



Inspector's Report

PL-500906-WW-26

Development

Development comprising of 71 residential units and a retail/commercial space. Residential development will consist of 4 blocks ranging in height of four storeys and all site development works.

Location

Newtown Centre/Newtown Square ,
Blessington Demesne , Blessington

Planning Authority

Wicklow County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

2560074

Applicant(s)

Clonmel Enterprises Ltd

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Grant Permission + Conditions

Type of Appeal

Third Party Normal Planning Appeal

Appellant(s)

Daniel Guy

Observer(s)

None

Date of Site Inspection

23rd June 2026

Inspector

Mary Crowley

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site, comprising an unused / vacant site extends to approx. 0.75 ha is located within the settlement boundary of Blessington Town. The site consists of an area referred to as Downshire Park, and falls c5m from east to west. This site adjoins the Newtown Centre and the Newtown Square apartments to the north east that form part of the relatively recent redevelopment of the town centre that now includes a shopping centre, library, gym and associated shopping units.
- 1.2. The local access road which connects the Blessington Inner Relief Road (BIRR) to Main Street and to the Dunnes Stores anchored retail development runs along the north-eastern boundary of the site with a narrow service/access road (providing access to the, Newtown Square's basement car parking) running along part of the site's south-eastern boundary. The site is bounded to the north-west and south-west by existing residential development, The Close/The Grove and The Avenue.
- 1.3. There are no protected structures or structures listed in the NIAH within the application site area. The Blessington Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is located c.50m to the southeast of the site. There are a number of protected Structures located to southeast of the site i.e. RPS05-06 Blessington Main Street Church of Ireland (less than c.150m), RPS05-05 Blessington Main Street Credit Union House/Market House (less than c.100m) and RPS05-03 (Bank, formerly a house c.80m) and a larger number of structures listed on the NIAH.
- 1.4. I refer to the photos and photomontages available to view throughout the file. Together with a set of photographs of the site and its environs taken during the course of my site inspection serve to describe the site and location in further detail.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. Planning Application

- 2.2. Planning permission was sought on the 13th February 2025 for 71 No. units on a site area of approx. 0.75 ha and a retail/commercial ground floor space of approx. 96sq.m. The proposed development provides for perimeter blocks overlooking public spaces, with an internal courtyard providing car parking and open space. The proposed development has had regard to pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connectivity around the site.

2.3. The proposed development can be further broken down as follows:

- 71 No. residential units comprising of 5 No. 1 Bed Units, 48 No. 2 Bed Units and 18 No. 3 Bed Units to be provided in a mix of unit types as follows: 35 No. 1 & 2 bedroom apartment units within 1 No. four storey block ('Block 1') and 36 No. 2 & 3 bedroom duplex apartments within 3 No. three storey blocks together with all other associated landscaping, site development and service infrastructure works;
- Primary vehicular access is provided from the public road running along the north of the site at Dunnes Stores ('one-way' only from Newtown Square) and capacity for possible vehicular access to southeastern part of the site into the rear of proposed OP4&5 lands within draft LAP.
- Designated pedestrian and bicycle accessibility will be provided along the northern frontage of the site towards Newtown Square.
- A ground floor retail/commercial space on the corner of Block 1 addressing Newtown Square comprising approx. 96sq.m.
- A total of approx. 0.113Ha of public open space is provided within the proposed development.
- Parking provision within the site will be provided at grade level – 55 No. car parking spaces on the surface and 16 No. at ground floor within Block 1.
- 178 No. designated bicycle spaces will be provided on site – 66 internally within Block 1, 36 in bike lockers in duplexes and 76 No. externally on communal space.
- The overall net density is approx. 95 units per hectare on a site area of approx. 0.75Ha

2.4. **Foul Sewerage** - Foul sewerage in the proposed development will be connected to the existing sewerage system as shown. Full details of the proposed foul sewerage system are documented in the engineering report submitted.

2.5. **Surface Water Sewerage** - Surface water in the proposed development will be attenuated on site and discharged into the existing surface water sewerage system as shown. Full details of the proposed surface water sewerage system including attenuation proposals are documented in the engineering report submitted.

2.6. **Water Supply** - The proposed watermain in the development will be connected to the existing watermain located as shown. Full details of the proposed watermain network are documented in the engineering report submitted.

2.7. The application was accompanied by the following:

- Planning Report
- Quality Housing Assessment
- Design Statement
- Archaeological Assessment
- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- AA Screening Report
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Part V Proposals & WCC Letter of Agreement Subject to Contract
- Civil Engineering Report that includes an Uisce Eireann Confirmation of Feasibility dated 4th September 2024
- Traffic & Transport Assessment Report that includes a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and DMURS Quality Audit
- Public Lighting Report

2.8. The principal development statistics are as shown below:

Gross Site Area	0.771 ha	7710 sqm
Net Site Area	0.75 ha	7500 sqm
No of Units	71	
Building Height	3 - 4 storey	
Public Open Space	0.113 ha	
Density (gross)	95 units / ha	
Density (net)	92 units / ha	
Retail / Commercial Space	96 sqm	

Car Parking	71 spaces	
Bicycle Parking	178 spaces	
Part V	14 No Residential Units (5 x 1 bed units & 9 x 2 bed units)	
Unit Type	Number	%
1 Bedroom	5	7%
2 Bedroom	48	68%
3 Bedroom	18	25%
Total	71	100%

2.9. Further Information

2.10. Further Information (FI) was submitted on 21st August 2025 and 2nd September 2025 and may be summarised as follows:

- Item 1 - Infrastructure
 - Waste Water - Uisce Eireann stated that Wastewater and Water Supply are available without infrastructure upgrade.
 - Surface Water - Designed in accordance with the principles of GDSDS, Ciria C753, the SUDS Manual and Nature Based Solutions (NBS) and will have no or negligible impact on the receiving waters.
 - Water Supply - Uisce Eireann states that a water connection is feasible without infrastructure upgrade by Uisce Eireann.
- Item 2 Limited Mix of Uses and Ground Floor Animation
 - Revised Site Layout Plan (Drwg No. C-94-4 Rev D) providing for 2 No. commercial / retail units totalling approx. 131.40 sq. m and redesigned windows for the enlarged internal bicycle storage area increasing animation along the street frontages.
 - Loss of 1 No. apartment unit decreasing the number of units proposed to 70 No. units. The proposed residential development (70 No. residential units) comprises of:
 - 4 No. 1 Bedroom units,
 - 48 No. 2 Bedroom units,
 - 18 No. 3 Bedroom units,

- Plus 2 No. retail/ commercial units

The gross floor areas and mix of the proposed development as set out as follows:

Description / Type	Total Floor Area
Total Residential	5,920.96 sq. m
Undercroft Car Parking / Bicycle Storage	470.22 sq. m
Common Areas (Apartment Block 1)	708.77 sq. m
Retail / Commercial Units	131.40 sq. m
Electricity Sub-Station / Switch Room	21.70 sq. m
Total	7,226.65 sq. m

- Item 3

- Road Capacity - The Traffic Assessment confirms that full operation of the scheme will have a negligible impact upon the operation of the adjacent road network. All matters raised in the Road Safety Audit have been addressed within the submitted layout plans and signed off by the Road Safety Auditor.
- Pedestrian Safety - Some deterioration of the existing granite setts has occurred, this does not compromise the safety of vehicular access. The applicant cannot propose or carry out upgrades, as this section of the road lies within third-party ownership and is not under the control of WCC. The applicant's scope is limited to providing safe and improved pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular access within lands under their control.

- Item 4

- Lighting Design - Height of the proposed lighting columns reduced from 8m to 6m.
- Pedestrian Link to Newtown Centre / Newtown Square - The crossing has been relocated in order to achieve appropriate inter-visibility.
- New Crossing Location - Crossing has been relocated to the existing landscaped area to the west of the existing parking.
- High Quality Footpaths - High-quality paving matching the paving on the opposite side of the road has been proposed in front of Block 1.
- Refuse Truck Swept Path Analysis - Bins will be brought to/from the refuse vehicle by the operators.

- Transitional Cycle Path Arrangements - Shared path is 3.5m in width at a minimum and wider at most other locations in line with the Cycle Design Manual. Appropriate Shared Pedestrian and cycle route signage and corduroy type tactile paving to tie-into the existing footpath and cycle track.
- Width of Shared Path - Rearranged/improved the shared path in their current response which removes the access points and planters at the corner of the commercial units providing more adequate shared path for pedestrians.
- Substation, Bin Storage and Cycle Parking Details - Revised Site Layout Plan relocating the substation, bin storage and cycle parking in the southern corner of the sit
- Backland Access Details – Exact location, detail and type of the access junction will be part of a separate application as it is not required to serve the applicants lands.
- Fire Tender & Refuse Collection Swept Path Analysis – Included in Transport Assessment.
- Item 5 Justification for the Limited Open Space or a Design Solution - Revised Site Layout Plan and Landscape plan which limits the location of refuse storage and bicycle parking on open space thereby creating more generous open space areas for residents. In total there is approx. 11% open space provision within the proposed development.
- Item 6
 - Storage Rooms - Revised floor plans with no storage rooms in excess of 3.5 sqm
 - 16m Separation Distances - Redesign of the proposed windows facing Newtown Square Apartments that addresses the opposing windows issue raised.
- Item 7
 - External Finishes - External finishes and graphic samples of external finishes set out in Design Statement. Details to be submitted to the planning authority for agreement.
 - Verified views with realistic CGI images - submitted
 - Universal Design - 4 No. units that benefit from universal design identified in plans
 - Part V – Revised design has a minor impact on the original Part V offer. 14 No. units identified to be assigned to provide for Part V obligations. Updated letter of agreement in principle from Housing Section enclosed.

- EV Charging Strategy - Revised Combined services/ EV charging layout and EV charging - undercroft car parking layout.
- Justification for siting and design of new ESB Substation - Revised Site Layout Plan relocating the ESB substation into the southeastern corner of the site.
- Item 8 Cycle Parking - Enlarged internal bicycle storage area proposed with no vertically stored bicycle spaces
- Item 9 Sunlight Daylight Assessment - Public spaces proposed are in sunlight within the recommended parameters with no overshadowing of the adjoining residential sites or amenities.
- Items 2, 4, 5, 7 & 8 Updated Design Statement - Revisions have been made to the design as follows:
 - Increase in commercial/retail space available & increase in floor to ceiling height
 - Additional windows on ground floor level for internal bicycle storage area
 - Windows re-designed facing Newtown Square Apartments
 - Increase in availability of useable public & communal open space areas
 - Revisions to bicycle and bin storage areas, and enlarged internal bicycle storage

2.11. The FI was accompanied by the following:

- Cover Letter
- Engineering Report including Uisce Eireann Confirmation of Feasibility, Extract from Uisce Eireann Website, Uisce Eireann Bulletin in Relation to WWTP and Uisce Eireann Annual Environmental Report 2024
- Transportation / Roads & Access Engineering Report including Proposed Northernmost Crossing Layout, Proposed Easternmost Crossing Layout, Refuse Vehicle AutoTRACKs, Fire Tender AutoTRACKs and Large Saloon Car AutoTRACKs
- Visual Photomontages
- Revised Part V Details, Wicklow County Council Housing Department letter re Part V and associated Part V Identification Plans
- Quality Housing Assessment
- Sunlight Daylight Assessment
- Updated Design Statement

- Landscape Plan (Revised)
- Public lighting design layout
- EV charging design layout & EV charging in undercroft parking
- Further Drawings to include bicycle storage and shelter details
- Updated Schedule of Development
- House and Apartment Standards Compliance Sheet

2.12. Public Notices

2.13. The FI was deemed significant and revised public notices were requested on 25th August 2025. Revised public notices were submitted on the 2nd September 2025.

2.14. Extension of Time

2.15. WCC sought Clarification of Further Information (CoFI) on 26th September 2025. On the 1st October 2025 the applicant sought a time extension of three months. WCC granted a three-month extension of time to the applicant on 2nd October 2025 with the CoFI to be received by the 16th January 2026.

2.16. Clarification of Further Information

2.17. CoFI was received on the 15th January 2026 and summarised as follows:

- **Item 1** - Site Layout Plan (Drwg No. C-94-4 Rev E) providing reconfiguration of southeast corner of the site which addresses the concerns raised regarding rear access to back lands, open space provision and location of ESB Sub Station. Contact has been made with the ESB and the existing sub-station can be used for the development together with a small new sub-station which does not restrict future access to back lands of properties along Main Street. See breakdown of proposed Communal and Public Open Space as follows:

Public Open Space	
Area 1	227 sqm
Area 2	70 sqm
Total	297 sqm
Communal Open Space	
Area 1	298 sqm

Area 2 (Roof Garden)	358 sqm
Total	656 sqm

- *Site Layout* - The site layout has been revised to remove the open space from the affected area along the eastern boundary with the zoned lands adjacent to the subject site. A proposed 5.5m wide carriageway with a 2m wide footpath is proposed to provide access to the two portions of land in question.
- *Road Safety* - The proposed road, footpath and indicative accesses are in line with DMURS with appropriate sight lines of 2.4x23m available for a 30km/h speed limit, which we would expect this road to be.
- *Potential Future Development of the Adjacent Back lands Sites* - The applicant's scope is limited to providing pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular access within lands under their control therefore the junction and final details of the proposed road are out of their control. The exact location, detail and type of the access road and potential junctions will all be part of a separate application(s) as it is not required to serve the applicants lands.

