

Blackrock Local Area Plan



7. Retail

7.1 Introduction

Retail, including retail services, is universally recognised as a core element of vibrant centres in terms of employment, social interaction and as a generator of footfall and animation. Retailing supports the needs of both local residents and the local business community. Blackrock is a well-established retail location with a good mix of independent and high-street retail operators and outlets making it an attractive urban centre. It is identified in the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and in the County Development Plan 2010-2016 as a 'District Centre'. Further appropriate retail development has the potential to further enhance and consolidate Blackrock as a substantial mixed-use urban village.



Photo 77: Blackrock Streetscape

7.2 Policy Context

The overarching policy framework for retail development within Blackrock and the County generally is established by 'The Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (May 2012), the 'Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area' 2008-2016 and the relevant elements of the current County Development Plan. The Local Area Plan must be consistent with these higher-tier policy frameworks.

7.2.1 Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)

The National 2012 Retail Planning Guidelines seek to ensure that the planning system supports competitiveness and choice in the retail sector commensurate with promoting the vitality and viability of city and town centres. The Guidelines (and the Retail Design Manual that accompanies them) advocate that retail development

should also help contribute to a high standard of urban design and encourage greater use of public transport. The Retail Design Manual identifies ten principles of urban design as follows:

- Design Quality
- Site and Location
- Context and Character
- Vitality and Viability
- Access and Connectivity
- Density and Mixed Use
- Public Realm
- Built Form
- Environmental Responsibility
- Sustainable Construction



Retail Planning Guidelines

7.2.2 Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016

The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area recommends that Blackrock District Centre be reinvented and revitalised to bring it back in line with modern retailing needs.



Retail Strategy

7.2.3 County Development Plan Retail Policy

The County Development Plan 2010-2016 sets out a Retail Hierarchy for the County. At the top level of the Hierarchy are the two Major Town Centres of Dún Laoghaire and Dundrum. The second tier in the hierarchy includes six District Centres - of which Blackrock is one. The strategy for Blackrock, as stated in the Retail Hierarchy is to 'Encourage the potential redevelopment of Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres as high density mixed-use centre in accordance with proposed Local Area Plan. Limited expansion of retail floorspace'. The net retail sales area for the entire Blackrock District Centre is capped by the County Development Plan at 25,000 square metres. A further objective of the County Development Plan is 'To promote the future redevelopment of Blackrock as a sustainable mixed-use District Centre'. See Map 14: Retail Hierarchy - Location of Major Town Centres and District Centres within dun Laoghaire-Rathdown.

Applications for new retail development or for amendments to existing retail development in the Blackrock District Centre will require to clearly identify and quantify the net retail sales area on any plans submitted with the planning application. This will help facilitate continued monitoring of the cumulative retail 'cap'.

7.3 Analysis of Existing Retail Facilities

Table 7A illustrates the current retail floorspace quantum within Blackrock District Centre. These figures are based on the data used in the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2008).

