



Draft Wicklow Town – Rathnew LAP Submission - Report

Who are you:	State Body
Name:	Department of Education
Reference:	DWTRLAP-194305
Submission Made	November 20, 2024 7:48 PM

Topic

Community Development (inc. sports facilities & schools, etc)

Submission

Please find attached the Department of Education's submission to the draft Wicklow Town-Rathnew LAP 2025

File

20241120 Final submission to Draft LAP.pdf, 0.12MB



Planning Department,
Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Station Road,
Wicklow Town

20th November 2024

Re: Draft Wicklow Town – Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of notification of the above draft LAP. The Department of Education has examined the contents therein and would like to make the following submission.

In the context of future population trends and their potential impact on school place requirements, the department notes that this draft LAP refers to the population growth identified for Wicklow Town in the recent draft Wicklow CDP 2022-2028. The department notes that the population scenario envisaged for Co Wicklow overall is the high NPF target of 157,500 people by 2026 and 164,000 by 2031. The plan also states that the NPF identifies Wicklow-Rathnew as a “Key Town” with a projected population of 18,515 by 2028. Therefore, the department made its submissions to the draft CDP regarding Wicklow-Rathnew on the basis of the potential population growth within the town and its environs between 2022 and 2031.

In terms of future population growth in Wicklow-Rathnew, the department notes the reference to the 18,515 population figure for 2028 and the 19,400 population figure for 2031 in Table 2.1 of the draft LAP. The department also notes in Table 2.1 of the draft LAP the reference to the potential development of 1,619 residential units within the town and its environs between 2022 and 2031. Recent CSO data on new dwelling completions show that the number of units completed in Wicklow and Rathnew for 2023 and as far quarter 3, 2024 was 274 units. This would leave a remaining target of 1,345 for potential completion by 2031. Allowing for the Census 2022 average of 2.84 persons per household in Wicklow, a development of 1,345 units could result in an additional cc 3,820 people for Wicklow Town - Rathnew in the future. If this growth materialises, it will result in an additional requirement for school provision in Wicklow Town - Rathnew. Furthermore, the department has used this particular scenario in making its assessment of future school place requirements within the LAP area. The department is equally mindful that the current NPF review has the potential to allocate a further population projected increase that may even go beyond 4,598.

With regard to the above criteria, the department is equally mindful of its current school place capacity within the LAP area. Currently, there are 10 schools (6 primary and 4 post-primary schools) located within the Wicklow - Rathnew LAP area. The department's preference would be to expand these existing facilities (if possible)

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should there be a requirement for additional school places resulting from planned population increases. Therefore, the department requests the Planning Authority to examine the potential of protecting a land buffer around each of these schools to enable them to expand further if required.

In terms of the identification of future school place requirement that necessitates the need for the reservation and acquisitions of sites for future new schools, the Department would like to highlight the following points.

1 - It is generally considered that schools are enabling infrastructure for housing" and as such, schools should be positioned in the heart of new and expanding sustainable communities, allowing for the maximum benefit to the community inside and outside school hours. Further to this, other community facilities and amenities should also be positioned close to school facilities to allow for all community facilities be complimentary to each other for the benefit of the whole community".

2 - Sites for future schools should be identified on appropriate and suitable land for development and zoned accordingly, with specific land use zonings. All enabling infrastructure required to develop and operate school facilities should be provided in advance of the need for such schools. This infrastructure includes road, electricity, water infrastructure, sustainable transport links, active travel networks, road safety measures and safe routes to school facilities. It should be noted that it is not within the remit of the Department of Education to develop or fund this enabling infrastructure."

In this regard, the Department notes the list of Community & Education zoned lands outlined in the "Education" section of Chapter 7 Community Development. With specific regard to Rathnew, the Department notes that there are two sites designated for future school provision, of which one is designated for future post-primary school provision. Currently, there is only one primary school in Rathnew (St Coen's NS). Having assessed the information in Table 2.1 of the draft LAP and its own current capacity in existing schools, the Department has identified a potential future requirement for at least one additional primary school in Wicklow – Rathnew, subject to projected population figures materialising, the age profile of that future population and other factors which influence school accommodation needs. The Department is mindful of the proposed intensive development of the Tinakilly area (SLO2) where over 700+ houses are planned. Having regard to what has been said at points 1 and 2 above, the department considers it appropriate to locate a site for a future primary school within the heart of the Tinakilly area and requests the Council to identify, reserve and appropriately zone a site to be included in the LAP. The size and location of this site can be agreed with the department in future engagements.

In respect of post primary provision, the Department is planning to locate and develop a new 600 pupil post primary school on the site of the former Abbey Community College. This will be the permanent site for Wicklow ETSS. It is expected that the capacity of this school and the current capacity of the other existing post primary schools will be able to cater for future potential needs resulting from planned future population growth as identified in Table 2.1. However, the department is also mindful of



potential population growth beyond 2031 and will continue to assess its requirements on an ongoing basis.

The department also anticipates that additional Special Education Needs provision at both Primary and Post Primary level will be required in the future throughout the country and this may result in schools requiring additional accommodation or space to meet this growing need. The department will consult with the Councils if and when additional SEN accommodation or sites for future special schools are required within specific locations.

The department welcomes the reference within the draft LAP to ensuring that both existing and proposed schools are as accessible as possible and that the requisite walking and cycling infrastructure is in place to encourage people to travel to school by sustainable modes of transport.

The department further welcomes the reference in Community Development Strategy for Wicklow Town- Rathnew that the Council will facilitate the development of a range of high quality community, educational, open space and recreational facilities that meet the needs of the local population and that these will be developed in tandem with new housing.

The department notes Cycling & Walking Objectives CPO 12.13 where the Council will facilitate the development of pedestrian and cycle linkages through and between new and existing developments to improve permeability and provide shorter, more direct routes to schools and CPO 12.14 where the Council will support the Green School Travel and Safe Routes to School Programs and any other sustainable transport initiative developed by schools. The department supports the development of sustainable travel links between schools and residential areas.

The department notes in section 2.2 Education and Training that it is stated that the analysis of current and projected education needs is based on the following assumptions:

- 12% of the population at any given time is of primary school going age.
- 8.5% of the population at any given time is of secondary school going age.

The department currently uses an average of 10.25% to determine primary school place needs and an average of 7.5% to determine post-primary school place needs. It should be noted that these percentage figures are subject to review.

In terms of assessing current and future capacity, the Department of Education has to be mindful of potential unforeseen circumstances such as the Ukrainian crisis, which have the ability to put undue pressure on school place provision and could necessitate reassessments of school place provision from time to time. The department will engage with the Councils where the findings of an assessment require a review of existing or future school site provision within a specific location.



Finally, the department welcomes the continued engagement with the Council regarding the development of both new and existing schools, as appropriate, and emphasizes the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient land is zoned for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Hanlon', written over a horizontal line.

Alan Hanlon
Statutory Plans
Forward Planning Section