

Submission in Response to
Proposed Variation No. 7 to The County Development Plan 2004 - 2010
Baltinglass Town Plan 2007 - 2010

BALTINGLASS & DISTRICT FORUM

c/- No. 2 Allendale Court
Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow

SUBMISSION

PROPOSED VARIATION TO THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2004 - 2010

**Proposed Variation No. 7
Baltinglass Town Plan 2007 - 2010**

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**On behalf of
Baltinglass & District Forum**



Fintan Doyle



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Background

The following is a submission of the Baltinglass & District Forum in response to Proposed Variation No. 7 to The County Development Plan 2004 - 2010, Baltinglass Town Plan 2007-2010.

We are an umbrella organisation representing 24 voluntary community groups of Baltinglass & District with an interest in (amongst other socio economic issues) Town Planning issues and their impact on the quality of life of the residents of Baltinglass.

We stress that our Forum is committed to working with the Council and developers in a proactive and positive manner to represent the best interests of the area. We also view ourselves as an intermediary between the people of Baltinglass and other bodies and organisations in any matter pertaining to Baltinglass.

The Proposed Baltinglass Town Plan 2007 - 2010 was discussed at a Public Meeting hosted by the Forum on 27th September 2007 in Scoil Conglais. The issues raised by the public and documented at the public meeting were subsequently discussed and accepted/rejected at several Baltinglass & District Forum meetings at which the public could also participate.

This submission reflects the views of the public and Forum, as assessed by the Baltinglass & District Forum.

At the Public Meeting the Forum encouraged participants to make submissions regarding the Proposed Town Plan 2007 - 2010, and provided a guidance document to assist the public in making those submissions. In this manner the Council would receive submissions representing all interests in Baltinglass & District.

This submission is divided into two major sections:

- A. Feedback on Major Issues
Immediate to Short Term 2007 - 2010, and**
- B. Feedback on Significant and General Issues
Medium to Long Term 2007 - 2016**

Section B will be detailed under the original order of Part B - Proposed Baltinglass Town Plan 2007-2010.

SECTION A. FEEDBACK ON MAJOR ISSUES - IMMEDIATE TO SHORT TERM 2007 - 2010

The major feedbacks from the public meeting and our deliberations relate to current infrastructure deficits and infrastructure associated issues, namely:

1. The highly dangerous layout and condition of the Baltinglass Bridge;
2. The state of the water services infrastructure servicing Baltinglass;
3. The provision of off Main Street centralised public car parking facilities;
4. The lack of a comprehensive Traffic Management Plan for the town and its environs; and
5. The pressing need for the earliest construction of what we have labelled the South (Bridge) Relief Road. Refer to the attached Map.

1. BALTINGLASS BRIDGE.

We were not surprised at the depth of feeling conveyed by the public on this issue - they are extremely apprehensive about vehicular and pedestrian safety on the bridge and its access', and decidedly concerned as to the structural integrity of the bridge to sustain carrying the current vehicular loads it was clearly not designed to accommodate.

The people of Baltinglass & District are anxious that a fatality or collapse is just waiting to happen.

There are several examples of bridges in Ireland in the same position, where separate elevated boardwalks or walkways have been constructed alongside the existing bridge to provide pedestrian thoroughfares in safety, and relieve HGV drivers of the possibility of causing a fatality, possibly with just a wing mirror!

Such a system would provide entrance and exit points at each side of the Slaney, and would need to be agreed to and facilitated by the property owners on each side of the bridge on each bank.

The immediate construction of the South (Bridge) Relief Road (see below) would largely remove the need for HGV traffic over the Baltinglass Bridge and within Main Street Baltinglass. The bridge is clearly viewed by the public and the Forum as an urgent and immediate issue to be addressed by the Council, not just the Town Plan.

2. THE STATE OF THE WATER SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICING BALTINGLASS

The Forum support the Council's stated policy for water and wastewater infrastructure in **all new developments**, not just *significant new developments*.

The Forum believes the water and wastewater infrastructure in Baltinglass needs to be addressed as a matter of extreme urgency, as all short to medium term development in the town hinges on these issues.

Members of the Forum will be available at all times to meet with the Environmental Section of the Council to assist Council sanitary planners to develop objectives and strategies to alleviate these issues in the immediate to short term.

3. THE PROVISION OF OFF MAIN STREET CENTRALISED PUBLIC CAR PARKING FACILITIES

The present structure of Baltinglass, with its single Main Street (the only significant commercial area) narrowing at the Slaney Bridge and transversing the main Dublin Road South to Carlow, Wexford and Waterford, is so heavily congested at present, that there is invariably a backlog of vehicular traffic (including HGVs) through the town.

