



# Wicklow Town - Rathnew LAP Submission - Report

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## Topic

Compact Growth - Housing - Population Growth

## Submission

As attachment

## Topic

Regeneration of Communities & Places - Healthy Placemaking - Urban Design - Opportunity Sites in Wicklow Town - Rathnew

## Submission

As attachment

## Topic

Economic Opportunity - Tourism - Shops & Services - Community Facilities

## Submission

As attachment

## Topic

Heritage - Biodiversity- Green infrastructure- Climate Action- Energy

## Submission

As attachment

## Topic

Infrastructure - Sustainable Movement - Transportation

## Submission

As attachment

## Topic

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

## Submission

As attachment

## File

RathnewLocalPlanSept23.pdf, 0.05MB

Wicklow Rathnew local area plan invited submission.

Wicklow county council's invitation for submissions and ideas is indeed welcome. I have lived in Rathnew almost ten years now, in secluded Tinakilly Lower. I am astonished and appalled at the speed and scale of recent local area developments and those to come, with all the potential for Rathnew becoming a dormer suburb and all the ensuing problems likely without population appropriate supports and infrastructures. New diverse groups and individuals may rightly feel cast adrift without decent local support measures available locally for the different ages and groups, outside of schools, pubs and supermarkets.

Rathnew village itself almost disappears under the burden of rush hour traffic, being crushed between two sets of traffic lights at either end of the village, a roundabout in its centre.

Parking at the row of shops just before the roundabout is awkward and often perilous. Only one pedestrian crossing serves Woodside estate and the bus stop opposite. Another one is needed on the other side in the village near

I have a long wait to emerge from the Tinakilly House Hotel gate opposite the graveyard between 2/2.30 pm and 6pm, and again, difficulty crossing traffic to enter the same gates. No designated bicycle lane serves cyclists, and much of the traffic for Wicklow town could be diverted to exit 17 from the N/M 11. Regarding school traffic; I don't know if there are local buses serving schools, or if car pooling is encouraged amongst parents, but individual cars clogging up and contributing to the local traffic should be part of the plan. Carrot rather than stick approach recommended. Cycle lanes for schools should also be available, with lockers so kids don't have to carry heavy loads of materials while cycling.

If the boundary between Wicklow and Rathnew were the traffic lights serving the County offices and train station, then trucks serving Tesco and its deliveries could access Rathnew area from the Hawks road roundabout and out in Wicklow near the tennis club roundabout. We are all now aware that air quality and noise are important factors in the assessment of healthy environments for people, especially children.

To enhance Rathnew village is a measure that is obviously needed to support the vast number of newcomers to this area. There is no centre there to give a community focus to the area. There is the Rathnew river, flowing down to the Broadlough estuary, beside where I live, often bringing rubbish with it, and the water surface often showing staining from some sorts of pollution.

There is barely discernible hint of the old bridge in the middle of Rathnew village, and a small empty area without feature or enhancement of the riverbank nearby with another takeaway beside it. This is actually quite a big site stretching up along the river to behind a motor/tyre garage fronting onto the main road.

It would be an ideal site for a much needed community centre that would serve both the existing populations interests, and to welcome those yet to come. There are already established Men's Shed and Women's shed groups. A large community centre with a hall for meetings/ entertainment, indoor sport/ dance venue, and some smaller rooms for education/ special interest or development groups. It needs a kitchen and perhaps a coffee shop. This facility as a whole could serve different sections of the local people: older folk, toddler groups, or youth groups. The riverbank could be taken in hand to landscape the area, with trees and benches to make up a place where people could just simply be, and relax near the river. A surfaced area could serve as an occasional outdoor market or car park with bicycle park area. It could be run as a whole venture by the community for the community.

Another site possibly suitable for a centrally placed community centre, beside both bridge and river is the one directly on opposite side of the road with vacant yard beside river. It also an ideal place for a pedestrian crossing.

All rivers have been attractive for settlers since ancient times; for travel, transport and sustained life. A river's history is part of the story of a community. Whether historical, real, verifiable or imagined, the river holds a people and a place together, throughout its seasons and moods, in war and most especially in peace. It gives a place a definite character and focus.

The story of the river could give schools a useful project to research for purposes of bolstering the Rathnew area history. Research into our local backstory could help anchor the community through the buzz this could create and spread in the community of families and beyond.

