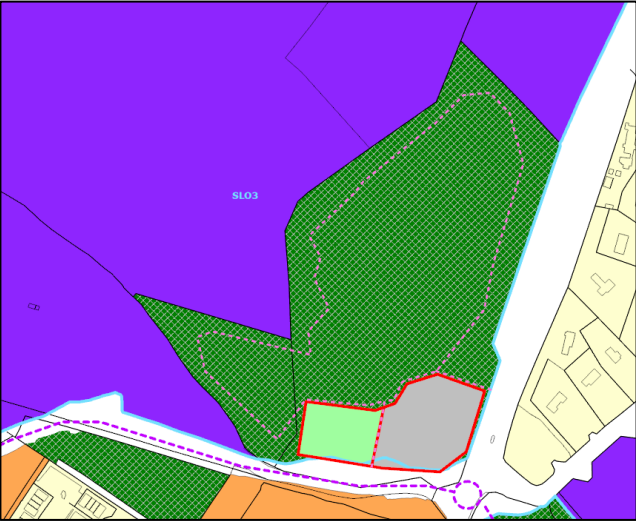
Note that issues in relation to Submission No. 127, 219, 205, 227 have also been assessed in **Part B.8 Zoning, Part B.5 Community Development** and **Appendix 3 Social Infrastructure Audit** as relevant.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

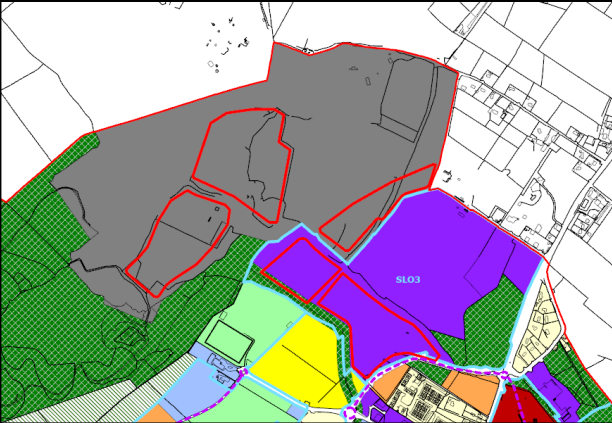
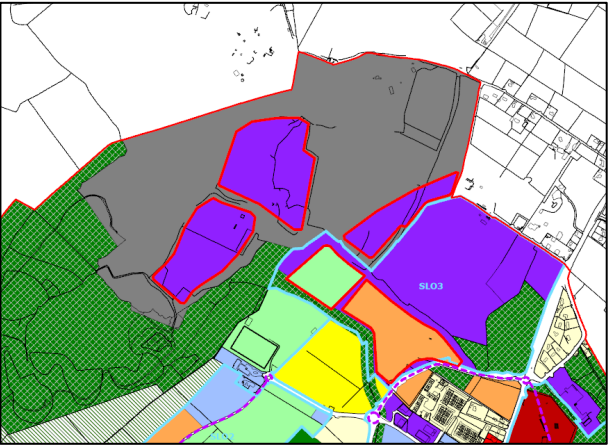
Amend the text of SLO2 as follows:

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.**

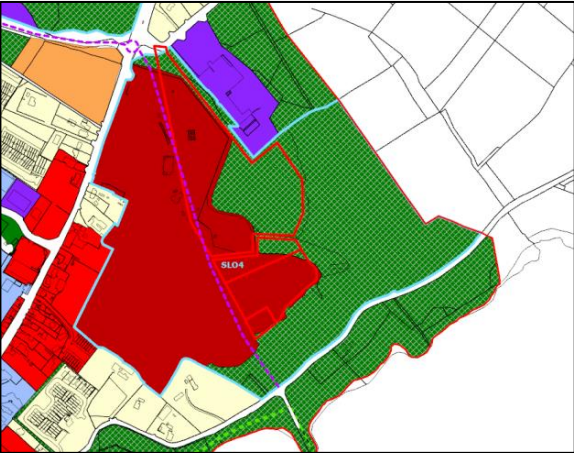
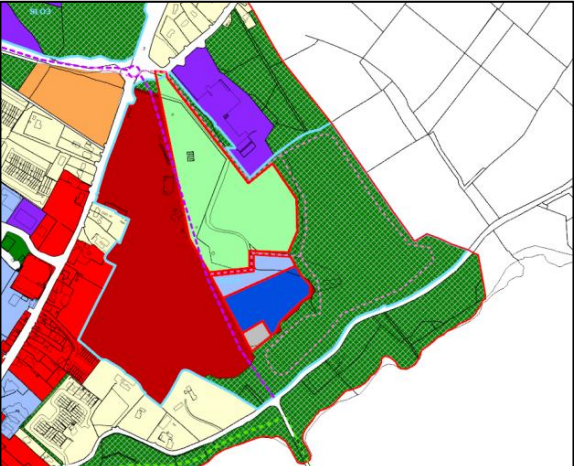
Specific Local Objective 3 – Quarry Employment Lands

No.	Name	Issues Raised
127	Blessington and District Forum Ref 145547	<p>It is requested that c. 0.9ha of lands at Santryhill, zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned for a Park & Ride (c. 0.6ha) and a playground (c. 0.3ha) [The exact requested zonings are unclear, however the most appropriate to suit the requested uses would be PU 'Public Utility' and AOS 'Active Open Space']. A possible 1km forest trail is also indicated. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Park & Ride for Blessington should be located to the north of the town purely from a cost point of view. If the LUAS/other infrastructure goes ahead in the future, it would not be built through or around the town, locating the P&R on the Dublin side will aid the feasibility of such projects, and could also be used for commuters using express buses. ▪ Playground area has residential zoned land to the south. ▪ Removal of a small section of biodiversity area for Park & Ride to be exchanged to adjacent lands. <p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Zoning Request (incl. suggested active travel route):</p> 