- **Item 2** - Cross-section 7-7 of Block 1 (Drwg No. C-94-5 Rev C) indicating floor to ceiling heights of the proposed retail units and residential units above.
- **Item 3** - Specific issues and any associated remedial works relating to surface condition, markings, signage, lighting and any other issues on the pedestrian routes will be agreed and addressed between the various parties to address safety concerns regarding the condition of the primary access route.
- **Item 4**- Cover letter and drawings re ducting car parking spaces (1, 2, 3 and 45) for future EV charging

2.18. The C of FI was accompanied by the following:

- Cover Letter
- Letter form Applicant
- Part Ground Floor Plan Block 1 Bicycle Store
- Site Services Layout
- Site Layout, Floor Plans, Elevations and Typical Sections
- Public lighting design layout
- EV charging design layout

- Electricity sub-station Drwg
- Proposed Link Road Details
- Engineers letter
- Proposed Link Road Details
- Letter from Clonmel Enterprises Ltd. (Applicants) Re Item 3
- Letter from Kroll on behalf of Cookehill Limited giving consent to Clonmel Enterprises Ltd for the inclusion of our lands within their planning application Reg Ref 25/60074.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

- 3.2. WCC Issued a notification of decision grant permission for **70 no residential units and 2 no. commercial / retail units** subject to 27 no conditions on 10th February 2026 and summarised as follows:

1)	Permission permitted as described in the documents lodged, as revised by FI submitted on 02/09/2025 and 15/01/2026
2)	Revised plans to be agreed: a) retail units will have a floor to ceiling heights of between 3.5m to 4m b) suitably located children's play zone within the proposed development
3)	a) No dwelling units shall be occupied until the Backlands Access Road and both Community Open Spaces completed b) The Backlands Access Road lands shall be kept clear from obstruction
4)	a) First occupation of any residential unit shall be by individual purchasers or by those eligible for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing b) No occupation shall occur until confirmation from a solicitor has been submitted
5)	Section 96 Agreement
6)	All of the mitigation measures and design elements as contained in the submitted documents (as Revised) shall be implemented in full Timescales for implementation of all mitigation measures shall be submitted and approved
7)	a) Works shall accord with the CEMP b) Construction Manager shall be appointed

	c) Building works between 0700 to Monday to Fridays inclusive, 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays.
8)	A single management company shall be established and legally constituted
9)	Section 48 Development Contribution in the sum of €715,801
10)	Security shall be given by a lodgement with the Council of the sum of €65,250
11)	Phasing programme to be agreed
12)	Written agreement of Uisce Éireann shall be obtained
13)	Surface/storm water drainage systems to comply with the details lodged
14)	a) Pavement design & makeup details to public roads / footpaths to be agreed b) Exact specification of the estate roads to be agreed c) Road construction materials to be tested
15)	a) Stage 2 Road Safety Audit to be submitted b) Prior to occupation a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit to be submitted
16)	Final Public Lighting design to be agreed
17)	EV charging infrastructure to be provided in accordance with submitted details
18)	External finishes shall be agreed
19)	Internally illuminated signage on the commercial elements shall not be permitted
20)	All mechanical plant and ventilation inlets and outlets shall be sound insulated
21)	No additional development shall take place above roof parapet level
22)	The hard and soft landscaping shall comply with the drawings
23)	Landscaping and tree planting shall be carried out before or during the first planting season and planting in the public realm shall consist of native species
24)	Development name and numbering scheme to be agreed
25)	Public Open space areas shall be dedicated to the use of the residents and their maintenance shall be the responsibility of the developer
26)	As constructed drawings of the development shall be supplied to the Council
27)	All service cables shall be located underground.

3.3. Planning Authority Reports

3.3.1. Planning Application

- The Case Planner in their first report requested FI in relation to the following as summarised:

- 1) Engineering Report on the capacity of the water supply and wastewater treatment capacity for Blessington.
- 2) Justification for the limited mix, the low floor to ceiling heights within this busy town centre location and the lack of proposed animation at ground floor level.
- 3) Traffic and Transport Statement/Engineering Report on the adequacy of the road network to serve the proposed development in terms of safety and capacity.
- 4) Revised lighting design, safe crossing point for pedestrians to link to the northern area of Newtown Centre/Newtown Square, details where the new crossing would be located, footpaths along the SE and NE side of block 1 should consist of high-quality paving to match to the paving on the opposite side of road, swept path analysis of refuse trucks, transitional arrangement for the current cycle path in the northeast corner of the site, proposed substation, bin storage and cycle parking (southern corner of the site) is inadequately detailed, safe and adequate access to zoned lands, should be provided and swept path analysis is provided for the courtyard or Block 1 parking.
- 5) Justification for the limited open space
- 6) Size of storage rooms and minimum back to back separation (with opposing windows) of 16m between Block 1 and the Newtown Square Apartment
- 7) Materials, colours and textures of all external finishes to the proposed development, verified views with realistic CGI images, clarify which units are proposed to benefit from universal design, Part V obligations, EV Charging Strategy that applies to all car parking spaces and justification of the siting and design of the proposed new ESB substation.
- 8) Design statement detailing / justifying the rationale of the design of bicycle parking
- 9) Sunlight Daylight Assessment.

3.3.2. Further Information was requested on 8th April 2025

3.3.3. Further Information

- Further Information was received on 21st August 2025. The Case Planner considered that for the most part, the response was adequate but that a number of issues were inadequately responded to and sought clarification of same and summarised as follows:
 - 1) Alternative proposals for open space / communal space, and the location of ESB substation having regard to the following. Noted that the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025 has been adopted, and this is the plan under which this application is required to be assessed, it would appear in the absence of a suitable access to back lands that the development would materially contravene the objectives set out for opportunity sites at this point under Objective BLESS OP4-6.
 - 2) Cross-sections indicating the floor to ceiling heights of the proposed retail units and residential units above.
 - 3) Safety concerns regarding the condition of the primary access route more comprehensively/proactively together with commitments to resolving issues.
 - 4) Drawings showing car parking spaces (1, 2, 3 and 45) as being ducted for future EV charging.

3.4. Clarification of Further Information was requested on 26th September 2025.

3.4.1. Clarification of Further Information

- Clarification of Further Information was submitted on 15th January 2026.
- The Case Planner in their third and final report and having considered the C of FI recommended that permission be granted for 70 no units subject to 27 no conditions. The notification of decision to grant permission issued by WCC reflects this recommendation.

3.4.2. **Other Technical Reports**

3.4.3. Planning Application

- **Baltinglass Municipal District Engineer (x2)** – Requested submission of a Traffic and Transport Statement/Engineering Report on the adequacy of the road network to serve the proposed development in terms of safety and capacity. FI should have regard to capacity concerns prior to the completion of the BIRR and safety concerns regarding the primary vehicular access route due to the existing surfacing having deteriorated significantly.

- **Pollution Control Section, Climate, Environment, Recreation and Amenity** – Applicant / Uisce Eireann to clarify if additional drinking water is available without impacting on ecological flows required for the Liffey River or the performance of the Water treatment Works and also if the development is allowed to connect to the foul sewer while the discharge licence application from the EPA to permit a larger discharge beyond 6000PE is still pending.
- **Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery** – Footpaths to be of high-quality paving to match to the paving on the opposite side of road, bin storage for Block 1 to be identified, proposed uncontrolled crossing to be agreed, details where the new crossing will be located, details of the full pavement makeup to be provided/agreed, cycle parking shelters should be able to accommodate cargo bikes etc and unacceptable lighting design. If the development is to be granted permission, it should be conditioned that a Stage 3 RSA is carried out at the completion of the development and all issues identified in the Audit are addressed by the applicant.
- **Housing Part V** - No stated objection

3.4.4. Further Information

- **Baltinglass Municipal District Engineer** - Safety concerns regarding the primary vehicular access route. The existing surfacing has deteriorated significantly, there is a general lack of road markings and signage and the potential for increased unsafe interaction between vehicles and pedestrians.
- **Pollution Control Section, Climate, Environment, Recreation and Amenity (1st September 2025)** - It is not prudent to grant planning permission for a development generating additional wastewater loads in the absence of a revised discharge licence from the EPA including any revised limits for protecting the receiving water. It is also not clear from the application if Uisce Eireann have carried out any assessment of the effect of the additional abstraction from the Liffey required to provide the drinking water for the development.
- **Pollution Control Section, Climate, Environment, Recreation and Amenity (16th September 2025)** - The planning authority, should consider, writing to the agency to seek their observations about whether the proposed development is likely to have an impact on the waste water discharges i.e. whether the discharge from the proposed development, in conjunction with existing discharges to the receiving water, would cause

a non-compliance with the combined approach, or significant breach of the combined approach, where there is already a non-compliance, as per Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007 -2024.

- **Housing (Part V) - No stated objection**

3.4.5. Clarification of Further Information

- **Baltinglass Municipal District Engineer** - Safety concerns regarding the condition of the primary access route and any associated remedial works relating to surface condition, markings, signage, lighting and any other issues on the pedestrian routes need to be agreed and completed before development could commence on this site.
- **Development Contributions**
 - Residential - €708,048.20
 - Retail - €7,752.60
 - Cash Security €1500 (per linear meter of road) x 43.5 = €65,250

3.5. **Prescribed Bodies**

- **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Archaeology** - The proposed development site is located in the environs of Recorded Monuments WI007WI005-013 habitation site and WI005-019 barrow, which are subject to statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places, established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Recommended archaeological condition – pre-development archaeological testing be attached.
- **Uisce Éireann** - The development is proposed to be constructed over this asset. Uisce Éireann does not permit build over of its assets and the separation distances as per Uisce Éireann's Standards Codes and Practices must be achieved.

3.6. **Third Party Observations**

3.6.1. Planning Application

3.6.2. There are 4 no observations recorded on the file from (1) Ballymore Eustace Community Development Association (Stephen Deegan), (2) Margaret Eustace & Others, (3) Micheal Walker and (4) Michal Ujma. The issues raised relate to negative impact on residential

amenity, negative impact on visual amenity, design, traffic and road safety and limited capacity of the existing wastewater and surface water network in Blessington.

3.6.3. Further Information

3.6.4. There are 2 no observations recorded on the appeal file from (1) Micheal Walker and (2) Daniel Guy. The issues raised relate to height and mass of the building, loss of daylight, surrounding roads are not suitable to cope with a development of this size and fails to respect and meet the current resident's and local community's needs and wishes.

3.7. **Planning History**

3.7.1. There is no evidence of any previous appeal on this site. There are several previous planning applications on the site that may be summarised as follows:

- **Reg Ref 14/1663** - Amendments to previously approved Courtyard Apartments scheme (Ref: 05/4442) within the previously approved Blessington New Town Centre
- **Reg Ref 08/1157** – Permission granted for amendments to previously approved Courtyard Apartments scheme (Ref: 05/4442) within the previously approved Blessington New Town Centre (Ref: 01/4436).
- **Reg Ref 05/4442** – Permission granted on the site of the previously approved Courtyard Apartments/retail block and theatre elements of the new Blessington Town Centre (Ref. 01/4436) on a site to the North West of the town square block.

3.7.2. **Pre Planning PP23/68** - Proposal for 70 No. Residential units.

3.7.3. **Pre Planning PP08/66** – Revision to Courtyard Apartment Scheme at Blessington Town Centre.

4.0 **Policy Context**

4.1. **National Context**

4.1.1. **Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)**

4.1.2. The NPF (First Revision, April 2025) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the long-term strategic planning framework to guide national, regional and local

planning and investment decisions over the next 15 years. Part of the vision of the NPF is managing growth and targeting at least 40% of all new housing in existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages through infill and brownfield sites while the rest of new homes will be targeted on greenfield edge of settlement areas and within rural areas. Key elements of the NPF include commitments towards 'compact growth', 'sustainable mobility', 'sustainable management of environmental resources', 'transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient society', and 'enhanced amenity and heritage'. The NPF also sets out a number of National Strategic Outcomes which include Compact Growth and Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities. These include:

- NSO 1 - Compact Growth
- NSO 7 - Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
- NPO 3a - Securing Compact & Sustainable Growth
- NPO 3c - Securing Compact & Sustainable Growth
- NPO 4 - Why Urban Places Matter (Community)
- NPO 5 - Why Urban Places Matter (Economy/Prosperity)
- NPO 6 - Why Urban Places Matter (The Environment)
- NPO 9 - Planning for Ireland's Urban Growth (Ireland's Towns)
- NPO 11 - Achieving Urban Infill/Brownfield Development
- NPO 13 - Performance-Based Design Standards
- NPO 32 - Housing
- NPO 33 - Housing (Location of Homes)
- NPO 34 - Housing (Building Resilience in Housing - Lifetime Needs)
- NPO 35 - Housing (Building Resilience in Housing - Density)

4.1.3. Climate Action Plan 2025

4.1.4. The Climate Action Plan 2025 builds upon and should be read in conjunction with the Climate Action Plan 2024. It refines and updates the measures and actions required to deliver carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by no later than 2050. All new dwellings will be designed and constructed to Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standard by 2025, and Zero Emission Building standard by 2030. In relation to transport, key targets include a 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled, a 50%

reduction in fossil fuel usage, and significant increases to sustainable transport trips and modal share. These legally binding objectives are set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The Commission is required to perform its functions in a manner consistent with the Climate & Low Carbon Development Act.