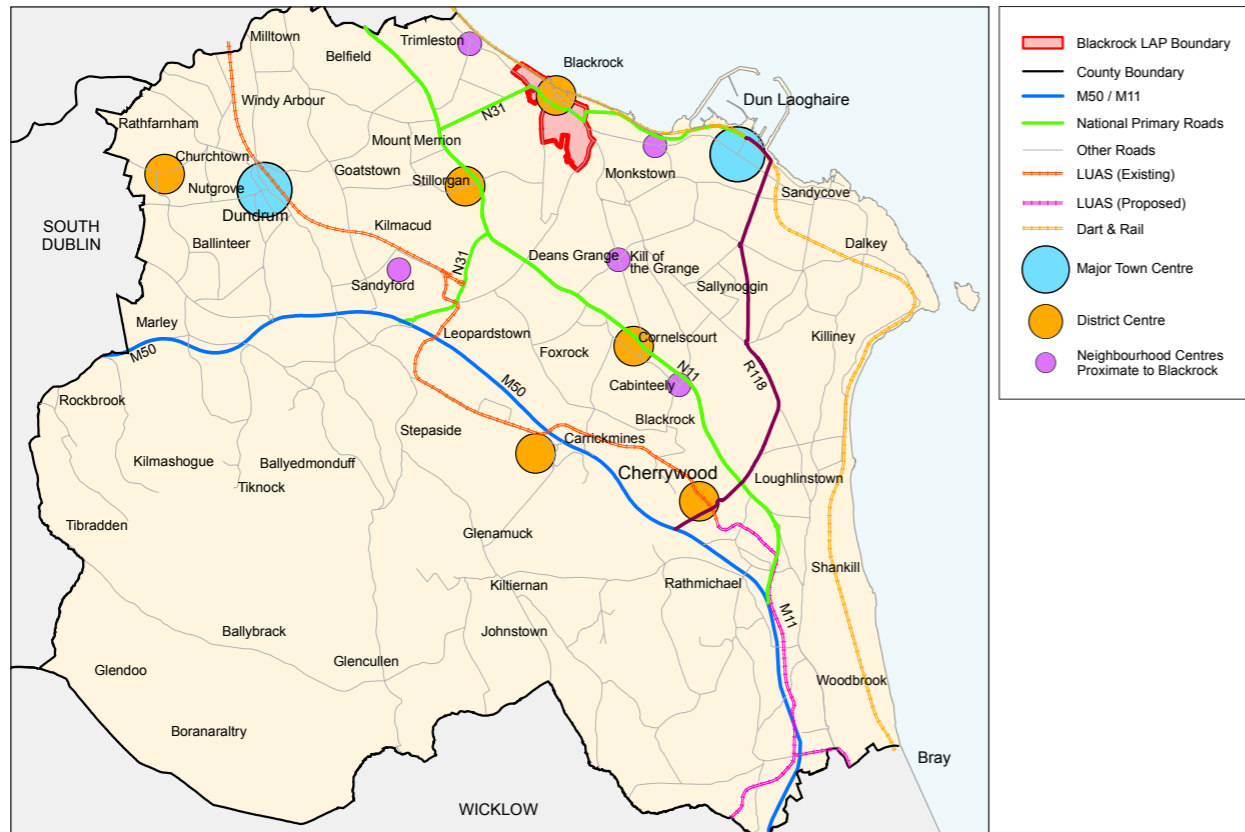
Type of Retail	Area (net)	Percentage of Total
Convenience	6,171	38.7
Comparison	8,646	54.2
Retail Warehouse	1,120	7
Total	15,937	100

The existing combined net retail floorspace for the Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres is approximately 11,800 square metres. The net retail floorspace for the Main Street core is approximately 4,200 square metres.

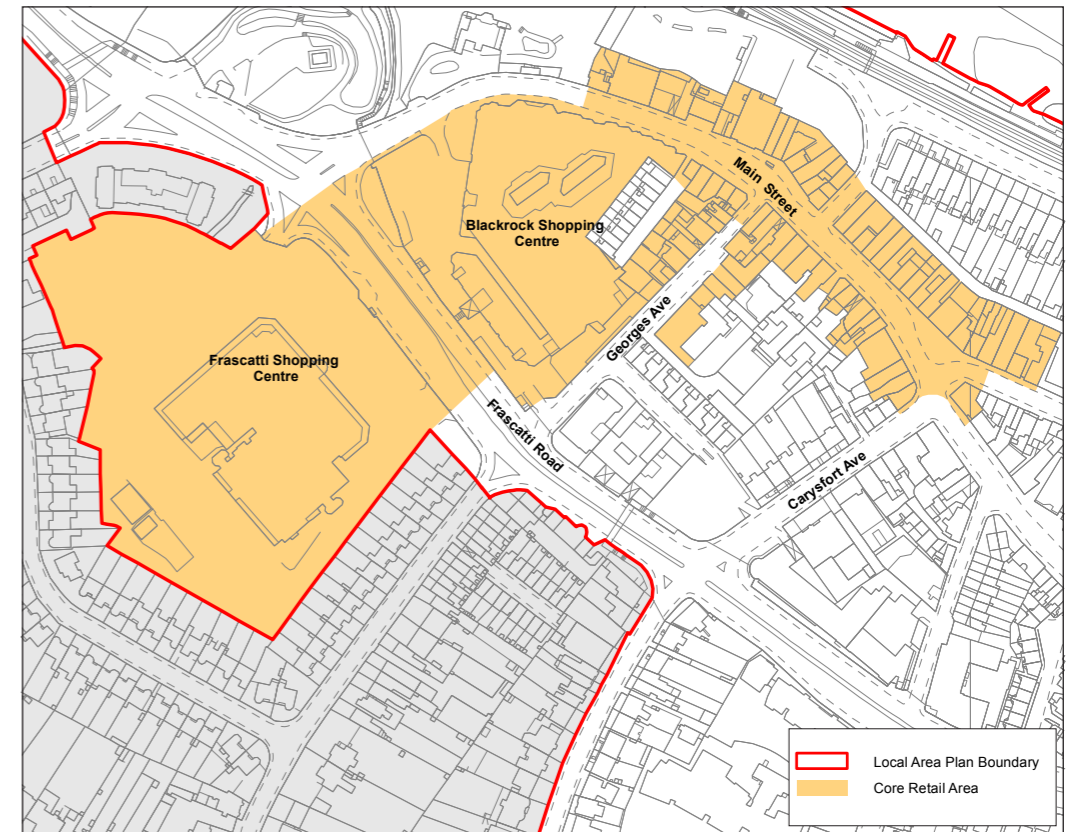
Survey work undertaken in the preparation of the Plan (August 2012) indicated that there are approximately 160 units within Blackrock District Centre - including retail and non-retail service units. Of the total units, approximately 53% (85 units) operated as 'pure' retail units while some 41% (65 units) operated as retail/non-retail service functions. Retail and non-retail service functions include banks, post office, restaurants, public houses, hairdressers, beauty salons etc. The retail services are predominately located on Main Street and its adjacent side streets. The two shopping centres house over half of the total number of 'pure' retail units - including the largest anchor units Debenhams, Marks & Spencers and SuperValu.