		<p>It is further requested that, with the amount of infrastructure projects that can be completed on these lands [referring to both this area of SLO3 and SLO4] a CPO should be considered.</p> <p>It is further submitted that the Residential Zoned Land Tax will not be successful in activating these lands [referring to both this area of SLO3 and SLO4]</p>
208	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 153614	<p>[This submission sets out rezoning requests in relation to lands within SLO3 and other nearby lands] It is requested that lands of c. 36.6ha at Deerpark, Dillonsdown, Blessington Demesne, and Newpaddocks, zoned EX 'Extractive Industry' (c. 24.8ha), E 'Employment' (c. 11.7ha) and OS2 'Natural Areas' (c. 0.2ha) in the Draft LAP, be zoned E 'Employment' (c. 24.8ha), RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2' (c. 7.8ha), and AOS 'Active Open Space' (c. 3.98ha). In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The addition of employment land use zoning north of SLO3 corresponds to lands east of the proposed N81. ▪ Sand and gravel extraction is virtually completed at the quarry located west of the proposed N81 and the area currently zoned EX 'Extractive Industry' is available for other beneficial use. ▪ Rezoning land as requested in SLO3 would have the benefit of creating additional land for residential purposes together with an ancillary area of Active Open Space and facilities which would be complementary to an existing sporting/recreational hub. ▪ It is acknowledged that additional residential areas would be RN2 'New Residential – Priority 2', this proposed residential area can be justified on the basis of site suitability and compatibility with other nearby residential areas, providing additional residential capacity in light of the recent increase in housing targets. This area within SLO3 can be considered on the basis that it can form part of wider integrated housing/community facility/open space scheme that will be well connected to the existing built-up area. ▪ The additional AOS lands in SLO3 would balance the requested reduction in SLO4 [addressed in relation to SLO4 below] and would also ensure that the delivery of AOS is not dependent on the development of a singular opportunity site. ▪ Additional employment land is requested within the EX 'Extractive Industry' area, with the balance of the lands being considered strategic land for future development. The additional employment land would replace the employment land being removed by the proposed residential and active open space zoning requested for SLO3. ▪ Given the strategic importance of Blessington in the context of employment provision, this area is ideally suited to further development for employment purposes. Land at this location can be re-graded as needed to provide for future development. There would be a net increase of 17.04ha of E 'Employment' lands.

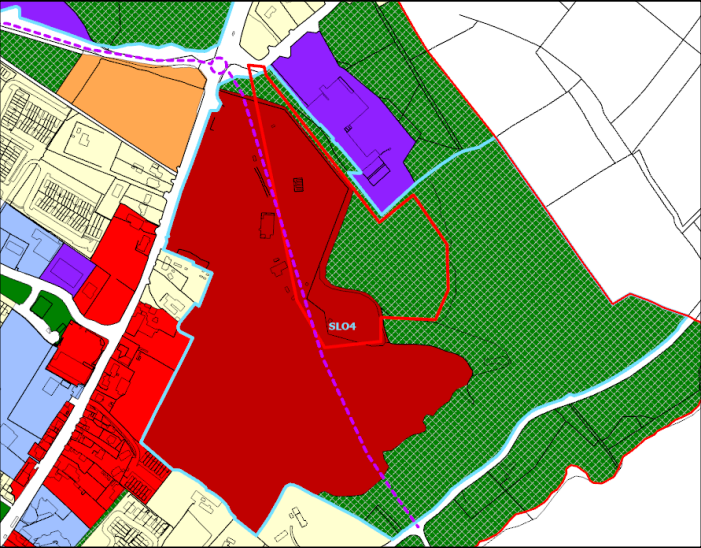
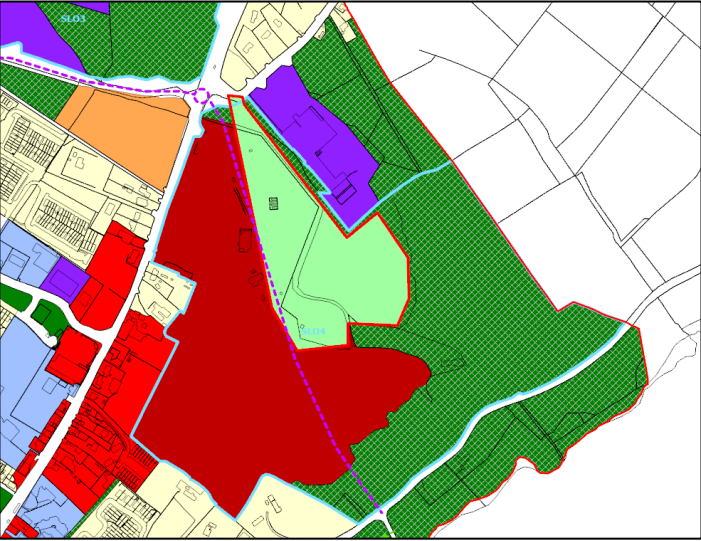
		<p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Rezoning Request:</p> 
225	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 204227	<p>This submission is a duplicate of Submission No. 208, and is assessed under that heading.</p>
Chief Executive Response		
<p>Issues in relation to zoning as raised in the submissions are dealt with in Part B.8 Zoning of this report. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recognised that additional AOS 'Active Open Space' is requested within the SLO3 in various locations by both submissions. The CE is satisfied that the provision of AOS 'Active Open Space' lands within the Draft LAP is adequate and has been informed by the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit, with no change recommended. Furthermore, requested zonings on OS2 'Natural Areas' would conflict with the recommendations of the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit. Requests for additional RN1 'New Residential – Priority 1' lands would exceed Core Strategy requirements, including likely longer term requirements, and therefore would be inconsistent with the Wicklow County Development Plan, which is precluded under Section 19(2) of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended), and would result in a reduction of E 'Employment' land. <p>In relation to potential Compulsory Purchase Orders, this is not within the remit of a local area plan.</p> <p>Issues in relation to the implementation/effectiveness of the Residential Zoned Land Tax are not a matter for the local area plan.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
<p>No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.</p>		

Specific Local Objective 4 – Doran’s Pit

No.	Name	Issues Raised
127	Blessington and District Forum Ref 145547	<p>It is requested that c. 8.6ha of lands at Haylands, zoned MU 'Mixed Use' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space', CE 'Community & Education', T 'Tourism', and PU 'Public Utility' [<i>The exact requested zonings are unclear, however the most appropriate zoning to suit the requested uses would be those above</i>]. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rezoning would see an increase in AOS lands but the retaining of biodiversity areas which could be utilised as a forestry walkway with a walkway linking Haylands & Santryhill. ▪ Multiple infrastructure projects could be completed on these lands including the N81-Knockieran Bridge road, tourism centre and glamping facility (with possible viewpoint with lake views), community centre, greenway parking in a central location close to the proposed Greenway, all while earmarking lands for much-needed sports facilities. ▪ Lands should be zoned as such for the upcoming LAP with the AOS lands to be developed before any residential development can take place. ▪ In conjunction with the lands at Santryhill, CPO should be considered. RZLT may not be implemented and will have no impact on a company with very large revenue/profits. <p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Zoning Request (incl. suggested active travel route):</p> 

