

SLA

Stephen Little
& Associates

Planning
Application to
An Bord
Pleanála

Educational
Needs
Assessment

Proposed Strategic
Housing Development

415no. Units and a
Childcare Facility in
the Townlands of
Roestown, Readlands
and Knocks,
Dunshaughlin, Co.
Meath

For Castlethorn
Construction
Unlimited Company

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1 INTRODUCTION

We, Stephen Little & Associates, Chartered Town Planners & Development Consultants, 26 / 27 Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin 2, are instructed by our Client (the Applicant), Castlethorn Unlimited Company, Usher House, Main Street Dundrum, Dublin 14, to prepare this Educational Needs Assessment to accompany this Strategic Housing Development (SHD) Planning Application.

The proposal comprises a residential-led development comprising 415no. residential units, a childcare facility and all associated site development and landscaping works in the townlands Roestown, Readlands and Knocks, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath

This Educational Needs Assessment has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) Guidelines entitled '*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas December 2008*' and the code of practice document prepared by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), titled '*The Provision of Schools and the Planning System, July 2008*'. We have been informed that the function of the Forward Planning Department within the DES is to steer the development of a school building programme in tandem with the development patterns forecast within City and County Development Plans.

This Educational Needs Assessment should be read in conjunction with the plans and particulars submitted as part of the Planning Application.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the main findings of this assessment: -

- On the basis of the information available, we have estimated that the anticipated demand for school places arising from the entire proposed development, equates to c. 139no. Primary School spaces and c. 99no. Post-Primary School spaces. This assumes that all of these school going age children will present at once which naturally will not happen.
- Regard is had to the likely enrolment projections for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as set out by the DES. The projections indicate that the rate of Primary School enrolment will begin to decline after 2018 / 2019 and the rate of Post-Primary enrolment will begin to decline after 2025 / 2026.
- In terms of the capacity of existing Primary Schools in the vicinity of the application site at Dunshaughlin, the capacity generated by the existing population is being met. However, there are expansion plans and new Primary Schools being developed in the catchment area which will add further capacity in the short term.
- In relation to the capacity of existing Post-Primary Schools, our assessment revealed that it is more difficult to assess the demand for Post-Primary School places. However, as enrolment figures for both Primary and Post Primary schools are set to decline, this suggests a corresponding increase in existing capacity within schools over time within the catchment area.
- The proposed development will not to be completed until after 2023. Any theoretical increase in demand for school places would not therefore be immediately felt by the educational facilities within the catchment area. In addition, a further four years of enrolments and through-put of pupils will have occurred in the meantime.
- The DES are currently providing capital investment in the local area to increase capacity of existing schools and provide for the construction of new schools.
- Dunshaughlin has 4no. schools provided (3no. Primary Schools and 1no. Post-Primary School) which were developed to cater for local demand generated for the planned area.
- Overall, it is considered that the demand for school places arising from the proposed development, at Primary and Post-Primary level, will be catered for by the existing and planned Primary and Post-Primary educational facilities in the catchment area.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & SITE CONTEXT

This section provides a brief summary of the proposed development and site context. Please refer to the Planning Application Report & Statement of Consistency, prepared by Stephen Little & Associates Chartered Town Planners & Development Consultants, submitted as part of this SHD Planning Application for further details on site context and description of the proposed development.

3.1 Proposed Development

The proposed development subject of an impending SHD Planning Application currently comprises residential-led mixed use development including: -

- 415no. residential units (254no. houses, 55no. duplex and 106no. apartments) in buildings ranging in height from 2 to 5-storeys.
- 1no. childcare facility (c. 409 sq. m gross floor area) which can cater for 80no. children.
- All associated and ancillary site development and infrastructural works, hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment works.

3.2 Site Description

The subject site forms part of the Applicant's wider landholding of c. 18.8 Ha extending north and beyond the Drumree Road. The proposed development forms part of Phase 2 plans for the remaining undeveloped portion of the overall lands in the Applicant's ownership. The lands are greenfield in nature and fall gradually in topography from north to south. These lands are irregularly shaped and largely comprise two distinct sites within the western part of the Dunshaughlin Local Area Plan (LAP) and are bisected by Drumree Road and Dunshaughlin Link Road and comprise a total area of c. 14.8 Ha (which includes the lands zoned F1 – Open Space).