4.1.5. National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBPA) 2023-2030

4.1.6. The 4th NBAP strives for a “whole of government, whole of society” approach to the governance and conservation of biodiversity. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to “act for nature”. This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. It will continue to implement actions within the framework of five strategic objectives, while addressing new and emerging issues:

- Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
- Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
- Objective 3 - Secure Nature’s Contribution to People
- Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
- Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland’s Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

4.2. National Guidance

- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013)

4.3. Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines

4.3.1. The following national policy, statutory guidelines, guidance and circulars are also relevant:

- Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025-2030: An Action Plan on Housing Supply and Targeting Homelessness (2025)
- Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing & Homelessness (2016)
- Appropriate Assessment Guidelines (2009)
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines (2011)

- Childcare Facilities Guidelines (2020)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines (2018)
- Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009)
- Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines (2018)
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (2009)
- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007)
- Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2023)
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020)
- Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 Guidelines (2017)
- Local Area Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013)

4.3.2. The ***Design Standards for Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2025)*** were issued on 8th July 2025. However, these Guidelines do not apply to the subject appeal. They only apply to any application for planning permission and to any subsequent appeal or direct application to An Coimisiún Pleanála submitted after the issuing of the Guidelines, i.e. from 9th July 2025. As per Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Circular Letter: NSP 04/2025.

4.4. **Regional Guidelines**

4.4.1. **Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2029 – 2031 (EMRA-RSES)**

4.4.2. County Wicklow is part of the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA). The EMRA published its Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) in 2019. The purpose of the Strategy is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 through providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Regions.

4.4.3. The Strategy sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), which are aligned with international, EU and national policy and which in turn set the framework for city and county development plans. RSO No 2 sets out the following:

Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration

Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens. (NSO 1)

4.5. Development Plan

- 4.5.1. The operative County Development Plan for the area is the **Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 (Variation No 3 & Variation No 5)**. The operative Local Area Plan for Blessington is the **Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031** that was adopted on the 16th June 2025 and came into effect on 28th July 2025.
- 4.5.2. Variation No. 3 (Blessington Local Area Plan 2025) to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 was made by Wicklow County Council on 16th June 2025, pursuant to Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The variation comprises integrating the land use zoning map and key development objectives from the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025, which was prepared separately but alongside the proposed Variation, as well as other changes consequent into the County Development Plan. Variation is discussed below.
- 4.5.3. Variation No. 5 of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 was made by Wicklow County Council on 30th March 2026, pursuant to Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The reason for the variation was to take account of 'NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements' - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, issued under Section 28 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) (July 2025). The variation revised the Wicklow Core Strategy and associated housing targets, and a number of related housing objectives set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 Written Statement. Arising from this variation, changes consequent were required to be made to the Blessington LAP 2025 Written Statement, largely in relation to the phasing of land zoned for residential development.
- 4.5.4. Relevant sections of the Development Plan are summarised as follows:

Volume 1	Chapter 2 Overall Strategy
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	▪ SCO1 Sustainable Settlement Patterns & Compact Growth - The delivery of compact growth in all towns and villages by capitalising on the potential for infill and brownfield development, moving away from a reliance on greenfield development and creating places that encourage active lifestyles is essential for the successful delivery of the development plan strategy. Chapter 3 Core Strategy Local Area Plans - As part of the new LAP adoption process for the settlements of Wicklow Town – Rathnew and Blessington, the land use zoning and key development objectives maps for these LAP settlements / areas were integrated into Volume 2 of the County Development Plan by way of variation (Variations 2 and 3). Zoning Principles Principle 1 – Compact Growth Blessington Level 3 - For larger towns in Levels 1-5, where more significant growth is targeted that is unlikely to be possible to accommodate wholly within the existing built-up envelope, a minimum of 30% of the targeted housing growth shall be directed into the built up area of the settlement. Principle 2 – Delivery of Population & Housing Targets Town centre regeneration / infill / brownfield developments normally located within the existing built up part of the settlement, generally on lands zoned ‘town centre’, ‘village centre’, ‘primary area’, ‘existing residential’ and other similarly zoned, already developed lands will be prioritised and promoted in the first instance for new housing development. Principle 3 – Higher Densities The guidance and assessment criteria set out in the more recent ‘Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (DoHLGH 2024) shall be applied. In existing residential areas, infill development shall generally be at a density that respects the established character of the area in which it is located, subject to the protection of the residential amenity of adjoining properties. Compliance with Specific Planning Policy Requirements – The Development Plan has incorporated the following Guidelines: ▪ Urban Development and Buildings Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018 (SPPR1, SPPR2, SPPR3 and SPPR4) ▪ Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024 (SPPR1, SPPR2, SPPR3 and SPPR4) ▪ Planning Design Standards for Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2025 (SPPR1, SPPR2, SPPR3, SPPR4, SPPR5, SPPR6, SPPR7 and SPPR8)
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	▪ Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (SPPR1) Chapter 4 Settlement Strategy Blessington - Level 3: Self Sustaining Growth Towns - The key principles influencing self-sustaining growth towns include balanced growth, regeneration and revitalisation, compact growth, significant enhancement of employment opportunities, investment in sustainable transport and enhanced social infrastructure. Population and Growth Target - The population of the settlement is targeted to increase from 5,234 in 2016 to 6,145 by Q2 2028. ▪ CPO 4.1 - To implement the County Wicklow Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy, having regard to the availability of services and infrastructure and in particular, to direct growth into key towns, self-sustaining growth towns, self-sustaining towns and small towns. ▪ CPO 4.2 - To secure compact growth through the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes within the built-up footprint of existing settlements by prioritising development on infill, brownfield and regeneration sites and redeveloping underutilised land in preference to greenfield sites. ▪ CPO 4.3 - Increase the density in existing settlements through a range of measures including bringing vacant properties back into use, reusing existing buildings, infill development schemes, brownfield regeneration, increased building height where appropriate, encouraging living over the shop and securing higher densities for new development. ▪ CPO 4.6 - To require new housing development to locate on designated housing land within the boundaries of settlements, in accordance with the development policies for the settlement. ▪ CPO 4.9 - To target the reversal of town and village centre decline through sustainable compact growth and targeted measures that address vacancy, dereliction and underutilised lands and deliver sustainable renewal and regeneration outcomes Chapter 6 Housing Table 6.1 Areas and Density Ranges - Blessington Key Town / Large Town (5,000+) Centre and Urban Neighbourhoods - 40 dph - 00 dph ▪ CPO 6.1 - New housing development shall be required to locate on suitably zoned or designated land in settlements and will only be considered in the open countryside when
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	it is for the provision of a rural dwelling for those with a demonstrable housing social or economic need to live in the open countryside. ▪ CPO 6.2 - The sale of all developments of residential units, whether houses, duplexes or apartments, to commercial institutional investment bodies shall be prohibited. ▪ CPO 6.3 - New housing development shall enhance and improve the residential amenity of any location, shall provide for the highest possible standard of living of occupants and in particular, shall not reduce to an unacceptable degree the level of amenity enjoyed by existing residents in the area. ▪ CPO 6.4 - All new housing developments (including single and rural houses) shall achieve the highest quality of layout and design, in accordance with the standards set out in the Development and Design Standards (Appendix 1) and the Wicklow Single Rural House Design Guide (Appendix 2). ▪ CPO 6.5 - To require that new development be of the highest quality design and layout and contributes to the development of a coherent urban form and attractive built environment in accordance with the following key principles of urban design: - Strengthening the character and urban fabric of the area; - Reinforcing local identity and sense of place; - Optimise the opportunities afforded by the historical and natural assets of a site / area; - Providing a coherent, legible and permeable urban structure; - Promoting an efficient use of land; - Improving and enhancing the public realm; - Conserving and respecting local heritage; - Providing ease of movement and resolving conflict between pedestrians/cyclists and traffic; - Promoting accessibility for all; and - Cognisance of the impact on climate change and the reduction targets for carbon emissions set out by the Government. ▪ CPO 6.6 - To require that all planning applications for multi-unit residential development are accompanied by a Design Statement¹³. Design Statements shall include a detailed assessment of existing environment and historic character and demonstrate how the design has evolved in response to these underlying characteristics and fabric of the town / village. The Design Statement should address each of the 12 criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual (DECLG May 2009). The layout, access, road widths and open space should be cognisant of town and village character. ▪ CPO 6.7 - The design and layout of new residential and mixed-use development shall deliver highly permeable, well connected streets which facilitate active street frontage
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	in accordance with best practice set out in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG May 2009) and the Design Manual Urban Roads and Streets (DTTS & DECLG 2013). ▪ CPO 6.8 - Support the provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time and in particular to require that all new residential developments in excess of 20 residential units to provide a minimum 5% universally designed homes in accordance with the requirements of 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach and the Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (2015) ▪ CPO 6.9 - To implement the provisions of the Wicklow Housing Strategy and in particular, to apply a 10% (or a greater percentage if provided for in future legislation) social housing requirement pursuant to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) to land zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential or other uses, except where the development would be exempted from this requirement. In certain circumstances, as set out in the Affordable Housing Act 2021, this requirement will be 20% devoted to social and affordable housing. ▪ CPO 6.13 - To require that new residential development represents an efficient use of land and achieves the densities as set out in the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoHLGH 2024) - Table 6.1. In promoting higher densities and more compact development, new development should demonstrate compliance with: - the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoHLGH 2024); - Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities; - Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities; - Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets; and any subsequent Ministerial guidelines ▪ CPO 6.14 - To densify existing built-up areas subject to the adequate protection of existing residential amenities. ▪ CPO 6.15 - Higher density proposals should be designed to a high standard, incorporate a mix of housing types and sizes and deliver compact urban forms that enhance the local built environment and contribute towards a sustainable mix of housing options. Proposals should provide an appropriate design response to the site, be designed to a high quality and afford adequate protection for residential amenity of neighbouring properties. ▪ CPO 6.16 - To encourage and facilitate high quality well-designed infill and brownfield development that is sensitive to context, enables consolidation of the built environment and enhances the streetscape. Where necessary, performance criteria should be
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	prioritised provided that the layout achieves well designed high quality outcomes and public safety is not compromised and the environment is suitably protected. ▪ CPO 6.17 - To facilitate development incorporating higher buildings (i.e. buildings that exceed the contextual prevailing height) where it has been adequately demonstrated that the development complies with the assessment criteria set out in Section 3.2 of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities or any subsequent height guidelines. In accordance with the SPPR 3 of Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines, where: - an applicant for planning permission sets out how a development proposal complies with the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines, particularly SSPR1 and SPPR2 thereof; and - the assessment of the planning authority concurs, taking account of the wider strategic and national policy parameters set out in the NPF and Guidelines; then the planning authority may approve such development, even where specific objectives of the relevant development plan or local area plan may indicate otherwise. In accordance with the SPPR 1 of Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines, Planning Authorities are required explicitly identify areas where increased building height will be actively pursued for redevelopment, regeneration and infill development to secure the objectives of the NPF and RSES. In this regard, the identification of locations for increased building height shall be carried out in the preparation of Local Area Plans for settlements in Tiers 1-3 of the County Settlement Hierarchy as these are deemed the only settlements of sufficient scale and diversity in urban grain to accommodate such increases in height. ▪ CPO 6.18 - To ensure that building height within future development makes a positive contribution to the built form of the area, is not obtrusive and does not adversely impact on the streetscape, local amenity or views. Require all development proposals, including infill development, to include an analysis of the impact of building height and positioning of buildings on: - The immediate & surrounding environment - streetscape, historic character - Adjoining structures; - Open spaces and public realm; - Views and Vistas. ▪ CPO 6.26 - While the zoning objectives indicate the different uses permitted in principle in each zone it is important to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use at the boundary of adjoining land use zones. In these areas it is necessary to avoid developments that would be detrimental to amenity. In zones abutting residential areas, particular attention
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	will be paid to the use, scale, density and appearance of development proposals and to landscaping and screening proposals in order to protect the amenities of residential properties. ▪ CPO 6.27 - To require new multi-unit residential development to provide an appropriate mix of unit types and sizes to ensure that there is a range of unit types available to suit the needs of the various households in the county, in accordance with the Design Standards for new Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020). ▪ CPO 6.28 - Apartments generally will only be permitted in settlements Levels 1 to 6 and in accordance with the location requirements set out in Section 2.4 of the Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020). All apartment development should be served by high quality usable open space.
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4.6. Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031

- 4.6.1. Blessington is designated a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' in the Wicklow County Development Plan. The town shall provide for local growth in residential, employment and service functions and will include enhancements to the built environment, water services, and public transport links. Accommodating such additional functions must be balanced with protecting the character and quality of the town centre.
- 4.6.2. The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of town centre regeneration objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following **objectives** shall apply in Blessington:

BLESS 1	To support and facilitate activities and developments that will improve the vitality, connectivity and vibrancy of Blessington Town Centre.
BLESS 2	To encourage the development of infill sites and back lands within Blessington Town Centre in a manner that preserves/creates fine grain building plots and presents strong urban frontages to existing and proposed streets. Active frontages at ground floor level will be encouraged. Traditional arches on Blessington Main Street should be used/reused as primarily pedestrian and cyclist passages to back lands, with vehicular traffic accessing plots from alternative locations if practical. Such areas include: ▪ Opportunity Sites as identified in this plan and the Blessington Town Centre First Plan. ▪ Back lands of premises on Blessington Main Street facing onto Kilbride Road, between the junction with Blessington Main Street and the Rectory residential development, subject to the preservation of historic boundary walls and landscape amenity in relation to the Poulaphouca Reservoir.