Parking is particularly difficult to access and pedestrian mobility is difficult and dangerous. The disabled, the elderly and children are seriously disadvantaged as there are no pedestrian crossings located along the entire length of Main Street. All pedestrians both agile and frail must zigzag through stalled traffic in order to cross Main Street at present.

In Main Street there are no Council delineated parking spaces (or method i.e. parallel or right angles), no restricted parking areas to improve lines of sight or access, no pedestrian crossings for a very busy thoroughfare, and most importantly a severe shortage of public parking spaces. In fairness there are a few disability parking spaces provided.

The result is a traffic & parking "free for all" involving double parking, island parking at the end of McAllister Square, delivery vehicles blocking half of Main Street (and hence half of the R747) whilst unloading, and due to the absence of any noticeable regulation by the Council and Garda, general abandoning of vehicles where and when people deem fit without any regard to their fellow residents.

Importantly, the core of the commercial area in Baltinglass has become dysfunctional to the detriment of all residents, businesspeople and motorists.

In relation to Edward and Mill Streets (the N81) the lack of parking control systems makes this stretch of Baltinglass' commercial area highly dangerous.

The Forum suggests the Council investigate a combination of the following options:

- a) Limits on street parking close to the centre of town, and restrict parking to short-term stay ;

- b) Providing adequate off street public carpark(s), either by facilitating private investment or through public/private partnership (PPP) initiatives in the designated TCI and TC2 areas; and
- c) Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan (see below).

4. THE LACK OF A COMPREHENSIVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE TOWN AND ITS ENVIRONS

Previous sections of our submission have already mentioned numerous issues which would justify the preparation of a comprehensive Traffic Management Plan for the town and its environs.

Some of the objectives of the Traffic Management Plan should include:

- Remove congestion, particularly on routes entering the town and in the town centre;
- Provision of more effective traffic control systems at the intersection of the N81 and R747;
- Provision of adequate off street public carpark(s), either by facilitating private investment or through public/private partnership (PPP) initiatives in the designated TCI and TC2 areas;
- Introduction and enforcement of parking regulations and restrictions;
- Examination of the pros and cons of introducing a one-way road system on the North side of the division of Main Street near McAllister's Monument;
- Pedestrian access and safety;
- Disadvantaged access and safety;
- Access, safety and secure parking for bicycles;
- Designated loading bays;
- Usage of picture dictionary signage;
- Provision and regulation of a designated Farmers Market location; and
- Siting a bus stop/shelter at the bottom of Chapel Hill, or in Weaver Square.

The Traffic Management Plan should be circulated to and discussed by the public before implementation.

5. THE PRESSING NEED FOR THE EARLIEST CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT WE HAVE LABELLED THE SOUTH (BRIDGE) RELIEF ROAD. REFER TO THE ATTACHED MAP.

Apart from our comments above in relation to the state of the water services infrastructure servicing Baltinglass, all of the issues already outlined would be immeasurably enhanced by providing traffic relief to the South of the town - which the public and Forum confirmed is probably the only option available for such a relief road.

The Forum believes this option connecting Lathaleere to Clough Cross requires immediate consideration by Council planners.

As it is the Council's stated intention to finance the development of infrastructure by facilitating private investment or through public/private partnership (PPP) initiatives we recommend that:

- a) The employment zoning of Action Area AA4 be reallocated to the area of what we have labelled the South (Bridge) Relief Road. Refer to the attached Map; and
- b) Sufficient R - New Residential zoning areas be provided at the South (Bridge) Relief Road area. Refer to the attached Map;

to make it sufficiently attractive for a development consortia to proceed with the construction of the South (Bridge) Relief Road and associated bridge over the river Slaney,

This area could perhaps be called the AAO - South (Bridge) Relief Road Action Area, and would become Phase 1 of the proposed phased development. Traffic control measures would need to be addressed in the Traffic Management Plan to ensure the "Bawnogues back lane" residential area is protected from high volume traffic generated by the existing R747 and the proposed South (Bridge) Relief Road.

In the absence of Council agreeing to reallocate zoning to facilitate this Action Area we believe the Council should proceed with construction of the South (Bridge) Relief Road and associated bridge over the river Slaney at its own expense.

SECTION B. FEEDBACK ON SIGNIFICANT AND GENERAL ISSUES - MEDIUM TO LONG TERM 2007 - 2016

1. PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The Proposed Baltinglass Town Plan Part B, 1, Purpose of this Plan states:

"Having regard to the fact that this Plan forms part of the County Development Plan, 2004-2010, the Plan is in place until 2010. However, all objectives have been prepared so as to account for the needs of the town up until 2016."

The Forum supports the Council's stated objectives.

