



Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Group
Name:	Blessington GAA
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Reference:	BLESSLAP-142801
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Topic

Economic Opportunity - Tourism - Shops & Services - Community Facilities

Submission

See attached submission

Topic

Infrastructure - Sustainable Movement - Transportation

Submission

See attached submission

File

Blessington GAA Submission to Local Area Plan.pdf, 1.42MB

Blessington GAA

Pre-Draft Public Consultation Submission to the Blessington Local Area Plan

Dear Sir/Madam,

Blessington GAA club would like to make the following submission as part of the pre-draft public consultation process for the New Local Area Plan for Blessington.

Introduction:

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.

Context:

Since this move in 2007 the population of Blessington has grown from 4,018ppl in 2006 to a population of 5,611ppl, an increase of 40% (source census 2022). Of the current population there are a total of c. 1500 males and females falling within the 5-19 age cohort alone. These figures bear through to demands currently being placed on our existing playing pitches and facilities within our existing club grounds at juvenile level while our adult membership continues to grow. The club currently has a membership in excess of 800 people.

With further growth envisaged within the town arising from recent permissions and development at Burgage, the former rectory site and within the Blessington Demesne area, the need for increased playing facilities has become a significant issue and area of concentration for our club.

As a club we recognise the need for growth and new housing to accommodate our adult members and their families which should remove the need for members to move away from the area. Such growth and new housing does however bring an increased demand on all services with our club forming one strand of the social infrastructure requirements of a growing area. While the club works vigorously to ensure we can meet this demand and has not been found wanting in the past, existing facilities are already strained with a clear need for further expansion.

Unfortunately demand for new housing increases the cost of facilitating such expansion with a strong need for support to be provided from both a local government and commercial private sector perspective. Such support will contribute significantly towards ensuring facilities are suitable and capable of meeting future demand arising from new developments over the lifetime of the Local Area Plan.

The 2013 -2019 Plan:

The 2013-2019 Plan page 23 'Sports Facilities' states such facilities "should be provided at a rate of 2.4ha per 1,000 population". A catchment of c.10,000ppl was applied at this time providing a requirement of c.24ha of lands broken down as 16ha of outdoor sports area, 2ha of equipped place spaces and 6ha of casual play areas.

Blessington GAA currently occupy a site of c. 8ha as identified in the plan however this land area provides for only three playing pitches and a smaller all-weather pitch totalling c.4ha of actual

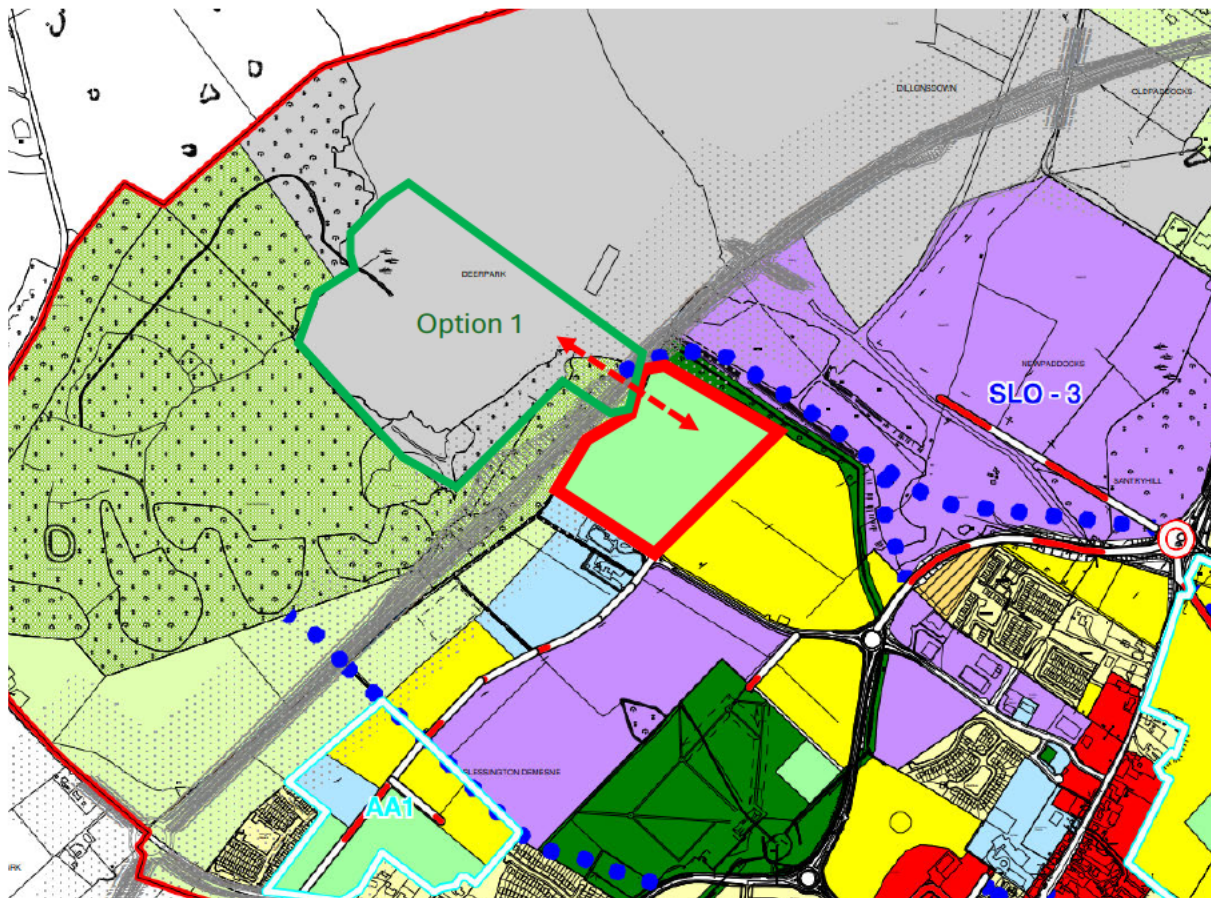
play space once all car parking, storage, club facilities and circulation space etc has been factored in.