BLESS 5	To promote the development of opportunity sites within Blessington Town Centre in accordance with the specific criteria set out for each identified area within this Local Area Plan. Regard should also be had to concept and access plans for opportunity sites as included in the Blessington Town Centre First Plan (or any update thereof).
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4.6.3. **Blessington Opportunity Sites (OP)** - There are numerous underutilised and unoccupied properties within Blessington Town Centre that could be redeveloped to contribute to the enhancement of the area and any development proposal for these sites should have regard to the objectives of the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan, and the Blessington Town Centre First Plan as relevant.

4.6.4. The appeal site is identified as **Opportunity Site OP6 - Downshire Park**. This site is a large vacant site to the immediate south of the Newtown Centre and west of the Newtown Square apartments. This site has the potential to significantly enhance the town centre character of Newtown Square and mark a clear transition between the town centre and residential areas to the west and south. There is also the potential for improved connectivity between adjacent residential areas and the town centre through the site. The key development criterion for this site is the need to provide for a vehicular route through to OP4 and OP5 to the south. Though the site is located outside the Blessington Core Retail Area, it is important that an active street frontage be provided at ground floor level, which could include a range of community or non-retail commercial uses, unless a retail impact assessment can justify further retail uses in this area. Access, movement concepts, active frontages, public realm, vehicle routes and shared space (pedestrian / cycle priority) for Opportunity Sites 4-6 are set out in Figure B.1.8: Concept Parameters & Access Plan of the LAP.

4.6.5. The overall strategy for OP6, is set out in Objectives **BLESS OP4-6** as follows:

BLESS OP4-6	▪ To provide for mixed use town centre infill development (which shall include residential use, particularly on upper floors). Indicative block formats, plot lines, and active frontages are provided in the below concept parameters and access plans. Development should provide an appropriate architectural response to the Blessington Architectural Conservation Area. ▪ To provide for a new vehicular access point along the eastern boundary of OP6 to service OP4 and OP5 from Newtown Square, alongside other vehicular access points as indicated in the below access plan. The development of any individual opportunity
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	site, or plot therein, should not 'land lock' or prejudice the development of adjacent/intervening plots. Permission will not be considered on OP6 unless the above vehicular access point/road servicing OP4/OP5 is included in the proposed development. ▪ To provide for new urban 'shared space' streets and pedestrian and cycle routes within OP4, OP5 and OP6 as indicated in the below access plans. Vehicular access to/from Dempsey's Lane into the opportunity sites will be discouraged. ▪ The development of back lands within OP4 and OP5 should provide strong urban and active frontages onto existing or proposed streets. Architectural variation between these intervening plots will be encouraged, while plot amalgamation will be discouraged. ▪ The development of OP6 should provide for active ground floor uses, having regard to its location outside of the Blessington Core Retail Area. ▪ Development within OP4 and OP5 should seek to preserve sightlines between Blessington Main Street and Glen Ding to the west, especially with regard to views through the gaps between existing buildings that are indicated below as pedestrian and cycle routes. ▪ The development of OP6 should have regard to sightlines between Blessington Town Centre (both in a general sense and with specific reference to St. Mary's Church of Ireland) and both Glen Ding and landscape elements of the former Blessington Demesne to the west. The building line of OP6 facing the Newtown Centre should be informed by the Newtown Square apartments to the immediate east. The development of OP6 should seek to preserve the residential amenities of adjacent existing residences. ▪ The development of these opportunity sites may require the reconfiguration of traffic movements around Newtown Square to remove the necessity of traffic entering the sites traversing the full circuit around the Newtown Centre/OP1. Rather, vehicular traffic should spend as little time as possible traversing the town centre, e.g. potential two-way access from the south-west corner of the Newtown to allow vehicular traffic to immediately proceed to the Blessington Inner Relief Road.
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4.6.6. **Residential Development** - It is an aim of the LAP to focus new residential development into the serviced existing built envelope of the settlement. The 'Town Centre' (TC) zone and the 'Existing Residential' (RE) zones all present significant housing opportunities through densification of the existing built up area, re-use of derelict or brownfield sites, infill and backland development. In any development proposal for this area, particular cognisance must be taken of the need to respect the existing built fabric and residential amenities

enjoyed by existing residents, and maintaining existing parks and other open areas within the settlement.

- 4.6.7. **Core Strategy** - There is capacity within the lands zoned TC, RE (all located in the serviced, built up envelope) and lands zoned RN1 (greenfield residential lands either within the built envelope or with extant planning permission) to meet current targets. The County Development Plan sets out a wide range of residential development objectives that will apply directly in Blessington. In addition, the following objectives shall also apply:

BLESS 6	The priority for housing growth shall be the existing built up area of the settlement, on lands zoned 'town centre', and 'existing residential'. In cognisance that the potential of such regeneration / infill / brownfield sites is difficult to predict, there shall be no quantitative restriction inferred from this plan or the associated tables on the number of units that may be delivered within the built up envelope of the town.
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- 4.6.8. **Development Potential & Density** - The application of density ranges will be considered in line with the objectives of the County Development Plan, this Local Area Plan and relevant Planning Guidelines. Density ranges should be based on consideration of centrality and accessibility to services and public transport; and considerations of character, amenity and the natural environment. The LAP states that as the density that may be possible to achieve on any given site cannot be pre-determined, the LAP does not include an estimate of housing yield for any particular area / site.
- 4.6.9. **Wastewater** - Uisce Éireann has recently completed upgrades to the Blessington Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) that have significantly increased the capacity of the plant. Due to these upgrades, there is sufficient capacity for the growth envisioned for Blessington in the core strategy as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- 4.6.10. **Water Protection** - The Poulaphouca Reservoir is a critical source of raw water supply to the populations of Dublin, Kildare and parts of Wicklow. Significant measures are required to be taken to protect the water quality in the reservoir, including the management of surface water runoff in adjacent towns and villages. Uisce Éireann recommends the use of the hierarchy of discharge outlined in the guidance document "Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents" to complement the approach to surface water management set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. In particular, Uisce Éireann encourages a specific focus on the water

quality of surface water runoff collected in Blessington town and discharged either directly to the reservoir or to watercourses which drain to the reservoir. This is applicable to both new developments and to any planned improvements to existing urban spaces. The following objective is relevant:

BLESS 55	To support and facilitate the improvement of the quality of surface water runoff that directly (or indirectly) will reach Poulaphouca Reservoir. This shall be applied to both new/expanded developments and to any planned improvements to existing urban spaces. In this regard, developments shall be designed in accordance with the guidance document “Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents” LAWPRO 2024.
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4.6.11. **Zoning** - Map No. 1 ‘Land Use Zoning Objectives’ (Variation No 5) indicates the boundary of the LAP. The Appeal site is zoned **TC Town Centre** where the land use zoning objective and the associated vision for this zone is as follows:

Zoning	Objective	Description
TC Town Centre	To provide for the development and improvement of appropriate town centre uses including residential, retail, commercial, office and civic use.	To develop and consolidate the existing town centre to improve its vibrancy and vitality with the densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure and residential uses, while delivering a quality urban environment, with emphasise on regeneration, infill town and historic centre conservation; ensuring priority for public transport where applicable, pedestrians and cyclists, while minimising the impact of private car based traffic and enhance and develop the existing centre’s fabric.

4.6.12. Uses generally appropriate for town centre (TC) include residential development, commercial, education retail, retail services, health, restaurants, public house, public buildings, hotels, guest houses, nursing / care homes, parking, office, tourism and recreational uses, community, including provision for religious use, utility installations and ancillary developments for town centre uses in accordance with the CDP and LAP.

4.6.13. **Phasing** – It is an objective of the Council that development is undertaken in an orderly and sustainable manner. The development of zoned land should generally be phased in accordance with the sequential approach:

- Development should extend outwards from the town centre with undeveloped land closest to the centre and public transport routes (if available) being given preference, i.e. ‘leapfrogging’ to peripheral areas should be avoided;
- A strong emphasis should be placed on encouraging infill opportunities and better use of under-utilised lands; and
- Areas to be developed should be contiguous to existing developed areas.

4.7. **Natural Heritage Designations**

4.7.1. The proposed development site is not within a designated conservation area. Sites proximate to the appeal site are as follows:

- Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA 004063 362m SE
- Red Bog, Kildare SAC 000397 2.4km N
- Wicklow Mountains SAC 002122 3.1km SE
- Wicklow Mountains SPA 004040 6.1km SE
- Glenasmole Valley SAC 001209 13.4km NE

5.0 **The Appeal**

5.1. **Grounds of Appeal**

5.1.1. The third-party appeal has been prepared and submitted by Daniel Guy, Newtown Square Apartments, and may be summarised as follows:

- The proposed buildings are too high and blocks the view of all Newtown Apartments which are built for over 20 years.
- The proposed development will block sunlight to the appellant’s apartment and also into the square of the town (outside Dunnes Stores).
- The development adds congestion to an already town centre area.

5.2. Applicant Response

- 5.2.1. The First Party response to the third-party appeal has been prepared and submitted by PD Lane Associates on behalf of the applicant, Clonmel Enterprises Ltd and may be summarised as follows:
- 5.2.2. **Blocking of Sunlight** - The Daylight Sunlight Assessment (March 2026) show that the impacts fall well within the guidelines for all the adjacent residential facades with regard to any potential loss of sunlight, and there will be virtually no overshadowing impact from the proposed development onto Newtown Square.
- 5.2.3. **Four Storey Building** - The proposed 4 storey corner apartment building (Block 1 is deemed appropriate in terms of good urban design practise for this town centre location. A two or three storey building would not be an appropriate response to the redevelopment of this vacant site at this prominent corner location at Blessington Town Centre.
- 5.2.4. **Congested Town Centre, More Traffic** – The Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) was carried out for the proposed development. The assessment shows that there is a negligible impact on the surrounding road network.
- 5.2.5. **Conclusion** - Requested that ACP uphold the decision of WCC to grant permission.
- 5.2.6. The Response was accompanied by the following:
- Sunlight Assessment (March 2026)

5.3. Planning Authority Response

- 5.3.1. None

5.4. Observations

- 5.4.1. None

5.5. Further Responses

- 5.5.1. The response received from the Applicant to the third party appeal was circulated under Section 131 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The third party submitted the following comments as summarised:

- The outcome of shadow from a four-story building in the middle of Blessington Town Square, due to inappropriate height is not a minor issue
- All buildings surrounding will be affected and will seriously affect the quality of lifestyle for many living in the apartments.
- All through the year “façade A” receives sunlight after 4pm in or around, in summer up until late evening, and from this projections for almost every period of the year, there would be a loss of sunlight directly because of the new proposed building development.
- Also the wording they use; “virtually no overshadow” is not a true statement and should be reconsidered, as for example June 21st virtual projections; they stop short at 6pm, whereas the sunset is 9.26 pm in fact many photos taken throughout the years show sunlight coming directly into the appellants sitting room (and kitchen – layout of apartment) all the way into the evening.
- Assessment against Guidance Document; Paragraph 5 – Heading March 20: Residential Façade A – Maximum available sunlight due to orientation; 3pm to 6.30pm (sunset) = 3.5 hours actual sunlight after development: 3pm to approx. 4.30pm = 1.5 hours = 50% of maximum sunlight. This should not be allowed.
- For a huge part of the year, unless denied approval, it truly takes away so much sunlight all across the year and this should be reassessed, rejected or at the bare minimum, the height reduced for current residents who are making ends meet and making a living, without this massive blocking in sunlight.

6.0 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

- 6.1. The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices of this report). Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

7.0 Appropriate Assessment

7.1. In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code 004063) in view of the conservation objectives of this site and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.

7.2. This determination is based on:

- Objective information presented in the applicant's reports;
- The limited zone of influence of potential impacts;
- Standard construction and operational surface water pollution controls that would be employed regardless of proximity to a European site and the effectiveness of same;
- Distance from European Sites;
- The limited potential for pathways to any European site; and
- The nature and extent of predicted impacts, which would not affect the conservation objectives of any European Sites.

