

Blackrock
Local Area Plan



9. Open Space, Recreation & Green Infrastructure

9.1 Open Space Strategy

POLICY BK26

It is Council policy to ensure that Blackrock provides an appropriate hierarchy of open spaces able to cater for a range of functions to meet the needs of its catchment population and its role as a District Centre.

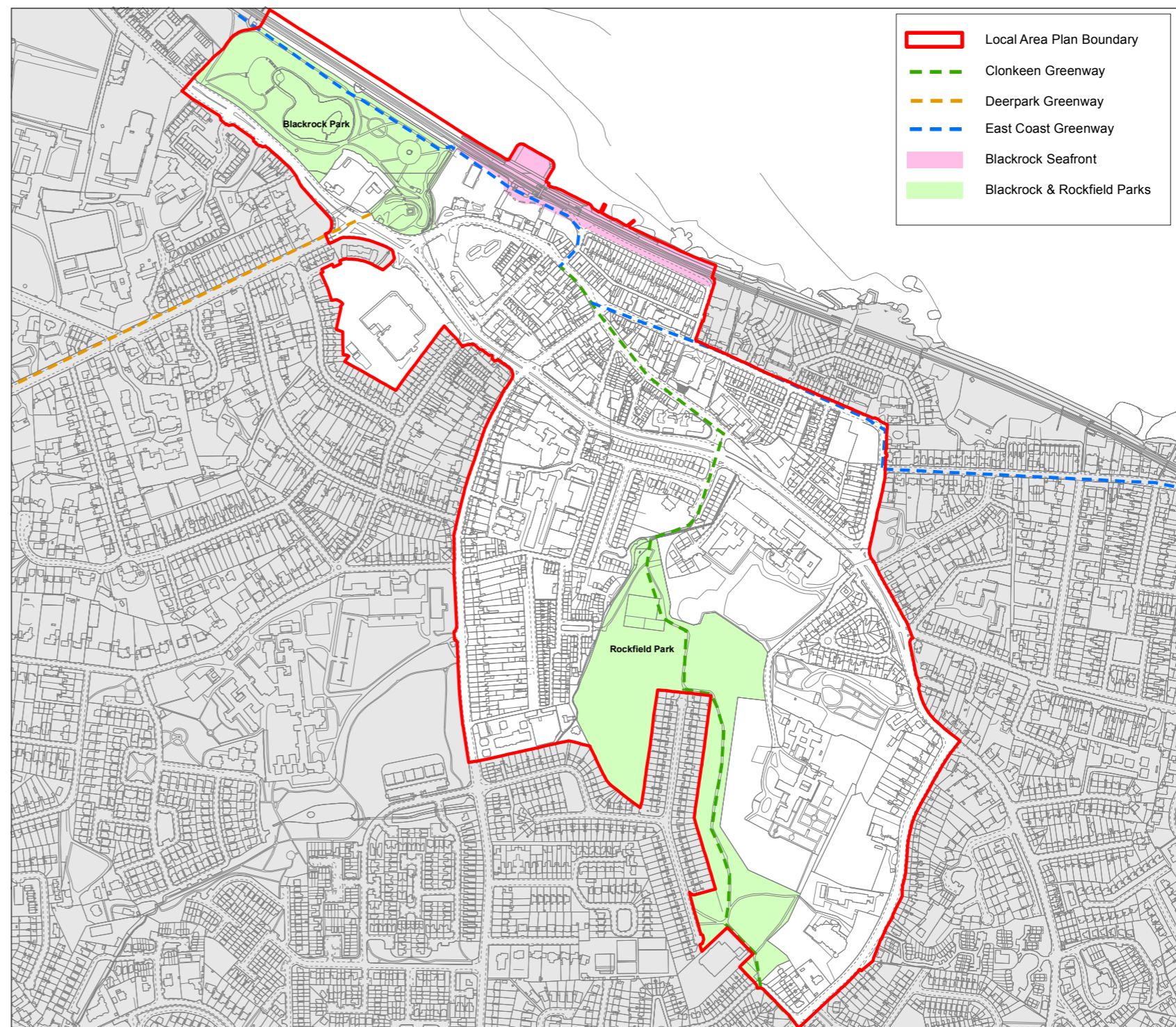
This section of the Plan sets out an Open Space Strategy for Blackrock—concentrating on the larger green spaces and recreational amenity areas such as the parks and the seafront and the connectivity and permeability between them (Map 16 'Open Space Strategy'). Smaller, intimate and more urban open spaces, such as plazas, market places, events areas and pavements are, nevertheless, also important in the wider hierarchy of Open Spaces, and as such are addressed in Chapter 3 the 'Public Realm Strategy'.

