



Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

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Blessington LAP,
Administrative Officer,
Planning Department,
Wicklow County Council,
County buildings,
Station Road,
Wicklow Town,
Co. Wicklow
A67 FW96

SLR Project No.: 501.065451.00001

**RE: Blessington Local Area Plan -Submission to the Pre-Draft Issues Paper
Submission on behalf of Belgard Estates Ltd.**

SLR Consulting Ireland acts as planning and environmental advisors to Belgard Estates Ltd. of [REDACTED]. This submission relates to the Blessington Local Area Plan (hereafter referred to as "LAP") Pre-Draft Issues Paper Consultation, which concludes on the 3rd of April 2024.

1.0 Introduction

Blessington is the largest town on the western side of County Wicklow and is a Level 3, self-sustaining growth Town, with good transport links and capacity for growth. According to Census 2022, the population of Blessington has increased to 5,611 persons, a 10% increase on the 2011 census.

Belgard Estates Ltd. hold a significant portion of strategic landbank within the LAP area, as follows:

1. In the north-western portion of the LAP area, lands in the townlands of Santryhill, Newpaddocks and Blessington Demesne, are accessed by the N81 national secondary road.

These lands are zoned as 'employment use', and 'proposed residential' and include a number of indicative road proposals, there are also some indicative pedestrian and cycle routes shown traversing the subject lands within the LAP zoning map. See Figure 1 below.



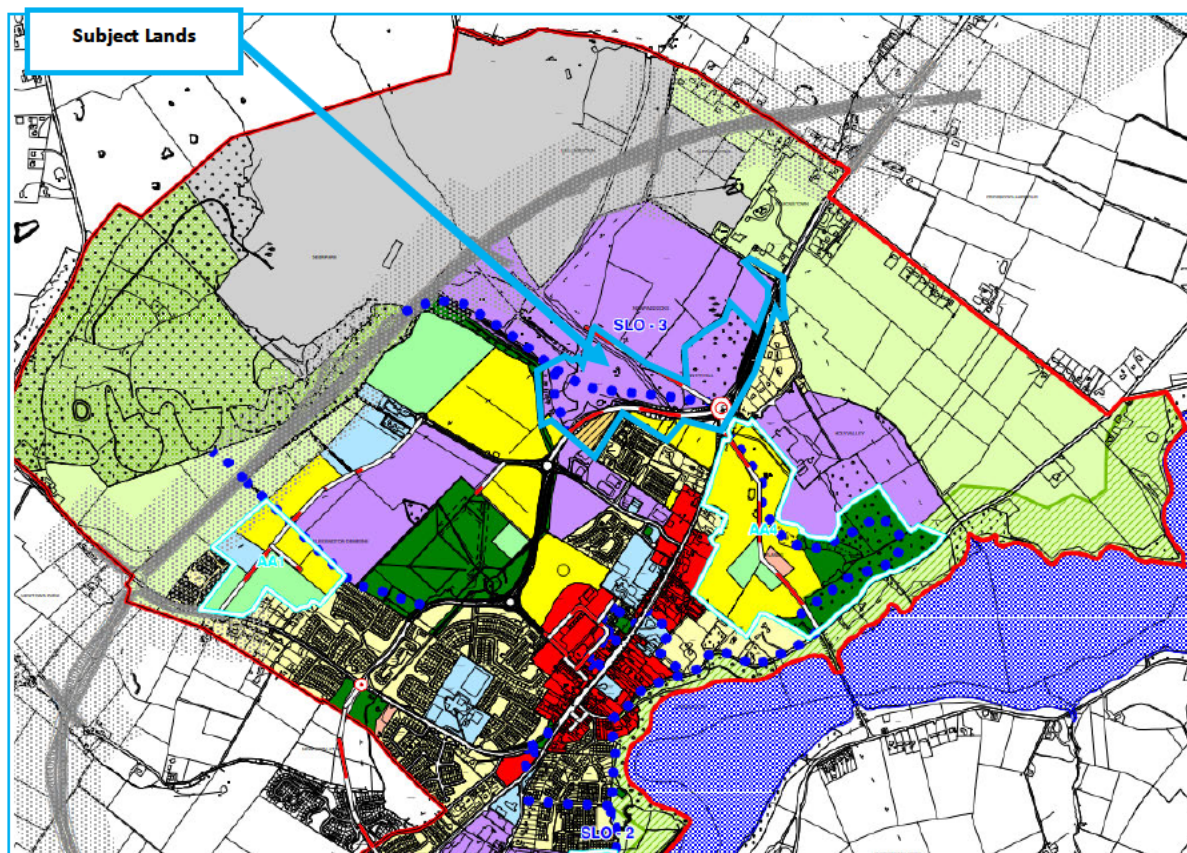


Figure 1: Lands in Ownership outlined in Blue (Purple: Employment/Proposed Employment, Yellow: Proposed Residential).

2.0 Basis of this Submission

2.1 Current Development Plan Policies

2.1.1 Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (CDP) came into effect on the 23rd of October 2022.

Within the Plan, Blessington is a key Town for population growth, economic growth, and strategic employment development. The targeted population growth rate of Blessington is 25%-30%.

The N81 national secondary road passes directly through Blessington town centre. It is intended to realign the current route of the N81 to the west of the town between Tallaght and Hollywood Cross. In the short term, the priority shall be the completion of the partly constructed Blessington Inner Relief Road (BIRR) in conjunction with Kildare County Council.

The following provides an outline of the key policies and objectives within the CDP that are considered relevant to this submission.



2.1.1.1 Preparation of the LAP

CPO 4.8 To prepare new local plans for the following areas during the lifetime of this development plan: Bray Municipal District, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole, Blessington.