		It is further stated that the Forum is in full agreement with the planners SLO2 & SLO4 that sports facilities should be completed first before any residential development
208	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 153614	<p>It is requested that the SLO4 Concept Plan be omitted. In support of this change, the following grounds put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The concept plan shows the zoned area to the east of the new road as green space/undeveloped land which is wholly inconsistent with the zoning map, and is a vast area and unsuitable location for active open space/tourism/car parking with no indication of a viable end user for these facilities. This is inconsistent with CPO 11.53 of the WCDP, which states the following: <i>'Where projects for new tourism projects identified in this chapter 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.'</i> ▪ The delivery of infrastructure at this location will depend on market conditions and development viability. Inconsistencies between the zoning map and this concept plan will lead to developer uncertainty. ▪ The reservation of c.2.7ha for amenity car parking/other tourist infrastructure is also a completely unsustainable model for tourism given the traffic it would generate, and is inconsistent with the need to facilitate modal shift to sustainable transport options as per Chapter 12 of the WCDP and the Climate Action Plan 2024, and CPOs 11.33 and 11.51, which state the following: <i>'CPO 11.33 To encourage eco-tourism projects² or those tourism projects with a strong environmentally sustainable design and operational ethos.'</i> <i>'CPO 11.51 Ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.'</i> ▪ The location is completely unsuited to creating safe and secure neighbourhoods with overlooking from surrounding uses, the required facilities should be integrated within the fabric of the urban extension as opposed to vast areas of car parking with poor design outcomes and adverse effects on the local biodiversity area. The location of open space/tourism facilities is at odds with the requirements of Section 4.2.1 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads which requires a strong sense of enclosure along roads/pedestrian streets. ▪ The proposed link road through SLO4 may attract a significant amount of traffic, the placement of this tourism facility may also add further pressure to this road and have negative implications on the proposed residential development. <p>It is further requested that the quantum of Active Open Space be reduced in SLO4, from 3.3ha to 2ha. [Note that Section 4.4 of the submission indicates that no land use zoning is requested in this area, only amendments to SLO requirements/concept plans]. In support of this change, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is noted that pre-draft consultation indicated a considerable shortfall in

		<p>the provision of active open space, and the lack of a football field for Blessington AFC is acknowledged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No rational is provided for 3.3ha at this location. ▪ 2ha is more than sufficient to provide for the average football pitch (0.714ha) and MUGA area. ▪ A smaller area of Active Open Space will also facilitate development that is in keeping with the development of a compact urban extension. ▪ A replacement area of active open space of 3.98ha as requested above on lands zoned EX 'Extractive Industry', a net increase of 2.68ha.
225	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 204227	This submission is a duplicate of Submission No. 208 and is addressed under that heading.
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	<p>Submitter objects to SLO4 having a mixed use zoning having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ insufficient infrastructure in Blessington to meet additional transport demands on our roads ▪ insufficient sports facilities and ▪ insufficient entertainment facilities ▪ insufficient school facilities <p>It is put forward that further residential units will put too much pressure on already breaking infrastructure; public transport is insufficient as it stands, the town doesn't have recreational or leisure facilities and roads are in a dire state. Numerous children travel outside of Blessington to attend school. This adds to further pollution and impacts on climate action mandate. The submitter requests that those matters are addressed first, before zoning any further land for residential, or mixed use purposes.</p> <p>SLO4 Concept Plan: The active open space here indicates a football pitches and tennis courts. The submitter puts forward that these are already available in Blessington and what is needed is an athletics track and swimming pool.</p>
103	J. P. & M. Doyle Ltd. Ref 140434	<p>It is requested that the indicative cycling and pedestrian link at the southern/rear boundary Blessington Mart be omitted from Figure B.8.5 and moved off the Blessington Mart site and onto the adjoining OS2 lands to the northeast on Map No. 6: Active Travel Strategy. In support of this change, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Following on from the request to reinstate the employment zoning at the Mart, there is no planning reason to retain an indicative pedestrian and cycling link into the Mart. If the OS2 zoning to the northeast of the Mart is retained, it would be more appropriate to show the indicative link into that OS2 land. ▪ There is no key green infrastructure in the historic planning unit of the Mart – see Map No. 3 Key Green Infrastructure. There is a green corridor adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the site, it would be more suitable for the indicative route as opposed to through the Blessington Mart site, which is not compatible with active travel proposals.
205	Serpents Basketball Academy Blessington Ref 163620	<p>These 2 No submissions are very similar in content and, alongside background information on each club, request the following:</p> <p>In relation to the overall quantum of AOS 'Active Open Space' lands within the Draft LAP, the following is stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lands zoned AOS are owned by a developer and a quarry operator

227	<p>Blessington AFC Ref 204711</p>	<p>and does not give much opportunity for a club to purchase their own land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None of the AOS land from the Blessington LAP 2013-2019 were utilised. ▪ Blessington AFC has outgrown their facilities at Crosschapel, with the club having 800 members ▪ The GAA have also outgrown their facilities. ▪ Serpents Basketball Academy has c.100 members with c.100 on a waiting list, and rents outdoor and indoor space (with the indoor space being too small). <p>It is requested that c. 6ha of lands at Haylands, zoned MU 'Mixed Use' and OS2 'Natural Areas' in the Draft LAP, be zoned AOS 'Active Open Space'. In support of this rezoning, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lands could become a community hub with sports facilities, a community centre, playground, and parking. <p>Draft LAP:</p>  <p>Zoning Request:</p> 
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		Regarding SLO2 and SLO4 in the written statement, submitters would agree that the sports facilities/road should be developed first before any residential development; the town needs various infrastructures to be completed with sporting facilities being a high importance area as they have not been developed over the last 11 to 12 years. This can only be attained with the current SLO2 and SLO4 to remain within the LAP & the written statement and to utilise the above proposals along with these objectives.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>Issues in relation to specific zoning requests as raised in the submissions are dealt with in Part B.8 Zoning of this report.</p> <p>In relation to potential Compulsory Purchase Orders, this is not within the remit of a local area plan.</p> <p>Issues in relation to the implementation/effectiveness of the Residential Zoned Land Tax are not a matter for the local area plan.</p> <p>Issues raised supporting the requirements set out in the Draft LAP for the development of sporting facilities before residential development are noted;</p> <p>In relation to the request for an indicative forest walkway through OS2 lands in SLO4, the text of SLO4 states the following: <i>'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.'</i> On this basis, the indication of an indicative route is not considered necessary.</p> <p>In relation to the pedestrian/cyclist link indicated (by an arrow) on the SLO4 Concept plan, the assessment of Submission No. 103 in Part B.8.1 Zoning Requests above, recommends that the active travel route through the Blessington Mart landholding be omitted. On this basis, the indicated link on the concept plan would not serve a purpose and is also recommended for omission.</p> <p>Noting the competing requests for both additional and a reduced quantum of AOS lands in SLO4, the provision of AOS lands by either zoning, or in this case a requirement within a Specific Local Objective, is in line with the recommendations of the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit. The CE is satisfied that the appropriate quantum of AOS lands have been provided for in the settlement, as per tables on pg. 50 of the Draft LAP Written Statement. On foot of these requests, no change is recommended. This issue is further addressed under Part B.5 Community and Development and Part B.8 Zoning of this report.</p> <p>In relation to an overall objection to the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning on the lands on the basis that transport/sport/school/entertainment infrastructure does not have the capacity for more residential units, attention is directed to the following statement in the text of SLO4: <i>'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.'</i> Residential development on the lands would therefore have to comply with the objectives in relation to residential phasing/core strategy as set out in the Draft LAP.</p> <p>Attention is also drawn to CPO 6.20 and CPO 7.46 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, which state the following:</p> <p><i>'CPO 6.20 Housing development shall be managed and phased to ensure that infrastructure is adequate or is being provided to match the needs of new residents.</i></p> <p><i>New significant residential or mixed use development proposals (of which residential development forms a component), shall be required to be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Audit, to determine if social and</i></p>		

community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services.

