



# Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Private Individual
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## Topic

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

## Submission

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to advocate for the inclusion and development of dedicated athletics facilities within the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025.

The proposed facilities would benefit the entire community in several ways:

Supporting local schools in delivering comprehensive physical education programs.

Providing a dedicated space for community sports events and games.

Offering training grounds for Lakeshore Striders, Community Games, and other local clubs.

Encouraging participation in field sports and athletics disciplines.

Promoting social inclusion and healthy lifestyles for all age groups.

I have been a member of Lakeshore Striders Athletic Club for over two years. During this time, I have experienced significant physical and mental health benefits, as well as the valuable social connections fostered by the club. Lakeshore Striders is the only athletics club in West Wicklow, with members from all local towns and villages. Over the past two years, membership has grown rapidly, with new members joining regularly. This growth highlights the strong demand in the area for a safe, accessible space where people can exercise, socialise, and engage in healthy activities.

The club is also in the process of establishing a juvenile section, which will further expand membership and provide an essential outlet for young people to develop lifelong health and fitness habits in a safe, social environment.

Currently, the club does not have our own facilities and relies on the hardcore track at Blessington Community College. While this is fine to an extent, the lack of toilets is a significant barrier to female participation, and with the school's planned expansion, the track may soon become unavailable. This leaves the club without proper facilities to train. West Wicklow already has a shortage of public amenities and sports facilities, and An Bord Pleanála's recent decision to refuse permission for the extension of the Blessington Greenway further deprives

the area of essential recreational spaces.

I respectfully urge you to prioritize the development of dedicated athletics facilities in the upcoming Local Area Plan. These facilities would be a valuable asset to the community, ensuring that sport and fitness are accessible to all and contributing to a healthier future for the local community.

Is Mise Le Meas,

Liam Mooney



### Topic

Active Travel Strategy Map

### Submission

To Whom It May Concern,

I submit the following for consideration regarding Active Travel in the Local Area Plan. While I understand the complexities involved in planning cycling infrastructure, my overarching suggestion can be summed up by the slogan:

"It's the Intersections, Stupid!"

Investing in bike lanes that are poorly designed—where cyclists are required to stop frequently, lack priority at minor junctions or driveways, or are abruptly dumped into the middle of busy junctions, is a misallocation of taxpayer money. In many cases, such lanes are not only ineffective but create more hazards than they resolve. At least if there is no bike lane present, motorists aren't inclined to get as frustrated and angry with cyclists for not using the adjacent cycle lane, which to all intents and purposes is effectively unusable for cycling.

I am not a resident of Blessington, and am only familiar with cycling on a few stretches of road around the town when passing through occasionally, but from driving through the town, it is obvious that there are significant issues with the lack of, and quality of cycling infrastructure. Even the ring road which has a cycle lane, has major flaws as a usable cycle lane. While the cycle lane may work for left turns, cyclists attempting to go straight or turn right are often forced to either dismount or navigate tricky, dangerous maneuvers to get onto the roundabout.

I regularly commute by bike (or used to) to my place of work in a North Kildare town. I come across the occasional bit of worthwhile cycling infrastructure enroute, but more often than not, ineffective cycling infrastructure. There is a super bit of ineffective cycling infrastructure just outside my workplace, and recently, it almost contributed to bringing about my demise. Leaving work on my bike, I opted not to use the relatively new 3m wide segregated bike lane beside me, and instead opted to use the road carriageway. One or two cars passed me and then slowed and stopped at the traffic backed up at the traffic lights. As I approached the backed up traffic, I could hear a HGV aggressively revving and approaching way too fast from behind, and then screeched to an abrupt stop just inches away from me, narrowly avoiding a collision with both my bike and a stationary car in traffic. Seems that that the HGV driver and his irate buddy in the passenger seat, were so aggrieved that I wasn't using the available 3m bike lane beside me, that they had to catch up with me to yell and intimidate me for not using the bike lane.

Although they were a bit over zealous, their frustration is maybe understandable, seeing someone on a bike not using a perfectly good bike lane beside them. The issue for me however is that when I leave my place of

work by bike, I travel less than 250m before I encounter a traffic light junction where I continue straight through, before travelling another 150m where I encounter a roundabout where I turn right. If I stick to the road carriageway, and the lights are green, I only need to yield at the roundabout before I get back onto a good cycle lane after exiting the roundabout, and only need to stop once if the lights are red. On the other hand, if I take the cycle lane, I need to stop five times - three times to get across the first junction, stopping at each traffic island and waiting on the green man each time, and a further two times to navigate the right turn on the roundabout as I need to cross the carriageways at the unsignalled pedestrian crossing with island also. This situation exemplifies a larger problem in Ireland: cycling infrastructure that fails to account for the realities of cycling, particularly at intersections. Poorly designed junctions not only undermine the effectiveness of bike lanes but also contribute to conflict between cyclists and motorists.

I respectfully urge you to prioritise improving the cycling infrastructure at traffic junctions in any plans to develop cycling paths in and around Blessington. For example, many of the existing roundabouts in Blessington could be upgraded to Dutch-style roundabouts that prioritise cyclists. These changes would make the connected cycle lanes more infinitely more usable, encouraging cycling, especially among vulnerable users like children and the elderly. I note from draft Local Transport Assessment that the numbers travelling to school by bike are zero, which is unsurprising given the lack of safe cycling infrastructure in Blessington.

While out at Eire Og GAA club in the past year or two, I have seen a positive example of good cycling infrastructure leading to the GAA club and Greystones Community College. The result is that there is a high volume of bikes and bike sheds at the school and shows that when you provide good safe cycle paths to schools, sports facilities, and amenities, people will use them. Contrast this to the single bike shed at Blessington Community College. No bike lanes, leads to no bikes.

I would encourage you to adopt a strategy that prioritises providing new well designed cycle paths and/or upgrading existing substandard cycle infrastructure to and from schools and sport facilities in particular when considering Active Travel in the Local Area Plan. Cycle infrastructure is only as good as the weakest link, and it will not be used if there are junctions and crossings on the route that are not safe to be used by vulnerable users. It would be a far better investment to build 200 meters of high-quality, safe cycle track to a school than to install 2 kilometers of substandard cycle lanes that are interrupted by poorly designed junctions. The former will be used, the latter will not.

Additionally, I would like to highlight the lack of bike parking in towns and villages throughout West Wicklow. The availability of bike parking at schools, sports grounds, town centre, parks, and bus stops is insufficient. Providing more bike parking would encourage cycling, although demand is unlikely to increase much until the cycling infrastructure itself is improved.

Finally, I recommend that all new housing developments include segregated cycle paths, with provisions to connect to future developments. This would help build a more cohesive cycling network and community in the area.

I trust that you will give my submission serious consideration as part of the Local Area Plan discussions. I look forward to seeing an increase in the number of people cycling to school in the next census, and to seeing improved cycling infrastructure that makes the roads safer for everyone.

Is Mise Le Meas,  
Liam Mooney

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