The club are currently under pressure for additional playing space and as the town grows the club will require further additional lands for playing fields. While it is noted the 2013-2109 plan identifies lands for Active Open Space at Burgage and the Naas Road such lands are distant from the existing GAA club grounds where significant investment has been made since 2007 in establishing a home for the club and developing and enhancing facilities. It is therefore imperative that the plan facilitates the natural expansion of the club in a manner which maximises the existing and planned facilities on site by identifying options for playing pitches/active open space areas surrounding the existing grounds.

Opportunities for Growth the Long Term View:

The club grounds (outlined red below) are quite constrained in terms of natural options for expansion of playing pitches with lands to the southeast subject to a current planning application for housing and the adjoining lands to the southwest occupied by the No.1 School and Kare Facility.

The most natural option for the development of the existing playing pitches is therefore to the northwest on lands identified as Quarry Lands in the 2013-2019 Plan. The use of these lands for quarrying activities has long ceased and are currently in use for agricultural purposes (See map Below - Option 1)

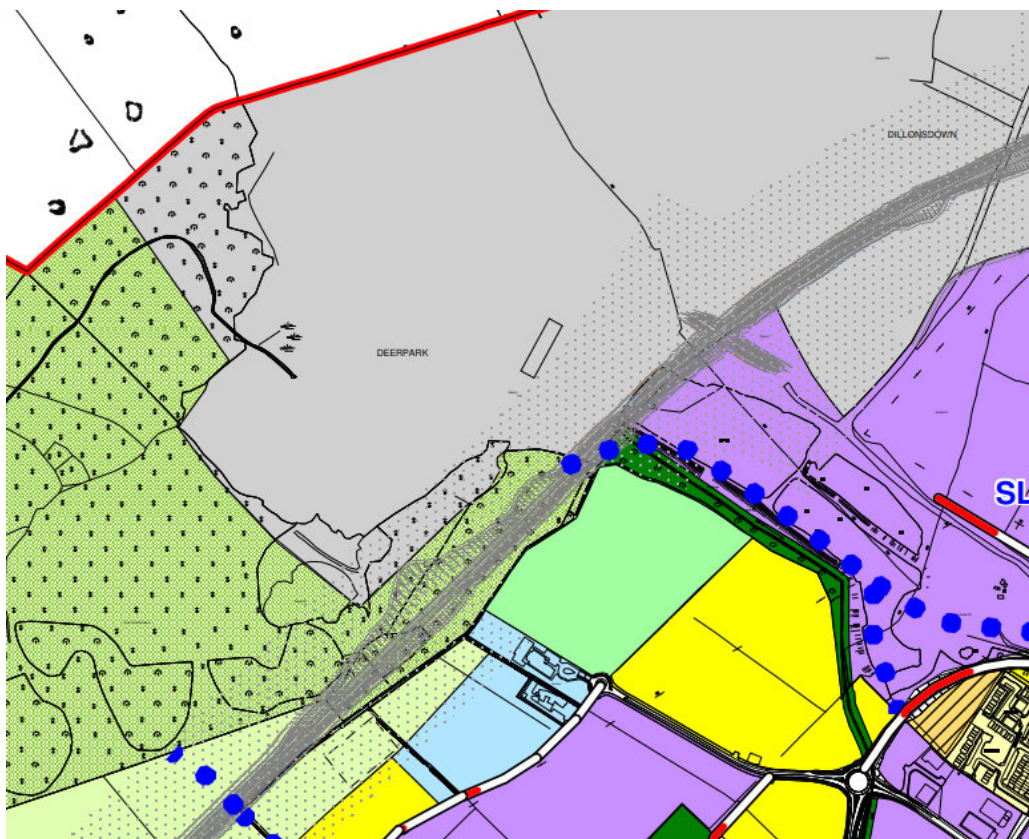


While it is noted that the N81 future road corridor is identified running through the connecting section of these lands, it is considered that access to the former quarry lands could be easily