2. PLANNING CONTEXT

3. OVERALL STRATEGY OF THE BALTINGLASS TOWN PLAN

4. ROLE OF COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Forum notes the intent of the Council as stated in Part A, 3.1 Development Contributions, and believes the Council should permit or adopt a more flexible method of redistributing levies and contributions to future needs of the Baltinglass community.

In particular the Council should "ring fence" development levies and contributions from Baltinglass for Baltinglass infrastructure update and maintenance.

5 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

5.2 Density of Development

The Proposed Baltinglass Town Plan Part A - 7, Quantity of Zoned Land states that:

Amount of New Zoned Housing Land

The number of houses to be catered for is based on the stated 2016 population (1,265 extra population) divided by the predicted 2016 household size (2.56), which yields 494 units. A further 80 houses must be added to reflect the potential of new household formation from existing households (i.e. the difference between the number of houses required for the two household sizes), giving a total figure of 574 units. **170 of these are assumed to be sited in the Town Centre zonings, the Mart Regeneration Site (AA1) or as infill.** The remainder 404 units will be at a density of 23 units/ha. The amount of land required is found by dividing these figures by the density giving a net land requirement of 17.6 ha. This figure is then adjusted by adding in the "excess factor" and "headroom" giving a total allowance for zoned residential land of **26.5 ha at medium density.**

The Proposed Baltinglass Town Plan Part B - 5.2 Density of Development states that:

The Council will not apply a density limit on lands zoned 'TCI: Primary Town Centre', 'TC2: Secondary Town Centre' or 'AA1: Mart Regeneration Action Area'. The quantum of development that will be considered on such lands will be guided by plot ratio, site coverage and standards with regard to car parking, open space and height. Except as specifically provided for under the Baltinglass Town Plan, the standards of the County Development Plan shall apply in all respects. The planning authority may refuse applications where it is believed that the density is too high or low for a particular location. The Council will have regard to the 'Residential Density Guidelines, DoEHLG, 1999' in the assessment of planning applications.

The Forum supports these views, and notes that standards provided specifically for Baltinglass will take precedence over the CDP. We believe that by association in these provisions with TCI and TC2, that AA1 - Mart Regeneration Action Area should also be included with TCI and TC2 in Part B - 6.1.3 Protecting the Character and Built Heritage of the Town Centre.

In the case of land zoned "R - New Residential" and "RE - Existing Residential" the Forum would recommend the Council introduce a lower density of housing from 9.2 houses per acre to vary between 4 and 8 houses per acre depending on the proximity of the land to the TCI and TC2 zones.

Historically most of the residential building, up to a few years ago, has been of a lower density. It has only been since the onset of estate development that the character of the town has been changed.

There are numerous families in the Baltinglass hinterland who cannot obtain planning permission under current CDP guidelines, but who would probably reside in the town should suitable and adequate low density residential zoning options be available. In addition many newcomers to the town chose Baltinglass for the availability of low density housing blocks.

The Baltinglass Forum urges the Council to identify additional R and RE variable low density zoning areas that will cater for the established residential trends as identified by the Forum consultation process.

6. COMMERCIAL/ TOWN CENTRE

6.1.3 Protecting the Character and Built Heritage of the Town Centre

The Forum believes the proposed Baltinglass Town Plan Part B - 6.1.3 should be amended to read as follows (changes are underlined);

6.1.3 Protecting the Character and Built Heritage of the Town ~~Centre~~

It is the policy of the Council to protect the character and built heritage of the town centre TCI and TC2 zones, and AA1 - Mart Regeneration Action Area.

Proposed development shall be strictly undertaken in accordance with the following design standards:

- Notwithstanding the development standards outlined above for the TCI and TC2 zones and AA1 - Mart Regeneration Action Area, development that is detrimental to the character and built heritage of the town ~~centre~~ will not be permitted. New developments shall respect the established form, scale, streetscape and character of the town and shall enhance, reflect and contribute to the existing ~~urban form~~ heritage of the town.
- New development immediately adjoining existing ~~residential~~ development shall ensure the protection of all existing ~~residential~~ amenities and shall have particular regard to minimising overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing and visual intrusion.

This wording reflects the Council's recognition of "The town's rich and historic heritage" which "makes a significant contribution to its character".

6.1.6 The Fire Station Opportunity Site

The Forum supports the construction of a new Fire Station. We note the proposed Baltinglass Town Plan is silent on its new location.

The Forum believes several aspects of the Council's Fire Station Opportunity Site proposal may need reconsideration:

- a) The loss of the car park adjoining the existing Fire Station will aggravate the existing chaotic parking situation in Baltinglass. The Forum believes any development of this site should be contingent on the Council having successfully addressed the provision of off Main Street centralised public car parking facilities;
- b) The concept of a set-down area for the community creche does not recognise the safety practice of creches requiring parents to deliver and collect children from within the creche facilities. Off street car parking facilities would need to be provided to the community creche; and
- c) The provision of adequate outdoor play areas for childcare facilities as outlined in the Childcare Pre School Services (No 2) Regulations 2006 - 28 (a) and (b).