Figure 1: Extract from Google Maps illustrating an indicative outline of the proposed development (in red).

The proposed development is set out in three character areas. Character Area 6 (c. 3.75 Ha) comprises a greenfield site which lies north of Drumree Road and to the west of the Dunshaughlin Link Road. A single private dwelling adjoins the subject site along the south eastern boundary.

Character Areas 3 & 4 (c. 8.47 Ha) are generally bounded to the west by the existing Dunshaughlin Link Road, to the south and east by lands zoned for open space, to the north by Phase 1 lands (currently under construction by the Applicant) and lands identified for neighbourhood centre use.

The site is ideally located in close proximity to Dunshaughlin town centre (c. 1km) to the east of the subject lands and the amenities therein (supermarkets, restaurants, pharmacies, schools and sports facilities, childcare facilities, primary health centre, library etc.).

4 METHODOLOGY

In preparing this assessment, the following methodology was utilised: -

- Definition of the catchment area to establish both existing and proposed educational facilities in the Department of Education and Skills Planning area.
- Review of Department of Education Data.
- An assessment of existing & proposed schools.
- An assessment of the underlying demographic trends in order to determine existing capacity and future demand for the provision of educational facilities.

Given that this study was a desk based study, the data and information contained herein is as accurate as the sources of data retrieved allow.

Further to a review of the relevant Government Guidelines namely, *'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)'* and *'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System (2008)'*, the following methodology was considered appropriate in determining the demand for school places, arising from the proposed development of 415no. residential units on the subject lands at Roestown, Readlands and Knocks, Dunshaughlin, co. Meath

4.1 Define Catchment Area

Based on discussion with the Forward Planning Unit of the DES it was determined that the *'School Planning Area'* would generally delineate the catchment area for a proposed residential development. The proposed development falls within the Dunshaughlin School Planning Area.