New significant residential or mixed use development proposals shall be required to be accompanied by a 'Accessibility Report' that demonstrates that new residents / occupants / employees (including children and those with special mobility needs) will be able to safely access through means other than the private car:

- (a) local services including shops, schools, health care and recreational facilities, and*
- (b) public transport services.*

Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity/quality of existing or planned linkages.'

'CPO 7.46 To require open space to be provided in tandem with new residential development (in accordance with the standards set out in the Development & Design Standards Appendix).'

In line with the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit, lands have been zoned throughout the plan are of both CE 'Community & Education', AOS 'Active Open Space' and OS1 'Open Space' to meet the needs of the level of growth envisioned in the prevailing Core Strategy. Furthermore, the development of SLO4 would deliver 3.3ha of Active Open Space, and 2.7ha of tourism infrastructure/amenity car parking and a road objective in tandem with any residential development, noting the statement in the text of SLO4 requiring the completion of the road objective and sports ground before the occupation of residential units. On this basis, the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning is considered appropriate.

In relation to the type of sports fields indicated on the SLO4 Concept Plan, this is entirely illustrative of location/access to any developed sports facilities within the overall development, and is not indicative of the type of facilities to be delivered. Text from the Draft LAP is referenced as follows: *'the exact type and layout of active open space uses shall be agreed with the Planning Authority'*. To clarify, the Planning Authority in question will, in most cases, be Wicklow County Council itself, or An Bord Pleanála as relevant, and refers to the development management/planning application stage. In 2025, as part of the National Sports Policy, the Wicklow County Council will be developing a Local Sports Plan for the County, which will identify infrastructure needs as well as a project delivery programme for new facilities. All of the submissions made with respect to sports infrastructure to this LAP will be considered in the preparation of the Local Sports Plan. On this basis, no amendments to the SLO4 Concept Plan are recommended.

In relation to the request to omit the concept plan from SLO4, the CE is of the opinion that the concept plan is entirely consistent with the lands zoned MU 'Mixed Use', in that the uses permitted under the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning is expanded upon within the text of SLO4, and for which the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning was intended in determining the zoning of the lands in the Draft LAP. The purpose of the MU 'Mixed Use' zoning in this case was a practical concern in that the final route / design of the road objective is indicative only, and setting out precise zoning boundaries in relation to this road may not be appropriate/possible. The CE is amenable to amending the text of SLO4 to clarify the uses that are intended for development within the MU 'Mixed Use' zoned area.

In relation to the location of the car park, the traffic generated, and the need to promote modal shift, the CE does not agree that the location of such a car parking facility would promote car usage. Map No. 7 indicates objectives that may aid supporting the previously planned extension of the Blessington Greenway, with the map showing the reserved land as potentially operating as a greenway supporting car park.

While the recently proposed greenway extension project has been recently refused consent by An Bord Pleanála, the 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. In this regard, the development of a tourism related car park, in close proximity and with direct access via the new road to the Blessington Lakes is an objective that is essential to retain. SLO4 is the optimal location in Blessington and in the wider area for providing supporting infrastructure for the future development of the tourism and recreation sector associated with the lakes.

Blessington serves a wide rural catchment population. Considering the current level of service of public transport in Blessington, many visitors to the lakes area and other amenities asset in Blessington, as well residents of Blessington's rural catchment will likely use the private car in some part of their journey. The location of the reserved land, and other locations intended for car parking as set out in BLESS48, is intended to facilitate modal shift to active travel in accessing the town centre, by diverting those entering the town from parking in the built-up area, allowing for road space reallocation and active travel infrastructure in central areas. Furthermore, any such facilities of large surface car parking could potentially be redeveloped in the future were the level of public transport service in Blessington to be significantly improved.

The provisions of the draft LAP, such as those relating to visitor centres, visitor car parking etc are recommended to be maintained in the plan, even in the absence of the current greenway project, as such facilities would support a wide range of tourism project and activities.

In relation to urban design consideration raised with regard to the concept plan, the description of SLO4 states the following: *'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 proposed Blessington eGreenway.'*

The submission states that AOS/other facilities should be integrated into urban extensions as opposed to vast areas of car parking with poor design outcomes, lacking overlooking, at odds with the strong enclosure required by the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets. The text of SLO4 explicitly refers to providing a strong sense of enclosure, and the above vision for SLO4 explicitly states that it is intended that the predominantly residential part of the mixed use development be 'bounded' by the planned link street. To do so serves to provide a strong boundary and gateway function between the 'town proper' immediately adjacent to the town centre and the relatively open active open space/tourism/parking uses transitioning into OS2 lands and the settlement boundary/rural area. The layout in the concept plan also avoids a significant resident population having to cross the link street to access the town centre (with the possibility that residents may choose to drive), and avoids the link street being perceived as the 'centre' of the regenerated area over the central green area/plaza indicated in the concept plan. Passive surveillance can be provided to the eastern side of the link street by any tourism/accommodation/clubhouse structures, passing traffic on the active travel route, and by residences providing the strong enclosure to the western side of the street.

In relation to adverse impacts on the local biodiversity area, the text of SLO4 requires the development of appropriate buffer zones from site of biodiversity value.