The future of Blackrock's open spaces have been defined and designed having regard both to the recently adopted County Open Space Strategy 2012-2015 and County Development Plan Policy OSR2: 'Hierarchy of Parks and Open Spaces' which seeks to promote 'quality parks and public open spaces which vary in size and nature and are designed to serve the needs of all members of the community by being readily accessible and at a convenient distance from their home and/or places of work'.

The Open Space Strategy for Blackrock represents a more localised subset for the Plan area and focuses on enhancing existing public open space assets and identifying a general design approach for these spaces, based on an understanding of local context, character and needs.



Photo 91: Blackrock Park



Map 16: Open Space Strategy

9.2 Blackrock Park

Blackrock Park represents a substantial area (11.28 hectares) of parkland located close to the heart of Blackrock urban village, between the Rock Road and the sea. It is one of the five designated 'Flagship Parks' identified within the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Hierarchy of Open Spaces and has an important recreational and potential bio-diversity role.

Weaknesses

- Underused green spaces
- The park is physically cut-off from the core area of Blackrock primarily as a consequence of poor accessibility, connectivity and legibility
- Poor quality water bodies
- Low biodiversity and limited number of habitats
- Lack of quality leisure and recreational facilities

Strengths

- Extensive views of Dublin Bay
- Areas of enclosure and seclusion
- Proximity to both Blackrock and Booterstown
- Distinct internal spaces and structures
- A series of linked spaces along a long linear axis
- Sunny aspect
- Provides a key 'link' on both the County Cycle Network and Urban Greenway Network
- Playground facility

The overarching objective of the Council is to enhance the Park's appeal and function by providing and facilitating:

- A high quality parkland
- Spaces for gathering and seating
- High quality spaces for Events and Performances
- Play, Exercise and Active Recreation spaces
- A distinct relationship with and connection to, the District Centre of Blackrock
- An attractive public realm
- High quality planting areas and biodiversity



Map 17: Blackrock Park



Photo 92: Blackrock Park Play Area



Photo 93: Blackrock Park Fitness Equipment

Objectives: Blackrock Park (Map 17)

BP1

It is an objective of the Council to provide improved access and circulation to and around Blackrock Park.

Internal Routes

The existing greenway (Cyclepath) linking Booterstown and Blackrock DART stations will be maintained. Localised improvements to the internal path system will be introduced to facilitate improved access and circulation within the park and to enhance its linkages to the external pedestrian system.

New Entrance at Rock Hill

A new plaza opposite Blackrock Shopping Centre will 'face' the entrance to the village core. This high quality entrance will open up the park and visually connect it to Blackrock by removing sections of the existing boundary wall/railing and providing for new railings and piers sympathetic to existing boundary elements. An integrated deck / pedestrian bridge will reinforce this connection. Existing access at Rock Hill will also be retained.

Improved access from the DART Station

Improved cycle and pedestrian linkages between Blackrock Park and the DART station to rear of Deepwell - to include increased width of the existing corridor and upgrading of the entrance to Blackrock Park at the location of the existing bridge and adjoining stream area in accordance with Objective PC1, Chapter 4.

BP2

It is an objective of the Council to improve the public realm and landscaping in the area of the Pavilion in Blackrock Park.

The area around the Pavilion beside the Main Gates at the 'bottom' of Mount Merrion Avenue, will be designed to provide for a high quality soft and hard landscape area and will include seating, floral beds and improved views over Dublin Bay.

This design will incorporate, as far as practicable, the retention of existing mature trees. The existing toilet block beside the bus stop will be demolished.

These landscape works in conjunction with the new access and proposed renovations to Pavilion will open up the park and help visually connect it to Blackrock.

BP3

It is an objective of the Council to explore renovation opportunities of the Pavilion structure having regard to its Protected Structure status.

A design concept is to be developed to explore the potential of renovating the existing pavilion in conjunction with the provision of new tea rooms/café and toilets. All works shall be in accordance with good conservation practice and will comply with the County Development Plan and National Guidelines.

BP4

It is an objective of the Council to improve the public realm and facilities around the Bandstand and Playground within Blackrock Park.

The surface around the Bandstand will be renovated to replace the existing dilapidated tarmac area. Steps will be taken to address the ongoing flood problem in this area. Improvements to this area will include new seating, tree planting, floral beds and other landscape works. The playground will be extended to include new play equipment, safety surface and fencing.

