



COAKLEY O'NEILL  
town planning

# Childcare Needs Assessment

Cork GAA Lands, Old Whitechurch Road  
Kilbarry, Cork

Prepared in June 2022 on behalf of  
**CORK COUNTY GAA BOARD**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd, NSC Campus, Mahon, Co. Cork, have been instructed by Cork County GAA Board to prepare this Childcare Needs Assessment to accompany a Strategic Housing Development application to An Bord Pleanála, as enacted under the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016, in respect of serviced, zoned lands at Kilbarry, Cork.
- 1.2 The proposed Strategic Housing Development will include the construction of 319no. residential dwellings comprising of 85no. semi-detached units (comprising of 17no. 4-bed units and 68no. 3-bed units), 118no. terraced units (comprising of 8no. 4-bed units, 60no. 3-bed units and 50no. 2-bed units), 53no. duplex units (comprising of 26no. 1-bed units, 25no. 2-bed units and 2no. 3-bed units) and 63no. apartments (in 3no. part 4 storey and part 5-storey blocks and comprising 15no. 1-bed units and 48no. 2-bed units).
- 1.3 This Childcare Needs Assessment examines the need to incorporate any onsite childcare facilities as part of the development proposal, with a specific focus on the relevant planning policy, demographic statistics, and an assessment of existing childcare facilities in the area.

## 2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The subject site is located c.2.9km northeast of Cork City Centre and measures c. 15.52ha in area. The lands comprise open fields under grass, scrub, and gorse, with established boundaries. An old hurling manufacturing factory lies derelict in the western part of the site. The lands are bounded to their north by the Glenamought River and river valley. Here, the lands slope steeply down to the river and informal walking paths are evident. To the east, the lands are bounded by the grounds of Delaney Rovers GAA club. A roadway running between the GAA club and the Old Whitechurch Road (which abuts the western site boundary) forms part of the subject site. Further to the south, and to the southeast beyond the GAA grounds, lie IDA employment lands within the Kilbarry Business and Technology Park. Cork City Council's Whitechurch LIHAF development lands are to the immediate southwest of the site.



**Figure 1. Strategic site location map (subject site generally indicated by red dot). Cork City Council administrative boundary also shown (in black). (Base map source: Cork City Council, 2020; Annotated by Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd., 2022).**

### 3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.0.1 The requirement for the provision of a crèche for residential developments over 75no. dwellings is outlined in national guidance under the *Childcare Facilities Guidelines (2001)* published by the then Department of Environment and in local planning policy under the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*.

#### 3.1 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001

3.1.1 The *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001* provide a framework to guide both developers in formulating development proposals, and local authorities in assessing proposals.

3.1.2 The Guidelines list the following as being appropriate locations for childcare facilities:

- New communities/Larger new housing developments
- The vicinity of concentrations of workplaces, such as industrial estates, business parks and any other locations where there are significant numbers working.
- In the vicinity of schools.
- Neighbourhood, District and Town Centres.
- Adjacent to public transport corridors, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways.

3.1.3 Appendix 2 of the Guidelines states an indicative standard of 1 childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas. Appendix 2 further states that the threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profiles.

3.1.4 It must be noted that the Guidelines' indicative standard that 1 childcare facility be provided per 75 dwellings in new housing areas is no longer considered to be a practical benchmark and childcare provision is, instead, routinely addressed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration existing facilities and capacity.

#### 3.2 Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2018

3.2.1 The *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)* requires that childcare facilities be provided in accordance with the demographic profile of the area, the existing capacity of childcare centres, and the scale and unit mix of the proposed development. These guidelines also specifically state:

*One-bedroom or studio type units should not generally be considered to contribute to a requirement for any childcare provision and subject to location, this may also apply in part or whole, to units with two or more bedrooms.*