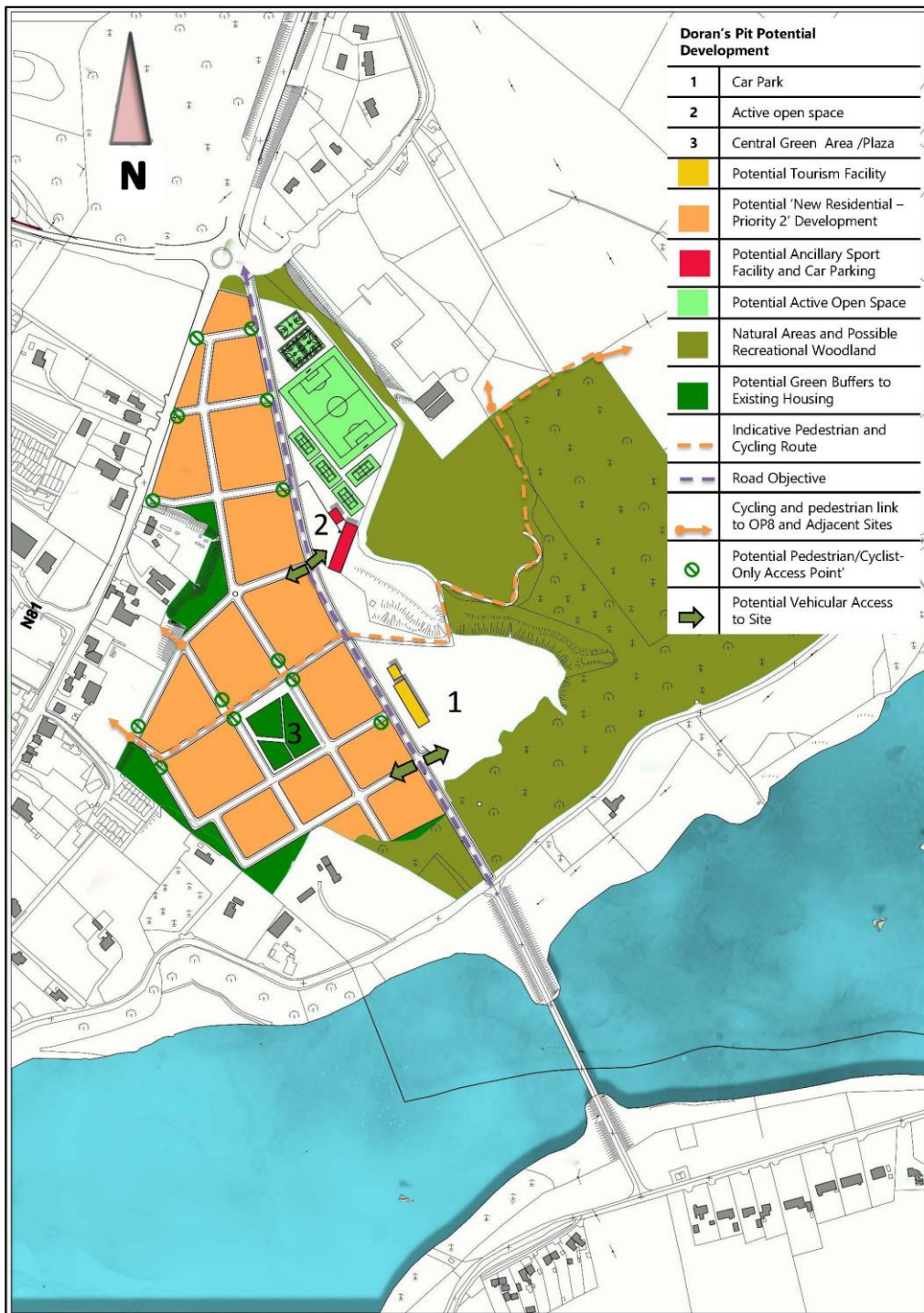
On foot of the above, no changes are recommended to the concept plan of SLO4.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Omit the cycling and pedestrian link to the Blessington Mart lands from the SLO4 concept plan.

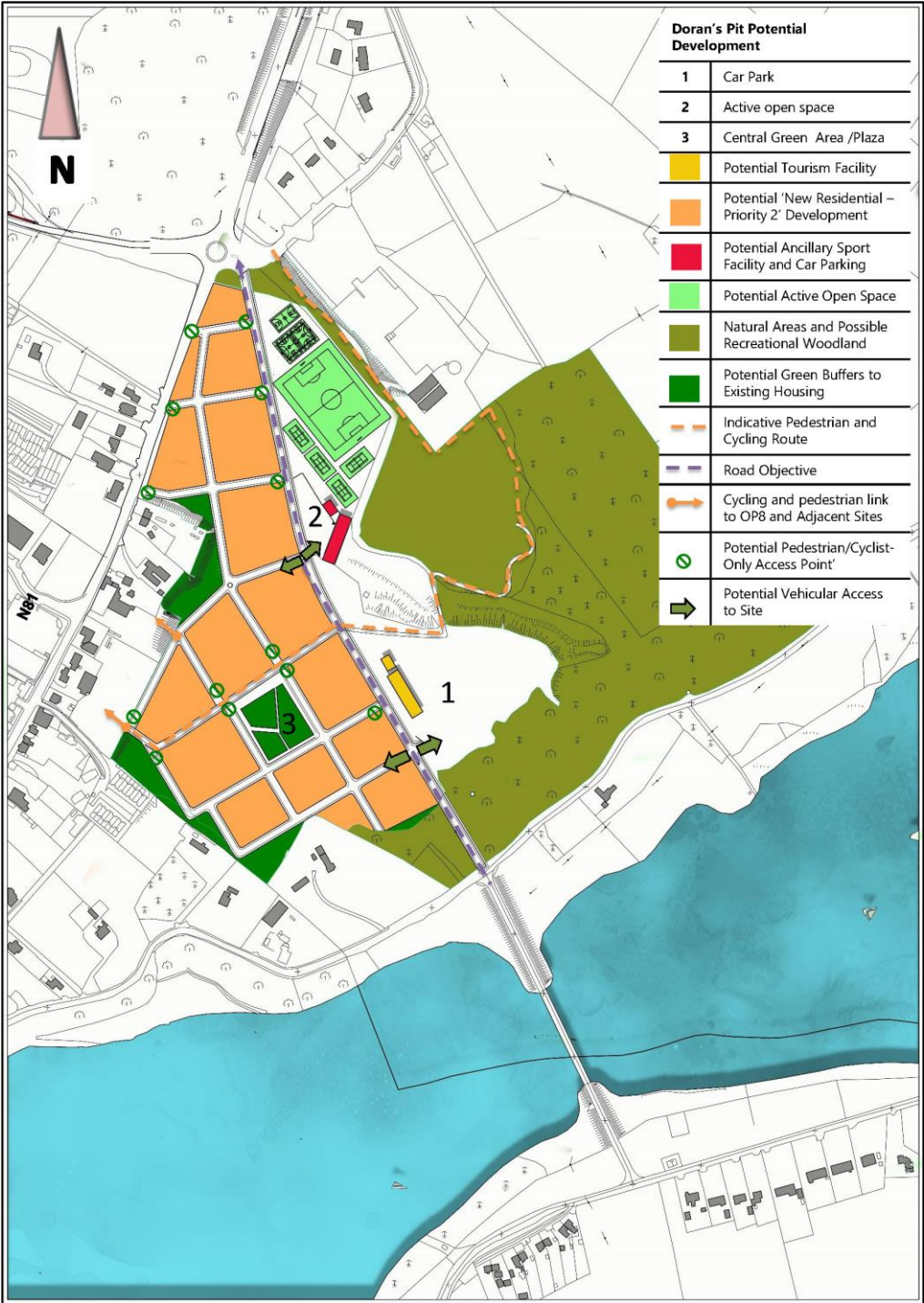
Change from:

