



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-305153-19

Development	Permission for 1 no. single storey prefab unit consisting of 2 no. classrooms and store/office for pre-school/after school use, along with all associated site works.
Location	St Oliver's National School, Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda, Co Louth.
Planning Authority	Louth County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	19451
Applicant(s)	Barbara Rothwell
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission
Type of Appeal	First / Third Party
Appellant(s)	Denise Lynch, Jackie Walsh, Anne Marie Kierans.
Date of Site Inspection	05/11/2019
Inspector	Conor McGrath

1.0 Site Location and Description

1.1. The site is located within the grounds of St. Oliver's National School, Ballymakenny Road, on the northern edge of the built-up area of Drogheda. The national school is co-located with Ballymakenny College secondary school and comprises a modern two-storey building and associated facilities. The site of the proposed works occupies a grassed area set behind car parking at the front / western end of the site. There are extensive car parking and set-down facilities within this wider educational site with one-way entrance and exit gates.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development comprises the erection of a prefabricated single-storey structure to the front of the school buildings to accommodate a new pre-school / after-school childcare service. The structure of 220-sq.m. provides two-classrooms of approx.. 70-sq.m. each and storage / office space. It is indicated that 4 staff members will cater for up to 44 no. children on the site. No changes or modifications to existing utility services or access arrangements are proposed as part of the proposed development.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

The planning authority decided to grant permission for the proposed development subject to 5 no. standard conditions.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning: The lands are zoned "RN" Residential New. This is an acceptable use. Competition between other similar facilities is not a planning issue. No impacts on adjoining visual or residential amenities are anticipated. The site is located outside the consultation distance for Seveso sites. Permission recommended.

3.2.2. Infrastructure: No objection subject to conditions

3.3. **Third Party Observations**

The content of observations on the planning application are reflected in the third-party appeal in this case.

4.0 **Planning History**

PA ref. 19/128: Permission granted for a 2-storey extension to the national school comprising one classroom and two special education training rooms and associated works.

5.0 **Policy Context**

5.1. **Development Plan – Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017**

This remains the relevant plan for the area. The appeal site is zoned **CCI**: Civic Community Institutional - To Provide & Protect Necessary Community, Recreational & Educational Facilities.

Creche / childcare facilities are permissible uses in this zone.

Policy HC 27: Ensure that adequate and suitable childcare facilities are provided as required within new residential development having regard to DoEHLG guidelines and the Louth Childcare Strategy.

Seek the provision of additional community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution in lieu of the provision of childcare provision where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that there are sufficient childcare spaces available in the locality.

5.2. **Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)**

It is Government policy on childcare is to increase the number of childcare places and facilities available and to improve the quality of childcare services for the community.

Appropriate locations for childcare facilities would include in the vicinity of schools. This would facilitate parents to make one trip in dropping off school-going children and children attending childcare facilities. This could also facilitate the provision of afterschool childcare services, thereby taking a sustainable approach to use of built facilities and transportation.

Section 3.3.4 reiterates the desirability of locating childcare facilities and schools in close proximity. The use of school premises to cater for after school care is recommended and school authorities are encouraged to examine how they can help address this demand.

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is not affected by any nature conservation designations. The closest site is the River Boyne And River Blackwater SAC (002299) approx. 1.7km south of the site. The Boyne Estuary SPA (004080) lies approx. 2km southeast of the site.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

The third party make the following points in their appeal against the decision to grant permission in this case:

- The concentration of schools in close proximity causes significant traffic congestion on Ballymakenny Road, which issues have been recognised locally.
- The student population of these schools is increasing.
- At maximum capacity the proposed prefab will have capacity for 44 no. children and this will add to the existing dangerous traffic situation.
- There is oversupply of pre-school services in this area and the proposed development will lead to displacement of services and jobs.
- There is capacity in existing service providers.
- It is not clear that the Louth County Childcare Committee were consulted on the application.

6.2. Applicant Response

The first party make the following comments in response to the appeal:

- The Infrastructure Directorate of the planning authority raised no objection to the proposed development.
- Locating on a school site will facilitate one combined drop-off and reduce traffic congestion.
- The facility will align with secondary school opening hours to facilitate combined trips, providing “link” hour care.
- Over-provision of facilities is not a matter for the planning authorities.
- Demand for such facilities is growing in the town.
- The proposal has the support of school authorities and parents.
- The Guidelines on Childcare Facilities recommends locations close to schools.
- The planning authority have advised that only creche applications are referred to the Childcare committee rather than such pre-school / afterschool facilities.
- The response is accompanied by a letter of support from the school principle.

6.3. Planning Authority Response

No further comment.

7.0 Assessment

- 7.1. The proposed development comprises a childcare facility located on the grounds of an existing primary school and adjacent to a secondary school. The lands are zoned for such uses and documentation on the file indicates that the school authorities initiated the introduction of this use on the site. There is support in the childcare guidelines for such co-location and there are recognised benefits for parents and children in this model. I therefore regard the proposed development as being acceptable in principle.
- 7.2. I note reference to the residential zoning of these lands in the planning officers report, however, following Variation no. 1 of the development plan, the relevant zoning objective is Civic Community Institutional.

- 7.3. Appellants have raised issues with regard to traffic congestion on Ballymakenny Road, particularly during the morning peak. During my inspection, I did observe relatively large volumes of private car traffic as well as school bus transport accessing the campus, with some consequent impacts on traffic flows in the area. In the context of the adjoining school populations, however, the development is not considered to be of a scale which would add significantly to existing traffic volumes at this location. Based on experience elsewhere, I would regard the potential for combined trips / drop-off arising from such co-location as real, such that any contribution of this facility to existing traffic flows will not be significant.
- 7.4. The primary school is provided with sufficient levels of open space / amenity areas and the proposed development will not result in a significant reduction in open space or otherwise impact negatively on the school population. I note appellants comments with regard to the level of existing childcare service provision in the surrounding area, however, this is not regarded as a matter for the Board to adjudicate on.

8.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening

- 8.1. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, its location within the existing built-up area and separation from the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on any European site.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. That permission be granted for the proposed development for the reasons and considerations set out below:

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, its location of within an existing educational campus, the provisions of the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011 – 2017 and the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001), it is considered that subject to the compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not be injurious to the amenities of the area, would not give rise to the creation of a traffic hazard and would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

11.0 Conditions

1.	<p>The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of clarity</p>
2.	<p>The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise management measures and off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of public safety and residential amenity.</p>
3.	<p>Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and</p>

	<p>disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of public health.</p>
4.	<p>The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution of €13,200 (Thirteen thousand, two hundred euro) in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. The application of any indexation required by this condition shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála to determine.</p> <p>Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.</p>

.Conor McGrath

Senior Planning Inspector

06/11/2019