At the time of the survey there were 10 vacant units, equating to 6% of the total units. Having regard to the four year long economic downturn this is not considered a particularly damaging vacancy rate. However, in the interests of continuing to maintain vitality and viability within Blackrock, the proportion of vacant units need to be kept to a minimum.

Blackrock's convenience retail market is dominated by two outlets - SuperValu located in the Blackrock Shopping Centre and Marks & Spencers located in the Frascati Shopping Centre. The Retail Planning Guidelines (DoECLG 2012) indicate that, overall, the retail market for convenience goods is dominated by three retailers - Tesco, Dunnes Stores and SuperValu, only one of which exists in Blackrock. However, the relative proximity of Blackrock to, respectively, Deansgrange, Cornelscourt and Stillorgon potentially offers a broader range of convenience shopping outlets that might otherwise be the case - including Lidl, Tesco and Dunnes Stores. It is assumed there will be a significant overlap between the various centres and their respective catchments particularly in terms of convenience retailing.



Map 14: Retail Hierarchy



Map 15: Core Retail Area

7.4 Core Retail Area

POLICY BK21

It is Council policy to ensure that retail in Blackrock remains concentrated within the Core Retail Area as identified on Map 15, in accordance with The Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012), The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016 and the County Development Plan 2010-2016.

The Core Retail Area within Blackrock, as illustrated on Map 15 consists of the Frascati and Blackrock Shopping Centres and the village core of Main Street, Rock Hill and George’s Avenue. The broad imperative underpinning a focussed ‘core retail area’ concept is targeted at clustering future convenience and comparison retail and associated services together to create synergies, improved overall vitality and a comprehensive retail offer. If the ‘core’ is too spread out and diluted it can potentially reduce footfall and undermine the overall vitality and viability of the centre.

A significant proportion of the existing retail floorspace in the ‘core’ area is concentrated within the two shopping centres. There is very limited scope to introduce additional large-scale retail development along the Main Street and adjoining streets within the village core. It is anticipated that the majority of the outstanding retail space ‘allocation’ for Blackrock will be ‘absorbed’ by the two existing shopping centres in the event of their comprehensive redevelopment. Notwithstanding, the Planning Authority must adopt a flexible approach and ensure that the retail cap of 25,000 square metres net retail floorspace is not fully absorbed within one or two specific sites to the detriment of the remainder of the overall

‘core retail area’. Any applications for substantial retail development within Blackrock shall have to clearly demonstrate the impact of the quantum of proposed retail - not only on Blackrock District Centre but elsewhere across the County.