facilitated as part of the detailed design for the future development of this long term road proposal providing ease of access to the Option 1 lands. Such lands would facilitate a gradual expansion of the GAA club in a manner which maximises existing and planned future facilities ensuring the long term future of the club at this location.

It is noted that the current embankment and tree planting connecting the GAA club to these long term future lands was carried out by Roadstones Ltd/CRH in order to screen quarrying activity to the northern lands. It is considered that this area could be sustainably removed in order to create a short term expansion of the existing playing pitches as a training space and in the medium term act as an access way to the northern lands while also facilitating any future development of the N81 Road Corridor project which will require the removal of these lands in any case.

In addition, it is noted that the 2013-2019 Local Area Plan includes indicative Pedestrian/Cycle Routes as part of the Tourism Strategy in the plan facilitating ease of access to Glen Ding Woods from the town. In particular Figure 5.1 Zone 3 and the Land Use Zoning map identify pedestrian/Walking routes which could be facilitated as part of such works creating the potential for the northern access to the woodlands connecting through to the existing trail to Glen Ding.



Land Use Zoning Map Extract and blue dots indicating pedestrian/cycle access to Glen Ding Woods.

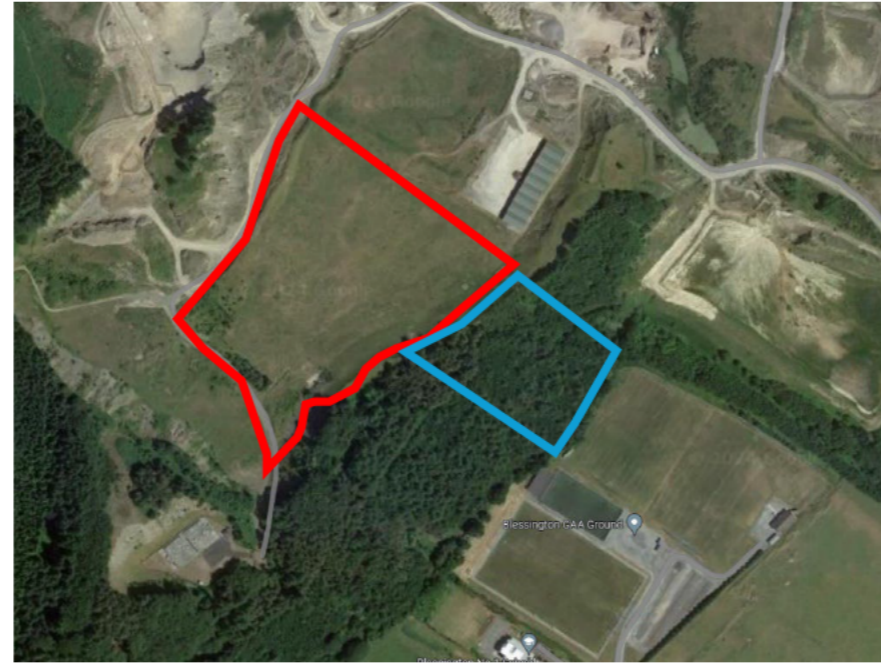
This area comprises of c. 2ha of planted embankment extending a distance of c. 130m along the side of the existing playing pitches and 150m wide. The following images outline a short, medium and long term proposal for future expansion of much needed playing pitches in this area.