Draft Plan SLO4 Concept Plan



Change to:

Proposed Amended Draft Plan SLO4 Concept Plan



And

Amend the text of SLO4 as follows:

Specific Local Objective 4 – Doran’s Pit

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 proposed Blessington eGreenway. 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 **edment** as follows:
 - (e) 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.
 - (f) 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.
 - (g) The development of at least c.3.3 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 1st house.
 - (h) **The reservation of land of not less than c.2.7 ha 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 reservation of land of not less than c.2.7 ha 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 proposed Blessington eGreenway (via the road objective), while minimising the interaction between parking cars and cyclists/pedestrians.~~

- 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.

Specific Local Objective 5 – Burgage More (North)
 Specific Local Objective 6 – Burgage More (Central)
 Specific Local Objective 7 – Burgage More (South)

No.	Name	Issues Raised
19	Ballymore Eustace Community Development Association Ref 133645	<p>The submitters object generally to zoning in the south west of the settlement (SLO5, SLO6 and SLO7) given their proximity to the reservoir and distance from the centre of the settlement. They suggest the plan must seek to control urban sprawl and promote density, whilst making best use of improvements to the Town Centre under the town centre first plan and that these Specific Land Objectives do not comply with good land use planning and would lead to car dependent development. With respect Section B.8 of the draft plan, under the heading 'European Sites' which states:</p> <p><i>'The approach to zoning lands adjoining European Sites has been as follows: 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;'</i></p> <p>The submitters object to the use of point 3 on the grounds that undeveloped lands that have the potential to impact on the integrity of a European Site must not be zoned in any case – with the exception of open space.</p>
Chief Executive Response		
<p>In relation to the approach to zoning lands adjoining European Sites, the CE is satisfied that the approach to zoning (which is set out in the Wicklow CDP and undergone SEA and AA) is correct and zoning provisions of the Draft Plan are consistent with this approach. Significant areas of lands have been zoned OS2 'Natural Areas' as buffer zones around the Lakeshore, generally is excess of that under the Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019. The extent of these OS2 'Natural Areas' lands has been informed by the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit. Furthermore, the Draft LAP has undergone Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Issues raised in this submission with respect to SEA and AA are addressed in Section 5 SEA and AA of this report.</p> <p>In relation to the zoning of the SLO as being car-dependent and distant from the town centre, the accompanying Blessington Local Transport Assessment indicates that the lands are within walking distance to public transport and also states the following:</p> <p><i>'The spatial extent of Blessington is such that most of the settlement is within 15 minutes' walk of the town centre (as represented by the Downshire monument). Land zoned for development within or just beyond such a walking distance would be easily accessible by bicycle in a short time to/from other parts of the settlement were adequate infrastructure in place.'</i></p> <p>A range of objectives supporting the development of adequate active travel infrastructure are included in the Draft LAP. Furthermore, the SLO does not extend further from the town centre than other existing areas of the settlement, e.g. Burgage Manor.</p> <p>On the basis of the above, no changes are recommended to the Draft Blessington LAP 2025.</p>		
Chief Executive's Recommendation		
No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.		

Specific Local Objective 8

No.	Name	Issues Raised
219	Cairn Homes Properties Ltd. Ref 172755	<p>It is requested that the below text of SLO8 be omitted: Permission for additional residential development within this SLO will not be considered unless this town park will be completed and available for use, in full, upon the occupation of the 1st house.</p> <p>In support of this, the following grounds are put forward:</p> <p>The suggested wording that permission for '<i>additional residential development... will not be considered</i>' is quite loosely drafted, with serious consequences that the planning authority would not even entertain an application at the site pending completion of the park. Whilst the park has planning permission, it will not be commenced until there is certainty in relation to the Phase 2 residential development. The viability of delivering the park is contingent upon the delivery of housing they are not mutually exclusive.</p> <p>It is further requested that the draft LAP highlight the successful implementation of Phase 1 of the town park.</p>
5	Marcin Jurkowski Ref 183854	Regarding "Map No. 1 Land Use Zoning Objectives" – submitter is happy to see open space under SLO8 and active open space under SLO02, close to town center, instead of building new houses and apartment everywhere (especially if there is plenty of space not too far away).
13	Rachel Murphy Ref 173347	The submitter objects to SLO8 having a further residential zoning on that further residential units will put too much pressure on already breaking infrastructure; public transport is insufficient as it stands, the town doesn't have recreational or leisure facilities and roads are in a dire state. Numerous children travel outside of Blessington to attend school. This adds to further pollution and impacts on climate action mandate. The submitter requests that those matters are addressed first, before zoning any further land for residential purposes.
110	Carmel Cashin Ref 163114	The submitter suggests that the area that would be most suited to a community centre would be SLO8 and this would require zoning for active open space as opposed to open space. This space would be easily accessible for all members of the community. This area could be further utilised with a 400m running track to facilitate track and field events such as community games, Safe walking spaces for our more vulnerable community members but also provide a home for a club in the town the Lakeshore Striders who will have nowhere to train their adult or juvenile groups. This space could be used to meet the needs of a significant cohort. The community centre would become a hive of activity and a safe space for service users. This is not a sports centre but a community centre.
Chief Executive Response		
<p>In relation to the requirement for the completion of the town park upon the occupation of the 1st house, it is considered that the text is entirely appropriate and will not hinder the granting of permissions with conditions requiring such. On this basis, the requested amendment is not recommended.</p> <p>In relation to the recognition of the completion of the town park, the CE welcomes the completion and recent opening of Phase 1 of the town park as an important asset to the town of Blessington. However, it would not appear that amending the Draft LAP in that respect would have any material planning effect and is unnecessary.</p> <p>Submission No. 5 is noted.</p>		

In relation to an overall objection to the zoning on the lands on the basis that transport/sport/school/entertainment infrastructure does not have the capacity for more residential units, lands have been zoned throughout the plan are of both CE 'Community & Education', AOS 'Active Open Space' and OS1 'Open Space' to meet the needs of the level of growth envisioned in the prevailing Core Strategy, in line with the recommendations of the accompanying Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit.

Attention is also drawn to CPO 6.20 and CPO 7.46 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, which state the following:

'CPO 6.20 Housing development shall be managed and phased to ensure that infrastructure is adequate or is being provided to match the needs of new residents.'