The current District Centre zoning in Blackrock, as set out within the County Development Plan, clearly allows for a range of retail and associated services to be considered outside of the core retail area. However, the provision of new retail development outside of the core retail area shall only be favourably considered where it can be demonstrated to the Planning Authority that it will not undermine the vitality and viability of the core itself.

Objectives: Retail Core & Net Retail Floorspace

RC1

It is an objective of the Council to strengthen the role of Blackrock as a District Centre as identified in the Retail Strategy for the GDA 2008-2016 and the County Development Plan 2010-2016 and to promote it as the primary retail location in the Blackrock area.

RC2

It is an objective of the Council to limit the net retail sales area within Blackrock District Centre to 25,000 square metres in accordance with the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan.

RC3

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that all applications for retail development shall identify and quantify on plans the extent of the net retail floorspace. Any redevelopment and increase in the quantum of net retail floorspace of the Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres shall be proportionate to their current share of floorspace within the District Centre.

7.5 Vitality & Viability

POLICY BK22

It is Council policy to support the continued vitality and viability of Blackrock District Centre by facilitating a mix of uses and activities.

Vitality and viability are key indicators in determining the health of a District Centre. Vitality refers to how active an urban centre is and viability relates to the commercial wellbeing of the centre. Both indicators depend on many factors including the range and quality of activities, the mix of uses, accessibility, general amenity, appearance and safety of the centre. Most, if not all, of these components need to be present in an urban centre to be successful.

Blackrock has developed over a considerable period and as a result has become a focus of activity for a reasonably comprehensive range of uses. The District Centre benefits from a good mix of retail units, retail and non-retail services and a high quality retail profile. Blackrock Market operates every weekend and includes a broad range of stalls that add to the centre vitality. Retail plays a key role in Blackrock as a source of employment, supporting the residential and business communities and creating a vitality and viability in the area - all of which help enhance the overall character of the urban village.

7.5.1 Retail Range & Quality

The actual historical physical form of Blackrock, combined with the mix and range of uses, helps distinguish Blackrock's identity and sense of place. It is essential, therefore, that new retail development within Blackrock makes a positive contribution both to the character and viability of the District Centre. The two shopping centres, although in need of modernisation, play a vital role in Blackrock's success as an attractive District Centre. The range and quality of retail and non-retail service units within the shopping centres helps strengthen Blackrock's position as a second tier retail destination within the County.



Photo 78: The Breffni, Blackrock, Main Street



Photo 79: Retail Frontage

There is, however, potential for additional smaller specialist retail units that would help further enhance Blackrock's appeal as a distinctive shopping location. There is also potential for the introduction of a greater number of uses that would increase evening activity. The Retail Design Manual states that 'Places that

provide a diversity of uses, activities and experiences feeding off each other are more attractive and competitive, not only to shoppers but also residents and business users; thereby enhancing the overall vitality and viability of these locations'. While there are a notable number of public houses in Blackrock, there is some potential to further encourage evening activity in the village core. Having regard to the opening of the new BFEI in the near future and the young customer base this will create, there may be opportunity to further enhance evening uses and the café culture that exists within Blackrock. Streetfront cafés, for example, can have a positive impact on the character of urban centres and enhance their attractiveness.

7.5.2 Active Streets

The quality and vitality of the street can be undermined by a concentration or clustering of uses that fail to interact with the streetscape - enclosed car parks, blank shop frontages, ground floor offices and residential units for example. Such uses often fail to acknowledge the public realm and can result in bland inactive frontages that detract from the vitality and appearance of the streetscape. Ground floor units should address the street. Internalised shopping environments that 'turn their back' on the public realm and present a blank street frontage have negative impacts on the attractiveness of urban centres and will not be encouraged. The Retail Design Manual advocates that where large units are required 'Negative streetscape impacts can be avoided by 'wrapping' the large floorplates with complementary streetfront units such as hairdressers, cafes, bookshops and suchlike'.



Photo 80: Active Street Frontage



Photo 81: Active Street Frontage

7.5.3 Living-Over-the-Shop

Section 5.3.4 (Policy RES4: 'Existing Housing Stock and Densification') of the current County Development Plan supports a Living-Over-The-Shop Scheme in Blackrock. Section 16.3.4 (viii) 'Living-Over-the-Shop' of the County Development Plan states 'In encouraging the residential use of the upper floors of commercial properties in established retail/commercial area - including the districts of Dún Laoghaire, Blackrock, Dundrum, Glasthule, Dalkey, Sandycove and Monkstown - the Council will consider dispensations from normal standards to facilitate 'Living-Over-The-Shop' developments that will contribute positively to the renewal of area'.