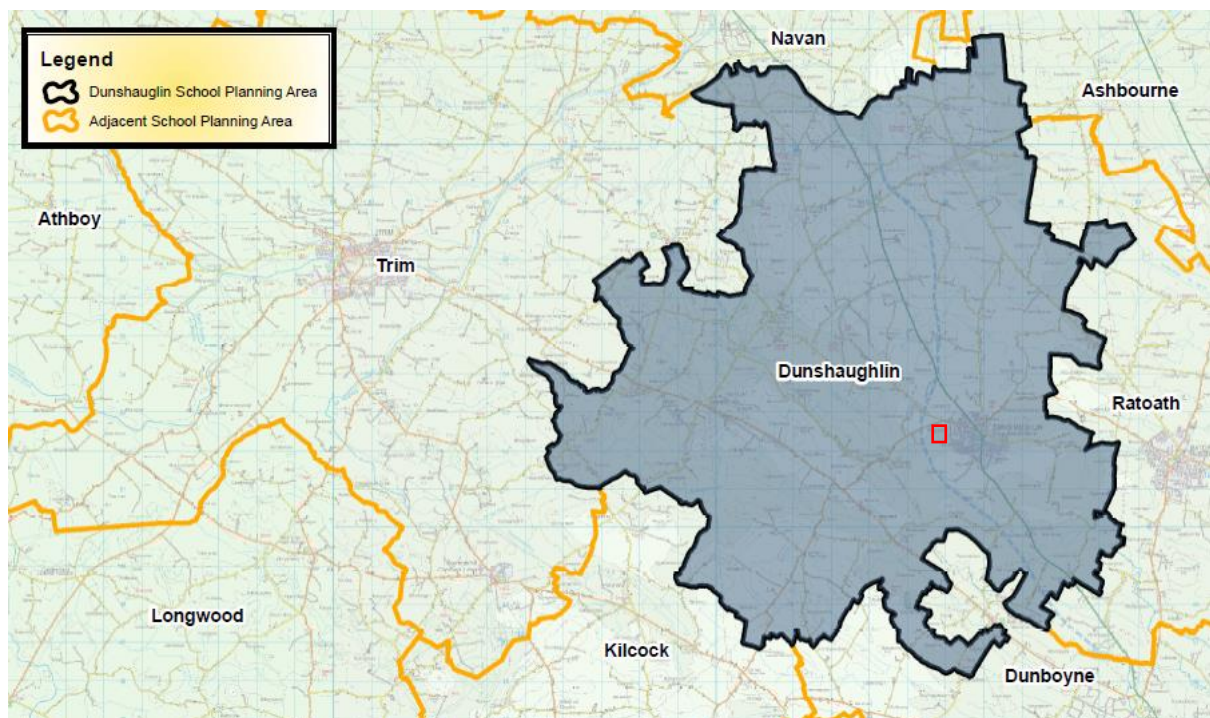


Figure 2: Map provided by the Department of Education and Skills showing the Dunshaughlin School Planning Area, which is applicable in the assessment of the subject site. The approximate site location is denoted with a red rectangle (Overlay by SLA).

The school-going population within a School Planning Area would generally be expected to attend either Primary or Post-Primary within said catchment area. For urban areas such as Dunshaughlin which serve a wide rural hinterland it is generally accepted that children attend school within their settlement.

Therefore, for the purposes of this Educational Needs Assessment we have considered Primary and Post-Primary Schools that are located within approximately a 1.5km radius of the proposed development (c. 20 minute walking time). This is considered to constitute reasonable proximity to the proposed development.

4.2 Review of Department of Education Data

The following information which is available on the DES website was reviewed in the context of this assessment: -

- Primary School Class Size 2019 – 2020.
- Post Primary School 2019.
- List of Major School Projects.
- New Schools 2019 – 2022.
- Projections of Full Time Enrolment Primary and Second Level 2015 – 2033.

4.3 Assessment of Educational Facilities within Catchment Area

Based on the list of schools within the catchment area of the subject lands, an assessment of the existing Primary and Second Level Educational facilities was carried out. A review of the DES website provided details of 2019/ 2020 enrolment figures for each school.

4.3.1 Review of Existing Schools & Available capacity

An estimation of the available capacity within each school was determined based on the Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR).

To calculate the capacity for each Primary School, the number of classrooms in each school was determined. From this calculation, it is inferred that there is at least 1 no. teacher per classroom. According to DES Circular 0019/2019 (*Staffing arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2019/20 School Year*), the recommended PTR for primary level education is 26:1, meaning that there is 1 no. teacher for every 26no. pupils. As such, the number of classrooms within each primary school was multiplied by 26, to determine the maximum capacity of the school. This figure was then subtracted from the enrolment figure to ascertain the number of additional spaces available.

As stated in DES Circular 0014/2019 (*Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts 2019/20 School Year*), the recommended PTR for Post-primary Schools varies depending on the nature and status of the school. In general, a PTR of 19:1 is applied to all free scheme Post-primary Schools, and a PTR of 23:1 to all recognised Post-primary Schools outside the free education system. However, information on the number of classrooms in Post-primary schools is not available to the general public.

Furthermore, the Forward Planning Unit of the DES assess the demand for Post-Primary Schools by using information obtained from long-term enrolment figures for 'feeder schools' (i.e. primary schools within the catchment area of the post-primary school) and projected population forecasts for an area. Unfortunately, this information is also not available to the general public.

For the purposes of this assessment, projections of capacity at existing Post-Primary Schools has been estimated on the basis of enrolment trends between 2009 and 2019. Data outlining these trends is publicly available on the DES website.

4.3.2 Review of Proposed Primary & Post-Primary Schools within Catchment Area

A review of the School Building Programme Announcements listed on the DES website provides an indication of the Primary and Post-primary facilities proposed to be developed within the catchment area.

A review of the statutory Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 relating to the catchment area was then undertaken, to determine whether provision had been made to facilitate the development of the planned school facilities. Details of our findings are outlined in Section 6 of this Report.

4.4 Analysis of 2016 Census to Determine Educational Demand

Demographic information from Census 2016 was examined and collated which allowed for a detailed population analysis of the study area.

The demand for educational facilities in catchment area was assessed using the figures retrieved from *“Theme 1-1: Persons aged 18 and under by sex and single year of age and Persons aged 19 and over by sex”* of Census 2016. This information was retrieved from the Central Statistics Office website.

The result of this analysis is outlined in Section 5 below.

4.5 Assessment of Demand Arising from Proposed Development

A crude assessment of the demand arising from the proposed development was determined by multiplying the proposed number of units by the projected Average Household Size in 2016. An average household size of 3.03 is derived from the 2016 Census for Dunshaughlin .