8.0 Water Framework Directive Screening

8.1. I have assessed the proposed development and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively Refer to Appendix 4: Water Status Impact Assessment – Screening Form of this report.

8.2. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or

otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment

8.3. This conclusion is based on:

- Nature of the project, site and receiving environment.
- Objective information presented in the appeal case documentation
- Hydrological and hydrogeological characteristics of proximate waterbodies.
- Absence of any meaningful pathways to any waterbody.
- Standard pollution controls and project design features.

9.0 Assessment

- 9.1. Planning permission was sought from Wicklow County Council (WCC) on the 13th February 2025 for 71 No. units comprising 35 No. 1 & 2 bedroom apartment units within 1 No. four storey block ('Block 1') and 36 No. 2 & 3 bedroom duplex apartments within 3 No. three storey blocks with a ground floor retail / commercial space (96 sqm) on the corner of Block 1 addressing Newtown Square and the primary vehicular access provided from the public road running along the north of the site at Dunnes Stores ('one-way' only from Newtown Square).
- 9.2. Further information (FI) was submitted to WCC on the on 21st August 2025 and public notices on 2nd September 2025 where the scheme was amended as follows:
- Revised Site Layout Plan providing for 2 No. commercial / retail units (131.40 sqm)
 - Changes to Block 1 ground floor area results in the loss of 1 No. apartment unit decreasing the number of units proposed to **70 No. units**.
- 9.3. Clarification of Further Information (CoFI) was submitted to WCC on the 15th January 2026. Further details of the proposed scheme and amendments are provided in Section 2.0 above.
- 9.4. WCC issued a notification of decision to grant planning permission subject to 27 no conditions on 10th February 2026.
- 9.5. This assessment is based on the plans and particulars submitted to WCC on 13th February 2025 as amended by further plans and particulars submitted by way of further information (FI) on 21st August 2025 and public notices on 2nd September 2025 and by way of CoFI submitted on 15th January 2026.

9.6. Having regard to the information presented by the parties to the appeal and in the course of the planning application and my inspection of the appeal site, I consider the key planning issues relating to the assessment of the appeal can be considered under the following general headings:

- Principle
- Height
- Sunlight & Daylight
- Traffic Impact
- Access to Opportunity Sites OP4 & OP5
- Other Issues
- Conditions

9.7. Principle

9.7.1. The site is located within the development boundary of Blessington on lands zoned *TC Town Centre* in the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031 and where the land use zoning *objective to provide for the development and improvement of appropriate town centre uses including residential, retail, commercial, office and civic use* and where residential and commercial / retail use is acceptable.

9.7.2. The proposed scheme comprises the following as amended:

- 70 no. dwellings units
- 1no. retail/commercial unit (131.40 sqm)

9.7.3. Accordingly, the principle of residential development at this location is acceptable.

9.7.4. In determining the appropriate density, I refer to Table 6.1 Table 6.1 Areas and Density Ranges of the County Development Plan that aligns with the 'Sustainable Residential Development & Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024)'. Blessington is appropriately categorised as being a Key Town / Large Town (5,000+ population) and where densities in the range 40 dph-100 dph (net) shall generally be applied at Centre and Urban Neighbourhood locations such as this appeal site. The density of the proposal equates to 95 no. units per ha which accords with the County Development Plan and the Sustainable Residential Development & Compact Settlements Guidelines and is therefore acceptable at this location.

9.7.5. Further requirements set out for the site in the current Development Plan (as varied), Local Area Plan, National Guidance and the relevant Section 28 Guidelines as they apply to the scheme (as amended) are addressed as follows.

- All internal roads have been designed to have regard to DMURS and residential development Guidelines (Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines) and Development Plan standards. The development has been designed to encourage active travel modes such as cycling and walking.
- The total floor areas of the apartments are stated on the drawings submitted and in the HQA. 55% of the units are shown to exceed the minimum required floor area. Consequently, it is considered that the proposed duplex/apartment units are acceptable having regard to SPPR3 of the Apartment Guidelines.
- The majority (61no. or 86%) of the units would be dual aspect. A total of 10 no. single aspect units are included, many of which are south facing. It is noted that 1 No. of the 1-Bed apartments and 3 No. of the 3-Bed apartments are single aspect facing to the north-east. I agree with the Case Planner that this is a minority of apartments and that the development complies with SPPR4 of the Apartment Guidelines.
- All of the proposed residential units include private open space in accordance with the requirements of the Apartment Guidelines and Compact Settlement Guidelines. The public open space is acceptable in terms of location, layout, design and amount of area proposed.
- The proposal details car parking provision within the site (all provided at grade level) with 55 No. car parking spaces on the surface (within the courtyard area) and 16 No. at ground floor within Block 1 (accessed from the courtyard area). There is no allocation of car parking to unit and no provision of additional visitor spaces. This is acceptable at this location.
- 178 No. designated bicycle spaces will be provided on site. The quantum and location of same (as amended) is acceptable.
- In terms of housing mix the amended scheme provides for 4 No. 1 Bedroom units, 48 No. 2 Bedroom units, and 18 No. 3 Bedroom units. Having regard to the Town Centre location of the site the unit mix proposed is considered acceptable and in accordance with the requirements of the Apartment Guidelines.

- Having regard to the unit mix, apartment floor area, dual aspect ratios, floor to ceiling heights, units per core, storage, communal facilities and refuse storage I am satisfied that the scheme complies with the requirements of the Apartments Guidelines.

9.7.6. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposal has been designed in accordance with the provisions of the Wicklow County Development Plan, Blessington Local Area Plan, National Guidance and the relevant Section 28 Guidelines. It represents a positive and sustainable use of zoned, serviced and highly accessible lands.

9.7.7. In terms of the proposed layout, height, design and overall visual impact I am satisfied that the proposed scheme responds appropriately to this developing town centre location by providing a contextually responsive approach to the scale of the site and its surrounding environment. Having regard to the sites context I consider that the scale, height and design of the proposed scheme is appropriate to this location and would not seriously injure the visual amenities of the area.

9.8. Height

9.8.1. The appellant raises concerns that the proposed buildings are too high and blocks the view of all Newtown Apartments which are built for over 20 years. Newtown Apartments are located immediately to the east of the appeal site

9.8.2. As pointed out by the applicant the proposed 4 storey corner apartment building (Block 1) is set between the building height of the adjacent Dunnes Stores building (which is higher than Block 1) and the adjacent Newtown Square apartments building (which is more or less the same height as Block 1). In urban design terms the height proposed is an appropriate response at this Town Centre location that is also designated as an Opportunity Site for suitable development.

9.9. I can understand the concerns raised by the appellant particularly as the Newtown Square apartments with balconies fronting onto the appeal site have enjoyed an aspect and amenity overlooking an undeveloped site and wider hinterland that would not be expected in a Town Centre location. However, these lands have been zoned for development and taken together with the national policy to deliver compact growth that has been translated into the Wicklow Development Plan (as amended), an appropriate housing typology is necessitated across the site to deliver the requisite density at this location. To put, for example, duplex units similar to the existing houses to the west of the site would be an inefficient and

unjustifiable use of land. The design and layout of this scheme represents the monumental shift in approach to residential land use development that has been evolving over the last two decades and that is reflected in National, Regional Local policy where the delivery of well designed compact settlements is now standard. In this context it is evident that what is proposed is a well considered scheme that the Planning Authority, who having considered the proposal supported same in their notification of decision to grant permission. Accordingly, there are no objections to the proposed height of the scheme.

9.10. Sunlight & Daylight

9.10.1. The appellant raises concerns that the proposed development will block sunlight to their apartment and also into the square of the town (outside Dunnes Stores) both to the east and northeast of the appeal site.

9.10.2. I refer to the plans and particulars submitted throughout the planning application process together with the Daylight Sunlight Assessment (March 2026) submitted with the First Party response to the appeal. This assessment shows the impact of overshadowing and potential loss of sunlight on the adjacent residential facades (at Newtown Square Apartments (Residential Façade A), Dunnes Stores (Residential Façade B) and housing estate “Downshire” (Residential Façade C) and Newtown Square public space. Taking the most likely affected areas i.e. those on the lowest residential floors as the area for analysis the assessment concluded the following:

- **March 20** – With March being the average sunlight available for the year, the results are well in excess of the desired 25% for each of the residential facades. The conditions only improve towards the Summer solstice in June and return to the above results for the Autumn equinox in September. Therefore, if the residential façades receive 5% of the available sunlight at the lowest elevation angle in winter (December 21) the assessment has demonstrated that these facades will receive adequate sunlight in accordance with best practise guidelines.
- **December 21** – With December being the lowest amount sunlight available for the year, it is stated that the results are well in excess of the desired 5% for each of the residential facades. In relation to Residential Façade A (Newtown Square Apartments) it is noted that the maximum available sunlight available due to orientation between 4pm and 4pm (sunset) is 0 hours. The reported value of 0 hours of direct sunlight on 21 December is

not, of itself, an indication of an unacceptable impact. Given that the affected area is west facing at ground floor level, direct sunlight on the winter solstice is naturally very limited due to the low solar angle. This result is consistent with the orientation of the building and does not indicate a failure to meet the relevant daylight and sunlight assessment criteria.

9.10.3. The study demonstrates that the impacts fall well within the suggested guidelines for all residential facades adjacent to the proposed development in an absolute worst-case scenario, with regard to any potential loss of sunlight, and that there will be virtually no overshadowing impact from the proposed development onto Newtown Square. I agree with the findings and conclusions set and as such I am satisfied that proposed development will not negatively affect existing residential properties or the square outside Dunnes Stores.

9.11. Traffic Impact

9.11.1. The appellant raises concerns that the development adds congestion to a town centre area. I refer to the Traffic and Transport Assessment submitted with the planning application together with the Transportation / Roads & Access Engineering Report submitted by way of further information.

9.11.2. The TTA was prepared to address the traffic and transport issues associated with this residential development, assessing the capacity of the existing road network and the impact of the proposed development locally. The TTA was prepared in accordance with TII's Traffic & Transport Assessment Guidelines and addresses the worst case traffic impact of the proposed development. Traffic surveys were commissioned and undertaken on the adjacent road network during September 2024 when schools were fully open. The analysis includes the effects of the existing traffic on the local roads and assesses the impact during the traditional peak commuter periods in accordance with Traffic & Transport Assessment Guidelines. The Traffic Assessment confirms that the road network and the proposed access junction arrangement is more than adequate to accommodate the worst-case traffic associated with the development. The assessment confirms that full operation of the scheme will have a negligible impact upon the operation of the adjacent road network. An Independent Stage 1 Road Safety Quality Audit of the Layout was included as part of the planning application. All matters raised in the Road Safety Audit have been addressed within the submitted layout plans.

9.11.3. Based studies and assessments submitted throughout the planning application process I agree with the applicant that there are no adverse traffic/transportation capacity or operational issues associated with the occupation of the proposed development that would prevent planning permission being granted.

9.12. Access to Opportunity Sites OP4 & OP5

9.12.1. The appeal site is identified as Opportunity Site OP6 - Downshire Park in the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031. The key development criterion for this site is the need to provide for a vehicular route through to OP4 and OP5 to the south. Objectives BLESS OP4-6 refers where the objective is to:

To provide for a new vehicular access point along the eastern boundary of OP6 to service OP4 and OP5 from Newtown Square, alongside other vehicular access points as indicated in the below access plan. The development of any individual opportunity site, or plot therein, should not 'land lock' or prejudice the development of adjacent/intervening plots. Permission will not be considered on OP6 unless the above vehicular access point/road servicing OP4/OP5 is included in the proposed development.

9.12.2. The issue of access to backland sites was considered by the Planning authority in their request for FI and C of FI. The applicant in their response to the request for C of FI set out the following:

In the event that the Local Authorities are minded to grant permission, we suggest that a suitable Condition(s) be provided whereby the lands are to be kept clear in line with the drawing NRB-CFI-001 in order to facilitate potential future applications on the back lands in order to comply with Objective BLESS-OP4-6." This recommendation can be added as a planning condition.

9.12.3. The Planning Authority accepted these proposals and attached the following condition:

3)	a) No dwelling units shall be occupied until the Backlands Access Road and both Community Open Spaces completed and made available to future occupants, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. b) The Backlands Access Road lands shall be kept clear from obstruction in line with the drawing NRB-CFI-001.
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	Reason: To ensure the timely provision of services, for the benefit of the occupants of the proposed dwellings and to comply with Objective BLESS-OP4-6.
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9.12.4. In order to ensure the delivery of the *new vehicular access point along the eastern boundary of OP6 to service OP4 and OP5 from Newtown Square* as per Objective BLESS OP4-6 it is recommended that a similar condition be attached.

9.13. Other Issues

9.13.1. **Archaeology** – I refer to the Archaeological Assessment submitted with the application that concluded that *no archaeological mitigation is required as part of the development*. However, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Archaeology in their submission to WCC stated that the site is located in the environs of Recorded Monuments WI007WI005-013 habitation site and WI005-019 barrow, which are subject to statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places, established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. The Department recommended that a condition be attached, requiring a programme of pre-development archaeological testing be attached to any grant of planning permission to ensure the protection of the archaeological heritage. Recommended that a similar and suitable condition be attached. Reflected in Condition No 23 in the Recommendation Conditions below.