Photo 82: Living-Over-the-shop

Residential uses over commercial premises within Blackrock District Centre would contribute to and enhance the vitality of Blackrock and would be considered positively. Units should be finished to a high quality to provide an attractive living environment and comply with the requirements set out in the County Development Plan.

Objectives: Vitality & Viability

VV1

It is an objective of the Council to encourage a broad mix of uses within Blackrock that contribute to the creation of a sustainable and vibrant District Centre that is the focus for social and business interaction. New development shall be required to demonstrate how it complements or enhances the existing mix of uses.

VV2

It is an objective of the Council to control the provision of non-retail uses at ground floor level on Main Street, Rock Hill and in both the Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres in order to maintain and strengthen the core retail area. Ground floor units are required to address the street and add to the vibrancy and vitality of the streetscape.

VV3

It is an objective of the Council to encourage and facilitate an appropriate range of day and evening activity thereby creating a vibrant, active and attractive urban village.

VV4

It is an objective of the Council to support a Living-Over-The-Shop Scheme in Blackrock in accordance with Policy RES4 (Section 5.3.4) and Section 16.3.4 'Living-Over-the-Shop' of the County Development Plan 2010-2016.

7.6 Retail Design

POLICY BK23

It is Council Policy to seek and encourage high quality design for all new retail development in accordance with the Retail Design Manual (2012).

Retail development has an immediate and dominant impact on the quality, attractiveness and ambience of the streetscape. It plays a significant role in terms of the visual appeal and use of the street. Well-designed retail development can improve the appearance of a street and make it more attractive to customers and visitors.

The Retail Design Manual is a best practice guide for new retail development. It is intended to provide a planning framework for new retail development in a way which meets the needs of modern shopping formats while contributing to protecting, supporting and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of town centres as places to live, work, shop and visit. The Manual identifies a series of urban design principles that should inform the preparation of design statements for new retail development. Retail development proposals within Blackrock will require to be prepared in accordance with these principles.



Retail Design Manual

Objectives: Retail Design

RD1

It is an objective of the Council to require that all new retail development in Blackrock is designed in accordance with the best practice principles set out in the Retail Design Manual - companion document to the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

RD2

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that new retail development in Blackrock has a high standard of urban design that addresses the street appropriately, avoids the development of blank frontages and incorporates a mix of uses vertically and horizontally.

RD3

It is an objective of the Council that new retail development in Blackrock shall be of an appropriate size and scale and of a design that minimises any potential for adverse impacts on the character, quality and identity of Blackrock. New development which is inappropriate for its context or that fails to realise the opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area or the site shall not be considered favourably.

7.7 Future Retail Development

The Retail Planning Guidelines state that retailing in District Centres should not be promoted to a scale of development such that they begin to act as retailing destinations in their own right or where this would undermine the vitality of the central area of the city or town in the environs of which the District Centre is located. The cap on the net retail sales area within Blackrock will ensure that Blackrock expands its retail development in accordance with what is appropriate for a District Centre and does not impact unduly on the County's two Major Town Centres – Dundrum and Dún Laoghaire.

The Local Area Plan is designed to help facilitate future retail development that enhances the vitality and viability of Blackrock as a District Centre. It is not the purpose of the Local Area Plan to inhibit competition, preserve existing commercial interests or prevent innovation. However, it is recognised that independent retailers, including lower order comparison and local convenience outlets contribute significantly to the character and identity of Blackrock and should, therefore, continue to account for a significant portion of the retail sales area within Blackrock. This is particularly important in the event of any comprehensive redevelopment of the shopping centres.

7.7.1 Redevelopment of Blackrock & Frascati Shopping Centres

The Retail Strategy for the GDA 2008-2016 identifies Blackrock as a centre which has redevelopment potential. This redevelopment potential is focussed on the reinvention and enhancement of existing retailing stock to bring it in line with modern retailing needs. The two shopping centres within Blackrock date from the 1980's – Blackrock shopping centre was built in 1984 and the Frascati Shopping Centre was first constructed as a freestanding department store in 1981 but later expanded as a shopping centre in 1989. Despite some minor recent upgrade works, it is commonly acknowledged that both Centres are now dated in terms of design and layout.