### 3.3 Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

- 3.3.1 At Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the pre-application consultation process with respect to the proposed SHD, the relevant statutory local planning policy pertaining to the development management of the site was contained in both the Cork County Development Plan 2014 and the Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017.
- 3.3.2 Items 1 and 2 of the Board Opinion makes reference to these documents. However, since this opinion was published, the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022<sup>1</sup>. It will come into effect in 6 weeks from this date and will form the basis of the Board's decision on this SHD application.
- 3.3.3 Notwithstanding the above, for consistency between the pre-application and application documents, key policies and objectives related to childcare provision from the Cork County Development Plan 2014 and the Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 are included in Appendix A of this report.
- 3.3.4 **Objective 3.21 Childcare Facilities** of the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 relates to the provision of childcare facilities and is outlined as follows:

*To support the provision and expansion of high quality childcare facilities throughout the city. The Council will:*

- a. Require purpose built childcare facilities as part of proposals for new residential developments of more than 75 dwelling units. However, where it can be clearly established that existing facilities are sufficient, alternative arrangements will be considered.*
- b. Consult with the Cork City Childcare Company and the HSE on planning applications where childcare facilities are proposed.*
- c. Require employers with more than 500 members of staff to provide childcare facilities as part of planning applications for significant new and extended development.*

- 3.3.5 **Section 3.61** of the Development Plan outlines Cork City Council's consideration of the needs of children and young people and states that the provision of more childcare is necessary for the successful delivery of compact growth and the creation of a more liveable city.
- 3.3.6 **Section 3.65** of the Development Plan provides guidance on the provision of childcare facilities within Cork City as follows:

*The provision of childcare should be addressed where, or within walking distance to where the need arises. In accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001), new residential developments of more than 75 homes will be expected to provide purpose-built as part of the development unless it can be demonstrated there is sufficient capacity in existing facilities. Large employment development, either new developments or expansion of existing developments, will be required to provide childcare facilities. In large scale retail, leisure or tourism developments,*

<sup>1</sup> Note some of the paragraph, figure and objective numbers cited in this section may change slightly as the final adopted plan was not available at time of writing.

*the provision of a drop-in childcare facilities will also be encouraged. Chapter 11 Placemaking and Managing Development lists development management considerations and references the Government Guidelines: "We Like This Place - Guidelines for Best Practice in the Design of Childcare Facilities" (2005).*

#### 4.0 FUTURE DEMAND CREATED BY THE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 This report assesses the likely demand for childcare facilities created by the proposed development of 319no. residential units (85 no. semi-detached houses, 118 no. terraced houses, 53 no. duplex units and 63 no. apartments) comprising the following breakdown:

- 41 no. 1-bed dwellings;
- 123 no. 2-bed dwellings;
- 130 no. 3-bed dwellings; and
- 25 no. 4-bed dwellings

In calculating the likely demand generated for childcare spaces, regard must be had to the planning policies in place pertaining to the provision of childcare facilities as part of apartment developments.

4.2 41 no. of the proposed units are 1-bedroom apartments/ duplex apartments. Having regard to the planning policies outlined in Section 3 above, these 41 no. apartments have not been included in calculations regarding likely demand for childcare spaces. Accordingly, this assessment was restricted to considering the likely demand arising from the proposed development in respect of the 2-bed, 3-bed, and 4-bed proposed units, which results in a total of 278 no. units.

4.3 Based on the average national household size of 2.75 people per household<sup>2</sup>, it can be estimated that those 278 no. proposed units will result in c. 765 people residing in them. According to the 2016 Census, the average family in the state contains 1.38 children (0-18 age bracket). Therefore, the relevant proposed 278 no. units could theoretically accommodate c. 384 no. children. However, the demographic composition particular to the local population must also be analysed to determine the number of children the proposed development could potentially accommodate.

4.4 In order to establish a statistical basis for levels of pre-school children utilising creche/childcare services in the northwestern suburb of Kilbarry, Cork City, the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Childcare, Quarter 3 2016, is utilised. This is the most recent data available in relation to same. This survey reports:

*Nationally, in 2016 19% of pre-school children were cared for in Creche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility, as opposed to 62% who were cared for by a parent/partner.*

*For the south-west region (which includes Co. Cork), the figures were slightly lower with 16% of pre-school children being cared for in Creche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility, while*

<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing, the Census 2022 data has not been published regarding average household size. Neither has Census 2022 data been published regarding the average number of children per household in the state.

