



## Draft Wicklow Rathnew Draft LAP Amendment Stage Submission - Report

<b>Who are you:</b>	Private Individual, Group
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<b>Reference:</b>	DWTRLAP-110334
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**File**

Objection to Proposed Material Amendment No Aoife Gurrie.pdf, 0.46MB

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Objection to Proposed Material Amendments 1 & 26 to the Wicklow-Rathnew Local Area Plan – Glebe / Fernhill Lands**

I wish to submit my strong objection to Proposed Material Amendments 1 and 26 in relation to SLO-9 and the Glebe / Fernhill lands. My concerns are outlined below:

**Key Objections:**

**1. Negative impact on neighbouring properties**

The introduction of the proposed **high-density, high-rise** residential development that includes four storey buildings including apartments, duplexes and houses will **alter the character** of the existing Glebemount estate bringing a **lack of visual cohesion** and it is **not integrated with the existing landscape**. A density of 40 units per hectare is proposed in the scheme. I strongly object to this proposal — particularly as it would directly adjoin long-established homes in Glebemount. This form of development is **entirely out of character** with the surrounding low-density neighbourhood, The eastern and southern boundary of the site is adjacent to houses in Glebemount - primarily of two-storey and bungalow family homes with private gardens. High-density, high-rise development on the proposed site would have a significant negative impact on these houses in Glebemount.



The proposed scale and intensity of the high-density, high-rise development would:

- **Overlook and overshadow** existing rear gardens and homes, resulting in loss of view, privacy and residential amenity
- **Visually dominate** the surrounding built environment
- Introduce an **abrupt and inappropriate transition in building height and scale**, which conflicts with the principles of proper urban design
- **Overload local infrastructure**, especially traffic, access roads, and parking capacity.

Such a proposal **fails to respect the established character, pattern, and scale** of existing housing — a core requirement of good planning under the **County Development Plan, Wicklow Rathnew LAP** and national policy. Introducing high-density, high-rise developments at the edge of a mature residential estate would represent **overdevelopment of the site** and would not constitute proper planning or sustainable development.

## **2. Through traffic in Glebemount estate**

The suggestion that pedestrian or cycling connectivity could be routed **through Glebemount estate** is deeply concerning and raises several serious issues affecting safety, privacy, and residential amenity. There is no direct access between Friarshill and the R750, the only way is through the private estate of Glebemount, which is outside the control and ownership of the landowners, the Delahunt family. There has been no consultation with residents regarding pedestrian access which is a requirement of Wicklow County Council proposed amendment no. 2.

### **A. Glebemount is not designed for through-traffic**

Glebemount is a quiet, long-established residential area made up of cul-de-sacs and narrow roads designed for local access only. Introducing a public route would:

- Increase non-residential footfall and cycling traffic past private homes
- Disrupt the peaceful, family-oriented character of the estate
- Result in loss of privacy and increased noise and disturbance

### **B. Safety risks for children, elderly residents, and vulnerable road users**

The estate is home to many young families and older residents. A through-route would significantly increase unpredictable movement and pose safety risks:

- At blind corners and driveways not suited to frequent traffic
- On streets lacking dedicated pedestrian or cycling infrastructure
- Especially during peak times such as school runs

## **3. Threat to local wildlife – protect the woodpecker**

The area in question is home to various wildlife species, including a woodpecker that has taken residence in the trees within the forest on this land inside the eastern boundary. This bird is an important part of the local ecosystem, and its habitat would be destroyed by the proposed development. Woodpeckers have been absent from Ireland for nearly a century and have recently returned to the area and have set up home in this location. Given their protected status and the significance of their return to our local ecosystem, this issue must be given due consideration by Birdwatch Ireland and other relevant environmental bodies. Any development in this area could have a detrimental effect on this rare and valuable species, as well as the broader biodiversity of the region. The environmental impact of this rezoning should not be overlooked, as it could disrupt the balance of local biodiversity.

#### **4. Increased pressure on infrastructure**

The proposed residential development will put additional strain on our already overburdened roads and public transportation. The existing road infrastructure is already heavily congested especially on the R750 Dublin Road going into and out of Wicklow town from Tesco, past Lidl and out towards the Rathnew cemetery. This stretch of road is often at a standstill in both directions, and it can take a significantly long time to get through. Journeys that should only take 3 to 5 minutes are taking over 20 minutes. Our road infrastructure in Wicklow town is not equipped to handle such an increase in population density at this location.

#### **5. Traffic and parking concerns**

Increased residential density will inevitably lead to higher traffic congestion and parking shortages in the area, making it more difficult for current residents to navigate their community safely and efficiently.

#### **6. Lack of community engagement**

The architect describes the proposed scheme as a *“development that is both respectful of the site’s heritage and forward-thinking in its design.”* The following factors were considered in arriving at the preferred design: - • *Preservation of the Woodland*; • *Integration with the landscape*; • *Sustainable Design*; and • **Community engagement.** And further cited *“engagement locally and discussions with similar operators”*. Who in the community was engaged regarding this? There was no knowledge of this rezoning and plans amongst the residents of Glebemount so I would like to remark that there is a significant **lack of community engagement** and had it not been for the proactive actions of an individual this proposal for rezoning would be completely under the radar.

#### **7. Rezoning will mean a loss of essential community and education services**

The current zoning designation supports vital education, sport, recreation and community functions that could benefit residents of all ages. Converting this space to residential use would **deprive the community** of these essential community and education resources which are badly needed in a town of growing population. Changing this to residential use — even when linked to the regeneration of Fernhill House — would permanently **reduce the amount of land available for public benefit**, at a time when Wicklow is experiencing rapid population growth and serious school capacity and sporting facility issues. The solution to Ireland’s housing crisis should not be to rezone land that is already zoned community/education to the **detriment of the supply of essential community services** and sporting facilities. Taking land that is zoned community education should not be permissible just to meet housing supply targets as it will exacerbate an already dire situation regarding lack of sport and community facilities for the ever-growing community. There is no clear justification for this rezoning, and I am concerned it would set a damaging precedent for how public land is managed in the county. **The Community/Education zoning should be retained in full.**

## Conclusion

For these reasons, I strongly urge Wicklow County Council to reject the rezoning application and consider maintaining or enhancing the current Community/Education zoning designation. Our town is in desperate need of these facilities. We have a shortage of schools, we lack any hotel accommodation or youth hostel, we are in desperate need of sports and recreation facilities and the rezoning would significantly harm the well-being and sustainability of the community. Thank you for considering my objection.

I respectfully request that:

- The **rezoning of Community/Education lands be reversed**, and the original CE zoning retained
- **Glebemount Estate be explicitly excluded** from any proposed pedestrian or cycling connectivity routes
- The proposed **high-density, high-rise** scheme be **rejected**, and future development be limited in **scale, height, and density**, and at least 10 metres from Glebemount boundaries to ensure compatibility with the surrounding built environment.
- Any future proposals be subject to **comprehensive public consultation**, robust **safety and environmental assessments**, and a **community-led design approach**

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours faithfully,



Kevin Gurrie