9.13.2. **Wastewater** - The development will be serviced by mains sewer which will be treated at Blessington Wastewater Treatment Plant, which ultimately discharges to the Liffey_040 between the Poulaphouca and Golden Falls reservoirs. The WWTP has been upgraded and its capacity has been increased from a population equivalent (P.E.) of 6,000 to 9000 P.E. The Licence Application for the new upgrade is under review with the EPA. Uisce Eireann stated that Wastewater drainage capacity are available without infrastructure upgrade. A review of the Uisce Eireann Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register (Published April 2026) at the time of writing this report indicated “spare capacity available” in the wastewater treatment capacity at Ballincollig WWTP (Reg D0063). I am satisfied that no issues arise in relation to wastewater drainage capacity subject to compliance with the requirements of Uisce Eireann.

9.13.3. **Water Supply** – Water supply is provided to Blessington primarily by the Poulaphouca Reservoir via the Ballymore Eustace Water Treatment Plant. The raw water is drawn from

the Poulaphouca Reservoir (Blessington Lakes). Uisce Eireann states that a water connection is feasible without infrastructure upgrade by Uisce Eireann. A review of the Uisce Eireann Water Supply Capacity Register (Published April 2026) at the time of writing this report indicated “potential capacity available” in Blessington to meet 2035 population targets - Level of service (LoS) improvement required. I am satisfied that no issues arise in relation to water supply subject to compliance with the requirements of Uisce Eireann.

9.13.4. **Drainage** - Surface water management for this development has been designed in accordance with the principles of Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS), Ciria C753, the SUDS Manual and Nature Based Solutions (NBS). A number of surface water measures are proposed, including:

- Permeable paving under car parking;
- Filter Drains;
- Sedum intensive green blue roofs;
- Rainwater harvesting; and
- Soakaway / attenuation.

9.13.5. The proposed attenuation storage design allows for interception storage to be provided, and a 20% climate change factor to the allowable discharge for the 100-year event. The outflow is restricted to 2.4l/sec. It is on a completely separate system and therefore will have no or negligible impact on the receiving waters. I am satisfied that no issues arise in relation to surface water drainage subject to standard conditions.

9.13.6. **Flood Risk** – I refer to the Flood Risk Assessment submitted with the application. The site and all land proposed for development are located within Flood Zone C, within which residential development is considered appropriate. I am satisfied that no issues arise in this regard.

9.13.7. **Invasive Species** – I refer to the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) submitted with the application. During construction works, there is potential for invasive species to be introduced to the site through the movement of materials, such as soil and stone, and the arrival of construction plant and equipment from an area with invasive species. Approximately 4500 tonnes of stone are to be imported while 6000 tonnes of soil are to be exported offsite. In addition, Japanese Knotweed was identified within the boundary of the site. This poses a risk of further spread within the boundary and adjacent habitats. There is

considered to be no risk due to a potential spread to any designated site given the absence of source-pathway. During the construction phase, ground-disturbing activities could potentially spread Japanese Knotweed facilitating its proliferation within the site. During the operational phase and unless treated appropriately, there is potential for this species to spread to new areas. There are a number of effective ways to treat Japanese Knotweed and these are detailed in the report. I am satisfied that compliance with the mitigation measures set out in the EclA can be dealt with by way of the Coimisiún standard condition requiring compliance with the mitigation and monitoring measures outlined in the plans and particulars, including the Ecological Impact Assessment submitted with the application to be carried out in full.

9.13.8. **Bats** - I refer to the Ecological Impact Assessment submitted with the application. The development site is located outside of the current distribution, current range and favourable reference range of Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Nathusius' Pipistrelle but within current distribution, current range and favourable reference range of Soprano Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Brown long-eared Bat, Leisler's Bat and Common pipistrelle. The development site is located within current range and favourable reference range of Natterer's Bat and Whiskered Bat, but outside current distribution (NPWS, 2019c). The report concluded that the proposed development would not have any potential bat roosting habitats onsite. If bats are located within the vicinity of the site, they may access the site for foraging however, this would be limited. This is also an absence of connectivity to the surrounding natural habitats given its location. I am satisfied that no issues arise in this regard.

9.14. **Development Contribution** - I refer to the Wicklow County Council Development Contribution Scheme. The proposed scheme is not exempt from the contribution scheme. Accordingly, it is recommended that should the Board be minded to grant permission that a Section 48 Development Contribution condition is attached.

9.15. **Conditions**

9.16. WCC issued a notification of decision to grant permission for **70 no residential units and 2 no. commercial / retail units** subject to 27 no conditions on 10th February 2026. Many of the conditions reflect the particular requirements of WCC and its internal departments together with those of prescribed bodies. While some of the conditions as recommended

can be dealt with by way of standard conditions (Uisce Eireann, surface water, compliance with DMURS, EV charging points, Section 47 Agreement re first occupancy, naming scheme, construction works etc) others require further consideration. For completeness and ease of reference all the conditions are considered in the following table.

1)	Permission permitted as described in the documents lodged, as revised by FI submitted on 02/09/2025 and 15/01/2026	Agreed. Standard ACP Condition to apply.
2)	Revised plans to be agreed: a) retail units will have a floor to ceiling heights of between 3.5m to 4m b) suitably located children's play zone within the proposed development	Agreed similar condition to be attached.
3)	a) No dwelling units shall be occupied until the Backlands Access Road and both Community Open Spaces completed b) The Backlands Access Road lands shall be kept clear from obstruction	Agreed similar condition to be attached.
4)	a) First occupation of any residential unit shall be by individual purchasers or by those eligible for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing b) No occupation shall occur until confirmation from a solicitor has been submitted	Agreed. Standard ACP Condition to apply.
5)	Section 96 Agreement	Agreed. Standard ACP Condition to apply.
6)	All of the mitigation measures and design elements as contained in the submitted documents (as Revised) shall be implemented in full Timescales for implementation of all mitigation measures shall be submitted and approved	Agreed. Standard ACP Condition to apply.
7)	a) Works shall accord with the CEMP b) Construction Manager shall be appointed c) Building works between 0700 to Monday to Fridays inclusive, 0800 to 1400 hours on	Agreed. Standard ACP Condition to apply.

	Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays.	
8)	A single management company shall be established and legally constituted	Agreed similar condition to be attached
9)	Section 48 Development Contribution in the sum of €715,801	Agreed similar condition to be attached
10)	Security shall be given by a lodgement with the Council of the sum of €65,250	Agreed similar condition to be attached
11)	Phasing programme to be agreed	Agreed similar condition to be attached
12)	Written agreement of Uisce Éireann shall be obtained	Agreed similar condition to be attached
13)	Surface/storm water drainage systems to comply with the details lodged	Agreed similar condition to be attached
14)	a) Pavement design & makeup details to public roads / footpaths to be agreed b) Exact specification of the estate roads to be agreed c) Road construction materials to be tested	Agreed similar condition to be attached
15)	a) Stage 2 Road Safety Audit to be submitted b) Prior to occupation a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit to be submitted	Agreed similar condition to be attached
16)	Final Public Lighting design to be agreed	Agreed similar condition to be attached
17)	EV charging infrastructure to be provided in accordance with submitted details	Agreed similar condition to be attached
18)	External finishes shall be agreed	Agreed similar condition to be attached
19)	Internally illuminated signage on the commercial elements shall not be permitted	Agreed similar condition to be attached
20)	All mechanical plant and ventilation inlets and outlets shall be sound insulated	Agreed similar condition to be attached
21)	No additional development shall take place above roof parapet level	Agreed similar condition to be attached
22)	The hard and soft landscaping shall comply with the drawings	Agreed similar condition to be attached.

23)	Landscaping and tree planting shall be carried out before or during the first planting season and planting in the public realm shall consist of native species	Agreed similar condition to be attached.
24)	Development name and numbering scheme to be agreed	Agreed similar condition to be attached
25)	Public Open space areas shall be dedicated to the use of the residents, and their maintenance shall be the responsibility of the developer	Agreed similar condition to be attached
26)	As constructed drawings of the development shall be supplied to the Council	Agreed similar condition to be attached
27)	All service cables shall be located underground.	Agreed similar condition to be attached

10.0 Recommendation

10.1. Having considered the contents of the application the provision of the City Development Plan, the grounds of appeal and the responses thereto, my site inspection and my assessment of the planning issues, I recommend that permission be **GRANTED** for the following reason and considerations and subject of the conditions outlined below.

11.0 Reasons and Considerations

11.1. Having regard to the following:

- a) the nature, scale, and extent of the proposed development and the pattern of existing and permitted development in the area,
- b) the location of the site within the development boundary of Blessington on lands zoned *TC Town Centre* and also identified as *Opportunity Site OP6 - Downshire Park* in the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031
- c) the provisions of the Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2029 – 2031 and the policies and objectives of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031
- d) Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework: First Revision (April 2025),
- e) Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025

- f) National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBPA) 2023-2030
- g) Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)
- h) Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2023)
- i) Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2025)
- j) Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (2019)
- k) the availability in the area of a wide range of social, community, transport and water services infrastructure,
- l) the documentation submitted with the planning application and the grounds of appeal,
- m) the submissions and observations received on file including from the planning authority, prescribed bodies, and third parties,

11.2. it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity, would be acceptable in terms of urban design, height and quantum of development and would be acceptable in terms of traffic and pedestrian safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

12.0 Conditions

1.	The development shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application on the 13 th February 2025, as amended by the Further Information documents/drawings received by the Planning Authority on the 21 st August 2025 and 2 nd September 2025 and as amended by the Clarification of Further Information submitted on 15 th January 2026 for 70 no residential units and 2 no retail / commercial units except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.
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	Reason: In the interest of clarity
2.	All of the mitigation measures and design elements as contained in the submitted documents (as Revised) shall be implemented in full as detailed, specifically those within the; (a) AA Screening Report, (b) Ecological Impact Assessment, (c) Archaeological Assessment Report, (d) Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment, (e) Landscape plan (f) Traffic & Transport Assessment & Road Safety Audit, (g) Public lighting & EV charging, (h) Planning Report, (i) Design Statement, (j) Engineering Report and (k) Construction and Environmental Management Plan Timescales for implementation of all mitigation measures shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The developer shall appoint a suitable qualified person to ensure the implementation of the mitigation measures within the agreed timescales. Reason: To protect the environment, the integrity of European Sites, in the interest of proper construction and proper planning and sustainable development.
3.	a) No dwelling units shall be occupied until the Backlands Access Road and both Community Open Spaces completed and made available to future occupants, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. b) The Backlands Access Road lands shall be kept clear from obstruction in line with the drawing NRB-CFI-001. Reason: To ensure the timely provision of services, for the benefit of the occupants of the proposed dwellings and to comply with Objective BLESS-OP4-6.
4.	Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the Planning Authority revised plans which provide that the

	proposed retail units will have a floor to ceiling heights of between 3.5m to 4m. The development shall accord with the written agreements. Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, compliance with the requirements of the Apartment Guidelines, clarification, and proper planning and sustainable development.
5.	The development shall be carried out on a phased basis, in accordance with a phasing scheme which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of any development. Prior to commencement of any development on the overall site, details of the first phase shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority and shall ensure that the appropriate section of access road, footpath, lighting, open space, landscaping and infrastructural services benefitting the particular dwellings are fully completed prior to those dwellings being occupied. Reason: To ensure the timely provision of services, for the benefit of the occupants of the proposed dwellings
6.	All of the permitted residential units in the development, when completed, shall be first occupied as a place of residence by individual purchasers who are not a corporate entity and/ or by persons who are eligible for the occupation of social or affordable housing, including cost rental housing. Prior to commencement of development, the applicant, or any person with an interest in the land shall enter into a written agreement with the planning authority under section 47 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 to this effect. Such an agreement must specify the number and location of each house or duplex unit. Reason: To restrict new housing development to use by persons of a particular class or description in order to ensure an adequate choice and supply of housing, including affordable housing, in the common good.
7.	Prior to commencement of development, proposals for a development name and numbering scheme, and associated signage shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority. Thereafter, all such names and numbering shall be provided in accordance with the agreed scheme. No advertisements/ marketing signage relating to the name(s) of the development shall be erected until the

	developer has obtained the planning authority's written agreement to the proposed name(s). Reason: In the interest of urban legibility and to ensure the use for new residential areas.
8.	Details of the materials, colours, and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed buildings and boundary treatments shall be as submitted with the application, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority. Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.
9.	a) The use of internally illuminated lettering for signage on the commercial elements of the development shall not be permitted. b) All plant including extract ventilation systems and refrigerator condenser units shall be sited in a manner so as not to cause nuisance at sensitive locations due to odour or noise. All mechanical plant and ventilation inlets and outlets shall be sound insulated and/or fitted with sound attenuators to ensure that noise levels do not pose a nuisance at noise sensitive locations. c) No additional development shall take place above roof parapet level of the apartment buildings, including lift motor enclosures, air handling equipment, storage tanks, ducts or other external plant, telecommunication aerials, antennas or equipment, unless authorised by a further grant of planning permission. Reason: To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity and the visual amenities of the area,
10.	a) The landscaping scheme as submitted to the planning authority shall be carried out within the first planting season following substantial completion of external construction works. All planting shall be adequately protected from damage until established. Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of five years from the completion of the development or until the development is taken in charge by the local authority, whichever is the sooner, shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

	b) Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit to the Planning Authority for full written agreement full details of a suitably located children's play zone within the proposed development. The proposed play equipment shall conform to relevant European Standards and the management and maintenance of the play equipment shall be the sole responsibility of the appointed Management Company. Reason: In the interest of visual and residential amenity and to ensure the provision of sustainable play areas.
11.	Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority. Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.
12.	a) Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. The scheme shall include lighting along pedestrian routes through open spaces and shall take account of the agreed landscaping plans. b) The agreed lighting system shall be fully implemented and operational prior to the making available for occupation of any residential unit. Reason: In the interests of amenity and public safety.
13.	Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall enter into a Connection Agreement (s) with Uisce Éireann (Irish Water) to provide for a service connection(s) to the public water supply and/or wastewater collection network. Reason: In the interest of public health and to ensure adequate water/wastewater facilities.
14.	The disposal of surface water shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit details for the disposal of surface water from the site for the written agreement of the planning authority.