Based on discussion with the Forward Planning Unit of the DES, it was confirmed that the following percentages of the estimated population is utilised to determine the number of people of school going age: -

- **Primary School:** 12%.
- **Post-Primary:** 8.5%.

The assessment of demand arising from the proposed development was estimated based on the methodology outlined above.

5 PLANNING & POLICY CONTEXT

The DoEHLG and the DES have published the relevant guidelines and code of practice for the provision of schools and community facilities. We note the following documents specifically: -

- 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' (December 2008).
- 'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System' (July 2008).

5.1 Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)

The DoEHLG Guidelines entitled '*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)*' were published in December 2008. The aim of these guidelines is to set out the key planning principles which should be reflected in Development Plans and Local Area Plans. In turn this should guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development in urban areas.

Having specific regard to the provision of community facilities and more specifically schools, the Guidelines state that new residential communities can generate a demand for a significant number of new school places, particularly where families are attracted to the area.

The Guidelines acknowledge that it is vital in the process of supporting sustainable communities that the planning system facilitates the timely provision of new school buildings. The Guidelines note that detailed guidance on school provision through the development plan, local area plan and development management processes and the roles, responsibilities and specific actions to be taken in relation to forecasting future demand for school places is available in the '*Joint Code of Practice on Provision of Schools and the Planning System (July 2008)*', a document prepared by both the DoEHLG and the DES.

In line with the information available at the time of writing, we have estimated the potential demand for school places arising from the proposed development and attempted to identify the capacity of existing schools in the vicinity of the subject site to cater for such demand.

5.2 The Provision of Schools and the Planning System (2008)

In July 2008, the DoELGH together with the DES published a code of practice document entitled '*The Provision of Schools and the Planning System*'. The code of practice document sets out the best practice approaches which should be followed by Planning Authorities to ensure that the planning system plays its full part in facilitating the timely and cost-effective roll-out of school facilities by the DES, in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

This document outlines the steps involved in ensuring appropriate delivery of educational services to meet demand, as follows: -

- Forecasting Future Demand.
- Planning for New Schools through Local Authority Development Plans.
- Location of Schools – Planning Considerations.
- Site Development Standards.
- School Development Proposals and the Development Management Process.
- School Site Identification and Acquisition.

With regards '*Forecasting Future Demand*' specifically we note that there are a number of measures identified.

With regards identifying future primary school demand, the Guidelines detail that future demand will be identified based on: -

- The anticipated increase in overall population for the city/county plan area over the next nine years.
- The current school going age population based on school return.

- The increase in school-going population, assuming that an average of 12% of the population are expected to present for primary education.
- The number of classrooms required in total derived from the above.

With reference to Post-Primary schools, the Guidelines note that the procedure for establishing demand is more complex, as it involves not just an assessment of likely population growth but also an appraisal of the capacity of existing post primary schools coupled with an assessment of the enrolment patterns in existing and anticipated 'feeder' national schools.

In support of the above aims, the Guidelines state that Planning Authorities will make available in a timely fashion, insofar as possible, reasonable estimates of future development potential within their areas through the Development Plan and Local Area Plan processes, and in a manner consistent with broader national and regional estimates of population growth contained in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.

5.3 Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019

Various objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (hereafter referred to as the Development Plan) seek to facilitate the provision of Primary and Post-Primary Schools within the County area to meet the demand for new schools identified by the DES, and in accordance with the Government's *'School Building Programme 2016 – 2021'*.

SS OBJ 6 outlines how a development of over 200 residential units would need an Education Needs Assessment, as part of making a Planning Application: -

"To have regard to capacity in social infrastructure, when assessing applications for residential development. Planning applications for 200 or more dwelling units must be accompanied by a report identifying the demand for school places likely to be generated by the proposal and the capacity of existing schools in the vicinity to cater for such demand and an audit of the social infrastructure and community facilities available to serve the proposed development."

6 POPULATION & EDUCATION DEMAND

This element of the analysis is largely based on the relevant Census 2016 data. The methodology applied to this section of the Report is based on the guidance contained in *'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System 2008'* prepared by both the DoEHLG and the DES.

