

Wicklow County Council

Forward Planning



Submission on Draft Wicklow County Development Plan 2021 - 27

Thank you for the opportunity to make a further submission at this draft stage of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027. My submission is on the key areas of residential development and the provision of zoned lands to accommodate higher density, well serviced and affordable housing, sustainable public and active transport for rural and urban areas, local objectives to address the Climate and Biodiversity crisis and measures to support the local economy, health and education needs over the next decade in County Wicklow.

I wish to propose the following objectives for inclusion the Wicklow County Development Plan

All objectives and policies contained in the Wicklow County Development Plan (CDP 2021-27) must comply with the higher-level objectives contained within the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the East and Midland region.

Compact Growth must be achieved through identification and zoning of residential lands with high densities which are served by well-designed community spaces and high-quality public realm through towns and villages and serving the higher density residential developments. Support and encouragement must be provided for the development of infill sites, change of use and conversion of vacant or upper floor commercial units to good quality residential units to bring life and vitality back into rural towns. The objective is to halt the population decline in rural towns by providing attractive town centre living at population densities that can support local traders and the local economy. This may also be achieved by provision of serviced sites.

Objective 1: The Local Authority shall identify sites in towns which fail to meet the criteria for the Vacant Site Levy (2015 Act) but which are not impeded by lack of infrastructure or services for development. Although such sites would not currently incur a VSL, the identification of such sites in a CDP/LAP will be beneficial as further progress is made on Town Centres First national policy,

the development of serviced sites initiatives and other government policies that may support restoration for residential use of derelict or vacant buildings

Objective 2: the identification of infill sites and town centre re-use sites shall be accompanied by a design objective to provide high quality public realm and recreational open/green spaces.

Sustainable Mobility must be achieved by the provision of good public transport links. The transport links must provide an attractive alternative to car dependency in an effort to reduce transport emissions and air pollution and provide for inter urban and as well as intra urban transport requirements for employment, education, recreation and socialising and access to health, community and public services. Transport must be improved for Wicklow by supporting the upgrade of the Rosslare rail line to an overhead electrified service extension from Greystones to Wicklow Town. This extension coupled with Irish Rails procurement of Battery Electric Trains could provide for an electrified rail service to Arklow. It is crucial to the development of a frequent and reliable electric train service to Wicklow that the National Transport Authority include the objective of an electrified service to Wicklow in the upcoming Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy. To support such large-scale public investment in the rail line, development in Wicklow must be centred around public transport and access to rail and bus transport hubs must be provided and prioritised.

Objective 3: Transport Orientated Development (TOD) shall be a primary factor in future residential development and employment zones.

Objective 4: Provided that the NTA includes electrification of the Wicklow rail line in the GDA Transport Strategy, land for Park and Ride facilities of an adequate size to serve the catchment, shall be identified at or in accessible proximity to rail stations at Arklow, Avoca, Rathdrum, Glenealy, Wicklow/Rathnew, Newcastle and Kilcoole.

Objective 5: land identified for Park and Ride facilities shall also include space for express bus use as NTA provides for such service on N11 improvements. Express bus services on the N11 should provide direct links from the rail centred Park and Ride locations to northbound destinations and avoid multiple stops at peak times to provide an attractive and timely service for commuters.

Objective 6: Active travel routes shall be identified to provide safe, direct links to the identified Park and Ride land and Rail stations at Arklow, Avoca,

Rathdrum, Glenealy, Wicklow/Rathnew, Newcastle and Kilcoole and delivered as public transport services are delivered in cooperation with the NTA. A new active travel link shall be identified to connect the Charlesland area to a potential rail stop south of Greystones station

Objective 7: Land for Park and Ride facilities should be identified to serve the Baltinglass and Blessington district area to allow the NTA to provide an express bus service connection to DART+ West and rail connection at Sallins/Naas rail station for connection to city centre.

The identification, facilitation and investment in active travel options is vital to cohesive planning and transport provision especially for intra-urban needs. The provision of high quality segregated and safer pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be the highest transport priority for cross-town interconnectivity to connect employment, education, transport nodes and recreation and amenity sites. Wicklow County Council planning and transport services and the NTA need to prioritise active travel utilising staff resources to ensure that construction engineering designs contain and deliver the highest quality civic and public realm aspects to active mobility schemes. The provision of higher standards such as Dutch style cycling standards should be encouraged to create safer and more attractive cycling routes especially in relation to Safe Routes to School and to facilitate successful funding applications. A network of safe, segregated cycling routes to school would improve the health of children and parents, improve air quality for all and reduce traffic congestion and parking hazards at 'drop off/pick up times'

Objective 8: all zoned residential land should provide indicative routes for safe cycling, walking and safe routes to school. The indicative routes should connect to and through existing developed areas, providing as direct routes as possible and utilising passive surveillance to desired locations for school, shops, employment, recreation etc. The provision of infrastructure to create the indicative routes should be a condition for planning permission

Objective 9: All town plans contained in the CDP & LAPs should contain a map which shows the current cycling and walking routes to desired locations. The maps should also show the missing links that would facilitate, improve or complete cycling and walking links to desired locations and Safe Routes to School (Local Authority requirement) All planning applications should be required to show how the proposed development connects to the existing cycling/pedestrian/safe routes to school map. All planning applications should

be required to indicate how the proposed site might connect active travel links to contiguous zoned land (Applicant requirement)

Objective 10: identify and facilitate the development of a segregated cycling route between Newtownmountkennedy and Kilcoole to connect NTMK to improved rail service. This route will also form the final leg of the 'mountains to the sea' route proposed by Newtown 2050 and will serve both recreational and inter urban use.

