

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

Ref	VAR7-200650
Who Are You?	Private Individual
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Proposed Variation Parts

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

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

Topic	Part 3
Submission	2. A. Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report 3. B. Draft Natura Impact Report 4. C. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 5. D. Call for Sites – Summary of Assessment

Write your observations here:

Submission on Proposed Variation No. 7: Objection to ASH2 / SLO6, Ballinahinch North, Ashford

ASH2 / SLO6 at Ballinahinch North, Ashford.

I wish to make a formal submission objecting to the proposed rezoning of these lands.

My primary request is that Wicklow County Council delete proposed variation ASH2 and proposed SLO6 and retain the existing unzoned status of these lands.

I recognise the need for additional housing in County Wicklow and I am not objecting to housing provision in principle. My concern is whether this particular substantial extension of Ashford onto currently undeveloped greenfield land represents the most appropriate, necessary and sustainable location for additional development at this time.

1. Scale and necessity of the proposed rezoning

ASH2 proposes the rezoning of approximately 19.4 hectares of currently unzoned land, comprising approximately 11.3 hectares of New Residential land, 2.1 hectares of Active Open Space and 6 hectares of Open Space.

The supporting documentation for Proposed Variation No. 7 indicates that there

is already substantial housing land capacity across County Wicklow, including significant headroom above the housing requirement to 2031.

Against that background, I ask the Council to demonstrate more clearly why such a significant new outward extension of Ashford, a Level 5 settlement, is necessary at this point rather than accommodating additional housing provision on existing zoned lands or in locations more strongly served by sustainable transport and existing infrastructure.

I also ask the Council to consider whether such a substantial expansion of Ashford should instead be considered comprehensively as part of the preparation of the next County Development Plan rather than through this variation process.

2. Expansion into the rural landscape

The ASH2 lands currently form part of the undeveloped rural setting of this part of Ashford and provide an important transition between the established residential area and the surrounding countryside.

The proposed SLO6 itself acknowledges that these are higher lands and requires future development to mitigate visual impact and provide an appropriate transition between developed land and the unzoned agricultural lands to the north.

This demonstrates that landscape and visual impact are material concerns associated with the proposed zoning.

The rezoning would establish a significant new development front extending Ashford into presently undeveloped greenfield land. I therefore ask the Council to reconsider whether this scale and location of development represents appropriate compact and sequential growth of the settlement.

3. Transport and road infrastructure

SLO6 requires a new link street from the R764 to the L-5063, with a connection to the R763, and potentially facilitates substantial changes to the existing local road network.

This is significantly more than a normal residential access road.

Before the lands are rezoned, I believe the Council should demonstrate that the traffic generated by the development, effects on existing junctions and roads, pedestrian safety, cumulative traffic associated with other planned development in Ashford and impacts on existing residential areas have been comprehensively assessed.

The requirement for substantial new road infrastructure should itself be considered when determining whether these lands represent the most sustainable and readily deliverable location for additional residential development.

4. Ecology, wetlands, trees and hedgerows

The environmental documentation associated with Proposed Variation No. 7 identifies potential environmental effects associated with new development, including habitat loss or fragmentation, disturbance caused by noise and artificial lighting, impacts on ecological connectivity and potential effects on surface water and groundwater.

SLO6 specifically requires protection of Ballycurry Ponds and Nun's Cross Pond and requires maximum retention of mature trees and hedgerows.

These requirements demonstrate that the area contains environmental features deserving particular protection.

I ask the Council to consider whether rezoning such a large area before detailed ecological, hydrological and arboricultural assessment of the entire SLO6 lands is premature, particularly given the proposed combination of residential development, roads, drainage infrastructure, floodlighting and intensive active recreational uses.

5. Existing residential amenity

SLO6 would place a substantial new residential neighbourhood and community sports infrastructure immediately adjoining established residential properties.

The Active Open Space facilities envisaged by SLO6 may include pitches, courts

or tracks, a MUGA, clubhouse and changing facilities, floodlighting, vehicular access and car parking.

These can be valuable community facilities, but they can also generate significant noise, artificial lighting, evening activity, traffic and parking.

The potential impact of these uses on existing residents should be considered as part of the strategic zoning decision now and should not be left entirely to individual planning applications after the principle of development has already been established.

6. Need for comprehensive masterplanning

Given the scale and complexity of SLO6, I am concerned that the proposed objective does not provide sufficiently strong protection against piecemeal development.

SLO6 involves residential development, active open space, landscaped parkland, community facilities, possible school expansion, significant new road infrastructure, pedestrian and cycling connections, drainage and environmental mitigation.

If the Council decides to retain the proposed zoning, I request that SLO6 be amended to require a single comprehensive masterplan for the entire SLO6 area, agreed with Wicklow County Council before individual development applications are considered.

Development should not proceed in a piecemeal manner where individual applications could prejudice the appropriate location of roads, open spaces, community facilities or environmental infrastructure.

Alternative request if ASH2 is retained

While my primary position remains that ASH2 and SLO6 should not be adopted, if the Council nevertheless decides to proceed with the rezoning, I request that the following protections be incorporated expressly into SLO6:

The Active Open Space shown adjoining the existing residential area should remain in that location and should not subsequently be relocated elsewhere

within SLO6 in order to facilitate residential development immediately adjoining existing rear boundaries.

A substantial landscaped and planted buffer should be provided between existing residential properties and active sports facilities.

MUGAs, floodlit pitches or courts, clubhouse buildings, car parking, servicing areas and other intensive uses should be located away from existing residential boundaries.

Existing mature trees and hedgerows adjoining the existing residential area should be retained and reinforced with appropriate native planting.

Future proposals should be required to demonstrate appropriate controls on lighting, operating hours and noise in order to protect existing residential amenity.

The proposed strategic link street and principal vehicular routes should not be aligned immediately alongside the existing residential boundary, and existing residential estates should not become through-routes serving the new development.

Safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle connections should be provided between the existing community, new open spaces, sports facilities, schools and Ashford village.

A comprehensive masterplan for the entire SLO6 area should be required before individual development applications are considered.

Detailed ecological, arboricultural, hydrological, drainage, landscape, visual and transport assessments should inform that masterplan.

Conclusion

I greatly value the existing rural setting of this part of Ashford. Its loss through a large-scale extension of the settlement would represent a significant and irreversible change to the character of the area.

I therefore respectfully ask Wicklow County Council to reconsider ASH2 in its

entirety, delete proposed SLO6 and retain these lands in their current unzoned state.

If the Council nevertheless determines that development at Ballinahinch North should proceed, I request that the safeguards outlined above be incorporated expressly into SLO6 before Proposed Variation No. 7 is adopted.

Thank you for considering my submission.