*65% were cared for by a parent/partner.*

- 4.5 Data extracted from the Census 2016 identifies that there were 12,652 no. (6.1%) children aged between 0-4 in the defined settlement of Cork City and Suburbs. Using a total population of the 2-bed, 3-bed and 4-bed units of 765 no. people based on average household size, then it is estimated that there would be 47 no. children in the 0-4 age bracket. Using the national percentage of pre-school children who are cared for in a Crèche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility, then theoretically, only 9 no. childcare spaces would be generated as a result of the subject development.
- 4.6 However, this assessment will proceed based on the worst-case scenario (i.e. that all children aged 0-4 years would be cared for in a childcare facility). This assessment will therefore proceed on the basis that the development will generate 47 no. childcare spaces.
- 4.7 For the sake of completeness, childcare provision for primary school going children is also considered as part of this assessment. Census 2016 data indicates that there are 19,541 no. (9.4%) children in the 5-12 (primary school going) age bracket in Cork City and Suburbs. The proposed development would therefore likely result in an additional 72 no. children of primary school going age in the settlement.
- 4.8 The CSO's *Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Childcare, Quarter 3 2016* states that;
- *Nationally, 8% of primary school children are cared for in a Crèche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility, with 74% being cared for by a parent/partner.*
  - *7% of primary school children are cared for in a Crèche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility in both the south-east and south-west.*
- 4.9 Using the national percentage of primary school children who are cared for in a Crèche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility, then theoretically, demand for just 6 no. childcare spaces for primary school going children would be generated as a result of the subject development.
- 4.10 The above primary school age figure, combined with the worst-case scenario pre-school figure cited in section 4.6 above, results in the conclusion that it is considered that the proposed development will generate a requirement for 53 no. childcare spaces at pre-school and primary school level.

## 5.0 ASSESSMENT

- 5.0.1 In order to establish the local need for a new childcare facility as part of the proposed development, a thorough examination was undertaken in line with current guidelines. In the first instance, a review of all available and registered facilities was carried out using the TUSLA website. In addition, each childcare provider operating within the defined catchment area of the proposed development was also contacted to enquire about the capacity they currently have to care for additional children.
- 5.0.2 A 2km radius from the subject site was utilised in order to represent reasonable walking distance from the site. The full list of facilities is outlined in Table 2 below.
- 5.0.3 In accordance with the childcare guidelines, we subsequently established the following:
- The emerging demographic profile of the area.
  - The existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities in the area.
  - The capacity of seven out of the eight existing childcare providers in the area.

## 5.2 Demographic Trends

- 5.2.1 Initially, the demographic profile of Cork City and Suburbs is examined, as the subject site is within the defined settlement area, as per the 2016 Census. It is noted that the population of Cork City and Suburbs increased from 198,582 no. people in 2011 to 208,669 people in 2016. This represents an increase of 10,087 people, or a 5.1% increase in population over the same period.
- 5.2.2 However, it is noted that over the same period, the number of children in the 0-4 age bracket decreased from 12,762 in 2011 to 12,652 in 2016, representing a decrease of 110 no. children over the same period. Therefore, in contrast to the overall population which has increased by over 5% in the five-year intercensal period, the number of children in the 0-4 age bracket decreased. This indicates that the number of pre-school aged children (i.e. 0-4 age bracket) is declining within the settlement as a whole.
- 5.2.3 Having regard to the fact that the total population of the settlement grew by over 5% in the five-year period from 2011-2016, while the total number of children in the 0-4 age bracket actually decreased, this is a strong indicator that there is an aging population demographic in the settlement.