The shopping centres are both zoned 'DC' with a stated objective 'to protect, provide for and/or improve mixed-use district centre facilities'. The redevelopment of the two shopping centres presents a significant opportunity to strengthen Blackrock's appeal and vitality and create a distinct, attractive and integrated urban development. It is an objective of the County Development Plan as stated in Section 7.8.2 'To manage the potential redevelopment of the Frascati and Blackrock Shopping Centres to improve linkages and pedestrian permeability across the Bypass'.



Photo 83: Frascati Signage

The existing Frascati Shopping Centre is dominated by surface car parking, lacks any strong urban edge and streetscape and offers very little to the townscape of Blackrock. Blackrock Shopping Centre presents a bland inactive frontage along both Rock Hill and Frascati Road. This weakens the streetscape and detracts from the vitality of the area.

The Frascati Road, which segregates the two shopping centres, is both a physical and visual barrier and provides a very poor environment for pedestrians.

This section of the Plan sets out a series of objectives and development guidance for the future of the shopping centres in order to facilitate their best possible and most appropriate redevelopment in terms of function, appeal, accessibility and shopping environment.



Photo 84: Blackrock Shopping Centre

The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016 indicated that the Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres currently account for approximately 11,800 square metres (74%) of the existing net retail floorspace within Blackrock. Any redevelopment and increase in net retail floorspace of the shopping centres should be proportionate to their current percentage share of the overall net retail floorspace in accordance with Objective RC3 to protect overall the vitality and viability of the village centre.

Objectives: Future Retail Development

FR1

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that any redevelopment of the Frascati and Blackrock Shopping Centres is carried out in an integrated manner having regard to the Development Guidance set out in Section 7.7.2. Any redevelopment shall enhance the streetscape and public realm and assist in improved movement between the two centres. Any redevelopment proposals should focus on providing an attractive and legible streetscape and public realm. Details of the proposed public realm should form part of any redevelopment application.

FR2

It is an objective of the Council that any planning applications for the redevelopment of the Frascati Shopping Centre and/or Blackrock Shopping Centre shall be accompanied by a detailed design statement.

FR3

It is an objective of the Council that any redevelopment of the Blackrock Shopping Centre and /or Frascati Shopping Centre shall include an appropriate mix of unit sizes to cater for the independent retailers that are considered both a key and complementary component assisting in the overall attractiveness of Blackrock District Centre.

FR4

It is an objective of the Council to encourage the upgrading, refurbishment and, where necessary, redevelopment of existing retail units in order to improve and enhance Blackrock's streetscape and ensure a vibrant and attractive town centre.

FR5

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that any new retail development with an additional net retail floorspace in excess of 1000 square metres shall be required to submit a Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) and a Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment (TIA). The TIA should examine the transport impacts of the development, assess the capacity of the existing infrastructure to deal with the proposed development, incorporate measures to improve existing infrastructure and include measures to encourage a shift towards sustainable travel modes.

FR6

It is an objective of the Council that any significant redevelopment proposals for the Blackrock and /or Frascati Shopping Centres shall provide for improved vehicular access and egress - including a right turn lane serving the Frascati Shopping Centre – where so required by the Planning Authority. Any such redevelopment proposals shall be subject to a Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment.

FR7

It is an objective of the Council that any redevelopment of the Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres shall incorporate a range of building heights in accordance with the limits set out on Map 12. Height should graduate to a maximum of two-storeys along any mutual boundaries with one and two-storey residential properties in order to protect residential amenity.

Notwithstanding the maximum height limits identified, the Planning Authority would have to be satisfied that the proposed development for the entire site provides for a range of building height that is respectful of the streetscape, the proximity to existing one and two-storey dwelling houses and would help enhance the overall visual character of the District Centre.

7.7.2 Blackrock & Frascati Shopping Centres: Development Guidance

Any proposals for significant redevelopment of the Blackrock Shopping Centre and/or Frascati Shopping Centre shall adhere to the development guidance set out below.