	Reason: In the interest of public health and to ensure the appropriate disposal of foul and surface water
15.	All service cables associated with the proposed development (such as electrical, telecommunications and communal television) shall be located underground. Ducting shall be provided by the developer to facilitate the provision of broadband infrastructure within the proposed development. Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity
16.	a) Prior to commencement of development and/ or occupation of the residential units, as applicable, final Road Safety Audit(s) and/ or Quality Audit(s) of the development, including the main entrance, internal road, pedestrian/ cycle path layouts, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority. b) Where the audit identifies the need for design changes revised design details should be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. The developer shall carry out all necessary works in accordance with the agreed revised design. Reason: In the interests of traffic, pedestrian and cyclist safety, and sustainable transport.
17.	a) The internal road network serving the proposed development, including carriageway widths, corner radii, turning bays, junctions, set down/ drop off area(s), parking areas, footpaths, kerbs, pedestrian crossings, raised tables, and cycle lanes shall be in accordance with the detailed construction standards of the planning authority for such works, and design standards outlined in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the National Cycle Manual issued by the National Transport Authority. In default of agreement the matter(s) in dispute shall be referred to An Coimisiun Pleanála for determination. b) Footpaths shall be dished at road junctions in accordance with the requirements of the planning authority. Details of all locations and materials to be used shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. Reason: In the interest of traffic and pedestrian safety.

18.	a) All parking within the scheme shall be for the residents of the proposed development only and shall not be reserved for any individual or individual residential units and shall not be sold separately. b) Electric vehicle charging infrastructure shall be provided in accordance with the submitted details. c) Ducting shall be provided for all remaining car parking spaces, facilitating the installation of electric vehicle charging points/ stations at a later date. Where proposals relating to the installation of electric vehicle ducting and charging stations/ points have not been submitted with the application, in accordance with the above noted requirements, such proposals shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the occupation of the development. Reason: To provide for and/ or future proof the development such as would facilitate the use of electric vehicles.
19.	A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. The CEMP shall include but not be limited to construction phase controls for dust, noise and vibration, waste management, protection of soils, groundwaters, and surface waters, site housekeeping, emergency response planning, site environmental policy, and project roles and responsibilities. Reason: In the interest of environmental protection residential amenities, public health and safety and environmental protection.
20.	A detailed construction traffic management plan shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. The plan shall include details of arrangements for routes for construction traffic, parking during the construction phase, the location of the compound for storage of plant and machinery and the location for storage of deliveries to the site. Reason: In the interest of sustainable transport and safety.
21.	An Operational Waste Management Plan (OWMP) containing details for the management of waste within the development, the provision of facilities for the storage, separation, and collection of the waste and for the ongoing operation of these facilities, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning

	authority not later than 6 months from the date of commencement of the development. Thereafter, the waste shall be managed in accordance with the agreed OWMP. Reason: In the interest of residential amenity, and to ensure the provision of adequate refuse storage for the proposed development.
22.	Prior to the commencement of development, a Resource Waste Management Plan (RWMP) as set out in the EPA's 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects' (2021) shall be prepared and submitted to the planning authority for written agreement. The RWMP shall include specific proposals as to how the RWMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness. All records (including for waste and all resources) pursuant to the agreed RWMP shall be made available for inspection at the site office at all times. Reason: In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development.
23.	a) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and completed at least to the construction standards set out in the Planning Authority's Taking in Charge Policy. Following completion, the development shall be maintained by the developer, in compliance with these standards, until taken in charge by the planning authority. a) The management and maintenance of the development following its completion shall be the responsibility of a legally constituted management company, or by the local authority in the event of the development being so taken in charge. b) The communal open spaces, hard and soft landscaping, car and cycle parking areas, access ways, refuse/ bin storage, and all areas not intended to be taken in charge by the local authority, shall be maintained by the legally constituted management company. c) Details of the management company contract, and drawings/ particulars describing the parts of the development for which the company would have responsibility, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority before any of the residential units are made available for occupation.

	Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out and completed to an acceptable standard of construction and to provide for the satisfactory future maintenance of this development.
24.	a) The developer shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts) to carry out pre-development archaeological testing in areas of proposed ground disturbance and to submit an archaeological impact assessment report for the written agreement of the planning authority, following consultation with the Department, in advance of any construction works. The report shall include an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy. b) Where archaeological material is shown to be present, avoidance, preservation in-situ, preservation by record (archaeological excavation) and/or monitoring may be required. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the Department, shall be complied with by the developer. No site preparation and/or construction works shall be carried out on site until the archaeologist's report has been submitted to and approval to proceed is agreed in writing with the planning authority. c) The planning authority and the Department shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any subsequent archaeological investigative works and/or monitoring following the completion of all archaeological work on site and the completion of any necessary post-excavation work. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer. Reason: To ensure the continued preservation either in situ or by record of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest
25.	Prior to commencement of development, the applicant or other person with an interest in the land to which the application relates shall enter into an agreement in writing with the planning authority in relation to the provision of housing in accordance with the requirements of section 94(4) and sections 96(2) and (3) (Part V) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, unless an exemption certificate shall have been applied for and been granted under section 97 of the Act, as amended. Where such an agreement is not reached within eight weeks

	from the date of this order, the matter in dispute (other than a matter to which section 96(7) applies) may be referred by the planning authority or any other prospective party to the agreement to An Coimisiun Pleanála for determination. Reason: To comply with the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and of the housing strategy in the development plan of the area.
26.	Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or other security to secure the provision and satisfactory completion and maintenance until taken in charge by the local authority and/ or management company of roads, footpaths, watermains, drains, public open space and other services required in connection with the development, coupled with an agreement empowering the local authority to apply such security or part thereof to the satisfactory completion or maintenance of any part of the development. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Coimisiun Pleanála for determination. Reason: To ensure the satisfactory completion and maintenance of the development until taken in charge.
27.	The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Coimisiun Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.
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I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Mary Crowley

Senior Planning Inspector

1st July 2026

13.0 Appendix 1 – Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-500906-WW-26
Proposed Development Summary	Residential development comprising of 70 residential units and 2 no retail/commercial units (as amended). Residential development will consist of 4 blocks ranging in height of four storeys and all site development works
Development Address	Newtown Centre/Newtown Square , Blessington Demesne , Blessington, Co Wicklow
IN ALL CASES CHECK BOX / OR LEAVE BLANK	
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	State the Class here
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	

☐ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	State the Class and state the relevant threshold
☒ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	State the Class and state the relevant threshold Class 10(b)(i) 'Construction of more than 500 dwellings units Class 10(b)(iv) 'urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere
4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No ☒	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

14.0 Appendix 2 – Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	PL-500906-WW-26
Proposed Development Summary	Residential development comprising of 70 residential units and 2 no retail/commercial units (as amended). Residential development will consist of 4 blocks ranging in height of four storeys and all site development works
Development Address	Newtown Centre/Newtown Square , Blessington Demesne , Blessington, Co Wicklow
This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	The proposed development involves the construction of 70 no residential apartment units (as amended) and associated works on serviced zoned lands. The nature and scale of the proposed development reflects the surrounding pattern of development and it is not considered to be out of character with the existing and emerging surrounding pattern of development. Construction materials will be typical of an urban environment and any construction impacts would be local and temporary in nature and the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan will satisfactorily mitigate potential impacts. Operational waste will be managed via a Waste Management Plan. The site is not at risk of flooding. The development has a modest footprint, comes forward as a standalone project, does not require demolition works, does not require the use of substantial natural resources, or give rise to significant risk of pollution or nuisance. The development, by virtue of its type, does not pose a risk

	of major accident and/or disaster, or is vulnerable to climate change. It presents no risks to human health.
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	The development is situated on zoned serviced lands within the development envelop of Blessington at a remove from sensitive natural habitats, designated sites and landscapes of significance identified in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031. The development will implement SUDS measures to control surface water run-off. The site is not at risk of flooding. The site is served by a local urban road network. No significant contribution to traffic congestion is anticipated. The Archaeological Assessment concluded that the site possesses low archaeological potential and that no archaeological mitigation is required as part of the development. However, the DAU specifically recommended archaeological condition – Pre-development archaeological testing. A standard archaeological condition has been attached.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	Having regard to the modest nature of the proposed development, its location removed from sensitive habitats/features, likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects, and absence of in combination effects, there is no potential for significant effects on the environmental factors listed in section 171A of the Act.
Conclusion	

Likelihood of Significant Effects	Conclusion in respect of EIA
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required.

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

DP/ADP: _____ Date: _____

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)

15.0 Appendix 3 - Standard AA Screening Determination Template 2

Screening for Appropriate Assessment	
Test for likely significant effects	
Case Reference Number: PL-500906-WW-26	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements of S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. I refer to Section 1.0 and 2.0 of this report above where the site location and proposed development are described. I also refer to Section 4.0 of the AA Screening Report submitted with application. Residential development comprising of 70 residential units and 2 no retail/commercial units (as amended). Residential development will consist of 4 blocks ranging in height of four storeys and all site development works. The proposed site will be accessed via the local road network to the north of the development that connects to the N81 (Main Street) national road.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The proposed development site is mainly comprised of an unmanaged greenfield site. The site is bordered by wood and metal fences. The proposed development is located within an urban environment with residential premises and a shopping centre surrounding the development in its immediate vicinity. The site slopes to the south. The total area of the red line boundary is 0.75ha. Water will be supplied to the development via mains. Foul water will discharge to an existing foul water sewerage network to the south. A confirmation of feasibility of connection was received from Uisce Eireann which states no upgrades are required for connection to the foul sewer and watermain. Stormwater

	water will be collected via a series of gullies and directed to the stormwater attenuation tanks before entering the existing surface water drainage network to the south. A hydrobrake will be fitted to the system prior to exiting the site. The car park areas will be comprised of permeable paving. The estimated construction timeframe, including landscaping activities, for the proposed development is approximately 24 months. Construction works would be confined to the proposed development footprint and would not necessitate any works within a drainage ditch or watercourse. During excavation works, soils would be temporarily stored onsite. Any excess soils would be used for landscaping and reinstatement works where possible or exported offsite via a licensed contractor. Approximately 6000 tonnes of soil and will be exported while 4500 tonnes of soil is to be imported. Any exported materials likely to contain invasive species or hazardous materials will be exported offsite to a licensed waste facility. All contaminated soils and third schedule species will be treated as a hazardous waste materials and disposed of accordingly. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) concluded that the proposed development site works falls within “Flood Zone C” and does not require a Justification Test. There are no fluvial or tidal concerns with the proposed development. The site is not within or adjoining any Natura 2000 sites and I do not consider that there is potential for any direct impacts such as habitat loss, direct emissions, or species mortality/disturbance. The closest Natura 2000 site is the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code: 004063) located approximately 362m south-east of the proposed development as shown in Figure 4.2 of the AA Screening Report. The Red
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	Bog, Kildare SAC (Site Code: 000397) is also located approximately 2.4km to the north of the site. The proposed development is located within a poor locally important aquifer. The groundwater vulnerability is considered high. There is a potential groundwater pathway to the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA/pNHA.. The Site Synopsis for Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA shows that the site is an important roosting place for the Greylag Goose [A043] and the Lesser Black-backed Gull [A183]. A deterioration in water quality can have an indirect impact on the qualifying interests of this SPA. The status of the Poulaphouca Reservoir (ID: IE_EA_09_71) is Good as per the Lake Waterbody WFD Status 2016-2021 and currently has a “not at risk” status. At its closest, the Poulaphouca Reservoir is located approximately 362m south-east of the proposed development. The following project elements of the proposed development have been examined in the AA Screening Report for relevance to possible effects on the Natura 2000 sites; ▪ Earthworks & Excavation ▪ Impact on Protected Habitats ▪ Sediment & Hydrocarbon Runoff ▪ Dust and Noise ▪ Stormwater & Waste Water ▪ Invasive Species ▪ Disturbance to Protected Species
Screening report	Yes
Natura Impact Statement	No
Relevant submissions	n/a

Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model

The proposed development site is not within a designated conservation area. Sites within the zone of influence of this project are as follows:

European Site (code)	Qualifying interests Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections	Consider further in screening ³ Y/N
Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA 004063	Greylag Goose Lesser Black-backed Gull Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA National Parks & Wildlife Service	362 m	Indirect Use of habitat by mobile species Hydrological connection via surface water / ground water	Yes
Red Bog, Kildare SAC 000397	Transition mires and quaking bogs Red Bog, Kildare SAC National Parks & Wildlife Service	2.4 km	None	No
Wicklow Mountains SAC 002122	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix European dry heaths Alpine and Boreal heaths Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) Blanket bogs (* if active bog) Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae)	3.1 km	None	No

	and Galeopsietalia ladani) Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles Lutra lutra (Otter) Wicklow Mountains SAC National Parks & Wildlife Service			
Wicklow Mountains SPA 004040	Merlin Peregrine Wicklow Mountains SPA National Parks & Wildlife Service	6.1 km	None	No
Glenasmole Valley SAC 001209 13.4km	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils Petrifying springs with tufa formation Glenasmole Valley SAC National Parks & Wildlife Service	13.4km	None	No

The proposed development is located 2.4km downstream from the **Red Bog, Kildare SAC** (Site Code 000397) and does not contain the habitats for which the Red Bog, Kildare SAC has been designated. Therefore, due to the lack of a direct source-pathway-receptor relationship, absence of the associated habitats present, nature and scale of the development, the Red Bog, Kildare SAC has been screened out.