The analysis is based on the projected demand for school places anticipated from the proposed development of 415no. residential units at the lands at Roestown, Readlands and Knocks, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath, to which this planning application relates.

6.1 Household Composition & Projected Population

The catchment area for the subject site consists of the Dunshaughlin School Planning Area (See Section 4.1 above). This generally includes the following EDs: -

- Dunshaughlin ED.
- Killeen ED.
- Skreen ED

The immediate catchment for school children is reasonably considered to be 1.5km from the subject lands and falls within the settlement boundary of Dunshaughlin. For completeness the ED statistics for whole School Planning Area are considered. Census 2016 data for these ED are set out as follows: -

Census 2016 Electoral Divisions					
Electoral Divisions (ED)	Total Population	Age ≤ 4	Age 5 to 11	Age 12 to 18	Age 19+
Dunshaughlin ED	5,840	407	597	648	4,188
Killeen ED	1,160	71	115	111	863
Skreen ED	1,481	88	154	146	1,093

Table 1: Populations of the EDs within the catchment area of the subject lands.

We note from the above table based on the figures from the 2016 Census provide an approximate indication that 597no. children (Age 5 – 11 yrs) are of primary school going age, and 648no. children (Age 12 – 18 yrs) are of Post-Primary school going age in the Dunshaughlin ED.

Using percentage estimates of overall population (Primary School: 12%; Post-primary School: 8.5%) utilised by the DES on the total population shown in Table 1, the following figures would be derived: -

- **Primary** – 5,840 @12% = c. 701 children.
- **Post Primary** – 5,840 @8.5% = c. 496 children.

This illustrates that the actual school-going population within the catchment area as recorded in Census 2016 is slightly lower than the DES estimate using the generalised percentage of population. Therefore, it is considered that the estimates used by the DES are reasonably conservative and allow additional capacity to be factored in to cater for spikes in population (e.g. increased demand from a residential development in a given area).

6.2 Anticipated Demand from Proposed Development

The additional demand for school places resulting from the proposed development of 415no. residential units has been calculated as follows: -

Total Number of Units Proposed	415
Average Household Size for Dunshaughlin (Census 2016)	3.03
Estimated Population	c. 1,257
12% Primary School	c. 151
8.5% Post-primary School	c. 107

Table 2: Estimated population of the proposed development at Dunshaughlin.

Unit Size	Houses	Apartments (No.)	Duplex	% of Total Units
1-Bed	-	32	-	7.7
2-Bed	6	74	24	26.5
3-Bed	191	-	31	52
4-bed	57	-	-	13.7
Total	254	106	55	415

Table 3: Unit Type breakdown of proposed development at Dunshaughlin.

The proposed development at Dunshaughlin will provide 415no. residential units. Based on an average household occupancy rate of 3.03 (Census 2016 for Dunshaughlin ED), the additional population added to the area could stand at approximately 1,257no. people. However, this is considered a conservative estimate.

Approximately 7.7% of the residential units proposed as part of this development will be one-bed units. These types of units generally do not attract families. Excluding 1-bed units for consideration leaves 383no. units, with a theoretical estimated population of c. 1,160no. persons. Based on this assumption, the following breakdown of the school-going population based on average occupancy of the '2-bed and larger' units in the proposed development is estimated as: -

- **Primary** – 1,160 @ 12% = c. 139no. children.
- **Post Primary** – 1,160 @ 8.5% = c. 99no. children.

Planning permission is likely to be approved by An Bord Pleanála in Q1 2021. Subject to permission being granted and allowing a 2– 3 year construction programme, it is unlikely that the proposed development would reach full residential occupancy before 2023.

Any increase in population in the area would not therefore be felt immediately by school infrastructure in the vicinity. The occupancy lag would allow time for the DES and the Planning Authority to plan to accommodate any potential increase in demand for school places arising from residential development in this area through the development plan process.

6.3 Summary – Population & Demand

The total theoretical demand for school places in the catchment area, arising from the proposed development and estimated school going population, is calculated as c. 139no. Primary School spaces and c. 99no. Post-Primary School spaces.

This theoretical demand would not be felt immediately by local schools infrastructure in the vicinity. Depending on local schools capacity (see sections below), the time that it will take to secure planning permission, construct and occupy the proposed development would allow the DES and the Planning Authority to manage any potential significant additional demand for school places in this area through the Development Plan process.