New significant residential or mixed use development proposals (of which residential development forms a component), shall be required to be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Audit, to determine if social and community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of the future residents. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity of existing or planned services.

New significant residential or mixed use development proposals shall be required to be accompanied by a 'Accessibility Report' that demonstrates that new residents / occupants / employees (including children and those with special mobility needs) will be able to safely access through means other than the private car:

- (a) local services including shops, schools, health care and recreational facilities, and*
- (b) public transport services.*

Where deficiencies are identified, proposals will be required to either rectify the deficiency, or suitably restrict or phase the development in accordance with the capacity/quality of existing or planned linkages.'

'CPO 7.46 To require open space to be provided in tandem with new residential development (in accordance with the standards set out in the Development & Design Standards Appendix).'

Furthermore, the development of SLO8 would deliver a significant 15.3ha area of Open Space (town park) in tandem with any residential development, noting the statement in the text of SLO8 requiring the completion of the road objective and sports ground before the occupation of residential units. On this basis, the zoning of the lands as per the Draft LAP is considered appropriate.

In relation to the suggested community centre in SLO8, such a use would be already permissible the other land use zonings in the SLO, namely RN1 'New Residential Priority 1' and in a wide variety of zones through the town in close proximity to this area. The lands zoned OS1 in SLO8 are considered more suitable for open parkland type uses given particularly the archeology of the area, and are not therefore being promoted for the development of community centres or sports grounds in this plan. In terms of the requests for a running track, a significant area of AOS 'Active Open Space' lands are situated immediately adjacent to SLO 8 in SLO 2, which would permit the development of such a facility.

On this basis, no changes are recommended to SLO8.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the Draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

Appendix 3 Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit

A large number of submissions refer specifically to the provision sports and recreation facilities including but not exclusive to athletics, ball sports and the provision of a swimming pool to serve Blessington and West Wicklow. A number of submissions also related to the provision of facilities along the lakeshore for water sports. Concerns were also raised with regard to the provision of education and childcare facilities, general services including healthcare and community facilities such as graveyards, parks and community centres. These submissions have been addressed under **Part B.5 Community Development**, of this report.

The submissions below relate specifically to the population projections and calculations for open space areas in the Blessington Social Infrastructure Audit.

Calculation of Open Space Areas

No.	Name	Issues Raised
15	Joan and Billy Flynn Ref 150523	<p>Based on a calculated shortfall the Social Infrastructure Audit concludes that 9.3ha should be zoned for additional OS1 'Open Space' use. It is submitted that this analysis is flawed for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The calculation of the amount of open space to be provided per 1000 population is based on section 8.1 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. ▪ The Audit adopts a population figure of 15,000 as the current population and 17,000 as the future population. However, these population figures relate to the catchment area, not the town area. ▪ The additional 9.3 hectares of zoned lands are all located within the town boundary, many of the existing open space facilities that serve the catchment population are provided outside the town. ▪ It is submitted that the open space audit should therefore also take into account the available open space facilities within the catchment area. ▪ The audit fails to include a qualitative assessment of current open space facilities provided in the town. ▪ The audit concludes a current shortfall of open space of 7.68 hectares based on a quantitative analysis using county wide development standards without a qualitative survey of use and demand amongst the population of existing facilities. ▪ In February 2023, Wicklow County Council published a commissioned report into the community and recreational needs of the Baltinglass Municipal District. This survey used qualitative as well as quantitative criteria. The survey mentioned the need for specific facilities (including a swimming pool and a football field) but no reference is made to dissatisfaction with the quality of open space in the town. ▪ The audit is unclear whether the increase of 9.3 hectares of OS1 zoned lands is in addition to existing facilities or in addition to existing zoned lands. ▪ The unmet current demand for open space as stated on page 58 of the Audit document is based on an assumed existing provision of 13 hectares (8.72+4.15+0.17). This existing provision relates not to existing zoned lands

		<p>but to existing open space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the figure 2.10 in the SIA the two large areas of OS1 zoned lands (New Town Park and the SLO1 area are not existing facilities. According to the accompanying table, a part of the New Town Park is included (3.61 hectares) because it is under construction, but not the SLO1 area. It can therefore be concluded that the existing area of open space as listed on page 55 of 13 hectares is existing facilities, not existing zoned land in the current LAP.
153	Dunmoy Properties Ltd. Ref 212157	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted that additional lands should be zoned for residential development to cater for future population projections. In this regard it is noted that the existing NFP growth estimates and housing targets are under review. The existing NFP estimated the annual rate of population growth in the Country would be 0.9% per annum. The Census indicated that the growth rate was actually 1.3% p.a., with Wicklow growing at 1.5% p.a. Provision. Provision should be made for pent up demand which has grown considerably over the last few years as access to the housing market has proved impossible for large numbers of people. This has been heavily influenced by lack of supply.
219	Cairn Homes Ref 172755	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft LAP seeks to zone Cairn's lands for Active Open Space. Submitted that this is entirely unfeasible as presented and can only be implemented with development to support the significant investment required. The AOS area of 15 hectares has been sized to cater for a catchment population of 17,000 which is entirely inappropriate. The allocation of AOS has been grossly miscalculated based on flawed analysis for the town. The Social Infrastructure Assessment Report wrongly assesses need based on Level 2 of the Community Facilities Hierarchy Model – 'Settlements with population range of 7000-15,000 rather than Level 3 (2,000-7,000). Using a more accurate max. population of 7,000 the AOS demand is 11.2Ha. (not 24 Ha), with unmet demand of 2.48 Ha. not 15.28 Ha. (Ref. B.8). Taking into account lands in Co. Kildare, the SIA considers the target population for the settlement in 2031 is taken as 7,048. This crass calculation places the settlement just over the threshold into a Level 2 of the Community Facilities Hierarchy Model – 'Settlements with population range 7,000-15,000'. The Draft LAP's Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIA) Report refers to the standard at Section 8.1 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 for active open space: • active open space shall be required as a rate of 2.4ha per 1,000 population divided into: – 1.6ha outdoor play space (pitches, courts, sports grounds) – 0.6ha casual play spaces (parks) – 0.2ha equipped play space (playgrounds and MUGAs) The current population is approx. 5,611 not the catchment of 15,000 used at page 58 (based on level 2 of the settlement model) as shown below.
214	Blessington GAA Ref 180116	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blessington GAA grounds are identified in the Plan as making up a significant proportion of the outdoor play space within the town at 7.9ha of 8.72ha. While the plan is correct in ascertaining that Blessington GAA currently occupies a site of c. 7.9ha this land area provides for only three playing pitches and a

		<p>smaller all-weather pitch totaling c.4ha of actual play space once all car parking, storage, club facilities and circulation space etc has been factored in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submitted that this is a miscalculation in open space provision and that additional land should be zoned for AOS.
225	Belgard Estates Ltd. Ref 204227	Submitted that there is insufficient justification provided in the Draft LAP in relation to the quantum of active open space, 3.3ha, required in SLO4. Requested that the quantum is reduced from 3.3ha to 2ha and a replacement area of active open space at alternative location within the submitter's landholding which could provide a total area of 3.98 ha of active open space in close proximity to another proposed residential area.