Bus Services

Objective 11: Identify rural towns and clusters where the provision of increased NTA rural (local link) services would meet the requirement of transport orientated development, facilitating future residential development through the provision of regular bus services. This may include the extension of Dublin Bus No 65 service at peak times to beyond Blessington.

Education and provision of school places

Objective 12: It should be a requirement of a planning application for +100 houses that proof be provided if capacity exists in the local schools to accommodate the likely increase in demand for school places. Currently it appears that an applicant just states that there is a sufficient quantity of schools in proximity to a proposed development but is not required to provide detail or proof to planners on the capacity of those schools to accommodate demand from the proposed development. It would appear to be a simple exercise for an applicant, having determined the number of schools in an area, to furnish planners with the excess capacity that exists in those schools.

Sports facilities and the planning system

Planning services, municipal districts and the CCSD Department are the main drivers for the provision of sports and recreational facilities and for applying for funding for large scale sports provision. To support applications and requests for sports facilities an audit should be carried out in each district to support planning objectives on sports and recreation objectives.

Objective 13: To support planning objectives and the development contributions scheme, each Municipal District should carry out a sports and recreation audit of their district. The audit should identify the sports and recreational assets and facilities that exist in the district, the capacity that exists in current provision of facilities, the likely increase in demand on existing facilities as development occurs in the district, the desire for or gap in provision of other sporting facilities (e.g. West Wicklow Pool campaign). The audit should identify the location of current facilities, scope for increasing the scale of each facility and sites for development of new sports facilities (e.g. proposed large scale sporting facility at Bray, Fassaroe lands. The outcome of the sports audit should inform forward planning for site identification, the development contribution scheme and council investment objectives over the course of this CDP and future LAPs and CDPs. The overall objective should be the creation of a large-scale community sports facility with multiple sporting facilities shared amongst the sports clubs as this presents the best opportunity to secure central funding

Town Centres First and placemaking

The Town Centres First, Government policy objective seeks to support towns and villages and the creation sustainable communities by implementing a strategic approach to town centre regeneration. The utilisation of existing buildings and unused lands for new development will promote and provide residential occupancy in our rural towns and villages. The identification of suitable sites and buildings needs to be carried out in a strategic manner through Town Centre Health Checks. A TCHC, with public participation can identify many opportunities for public realm, active transport links and community services investment to support town centre living. It can also open new infill or opportunity sites for higher density development. A TCHC may also support funding applications for Town and Village Renewal grants.

Objective 14: in conjunction with each Municipal District, Town Centre Health Checks should be carried out to identify opportunities for residential development within towns and villages. Identification of suitable towns should include transport objectives as described in Objective 11 (I accept that the carrying out of TCHC is not a planning services function, however planning services could liaise with each Municipal District to encourage the MD to carry out a TCHC. Where a TCHC identifies opportunities there should be scope to

amend population figures for a town where sustainable town centre residential development and proper public transport services would support such an amendment.

Previously zoned land

The CDP should clearly identify land, which has been previously zoned for residential development in the preceding CDP but has not been developed.

Objective 15: Except in circumstances where a lack of services has impeded development, these sites should be clearly identified in the CDP and LAPs. This will assist in assessing potential land hoarding or other matters to provide that in the eventuality that CPO or other housing provision or Planning measures become available to activate that land for the provision of affordable or cost rental housing opportunities that these sites have been identified and owners are aware of their identification as such sites.

I wish to propose the following amendments to Draft Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027

Section 12.1 Active Modes of Transport – Cycling and Walking: suggest that ‘factors that will influence whether one will walk or cycle....distance’ also incorporates and acknowledges that the increase in popularity of e-bikes and e-scooters which provide greater ranges and accessibility for a wider cohort of users enables greater distances to be achieved.

Section 12.5 Ports, Harbours, Marinas & Freight Transport suggest addition ‘that WCC will actively engage with the Offshore Renewable Energy industry to identify the current and future requirements for Wicklow and Arklow ports to serve the design, build, operate, maintain, re-power and decommissioning phases of ORE developments’

Section 12.6 Strategic Sites in Bray – Fassaroe – add to 2nd bullet point

N11 Cycle Pedestrian Bridge ...'linked to direct, segregated safe cycling route to Bray Town Centre'

Section 12.8 Sustainable Transportation Objectives

CPO12.8 – the requirement for installation of ducting infrastructure – design and as built drawings should be provided on completion of development.

CPO 12.52 add 'segregated' before 'cycling lanes/tracks'

CPO12.66 add 'to facilitate the delivery an active travel link between Bray Harbour and Woodbrook/Shanganngh in cooperation with DLRCoCo and the NTA and adjoining landowners.

Core Strategy

Suggest a redesignation of Greystones as a 'Self Sustaining Town' in recognition of the large-scale residential growth over the past years and to allow for Greystones/Delgany to 'catch up' in terms of employment, services and transport.

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