



Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

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Topic

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

Submission

Having read the draft LAP could I draw your attention to BLESS28 which is the only real reference to a community Centre for Blessington. The population of Blessington has increased significantly since 2016 and with further planned housing development I am asking that community infrastructure meets the needs of the community. With plans such as the LECP, Health and Well being strategy, Blessington Health Check, The Age friendly strategy etc. The Blessington access Audit community is key therefore due consideration must be given to its needs.

I wish to note from the outset that a community centre is something very different to that of a multipurpose sports facility and the two must be considered in isolation. The community centre can of course facilitate an indoor sports hall but it is not a sports complex.

In the draft LAP the area that would be most suited to a community centre would be SLO 8 this would require zoning for active open space as opposed to open space. This space would be easily accessible for all members of the community. I understand how limited space is in Blessington so it would make sense to optimise this opportunity. This area could be further utilised with a 400-metre running track to facilitate track and field events such as community games, Safe walking spaces for our more vulnerable community members but also provide a home for a club in the town the lakeshore Striders who will have nowhere to train their adult or juvenile groups. This space could be used to meet the needs of a significant cohort. The community centre would become a hive of activity and a safe space for service users. This is not a sports centre but a community centre.

Below is a proposal

We aim to have a successful, vibrant community facility providing a safe and welcoming meeting place. The hub should exist to improve the quality of life for local people by offering excellent services which provide a range of educational, recreational, cultural, and social opportunities. In addition, we would be looking to provide informal advice to users on a wide range of matters and signposts them to the appropriate point for further advice. This space should be a central hub where individuals from a wide range of backgrounds come to socialise, learn, and enjoy. We would be working in consultation and partnership with the local community, statutory and voluntary agencies in developing our programmes and responding to emerging need and new initiatives.

Our Purpose

- To facilitate the development of services and opportunities which meet the changing needs of Blessington and wider West Wicklow communities.
- To provide supports and education, to help those experiencing social isolation and to encourage active participation within the community.

- To provide social well-being support to individuals, families, and the community.

Aims & Objectives of the Community Hub:

1. To provide a dedicated multi-disciplinary community space
2. To provide specific assistance and programmes to individuals or target groups as identified by relevant needs analysis and community profiles
3. To enhance the standard of services provided, evaluate, and monitor changing needs.
4. To ensure the delivery of high-quality advocacy, counselling, referral, support, information, and community education.
5. Improve the quality of life for the local community
6. Provide an accessible, welcoming venue and focal point for the community. A place for people to meet and socialise and a space for local organisations.
7. Provide a range of low or no cost educational, recreational, social, and cultural activities that are accessible to local people in response to local need.
8. Provide a local facility and resource which promotes and encourages learning, development, and a stronger community.
9. Promote and advocate the needs of groups based in the centre and provide opportunities for more integration and inclusion between users.
10. Act as an informal information point on activities and services.
11. To maintain strategic relevance with partnerships, local authority, and funding bodies.

With the support of the West Wicklow Interagency committee, we had a firm base to create a ground swell of support for this project.

This group consists of over 30+ agency who have a remit to provide services in Blessington and all West Wickow. These services range from TUSLA-CYPSC WCCC, WCP, Drugs projects, youth projects, Mental Health services, Domestic Violence, Parent Programmes to name a few. This committee have been in place for several years and is in full agreement of the need for a dedicated community space in Blessington.

This committee is chaired by CHO area 7 Tusla lead and has become a subgroup of the Children Young Persons Service Committee (CYPSC)

We have further need for additional dedicated youth spaces which would reduce anti-social behaviour in the area by creating pro social engagement. Youth work can help to build confidence, provide role models, open new experiences, and give young people a sense of belonging. Youth work is both educational and enjoyable, when it has the correct facility to operate from.

The facilities would be used by all community organisations with statutory organisations operating services from it. The 400-metre track and provision for Track and Field events would be a great way to utilise the space and provide outcomes that align with many of the current plans in Wicklow County Council and its associated groups such as LCDL, Healthy Ireland, Wicklow Sports partnership etc.

I thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal and look forward to a favourable outcome for SLO 8