7. EMPLOYMENT

The Forum strongly endorses the development of a hotel on a suitable site within the town

8. COMMUNITY, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

8.6 Sheltered Housing

The Forum considers the provision of sheltered housing as a fundamental component of community ethos, and recommends the Council specify in some detail the prerequisites surrounding the development of sheltered housing, retirement estates, nursing homes and associated facilities (eg clinics).

9. HERITAGE

9.1 Natural, Architectural and Archaeological Heritage.

In the Draft Development Plan under this heading, the only heritage assets listed are those set out in Chapter 10 of the County Development Plan (CDP). These are merely designated Protected Structures and National Monuments within the Town Plan boundary. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) www.buildingsofireland.ie/Surveys, which forms the basis of the Minister of the Environment's recommendations to the planning authorities for inclusion in their Record of Protected Structures, is more reflective of the streetscape of Baltinglass. However, neither the CDP nor the NIAH is fully representative of the town's heritage assets.

The preservation for future generations of our built heritage is of major concern to the Forum. Additionally, the status of Baltinglass as a "heritage town" is fundamentally important to its development in terms of tourism. It is recommended that the town's heritage assets be re-examined, in consultation with the NIAH, in order to construct a realistic list of such assets for inclusion in the final Development Plan for Baltinglass.

10. TRANSPORTATION, CIRCULATION AND PARKING INFRASTRUCTURE

10.1 Sustainable Transportation Patterns

The Forum endorses the Council's policy on Sustainable Modes of Transport. We believe the construction of a complete N81 outer ring road should be added to the works required to be undertaken in the mid to long term.

11. WATER SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

11.2 Flooding

The Forum welcomes the Council's policy initiatives regarding flooding.

These will particularly apply to Action Areas AA2 - Baltinglass Town Action Area and the proposed Action Area 00 - South (Bridge) Relief Road Area.

We recommend that the existing bridge and South of existing bridge reaches of the Slaney are periodically cleaned as was the case in 2001, to prevent detritus accumulating and potentially creating hazardous flooding.

12. ZONING

TCI - Primary Town Centre

The Forum believes the rural lineage of the town should be recognised and provided for in the Permitted in Principle Category of this zoning, by encouraging and permitting the establishment of a Farmers Market.

TC2 - Secondary Town Centre

The Forum believes the rural lineage of the town should be recognised and provided for in the Permitted in Principle Category of this zoning, by encouraging and permitting the establishment of a Farmers Market.

13. ACTION AREAS

13.2 AA1 - Mart Regeneration Action Area

The Forum believes the following wording should be added to this section:

"Any developments in AA1 shall take account of Part B - 6.1.3 Protecting the Character and Built Heritage of the Town"

13.5 AA 4 - Bawnogues West Action Area

The Forum believes that Employment areas/zoning should not be immediately alongside or adjacent to residential areas - a suitable greenbelt area could perhaps be interposed or the zoned area reallocated.

Accordingly the Forum believes that the AA4 Employment Zone should be reallocated to the AAO - South (Bridge) Relief Road Action Area.

As it is the Council's stated intention to finance the development of infrastructure by facilitating private investment or through public/private partnership (PPP) initiatives, we recommend that sufficient zoning be made available in this Action Area to make it sufficiently attractive for a development consortium to proceed with the construction of the West Link Road.

13.6 AA 0 - Proposed South (Bridge) Relief Road Action Area.

We refer the Council to Section A Feedback on Major Issues - Point 5 above, which summarises the Forum's belief there is a pressing need for the earliest construction of a South (Bridge) Relief Road.



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

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PROPOSED BALTINGLASS TOWN PLAN

Legend

- Town Plan Boundary
- RE Existing Residential
- R New Residential
- TC1 Primary Town Centre
- TC2 Secondary Town Centre
- NS Neighbourhood Shops & Services
- E Employment
- C Community/Educational /Institutional
- OS Open Space
- GB - Agriculture/Greenbelt
- Formal Active OS
- MU Mixed Use Development
- AA (Action Area)
- Protection Zone for proposed new well at Bawnogue (Baltinglass water supply)
- Indicative Pedestrian Footbridge (Exact location subject to detailed assessment and design)
- Indicative New Road and Bridge (Exact route subject to detailed assessment and design)
- River Slaney
- Slaney River walk

Director of Services: Desmond O'Brien
Senior Planner: Patrick B. Hooper
Scale: 1:11,000 @ A3
Date: 26/9/2007
Checked By: AM

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