## 5.3 Settlement of Kilbarry

- 5.3.1 The demographic profile of Kilbarry was examined using the CSO Census of Population Statistics for 2016. The population of Kilbarry is defined for the purposes of this assessment by all Electoral Divisions located within a 2km radius of the subject site. In total, 11 no. electoral divisions have been included for the purposes of this study area, as outline in Table 1 below.

ED	Total Population 2011	Total Population 2016	Change	0-4 age bracket 2011	0-4 age bracket 2016	Total Change
St Mary's	5158	5538	+380 (7.4)	466	381	-85 (-18.2%)
Rathcooney	8181	8574	+394 (+8.4%)	713	720	+7 (+1%)
Whitechurch	2813	3000	+187 (+6.6%)	270	248	-22(-8%)
Commons	885	963	+78 (+8.8%)	71	81	+11 (+16%)
Fairhill C	3715	3610	-105 (-2.8%)	222	186	-36 (-16%)
Fairhill B	777	746	-31 (-4%)	118	136	+18 (+15%)
Farranferris B	887	928	+41(4.6%)	173	204	+31 (+18%)
Farranferris A	1812	2044	+232 (+12.8%)	429	536	+107 (+25%)
Blackpool A	663	690	+27 (+4.1%)	39	39	0
Glen A	2354	2466	+112 (+4.8%)	143	134	-9 (-6.3%)
Glen B	3775	3699	-76 (-2%)	196	212	+16 (+7.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,488</b>	<b>32,258</b>	<b>+3770 (+13.2%)</b>	<b>2840</b>	<b>2877</b>	<b>+37 (+1.3%)</b>

**Table 1. Electoral Divisions included within study area.**

- 5.3.2 The population of Kilbarry increased from 28,488 people in 2011 to 32,258 no. people in 2016, representing a significant increase of over 13% over the 5-year period. Of note is that over the same period, the number of children in the 0-4 age bracket only increased by 37 no. people, representing an increase of just 1.3% over the intervening period.
- 5.3.3 This indicates that while the number of pre-school children in the area is increasing, it is at a far slower rate than the overall population growth. Once again, this indicates that the demographic profile of the Kilbarry area is that of an ageing population.
- 5.3.4 In terms of commuting times within the Kilbarry area, in 2016, for 10,523 no. people over the age of 5 years, their commute time to work, school or college each day was between 15 minutes and 45 minutes, representing almost 36% of the total commuting population of the settlement. A further 1,324 no. people or 4.5% of the total commuting population travelled over 45 minutes to work, school or college every day.
- 5.3.5 This suggests that just over 40% of the local population commute each day and owing to the proximity of the site to larger employments areas in the city, such as Tivoli, Mahon, and Little Island, it is considered likely that a sizeable portion of the existing and future population of Kilbarry will avail of childcare outside the immediate area.

#### 5.4 Distribution of Childcare Facilities in Kilbarry area

- 5.4.1 In addition to the above analysis, it was deemed appropriate to audit existing childcare provision within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.
- 5.4.2 Data from TUSLA's website was used to ascertain the number of existing registered childcare facilities in the local area. The latest information (April 2022) available on the TUSLA website indicates that there are 8 no. existing early years childcare services in the area.
- 5.4.3 In carrying out this assessment, each of these 8 no. facilities were contacted by phone in order to determine whether they are currently operating at full capacity and, if not, how many additional children they can currently accommodate. Specific available spaces were unavailable in relation to 1 no. of the providers. Details of these childcare facilities, including maximum capacity, are presented in Table 1 below. On this basis, the assessment was progressed based on available information

Childcare Facility	Capacity of Facility	Available Spaces on Inspection Day	% Available Spaces
<b>Tir na Nog Montessori School Delaneys</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>First Friends Rathpeacon</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Mayfield Community Playschool</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
<b>Glenfields Community Childcare Limited</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>39.5%</b>
<b>Tir na nOg Glen Community Resource Centre</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Little Hands Childcare</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
<b>Naionra na mBachlóg/Little Buds Pre-School</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>42.5%</b>
<b>Glentrasna Community School</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>17%</b>

Table 2. Capacity of childcare facilities in Kilbarry

- 5.4.4 It is noted that information was not available in relation to 1 no. local childcare facility. Given that this information was not available, a worst-case scenario has been adopted and it is assumed that this facility is at full capacity.
- 5.4.5 Having regard to Table 2 above, it is noted that there are 56 no. existing spaces available in the Kilbarry area, representing 17% availability within existing facilities.