7 EXISTING EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

As detailed in Section 3 above, a desktop-based search was carried out to identify the provision of Education Facilities in the catchment area. For clarity purposes, we can confirm that the Educational Facilities examined comprise of (a) Primary School Facilities and (b) Post Primary School Facilities.

A study of the catchment area reveals that the following schools are located in the area (see Tables 3 & 4 below). Each school is identified by a reference number (added by SLA), which corresponds with the location of each school as identified in Figures 3 & 4 below also.

7.1 Primary School Facilities

From the outset, it is noted that the DES recommend that primary schools cater for children within the immediate vicinity in the first instance, to ensure local needs are met and to reduce the need to travel. In this regard, we have listed below the existing Primary Schools within walking distance or less than 20 minute commute of the subject site. The estimated capacity shown in Table 4 is calculated by multiplying the number of classrooms in the school by the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), which is currently 26:1.

Primary Schools					
Ref.	Name	Enrolment 2019 / 2020	No. of Classrooms	Estimated Capacity based on PTR	Available Spaces
1	Dunshaughlin Community National School *	14	4	104	90
2	Gaelscoil Na Ríthe	226	8no. Permanent & 2no. Temp.	260	34
3	St. Seachnall National School	552	22	572	20
Potential Available Capacity					c. 144

Table 4: A list of Primary Schools within the Dunshaughlin School Planning Area. All data shown sourced from www.education.ie. * Temporary site in Dunshaughlin GAA Grounds pending construction of Permanent New Primary School on R147.

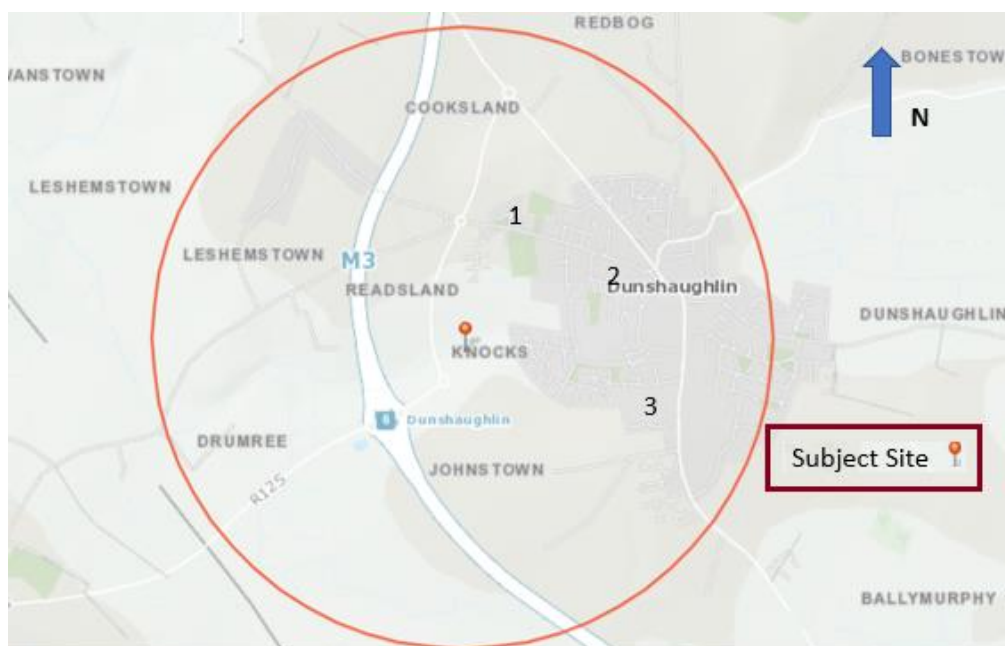


Figure 3: Extract from Google Maps showing Primary Schools within the defined catchment area (subject site demarcated by red pin, catchment area demarcated in red – Overlay by SLA).

7.2 Post-Primary School Facilities

Table 4 below details the existing Post Primary Schools within the defined catchment area.

Post Primary Schools			
Ref.	Name	Gender	Enrolment 2019 / 2020
1	Dunshaughlin Community College	Mixed	1,071

Table 5: A list of Post Primary Schools within the defined catchment area. All data shown sourced from education.ie.