I would like to think of this project as part of the bigger work of creating a booklet with maps of the Rathnew area, including history, particular sites of interest marked. It might also include our rich environmental interest: flora and fauna, possibly drawn by local artists, with so many natural features giving rise to greater interest and appreciation of the natural gifts and features of the area. It could also be part of a group of locally produced booklets/ guides to the many different areas of interest in County Wicklow, possibly produced under one aegis, or in similar format curated by a central body, perhaps in commercial form, including a master map of the whole county with keys to locations in specific areas. This could form a wider plan for the whole county's areas of interest, promoting it for communities willing to make audits of their assets locally, allowing them to renew their own appreciation of their surroundings, and in the context of that of their neighbours. This simple step would extend the whole arena of local interest.

Addressing the predictable, dense volume of car traffic queuing to only avail of Wicklow's splendid beaches is essential. Clogged motorways, no alternate access roads routes provided, or pointed out, avoiding misery for local traffic. A basic analysis or survey of destinations of drivers would provide the necessary information and impetus to rethinking this depressing situation. Beaches and Caravan parks are notably popular destinations attracting much traffic. Wicklow town comes to a standstill at these times and needs a bypass for this predictable but often problematical seasonal holiday traffic. Wicklow's narrow country roads outside the town tempt fast compensatory travel, nudging local traffic out of its way. Speed limits need to be revised and enforced.

Many more similar initiatives are possible to boost the quality of life here in the county leading to pride of place, appreciation of environments and their stories, leading to a better quality of civic participation in local life for adults and children living away from the dramas of big city life. The complacency and apathy that is such a hallmark of everyday modern life leads to disengaged families and consequent disaffection in young adults, with a vulnerability to dubious excitements offered by unscrupulous individuals. A community that is engaged locally is brighter, optimistic and creatively focused for itself, and its community and that is infectious.

I spoke to two of your planners at recent consultation day regarding my experience as part of a team that worked to regenerate a smaller village in Mayo, led by community worker Sister Maureen Lally. It successfully helped to develop a sense of identity through local exploration of its history, traditions and mythology. There followed the sense of pride in place, a sense of belonging and strong identity with the place itself. That brings a strong sense of levelling up, of humanity held in common and a generosity of spirit along with it. In other words, a sense of community. It is more than possible for a similar effort to achieve equal if not better results here in Rathnew, given the will and support from the county council.

The developers of the vast new housing developments and those who profited from their efforts, should be held liable for generous help to underwrite support for such an effort for the

benefit of all those families and groups of whatever makeup that have been sold housing here. Such social cohesion is essential to avoid the preying of criminal or other disaffected individuals or troublemaking groups in local areas, and the prospect of gangs influencing the less stable parts of the population. A community that cares will spot trouble in the making, if not well before it happens.

A community will not allow people dump recyclables and other rubbish in local beauty spots, or indeed anywhere locally. It will do voluntary tidy-ups, it will take responsibility for itself, and without political interference or resource to outsiders, and report such misdemeanours to appropriate quarters. A litter person could also be employed to monitor dumping. Make the recycle centre better known; its a good local asset. Small local litter bins could be frequently emptied. A cleaning team could be employed for the village and community centre, and a revolving local committee to run programs/events for the same community centre. we have to take responsibility for our low level of public cleanliness that is part of a basic laziness and lack of respect for ourselves; it is a disappointing side of Irish life, but given the will and right initiative, it can be changed. Any cultural overlay can be changed, improved for the better, and replaced with a better version of ourselves in action. It can create a shared arena where private virtue can turn into a real public value, and we all can become better, more caring and responsibly engaged citizens. So many problems are created by the blinkered focus of individual people trying their best to survive in stressful times, not seeing the broader view of each doing the same as his/her neighbour, and all contributing to an apparently increasingly unmanageable whole, and eventual destruction of gentler more fulfilling lives. This is where the overview is essential to pre-empt such social problems emerging in local lives, to provide rational solutions to problems of dispirited living, overpopulation in an unfocussed environment and restore balance to a community as a whole. And that is in the remit of Wicklow County Council.

I hope the above suggestions will be of some use to the creative envisioning of life in our densely crowded and address some of the downside of being such an attractive destination for visitors.

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