BP5

It is an objective of the Council to renovate the Bandstand having regard to its Protected Structure status.

The Bandstand renovations will include upgrade and repairs to roof, replacement of railings, painting of the structure and creation of an ornamental landscape border around base of structure. All works will be in accordance with good conservation practice and will comply with County Development Plans and National Guidelines.

BP6

It is an objective of the Council to upgrade the landscaping and public realm around to the Pond and Amphitheatre area and to improve the hydrological environment of the Pond.

The existing pond edge and footpaths shall be upgraded and repaired, while the tidal inflow/outflow which previously self cleaned the pond are to be reinstated and improved. Renovations to the pond area will promote and enhance the biodiversity value of the island, while the fountain feature shall be restored. The existing amphitheatre will be enhanced to improve access. A small area of the lake, below the existing amphitheatre will be converted to an enlarged stage, lawn and improved circulation area.

9.3 Rockfield Park

Rockfield Park is well located and at the heart of established residential areas to the south of the Frascati Road corridor. The Park consists primarily of large expanses of green open space, much of which is laid out as playing pitches. At the northern end of the Park new changing facilities have recently been constructed adjacent to the long established tennis courts.



Photo 94: Tennis Courts at Rockfield Park

There are a number of pedestrian access points to the Park including from the rear of the Guardian Angels Church complex on Newtownpark Avenue and from Castle Byrne Park, Avondale Court, Brookfield Court and Temple Hill.

Weaknesses

- Obscure pedestrian / cycle access points from immediate surrounds
- Little passive surveillance
- Lack of directional signage

- Poor vehicular access and car parking
- 'Backland' context

Strengths

- Large open space with good range of sports facilities
- Good central location within walking distance of a large catchment population
- Open and sunny aspect
- Forms a 'key' link on the County Cycle Network and Urban Greenway Network.



Photo 95: Path through Rockfield Park

Objectives: Rockfield Park

RP1

It is an objective of the Council to retain and enhance existing pedestrian / cycle access to the Park.

RP2

It is an objective of the Council to establish an open, obvious and well signposted entrance point into Rockfield Park. Within the vicinity of this entrance, a small, short-stay car park shall be provided for users of Rockfield Park, in conjunction with the redevelopment of the St. Teresa's and Dunardagh land holding in accordance with the Site Framework Strategy Section 3.5, Drawing No. 2.

RP3

It is an objective of the Council to establish improved pedestrian and cycle permeability between the Park and future residential development(s) on the St Teresa's and Dunardagh landholding in accordance with the Site Framework Strategy, Section 3.5 Drawing 2.

RP4

It is an objective of the Council to improve access to Rockfield Park from Barclay Court and the site of the former Rosemont School. Any redevelopment of the former Rosemont school site shall ensure that the existing trees on site are retained and incorporated into Rockfield Park as part of the open space provision.

RP5

It is an objective of the Council to improve signage to and legibility within both the Park and its immediate environs. Information signage will also be included at key access points to Rockfield Park and contain details to natural and built heritage features of the park.

RP6

It is an objective of the Council to extend the network of paths around the soccer pitches and to improve circulation within the Park.

RP7

That the existing gateway from Castlebyrne Park be replaced by a more user friendly gateway for pedestrians, cyclists and the disabled.

9.4 The Seafront

The coastline at Blackrock is an important asset which is currently under utilised. The railway line forms a physical barrier while the development in the core of Blackrock has over time generally 'turned its back' on the sea. A key objective of the Blackrock LAP is to reconnect the village to the seafront and, in turn, promote the use of the coastline for an extended palette of passive and active amenity and recreational uses.

9.4.1 Access and Recreational Amenity

The Blackrock Baths were provided for by the railway company in 1839. In 1887 the Baths were rebuilt, but were eventually closed in the late 1980s. By 1992, due to lack of maintenance, parts of the Baths were dismantled and in 2012 much of the remaining structures were demolished under the Dangerous Buildings Legislation.

The seafront and bathing area at Blackrock represents an intrinsic part of Blackrock's heritage and notwithstanding the recent demolition, the area still has considerable potential as a recreational and tourism asset. The seafront itself is a natural yet underutilised asset and resource which currently has restricted access and a poor public realm. The County Development Plan includes various policies and objectives aimed at realising its potential. Policy LHB19: 'Beaches' states 'It is Council policy to promote the use of beaches for amenity and recreational use. The areas traditionally used for bathing in the County include.....Blackrock Bathing Place', while Specific Local Objective 9 seeks 'To encourage the redevelopment of the area encompassing Blackrock Baths, Bath Place and Blackrock DART Station'. To maximise the overall potential of this natural asset, the bathing place, the associated public realm and pedestrian access to it, all need to be upgraded and enhanced where feasible. Section 3.6, 'Public Realm Strategy' of the Plan includes detailed proposals to improve the pedestrian connectivity to the seafront and to further scope for improved bathing and amenity facilities at this location.