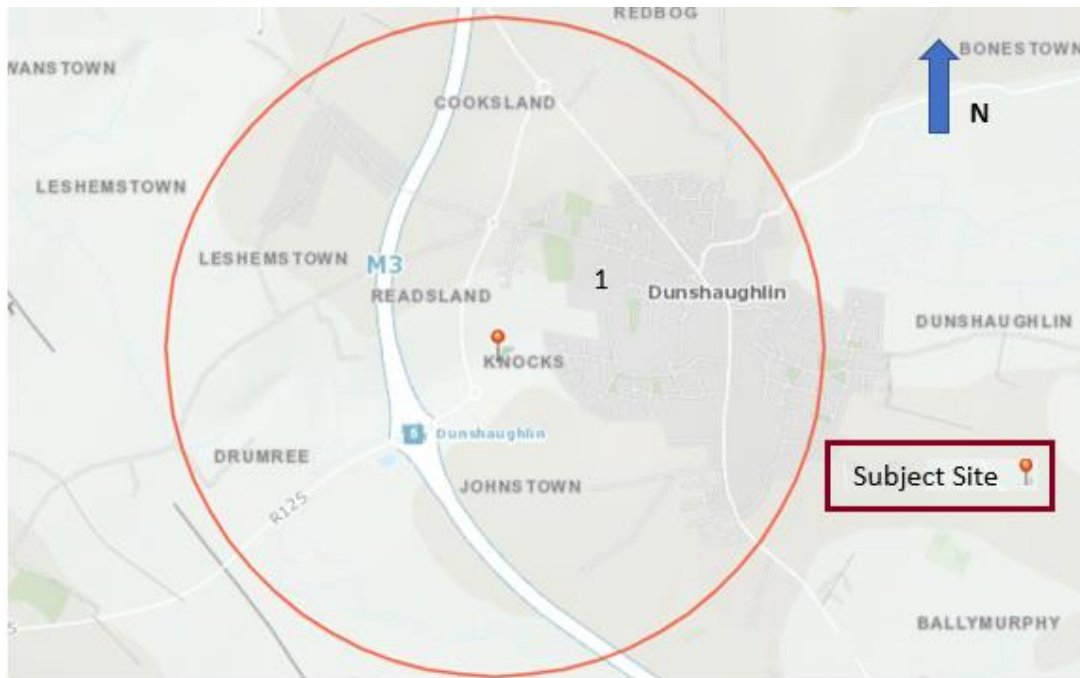


Figure 4: Extract from Google Maps showing Post-Primary Schools within the defined catchment area (subject site demarcated by red pin, catchment area demarcated in red – Overlay by SLA).

The Forward Planning Unit assess the demand for Post Primary Schools by using information obtained from long-term enrolment figures for ‘feeder schools’ (i.e. primary schools within the catchment area of the post-primary school) and projected population forecasts for the area. Unfortunately, this information is not available to members of the public.

If a Post-Primary school requests funding from the DES, it is required to fill out an Education Assessment Sheet, providing information on existing enrolment figures, built capacity and the curriculum taught within the school, (i.e. some schools have a strong focus on science or languages while others may focus on woodwork and metal work). As a number of subjects require specialist rooms, the capacity and additional facilities required for each school are determined by senior members of the Forward Planning Unit. As some schools were constructed by religious orders in the 1960s and 1970s and have been subsequently extended through funding raised by these orders, figures relating to the pupil capacity for these schools may not be readily available to the DES.

For the purpose of this assessment, the information detailed on the School Planning Programme and information contained within press releases made by the Minister for Education and Skills were assessed. This information is documented in Section 8 of this Report.

7.3 Enrolment Projections

The DES anticipates that enrolment figures for primary schools in Ireland will remain at peak levels this academic year (2018/2019) and fall gradually from 2019 / 2020 onward, in line with revised migration and fertility assumptions for the country as a whole. The Departmental document ‘*Projections of Full-Time Enrolment: Primary and Second Level, 2018-2036 (July 2018)*’ states in relation to this: -

“Primary enrolments, which have already risen substantially in recent years, are projected to rise by an additional 4,360 pupils by 2018, reaching a peak of over 567,800 in 2018, before beginning to reduce. This peak figure is reflective of primary enrolment levels last seen in Ireland in the mid-1980s, where enrolments rose to a peak of 567,000 pupils in 1987 before beginning to reduce.”

