



Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Who are you: | State Body |
| Name: | Department of Public Health HSE Dublin and Midlands |
| Email Address: | [REDACTED] |
| Reference: | BLESSLAP-105653 |
| Submission Made | April 3, 2024 12:54 PM |

File

DeptPublicHealthHSEDublinandMidlands_Submission_PreDraftBlessingtonLAP.pdf,
0.16MB



To: Wicklow County Council
Re: Pre-Draft Blessington Local Area Plan

April 2024

We, the Department of Public Health HSE Dublin and Midlands, welcome the opportunity to consult on the Pre-Draft Blessington Local Area Plan.

We'd like to put forward a number of suggestions from a public health perspective for the Local Area Plan to protect and promote the health and equity for the local Blessington population. In particular we'd like to put forward considerations and suggestions in the relation to Housing, Green infrastructure, Biodiversity, Climate Action, and Transportation.

1. Housing

We welcome the proposed plans for the provision of housing in the area. The design of built environments can impact the health of the population. We suggest that all new housing developments consider the health impacts of the physical environment where people are born, grow, work, live, play and age. Good quality, safe, stable, and affordable housing are important social determinant of health and well-being¹.

¹ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180313.396577/>

October 2023:

Our name has been changed from Public Health Area B to Department of Public Health - HSE Dublin and Midlands. For continuity of communication our email address remains 




As well as good housing, access to nature and biodiversity through urban green spaces have shown to promote psychological and physical health of a population and increase social engagement². We suggest that all new developments provide sufficient accessible greenspace and outdoor recreational facilities such as playgrounds, for the projected population of Blessington after the housing is built. This is especially important with plans for increased density of housing in some areas.

Green spaces provide the opportunity for active healthy lifestyles and positive mental health. They reduce psychological distress and allow for a safe space to exercise. Outdoor recreation facilities, such as playgrounds, can promote healthy social, physical, and psychological development and well-being of children. Based on the 2022 CSO census the Blessington area is a relatively young population, and we suggest that outdoor recreational facilities be designed for all children (aged 0-17) and abilities. It is important that the facilities are inclusionary and accessible, with barriers removed, as all children have the right to play under the UN convention of children's right.

² https://www.opr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Green_space_benefits_for_health_and_well-being_A_life-course_approach.pdf

October 2023:

Our name has been changed from Public Health Area B to Department of Public Health - HSE Dublin and Midlands. For continuity of communication our email address remains 



2. Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure, and Climate Action

We welcome Wicklow County Council's recognition of the importance of protecting biodiversity and having climate adaptation and mitigation plans. Climate change is a threat to population health³. We suggest protecting established mature trees in an area and planting new native species where possible/reasonable so that they may benefit future populations. Mature urban trees with established root systems and leaves protect against flooding, mitigate against air pollution, and provide shade in high temperatures. More frequent adverse weather events are projected to occur at increasing magnitude and intensity with the effects of climate change. Trees also promote health for humans and wildlife. They are a habitat for Irish wildlife, and people generally feel less anxiety and stress around trees⁴.

Finally, trees can bring an economic value. There are economic benefits from carbon reduction as well as having a direct positive impact for businesses. It has been shown that local businesses can benefit from proximally located green infrastructure, as there are places people wish to visit⁵.


3

<https://issphm.ie/resources/Treat%20Climate%20Change%20like%20the%20Public%20Health%20Emergency%20it%20is.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/benefits-of-urban-trees/>

⁵ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fevo.2020.00016/full>

October 2023:

Our name has been changed from Public Health Area B to Department of Public Health - HSE Dublin and Midlands. For continuity of communication our email address remains 



3. Transportation

We welcome plans to increase pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. Active travel (journeys by physical activity such as walking or cycling) promotes and maintains physical and mental health, as well as having environmental co-benefits⁶. High quality, safe, accessible infrastructure is a facilitator for active travel. We suggest that all new infrastructure be fully segregated from vehicular traffic with sufficient diameter. It should be connected with existing infrastructure, school routes, new housing developments, outdoor leisure facilities, green spaces, as well as be accessible for persons with disabilities. Lack of accessible urban infrastructure disadvantages people with disabilities and negatively impacts their health and well-being and opportunity to participate.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to consult on the Pre-Draft Blessington Local Area Plan and thank you for considering our suggestions as outlined.

Yours faithfully,

The Department of Public Health HSE Dublin and Midlands

⁶ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthbusinessservices/national-health-sustainability-office/sustainable-transport/sustainable-and-active-travel-walking-and-cycling/#:~:text=Active%20travel%20like%20walking%20or.activity%2C%205%20days%20a%20week.>

2023:

Our name has been changed from Public Health Area B to Department of Public Health - HSE Dublin and Midlands. For continuity of communication our email address remains