Photo 96: Blackrock Park

9.4.2 Sutton to Sandycove Pedestrian / Cycle Route (S2S)

The current County Development Plan identifies a Specific Local Objective SLO93, 'To promote the development of the Sutton to Sandycove (S2S) Promenade and Cycleway.' The Sutton-to-Sandycove initiative involves the development of a continuous 22 kilometre cycleway and promenade around the coastal edge of Dublin Bay and linking into existing and proposed cycle and walking routes. The indicative route shown on Map 2 'Extract from the County Development Plan' runs along the seafront at Blackrock.

The biodiversity and habitat of Dublin Bay is of national and international importance and large sections are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (pNHA). The indicative S2S route, as shown in the County Development Plan 2010-2016, traverses a section of these designated areas. In this regard feasibility studies of this coastal route shall be carried out, including an assessment of route options.

Objectives: Seafront

SF1

It is an objective of the Council to improve access to and recreational amenity facilities at the seafront at Blackrock, in accordance with Objective PR1 and PR2 Section 3.6 Public Realm Strategy. Any development proposals shall take into account and provide for the possible future construction of the S2S project and shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in accordance with the requirements of the European Communities (Birds & Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI.477 of 2011) to ensure the protection and preservation of all designated SPAs, SACs, and pNHAs of Dublin Bay and the surrounding area.

SF2

It is an objective of the Council to promote the development of the Sutton to Sandycove (S2S) Promenade and Cycleway in accordance with the objectives of the County Development Plan 2010-2016. It should be noted that this coastal route will be subject to a feasibility study, including an assessment of route options. Any development proposals shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive to ensure the protection and preservation of all designated SPAs, cSACs, and pNHAs of Dublin Bay and the surrounding area.

9.5 Green Routes

Connectivity between the open spaces, particularly the green spaces used for recreational activities such as the Parks and the seafront is an important element of the Open Space Strategy. The focus here is on the pedestrian and cyclist.



Photo 97: Path/Cycle Route through Blackrock Park

Urban Greenways & Cycle Networks

In response to the County cycling policy which states '...to promote and encourage more healthy, sustainable and environmentally friendly forms of transportation such as cycling and walking and to make the footway network accessible for all' and County Development Plan Policy OSR7 'Greenways Network' of the current County Development Plan which states 'It is Council policy to develop a comprehensive network of County greenways linking parks and public open spaces and to work with adjoining local authorities and other stakeholders to achieve and improve external linkages', Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council identified a network of proposed Urban Greenways in their 'Open Space Strategy' 2012-2015.

Greenways are 'shared-use routes for non-motorised users, walkers, cyclists, roller skaters, horse riders for pleasure, recreation, tourism and daily journeys. They are generally routes which predominantly utilise established green spaces but can also cross and link to public roads. Greenways provide and expand recreational opportunities for walking, jogging and cycling and can often coincide with river/stream corridors and can promote free passage for wildlife'. Three of these proposed routes connect into Blackrock and link with each other and are identified on Map 16 'Open Space Strategy'.

- The Clonkeen Greenway from Blackrock through Clonkeen Park to Shankill (12.6 kms. 7.8 mls.)
- Deerpark Greenway from Deerpark to Blackrock (3.6 kms. 2.1 mls.) running through Rockfield Park.
- The East Coast Greenway from Booterstown to Bray along the coast at Blackrock and through Backrock Park (19.6kms; 11.8 mls.)

In addition, the 'Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Cycle Network' (2012) has introduced an objective approach to cycling infrastructure provision in the County based on a series of review assessments. The document sets out a rationale for the recommendations aimed at improving the facilities for cyclists in the County. This Cycle Network is particularly relevant in considering the issue of connectivity and permeability around Blackrock and between its open spaces, where the routes mirror those in the Open Space Strategy.

Objectives: Green Routes

GR1

It is an objective of the Council to provide and enhance where appropriate the provision of Green Routes including Urban Greenways and Cycle Network routes to both connect open spaces in Blackrock to cater for pedestrians and cyclists and provide recreational opportunities, in accordance with Map 16 'Open Space Strategy'.