Chief Executive Response

The draft LAP, in combination with the Social Infrastructure Audit appendix of the LAP has carried out a full audit of sports and recreation existing and future land use needs within the settlement. The draft LAP has zoned the required amount of land for Active Open Space (AOS) and Community (CE), which allows for sports facilities to be developed, for the future needs of the population of the settlement and its catchment.

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

Blessington is a service hub for a wide rural catchment including the villages of Hollywood, Manor Kilbride, Lackan, Ballyknockan, Dunlavin, Donard and Valkeymount (in County Wicklow), Rathmore, Eadestown, Ballymore (in County Kildare) and Brittas in County Dublin. In terms of access 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 therefore a hub for the provision of community facilities including Active Open Space facilities which will serve residents living in its hinterland.

While it is acknowledged that many communities within the rural catchment of Blessington would have sports and recreation facilities such as playing pitches and playgrounds, it is recognised that Blessington, as the only Level 3 Settlement (Settlement Hierarchy) in West Wicklow, is envisaged to provide more specialist sports and recreation facilities which could include; a swimming pool, sports track, multisport playing pitches and courts etc. An audit of the active open space facilities within the catchment of Blessington would therefore not be appropriate.

It is submitted above that the allocation of AOS has been miscalculated and that the Social Infrastructure Assessment Report wrongly assesses need based on Level 2 of the Community Facilities Hierarchy Model – 'Settlements with population range of 7000-15,000 rather than Level 3 (2,000-7,000). In this regard the Social Infrastructure Audit notes the following:

- As per the Core Strategy the population target for Blessington (in Co. Wicklow) by Q2 2028 is 6,145, with a housing growth target of an additional 514 units for the 2016-2031 period.
- The target population of Blessington (in Co. Wicklow) for 2031 is 6,313.
- The Social Infrastructure Audit acknowledges that since the 2022 Census, there has been new residential development built in Blessington and it is likely that through planning permissions for

residential development that are either recently completed, currently under construction and permissions that have not commenced yet, the 2031 population target will be fulfilled well before that date.

- The Social Infrastructure Audit also has to consider the population target for the area of Blessington located in the jurisdiction of Co.Kildare, noting that a much larger proportion of the town is located in Co. Wicklow and that this portion of the town will provide the vast majority of the community facilities serving the Blessington population living in Co. Kildare, including open space and sports facilities.
- When the 2029 total target population for Blessington (Co. Kildare) and the 2031 total target population for Blessington (Co. Wicklow) is considered this gives an estimated population for the town of Blessington (Co. Kildare and Co. Wicklow) of c. 7,048 during the lifetime of the plan, hence the Social Infrastructure Audit is based on Level 2 of the Community Facilities Hierarchy Model.

With regard to the calculation of the level of AOS zoning lands, as noted above, Blessington also serves a rural hinterland. In this regard:

- The catchment population was based on the 2022 population of the Electoral Divisions located within a c.15 minute drivetime from Blessington town centre.
- The 2022 Census baseline population for the catchment was c.15,000 including Blessington town (Co. Kildare and Co. Wicklow).
- The population of Blessington town (Co. Kildare and Co. Wicklow) and its rural catchment is projected to increase to c.17,000 during the lifetime of the plan having regard to relevant core strategy as outlined in the 2022-2028 Wicklow County Development Plan and the 2023-2029 Kildare County Development Plan.

In accordance with the Planning Authority's Active Open Space Policy, active open space shall be required as a rate of 2.4ha per 1,000 population divided into:

- 1.6ha outdoor play space (pitches, courts, sports grounds)
- 0.6ha casual play spaces (parks)
- 0.2ha equipped play space (playgrounds and MUGAs)

In this regard it is further noted that normally AOS in accordance with this standard will be zoned through the local plan process and individual development will be required to either deliver some or all of the space required (through an action area agreement) or via development levies.

Based on these calculations a total of 27.2ha of AOS and a total of c13.6ha of OS1 (total 40.8ha) would be required to accommodate sports facilities, recreational amenity areas and play spaces to serve the 2031 projected population of Blessington (Co. Kildare and Co. Wicklow) and its catchment. A total of 46ha has been zoned OS1 and AOS across the draft LAP area comprising of c.23ha AOS and c.23ha OS1. This includes existing facilities. A additional c3.3ha of land is reserved for AOS on SLO4, bringing the total area of lands specifically reserved for AOS to c.27ha. It is further noted that active sports facilities can be developed on TC, CE and other MU lands and not exclusively on AOS zoned lands. It is therefore considered that the draft Plan has adequately and appropriately zoned for active open space uses for the lifetime of the plan in accordance with National Guidance and has located AOS on sites where the development of such facilities would not have an adverse impact on any protected sites while still located close to the town centre and existing and proposed residential areas and schools.

In relation to the area of lands zoned OS1, while issues are raised in relation to the exact calculation of required areas, the areas required in the Social Infrastructure Audit are stated as **minimum** areas (e.g. pg. 58 of the audit). On this basis, if another reason arises for lands to be zoned OS1, beyond the minimum needs of Social Infrastructure Audit that may be taken into account regardless of any area requirement. Recommended Objective 5 of the Social Infrastructure Audit states the following: *'Additional OS1 'Open Space' land may be required to account for the recommendations of the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit and Blessington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, where relevant.'* This is restated as having been taken into account in a footnote on pg. 70 of the Audit. As indicated above, the rationale for the zoning of the OS1 lands in the plan area and indeed the OS2 lands identified in the plan area were also informed by the accompanying Blessington Green Infrastructure Audit.

It is also submitted that the Social Infrastructure Audit should have excluded all car parking, storage, club facilities and circulation space associated with sports facilities. In this regard such facilities are an integral part of sports facilities as they are directly associated with day to day functioning of these facilities, therefore, it would not be appropriate to zone additional AOS lands to accommodate car parking and ancillary facilities associated with the main AOS function/sports facility on a site. In this regard the Social Infrastructure Audit has appropriately calculated the required quantum of AOS lands to serve Blessington and its catchment.

The CE is satisfied with the details of the Social Infrastructure Audit and that an appropriate level of land has been zoned to accommodate the future AOS and OS1 requirements for Blessington and its catchment during the lifetime of the plan.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change to the draft Blessington Local Area Plan 2025.