The proposed development is located downstream from the **Wicklow Mountains SAC** (Site Code: 002122) and does not contain the habitats for which the Wicklow Mountains SAC has been designated. Therefore, due to the lack of a direct source-pathway-receptor relationship, absence of the associated habitats present, nature and scale of the development, the Wicklow Mountains SAC has been screened out.

The proposed site is located 6.1km and downstream from the **Wicklow Mountains SPA** (Site Code: 004040). The site does not contain the habitats associated with species for which the Wicklow Mountains SPA has been designated. Therefore, due to the lack of a direct source-pathway-receptor relationship, distance from the site and lack of the associated habitats present, the Wicklow Mountains SPA has been screened out.

The proposed site is located 13.4km from **Glenasmole Valley SAC** (Site Code: 001209) and is within the Dodder sub-catchment (Dodder_SC_010), while the site is located within the Liffey sub-catchment (Liffey_SC_020). The proposed site does not contain the habitats for which the Glenasmole Valley SAC has been designated. Therefore, due to the large distance, absence of direct hydrological connection and lack of associated

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code 004063) is considered to be the only Natura 2000 site at risk from the proposed development. Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA covers an area of approximately 20 square kilometres and exits into the River Liffey gorge at its western end. It is of principal interest and national importance for its Greylag Goose population, which is one of the largest in the country. The site provides the main roost for the birds, with feeding occurring mostly on improved grassland outside of the site. A mean peak of 701 individuals occurred during the five seasons 1995/96 to 1999/2000. It attracts roosting gulls during winter, most notably a large population of Lesser Black-backed Gull which in Ireland is rare in winter away from the south coast.

There will be no direct impacts. However, there may be indirect impacts from hydrological connection to this SPA during the construction and operation phase by way of impact to water quality (siltation and pollution). Therefore, impacts generated by the construction and operation of the development require further consideration. Sources of impact and likely significant effects are detailed in the Table below.

AA Screening matrix

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA Greylag Goose Lesser Black-backed Gull	Direct - None Indirect - Water Quality - Discharge / run off of surface waters containing sediment, silt, oils and / or other pollutants during the construction and operational phases. Nutrient release through wastewater discharge during the operational phase.	Decline in water quality by way of emissions to surface water and wastewater discharge has the potential to affect the supporting habitat of QI species associated with the SPA. While outside of the SPA, the development site could reduce the available ex-situ foraging habitat for various QIs species listed for the Cork Harbour SPA.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone) The closest mapped watercourse to the proposed development site is the Deerpark 268m to the north-west of the proposed development. It is directly connected to the Poulaphouca Reservoir. There will be no works within this watercourse or any other watercourse/drainage ditch.	

	Surface Water - The site will be served by the public surface water sewer system. In addition, the proposed development incorporates comprehensive SUDS measures to treat and attenuate surface water runoff to further reduce the already negligible potential for surface water impacts. No potential for impacts to water quality and resource exists for European sites from surface water runoff or drainage from the Proposed Development. Foul Water - The proposed development will be served by separate foul water and surface water sewers during its Operational Phase. The potential for foul waters generated at the proposed development to reach these European sites and cause significant effects, during the Construction and Operational Phases, is deemed to be negligible due to the confirmation by Irish Water that a wastewater connection is feasible without infrastructure upgrade. The construction phase will be temporary. The development proposes a range of measures as outlined in the CEMP. These mainly relate to the management of soils, excavations, hydrology & hydrogeology, traffic, accidents/spills/leaks, water utilities, and dust. These are best practice standard construction management and surface water management measures which have not been designed or intended to avoid or reduce any harmful effects of the project on a European Site. The potential for significant surface water effects to downstream sensitivities during the construction phase would be satisfactorily addressed by these measures. For the operational stage, the surface water drainage network has been designed in accordance with SuDS principles. The potential for significant surface water effects to downstream sensitivities during the operational phase is negligible considering the inclusion of suitable SuDS measures and a petrol interceptor. Due to the separation distance and hydrological buffer from the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, together with the construction and
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	operational measures incorporated into the project (which are not included to avoid or reduce harmful effects on European sites), I do not consider that the proposed development will give rise to hydrological impacts that could significantly affect the Natura 2000 sites. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have no likely significant effect 'alone' on any qualifying features of the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA.
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? It is acknowledged that other developments have a potential cumulative impact on the surface water drainage network. I consider that the potential for in-combination effects is limited to the cumulative impact of Surface / Storm Water Drainage associated with other developments in the area. The applicant's AA Screening Report also identifies other relevant projects in the area, the majority of which are of a similar residential nature. I also note that the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031 includes a range of policies and objectives to protect water quality, water regime, and Natura 2000 sites, and that any approved projects would have to demonstrate compliance with same. I acknowledge that other developments have a potential cumulative impact on the surface water drainage network. However, consistent with the current application, I am satisfied that they have demonstrated that there would be no significant residual effects on hydrology and Natura 2000 sites. As there are no pathways connecting the project site to surrounding Natura 2000 sites and as the project will not result in significant negative impacts it will not have the potential to combine with other projects in the surrounding area to result in cumulative significant effects to the local environment or Natura 2000 sites occurring in the wider surrounding area.

Step 4: Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site

I conclude that the proposed development (alone) would not result in likely significant effects on **Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code 004063)**. The proposed development would have no likely significant effect in combination with other plans and projects on any European site(s). No further assessment is required for the project. No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions.

16.0 Appendix 3 - Water Framework Directive Impact Assessment - Screening

Stage 1 Screening			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
ABP Ref.	ACP-PL500906-WW-26	Townland, address	Newtown Centre/Newtown Square , Blessington Demesne , Blessington, Co Wicklow.
Description of project		Residential development comprising of 70 residential units and 2 no retail/commercial units (as amended).	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening		Undeveloped urban greenfield site zoned Town Centre where residential is permitted in principle. The site is underlain by the Blessington Gravels groundwater body.	
Proposed surface water details		Surface water management for this development has been designed in accordance with the principles of Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS), Ciria C753, the SUDS Manual and Nature Based Solutions (NBS). It contains intensive and extensive green blue roofs, water butts, permeable paving and an attenuation/soakaway tank. The outflow is restricted to 2.4l/sec. It is on a completely separate system and therefore will have no or negligible impact on the receiving waters.	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		Uisce Eireann water connection. Water supply is provided to Blessington primarily by the Poulaphouca Reservoir via the Ballymore Eustace Water Treatment Plant.	

	A review of the Uisce Eireann Water Supply Capacity Register (Published April 2026) at the time of writing this report indicated “potential capacity available” in Blessington to meet 2035 population targets - Level of service (LoS) improvement required. I am satisfied that no issues arise in relation to water supply subject to compliance with the requirements of Uisce Eireann. No capacity issues identified.
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity	Uisce Eireann Wastewater connection. The development will be serviced by mains sewer which will be treated at Blessington Wastewater Treatment Plant, which ultimately discharges to the Liffey_040 between the Poulaphouca and Golden Falls reservoirs. A review of the Uisce Eireann Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register (Published April 2026) at the time of writing this report indicated “spare capacity available” in the wastewater treatment capacity at Ballincollig WWTP (Reg D0063). I am satisfied that no issues arise in relation to wastewater drainage capacity subject to compliance with the requirements of Uisce Eireann. No capacity issues identified.
Other	The site-specific Flood Risk assessment places the site in Zone C and the floor height is at least 3m above any flood level recorded in the locality. No unacceptable flood risk associated with the proposed development
Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection	

Identified Waterbody		Distance to (m)	Waterbody name(s) (code)	WFD Status 2019 - 2024	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective 2016 - 2021	Identified pressures on the waterbody	Pathway linkage to water feature
River Waterbody		c320m	Liffey_040 (IE_EA_09L010400)	Good	Not at Risk	None identified	Surface water run off wastewater
Groundwater Waterbody		Underlying	Blessington Gravels (IE_EA_G_047)	Good	Not at Risk	None Identified	Drainage to groundwater
Lake		c390m	Pollaphuca (IE_EA_09_71)	Good	Not at Risk	None Identified	Surface water run off and source of water supply
		c7.2km	Golden Falls (IE_EA_09_53	Moderate	At Risk	Urban Wastewater, Hydro-morphology	Surface water run off and wastewater
Step 4: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.							
CONSTRUCTION PHASE							
No.	Component	Waterbody receptor	Pathway	Potential for impact / what is	Screening Stage	Residual Risk (yes/ no)	Determination to proceed to Stage 2.

			(existing and new)	the possible impact	Mitigation Measure	Detail	Is there a risk to the water environment?
1.	River Waterbody	Liffey_040 (IE_EA_09L010 400)	None	Demolition / site clearance / construction runoff, siltation, pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages	Implement CEMP	No	Screened out
2.	Groundwater Waterbody	Blessington Gravels (IE_EA_G_047)	Drainage through soil / bedrock	As above Groundwater (aquifer) vulnerability will be increased with the removal of topsoil and overburden.	Implement CEMP	No	Screened out
3.	Lake	Pollaphuca (IE_EA_09_71)	None	Demolition / site clearance / construction runoff, siltation, pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages	Implement CEMP	No	Screened Out
		Golden Falls (IE_EA_09_53)	None	Demolition / site clearance / construction runoff, siltation,	Implement CEMP	No	Screened Out

				pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages			
CONSTRUCTION PHASE							
No.	Component	Waterbody receptor	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact / what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure	Residual Risk (yes/ no) Detail	Determination to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment?
1.	River Waterbody	Liffey_040 (IE_EA_09L010 400)	Surface water will be discharged to Liffey_040 and further downstream to Pollaphuca and Golden Falls. Wastewater discharges to Liffey_040 and downstream to Golden Falls. Water supply will be sourced from Pollaphuca, which flows downstream to	Hydrocarbon spillage / pollution associated with surface water. Pollution associated with wastewater discharge. Water regime impacts.	SUDs features and storm water management Compliance with Uisce Eireann (UE) requirements	No - Proposed measures will prevent any unacceptable impacts on water quality or water regime	Screened out

			Liffey and Golden Falls.				
2.	Groundwater Waterbody	Blessington Gravels (IE_EA_G_047)	Via the overlying soil and Liffey_040	Hydrocarbon spillage/ pollution	SUDs features, storm water management	No - Proposed measures will prevent any unacceptable impacts on water quality or water regime	Screened out
3.	Lake	Pollaphuca (IE_EA_09_71)	Surface water will be discharged to Liffey_040 and further downstream to Pollaphuca and Golden Falls. Water supply will be sourced from Pollaphuca, which flows downstream to Liffey and Golden Falls.	Hydrocarbon spillage / pollution associated with surface water. Pollution associated with wastewater discharge. Water regime impacts.	SUDs features and storm water management Compliance with Uisce Eireann (UE) requirements	No - Proposed measures will prevent any unacceptable impacts on water quality or water regime	Screened Out
		Golden Falls (IE_EA_09_53)	Surface water will be discharged to Liffey_040 and further downstream to Pollaphuca and Golden Falls.	Hydrocarbon spillage / pollution associated with surface water.	Hydrocarbon spillage / pollution associated with surface water.	No	Screened Out

			Wastewater discharges to Liffey_040 and downstream to Golden Falls. Water supply will be sourced from Pollaphuca, which flows downstream to Liffey and Golden Falls.	Pollution associated with wastewater discharge. Water regime impacts.	Pollution associated with wastewater discharge. Water regime impacts.		
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
1.	Decommissioning is not anticipated as this is a permanent residential development.						