2.1.1.2 Regeneration & Renewal

CPO 5.6 To seek funding and focus new investment into the core of towns and villages in order to reverse decline, foster resilience and encourage new roles and functions for streets, buildings and sites within towns and villages.

Blessington: Regeneration of the town centre to include reclaiming the Market Square as an amenity space and focal point for the town, providing public realm improvements, addressing dereliction, providing remote working / enterprise hub, repurposing the former HSE building to create a visitor centre for the Blessington e-Greenway and significantly improving permeability and sustainable mobility. The regeneration proposals will strive to include measures to increase economic opportunities within the town to reduce the need for commuting. The delivery of the inner relief road is a key element in realising the revitalisation of the town as it will remove the excessive traffic volumes travelling through the town centre.

2.1.1.3 Placemaking

CPO 5.15 Support the preparation of Placemaking Strategies for towns and villages, where feasible, which shall address physical, social, and economic elements. The strategies shall provide a strong focus on public realm improvements and bringing life back into town and village centres. For strategic sites, notably in Bray, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones and Blessington, detailed masterplans for town centre renewal may also be prepared.

2.1.1.4 Residential Development

CPO 6.1 New housing development shall be required to locate on suitably zoned or designated land in settlements and will only be considered in the open countryside when it is for the provision of a rural dwelling for those with a demonstrable housing social or economic need to live in the open countryside.

2.1.1.5 Economic Development

CPO 9.1 To support all forms of employment creation, especially where this can mitigate long distance commuting, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and compliance with all other objectives of this plan. Strategic employment development will be directed into the towns of Bray, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones and Blessington.

2.1.1.6 Tourism & Recreation

CPO 11.30 In conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, to support the development of Bray, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones-Delgany, Blessington, Baltinglass, Enniskerry, Kilcoole, Newtownmountkennedy, Rathdrum and Tinahely – Shillelagh - Carnew (southwest Wicklow) as tourism hubs.

CPO 11.36 Support and facilitate the delivery of the Blessington Greenway and the South Wicklow Greenway Arklow to Shillelagh including facilities ancillary to these routes (such as sign posting, car parks) and the development of linkages between these trails and other local routes.

CPO 11.46 To support the development of the following outdoor recreation hubs/clusters – Glendalough, Rathdrum, Blessington-Baltinglass, Tinahely-Shillelagh and East Coast Maritime.



2.1.1.7 Public Transport

CPO 12.21 *To promote the development of transport interchanges and ‘nodes’ where a number of transport types can interchange with ease. In particular: to promote the Luas extension from City West / Tallaght to Blessington.*

CPO 12.44 *To support and drive the development and completion of the Blessington Inner Relief Road (in consultation with Kildare County Council) and upon completion, to significantly improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure on Blessington Main Street and surrounding town centre local road network.*

CPO 12.47 *To improve regional road links between Wicklow and other counties, in particular the Blessington to Naas route and routes from Dunlavin and Baltinglass to the M9/N9.*

2.1.2 Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019

The Blessington Local Area Plan 2012-2019 came into effect on the 11th of January 2013. It is the purpose of this Plan to establish a framework for the planned, co-ordinated, and sustainable development of Blessington. The aim of the Plan is to enhance and facilitate the balancing of economic, social, and environmental infrastructure in order to maintain and develop a high quality of life without compromising the protection of the environment and the needs of future generations.

Belgard Estates Ltd. holds a significant portion of strategic land within the LAP area, as described earlier on page 1 of this submission. With respect to these lands a number of key policies and objectives within the Blessington LAP, are of relevance:

2.1.2.1 Economic Development

E1 *To facilitate the development of employment generating activities on suitably zoned lands within Blessington in accordance with the objectives and development standards set out in the County Development Plan.*

E5 *To require the design and layout of employment lands located at Blessington Demesne to provide for a pedestrian walkway (linked to the proposed public park) along the southern boundary, adjoining Action Area 1.*

3.0 Pre-Draft Issues Paper

The Pre-Draft Issues Paper published indicates that the ‘big picture strategy’ for Blessington focuses on three over-arching themes that will inform and shape the Blessington Local Area Plan, these are:

1. “Health Place-making”
2. “Climate Action”
3. “Economic Opportunity”.

In relation to the subject lands, Belgard Estates Ltd. request that the existing use and zoning on the subject lands, is continued within the new Blessington Local Area Plan.

The following areas are considered important in ensuring that existing and any future proposed developments on these lands are feasible under the Blessington LAP:

Self-Sustaining Growth Town: To retain the existing zoning on the subject lands, which are strategically located within the development boundary and will contribute to compact growth, economic development, and employment growth within the LAP area.



Movement – The completion of the Blessington Inner Relief Road and the realignment of the N81 to the west of the Town as a matter of priority to improve traffic flows and allow for sustainable growth of the town in line with the Wicklow CDP.

Water Services Infrastructure and Utilities -The continued provision, operation and improvement of water, waste, energy, and telecommunications services infrastructure to ensure economic growth can be achieved over the lifetime of the Plan.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Belgard Estates Ltd, are supportive of Wicklow County Council and its work to further a spatial planning framework for the future growth of Blessington to develop a self-sustaining growth Town.

Belgard Estates Ltd, as landholders of a strategic landbank within the LAP, would welcome the opportunity to participate in further consultations with the County Council as work on the draft Local Area Plan is progressed. They look forward to engaging further with Wicklow County Council in due course.

In the meantime, should you have any queries on the above submission, or wish to discuss any matter further, please to not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

SLR Consulting Ireland

Aislinn O'Brien

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Technical Director Planning

Cc. Mr. R. Griffin (Belgard Estates Ltd.)

