



Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

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Topic

Compact Growth - Housing - Population Growth

Submission

Please recognise the additional housing and resident population that is actually within the Co.Kildare boundary along the Kilmalum area that utilises all of the Blessington facilities. The total population that utilises the Blessington urban area for services (water, sewerage etc) , transport infrastructure (cycle lanes , bus services etc) and retail offerings should be considered in all proposed plans. Greater collaboration between Wicklow and Kildare county councils should be a key feature of the development of a new local area plan.

In terms of increasing housing density and utilising existing infrastructure, enabling redevelopment of empty or underused above the shop or in the village buildings should be facilitated and encouraged. Where new developments are required ensuring sustainable forms of transport and cycle/footpaths are prioritised could help reduce traffic burden from increased resident numbers. Increased apartment build but with dedicated green areas and shared safe play infrastructure and spaces might help to increase density while still offering family friendly accomodation.

Topic

Regeneration of Communities & Places - Healthy Placemaking - Urban Design - Opportunity Sites in Blessington

Submission

Design standards should include people centered design with aesthetic quality.

The existing urban design would be enhanced by more utilisation of the vacant retail and service properties e.g.old Ulster bank, old hotel, and old retail units.

Topic

Economic Opportunity - Tourism - Shops & Services - Community Facilities

Submission

There are no deficiencies in the current food retail provision in Blessington - 3 supermarkets are well able to cater to the existing and increased population. There are some great local enterprises that provide much needed services and retail of hardware, office supplies etc. Increased catering/restaurants would be welcome and could be accomodated if incentives are in place to utilise existing village centre buildings. A local hotel would help anchor the tourist and local event accomodation if that were to be possible (utilising the prime location of the old Blessington hotel). Greater visibility of water based opportunities and access to the waterfront or views over the lake from the village would help take advantage of the natural resources we have on our doorstep- but are not visible to tourists on entry to the town . Ensuring that there are welcoming park and ride facilities for tourists and commuters with dedicated cycle lanes to access the new greenway and in future Glen Ding forest as well as the existing ring road infrastructure would help highlight the fantastic cycling opportunities here. Increasing the opportunities for outdoor based recreation would bring new jobs to the area as already evidenced in recent years in the new activities and catering facilities at the Avon, and at other greenway locations around Ireland.

Greater levels of community based facilities e.g. a sports centre with a swimming pool, music studio and gym hall/community room space would be very welcome especially for a growing population and little in the way of facilities for young people apart from GAA. A location for the sport centre could be in the Doran's pit area or closer to the Avon. Great examples like the Rua Red arts centre in Tallaght, Monagahn peace campus <https://monaghan.ie/monaghan-peace-campus/> provide some ideas for what could be possible for Blessington.

Greater levels of evening classes for adults using a community centre/ the education centre or existing schools could increase social opportunities for older residents. Greater opportunities for people with disabilities through council supported work opportunities in the local businesses would be a great way to help Blessington become a more inclusive society. Supporting youth groups and outdoor activities and opportunities with council funding and facilities would help ensure greater options for young folk and provide opportunities away from drug use.

Topic

Heritage – Biodiversity- Green infrastructure- Climate Action- Energy

Submission

Ensure that all future developments are assessed in terms of their carbon emissions during construction, life cycle assessments of materials used and intended lifespan e.g. heating and energy requirements. Maximise the use of green spaces - e.g. remove the proposed industrial zone north west of the new park and re-zone as a green corridor open space, ideally as allotments, enabling a green lung area, with community use, up to Glending forest.

In terms of flood risk ensure that the water catchment of the bordering Kildare region is accounted for - e.g. the recent infilling of soil and gravel on the western edge of the Naas road at Glending in a field is already being undercut from the river running off the hillside. Additional flood risk for residents of Blessington Abbey with development of the new estate in County Kildare in Kilmalum region. All new parking areas in the village, industrial zones and housing estates should be based on SUDS type design.

Protect the trees on the main street with preservation orders, and ensure the green area of Dempseys lane is maintained, and enhanced with safer street lighting for winter/evening walkers.

Ensure residents of Blessington can easily access information on energy efficiency, get support on home insulation upgrades, reduce fossil fuel use and maximise local generation (solar etc) opportunities.

Ensure that car use for short journeys is discouraged by creating cycle/walk friendly infrastructure and prioritised access. Establish and maintain a Blessington Local area Bus (BLAB) minibus service, that runs regularly around all local housing estates to encourage less driving and easy access to the village, with an electric bus powered by a solar/mini wind turbine and battery system.

From a heritage perspective, again there is little evidence of the massive impact the flooding of the valley had during the creation of the Lakes available to tourists or locals alike. Making more of the local impact, the local construction, the importance of the Lakes role in water supply and electricity generation would be valuable.

Topic

Infrastructure - Sustainable Movement – Transportation

Submission

Too much through traffic, and no safe well connected cycle lanes make the village unsafe for cycling. For residents commuting to Dublin there are not enough frequent bus options- greater frequency of buses both heading into Dublin on the N81 would be fantastic, and to Naas and Sallins train station. There is a great train service to Dublin from Sallins, and the new local link offers a smart joined up service - except that it does not run early enough to get to Sallins train station for a morning train to Dublin. This could be a great option for some commuters if it was available.

Wicklow and Kildare county councils should work together to map out and deliver a joined up cycling & pedestrian infrastructure for the village and residential areas so that children and all ages can safely journey to and through the village and to the lake, and give priority to cyclists and pedestrians over motorists. Currently there is a cycle path for short section from the roundabout near Blessington Manor to the N81 but this then disappears as you get closer to the village, negating the benefits of the short cycle path.

As mentioned above an electric mini bus that is powered sustainably and that serves as a locals bus for transport to and from local housing areas to the village centre would help reduce traffic and provide a service to those that are unable to walk / cycle.

Reducing the volume of on street parking in Blessington should be a priority, introducing paid parking (with flat fee for the first 3 hours (to discourage school time traffic/short term parking and encourage walking/cycling) and increased fee structure after 3 hours to discourage longer term parking could help. Developing park and ride facilities (e.g. in Doran's pit on the North side, and near Texaco on the south side in vacant lots) with good transport links and connections would help reduce through traffic.

Ensure that a looped walk in Glending is possible by opening up the newly built pedestrian link and also facilitating a link near the GAA fields - would be popular for both locals and tourists.

Topic

Other topics for you to have your say on! - Environmental Assessment - Plan Implementation -Plan Delivery

Submission

Ensure that all future developments are assessed in terms of their carbon emissions during construction, life cycle assessments of materials used and intended lifespan e.g. heating and energy requirements. Kildare and Wicklow county councils need to work closely to ensure that a regional approach is taken to the assessment of nature related risks (e.g. flood risk assessments, drinking water catchments and treatment, wastewater treatment) and also that Kildare's population is included and able to have a voice in the development of the local area plan.

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