## 6.0 CHILDCARE PROPOSAL

- 6.1 Appendix 2 of the Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities establishes a standard that where 75 no. dwellings are proposed, one childcare facility providing a minimum of 20 no. childcare spaces is considered reasonable. On this basis, the need to provide 40 no. childcare spaces would be triggered if a development meets a threshold of 150 no. units, 60 places by a threshold of 225 no. units and 80 places by a threshold of 300 units.
- 6.2 The Guidelines note that the threshold for provision should be established having had regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding that there is capacity within existing childcare facilities in the local area to accommodate 56 no. additional children, and that the proposed development is anticipated to generate the need for 53 no. additional childcare spaces locally, it is considered prudent to provide a new childcare facility on site to complement the level of existing local childcare facility provision.
- 6.4 Therefore, the proposal development provides for a 71 no. place crèche, having regard to the existing capacity in the wider area. A two-storey crèche building is proposed near the proposed site entrance off Old Whitechurch Road. A dedicated play area, exclusively for use by the crèche, will be provided to the rear of the facility.
- 6.5 In addition, provision has been made for a dedicated drop-off area for the crèche, as well as dedicated parking in order to prevent any informal car parking associated with the crèche to take place near the entrance to the development. These parking facilities are in accordance with the childcare guidelines.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The assessment herein has been prepared in accordance with the *Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001*, and the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*.
- 7.2 Section 4 of this reports notes that, based on current demographic trends in Kilbarry, it is likely that the proposed development will become home to 47 no. children in the 0-4 age range. Based on data relating to the take-up of pre-school places in the 0-4 age range nationally, it is likely that only 9 no. preschool childcare spaces will be generated by the proposed development. However, a cautious approach has been taken in this regard and the assessment has been carried out on the basis of the need for 47 no. spaces being generated.
- 7.3 In addition, it is projected that, as a result of the 72 no. children in the 5-12 age bracket likely to live in the proposed development once constructed, 6 no. of them will also require a space in a childcare facility.
- 7.4 Therefore, this assessment has been carried out on the basis that the proposed development will generate the need for a total of 53 no. childcare spaces.
- 7.5 Having reviewed available capacity in the existing childcare facilities in Kilbarry, it has been established that 56 no. childcare spaces are available, which would cater for 100% of the demand generated from the proposed development.
- 7.6 In addition, commuting trends for the Kilbarry area indicates that in excess of 366% of those living in the Kilbarry area of commuting age travel between 15 and 45 minutes to work, school or college each day. In addition, a further 4.5% travel further than 45mins to work, school or college daily. On this basis, it is considered likely that a sizeable portion of the existing and future population of Kilbarry will avail of childcare elsewhere, likely in the larger employment areas of Mahon, Little Island and the City Centre.
- 7.7 Notwithstanding the above, a cautious approach has been taken and a 71 no. place childcare facility has been proposed as part of this development.

## APPENDIX A – CORK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014 POLICY AND OBJECTIVES REGARDING CHILDCARE FACILITIES PROVISION

### A.1 Cork County Development Plan 2014

A.1.1 Objective SC3.1 of the Plan relates to the provision of childcare facilities and is outlined as follows:

*Support and facilitate the sustainable provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations and seek their provision concurrent with development, having regard to the population targets for the areas and in accordance with the Guidelines on Childcare facilities and Childcare (pre-school Services) regulations 2006.*

A.1.2 Section 5.3.2 of the Plan outlines the issues of providing childcare facilities in tandem with new residential development as follows:

*The council will take account of existing childcare provision when considering new childcare/crèche facilities provision as part of residential development in order to avoid an overprovision of these facilities.*