Short Term Proposal:

Land immediately adjoining the existing GAA grounds to the northwest (outlined in Blue) to be allocated the following

Specific Local Objective 1: To facilitate Active Open Space until such time as works commence on this section of the proposed N81 Outer Relief Road. The subject lands shall be levelled and graded appropriately for use as playing pitches.

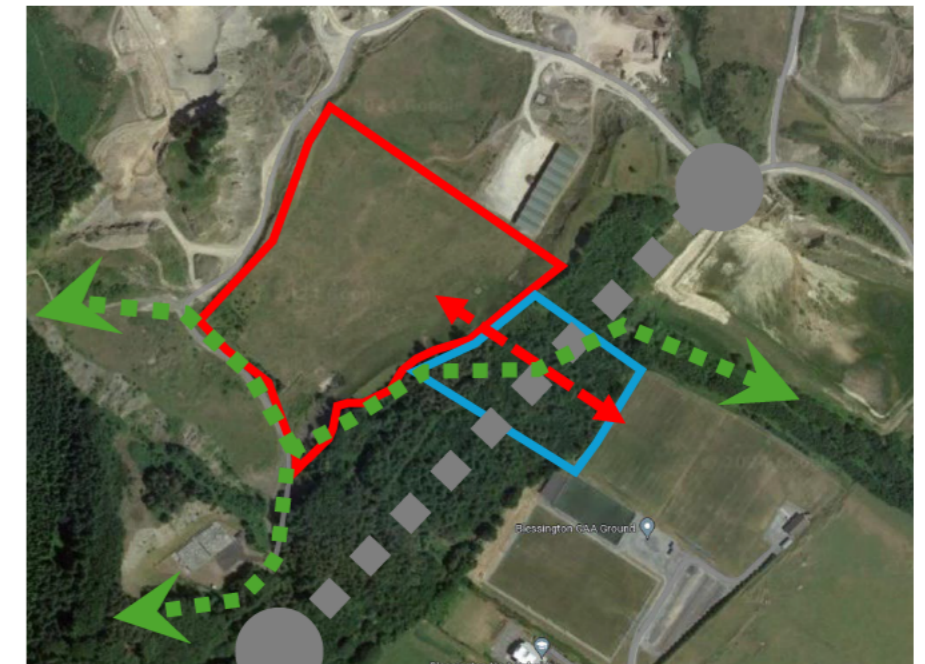


Medium Term Proposal:

Lands Northwest of the existing GAA Grounds currently in agricultural use where quarrying activity has been exhausted to be allocated the following:

Specific Local Objective 2: To facilitate the use of lands (outlined in Red) as Active Open Space. Access to the subject lands shall be facilitated from the existing GAA grounds and lands identified to facilitate the future N81 Outer Relief Road.

Access to the subject lands shall be incorporated as part of the detailed design of the N81 Outer Relief Road Project providing ease of access to the subject lands from the existing GAA grounds while also incorporating pedestrian and cycle access to Glen Ding Woodlands existing trails and pathways.



Long Term Proposal:

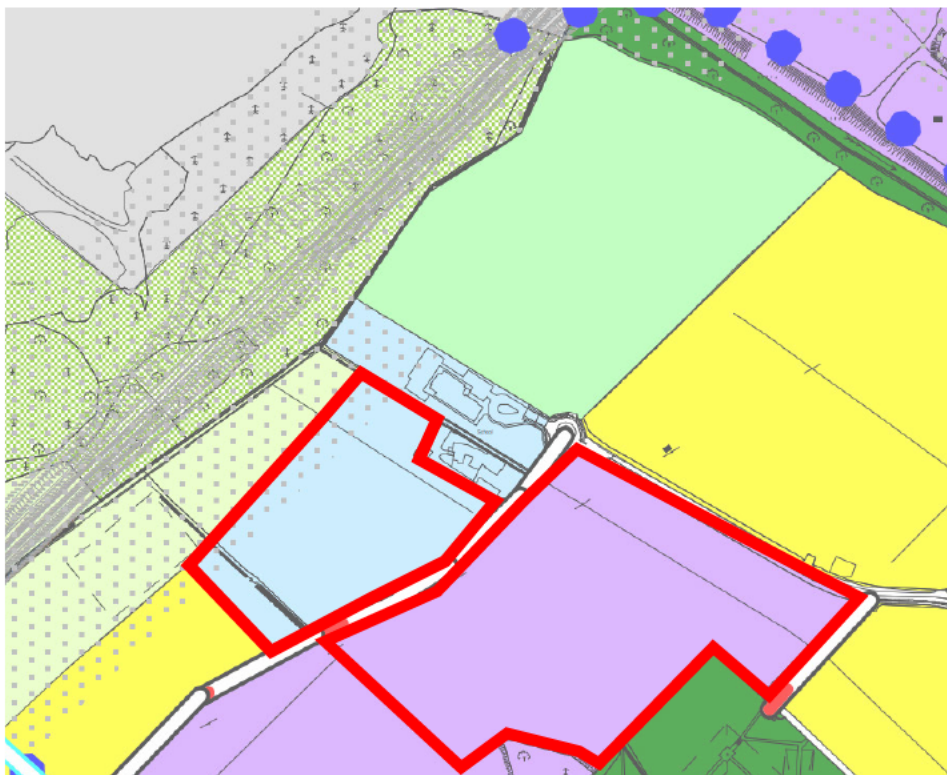
1. Lands outlined Blue facilitate Access to long term Active Open Space lands (outlined in Red)
2. N81 Outer Relief Road corridor remains in place with access to northwest facilitated as part of any detailed design.
3. Land outlined Red provide much needed Active Open Space lands
4. The proposal facilitates the delivery of northern pedestrian and cycle access to Glen Ding Wood delivering on the objective to provide for a looped pedestrian and cycle access to the existing woodlands as part of the tourism strategy of the 2013-2019 Plan.

Such a proposal if incorporated as part of the new plan for the town would facilitate and contribute towards ensuring the long term future of the GAA club at this location, provide certainty in terms of the existing and future planned facilities while also ensuring ease of access to such facilities for the residents of the town in particular the younger members of the club, encouraging cycling and pedestrian modes of transport and contributing towards the climate challenge. In addition, the longer term proposal has the potential to facilitate much need pedestrian and cycle access to Glen Ding Woods contributing towards the tourism offering in the town.

Opportunities and the immediate need:

Given the complexities of delivering on the above option for growth which will require significant negotiation with private landowners the GAA club would welcome further objectives in the Local Area Plan which would provide the club with the option of meeting its current shortage in playing space. While lands to the immediate south east are subject to a current planning application and the existing school is located to the immediate south, as a short term stop gap it is considered that part of the existing employment lands to the south east and the Community Zoned lands to the south west have potential to meet the clubs current and immediate needs for an additional playing field(s).

In this regard it is proposed that a specific Local Objective be included on both of these lands which would facilitate Active Open Space use over the lifetime of the plan. Such lands are located between 50 and 100m of the existing GAA grounds where parking and existing facilities exist. The development of playing pitches on these lands would meet a short term need while also allowing for negotiations and detailed proposals for SLO1 and 2 to be carried out.



Specific Local Objective 3: *To facilitate the temporary use of the lands outlined in red for use as Active Open Space over the lifetime of the plan.*

Conclusion:

Blessington GAA would once again like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the new Local Area Plan for the town. As previously stated, it is imperative that as the town grows a commensurate level of community and playing facilities must be provided.

The GAA club plays a pivotal role within the town at present and continues to grow its membership providing a range of activities for the entire community. It is therefore of utmost importance that the current/immediate needs of the club can be met by the plan while also ensuring the short to longer term future needs of the club can also be facilitated and achieved.

Blessington GAA would therefore welcome the inclusion of Specific Local Objectives 1, 2 and 3 as set out in this submission to be included in the Draft Plan written statement and land use zoning maps in order to facilitate the sustainable growth of the club over the lifetime of this new plan and subsequent plans.

If you require any further information in regard to this submission, please do not hesitate the contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Richardson

Michelle Richardson

Chairperson

Blessington GAA Club.

Email: [REDACTED]