Blackrock and Frascati Shopping Centres - Development Guidance	
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guideline height of between two and five storeys. Height should graduate to a maximum of two- storeys along mutual boundaries with one and two-storey residential properties (See Map 12). The maximum height limits shall only be considered along the site frontage with Frascati Road. Reasonable setback to be achieved along southern, western and eastern boundaries that adjoin residential properties to secure residential amenity in conjunction with consideration of building height, scale and use.
Mix of Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any redevelopment shall incorporate a mix of uses, including evening uses, which enhance the vitality and viability of the area. Any comprehensive redevelopment of the Frascati Shopping Centre shall incorporate an element of high quality residential development, a community / exhibition room and a crèche / childminding facility. Residential element should include a mix of unit types.
Retail Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail Impact Assessment to be submitted. Retail figures to be expressed in terms of lettable retail floorspace. Floor plan drawings should clearly distinguish between gross retail floor area and net retail sales area. Retail service units to be clearly identified on floor plans.

Design Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality architecture – Design to be high quality, distinctive, legible and robust. Layout should be legible and permeable. Creation of a new building line with attractive streetscape along the Frascati Road. Removal of surface car parking in front of the centres along the Frascati Road. Creation of attractive and active street frontage. Design and layout should respect and protect residential amenity of neighbouring properties. Design of any new development should respect the existing streetscape in terms of height, scale and massing. Avoid the development of blank frontages. Incorporate a mixture of uses both vertically and horizontally.
Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Realm Strategy to be submitted as part of any redevelopment proposal. Tree planting to be provided along the Frascati Road boundary in accordance with Section 3.6 Public Realm Strategy. High quality public lighting to be provided - Lighting plan to be submitted. High quality attractive paving materials. Hard and soft landscaping proposals to be included. High quality street furniture to include outdoor seating.
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any redevelopment proposals shall include a coherent and cohesive signage strategy. New shopfronts should make a positive contribution to the creation of an attractive streetscape.
Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rationalisation of vehicular access points in accordance with the Transport Network Strategy. Provision of a new pedestrian / cycle link across the Frascati Road between the Frascati and Blackrock Shopping Centres in accordance with Section 4.3 Objective PC4 and Objective PR17 of the 'Public Realm Strategy'. Masterplan to be submitted showing overall vision and optimal design solution for the connection between the two shopping centres. Traffic and Transport Assessment to be submitted.

7.8 Shopfronts & Signage

POLICY BK24

It is Council policy to retain and enhance the character and heritage of Blackrock core retail area through appropriate high quality shopfront design and signage.

The design of new shopfronts can have a significant impact on the character of the streetscape. New shopfronts should harmonise with and complement the existing streetscape. A shopfront that is well designed integrates with the existing streetscape and forms a cohesive part of the overall building. The many historic buildings in Blackrock provide a strong and attractive backdrop for shopfronts. There are a variety of shopfront types within Blackrock's core retail area. However, the traditional style of shopfront remains the predominant style within the village core.



Photo 85: Conway's Public House



Photo 86: Shopfront

The design of new shopfronts in Blackrock needs to carefully consider the following elements – the streetscape, the building and the design details (these elements are considered further in Appendix E 'Shopfronts & Signage').

Objectives: Shopfronts & Signage

SS1

It is an objective of the Council to require that all new retail development is designed in accordance with the best practice principles set out in the Retail Design Manual - companion document to the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

SS2

It is an objective of the Council to require a high quality of design and finish for new shopfronts and signage in Blackrock that enhances the local streetscape and public realm.

SS3

It is an objective of the Council to require that planning applications for development incorporating new shopfronts in Blackrock shall include an appraisal of the existing streetscape and building and outline how the proposed shopfront addresses the streetscape.

SS4

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that new signage associated with shopfronts in Blackrock shall be proportionate to the scale of the building and shopfront and should not dominate its appearance. New commercial development within the District Centre comprising of three units or more shall include a coherent signage strategy detailing the dimensions of all signage and a common palette of materials to be used.

SS6

It is an objective of the Council to discourage the provision of large projecting, hanging or banner signage / flags that detracts from the character of the streetscape within the core retail area and results in visual clutter. Signage above ground floor level will only be permitted where the Planning Authority is satisfied that it will not give rise to visual clutter and will not detract from the streetscape.