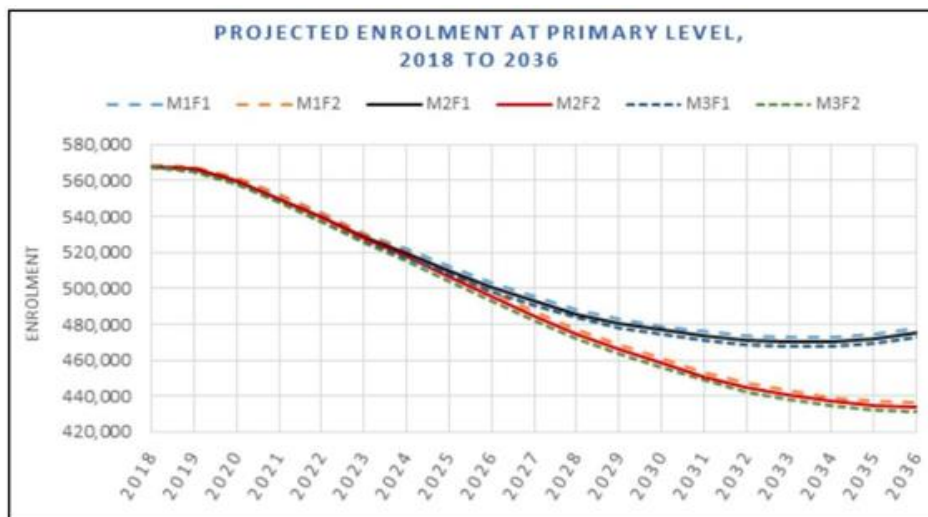


Figure 5: Projections of Enrolment at Primary Level, 2018-2036, organized by growth projection scenarios created by the CSO (Source: Department of Education and Skills, July 2018).

It is anticipated that post-primary enrolments, however, will continue to rise in the medium-term and will likely reach record levels in 2024. In relation to these projections, the DoE report states: -

“Post-primary enrolments are also projected to rise substantially by over 6,087 by 2018 and will continue to rise under M2/M3 scenarios until 2024, at which point enrolments at second level are expected to be in excess of 402,176 pupils for the first time in the history of the State. In total, therefore an additional 19,710 pupils are expected in the system in 2020 at second level compared to September 2017.”

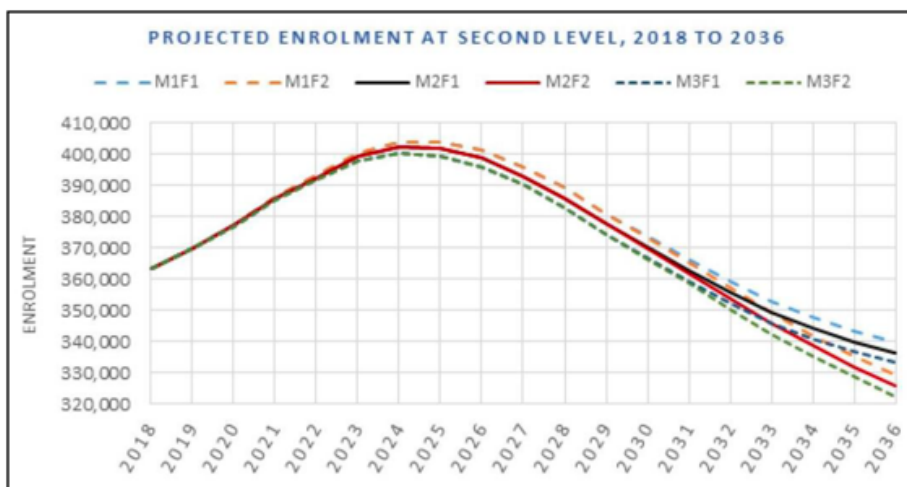


Figure 6: Projections of Enrolment at Post-primary Level, 2018-2036, organized by growth projection scenarios created by the CSO (Source: Department of Education and Skills, July 2018).

7.4 Summary – Existing Facilities

The schools within the catchment area of the proposed development have been identified based on information available from the DES.

There are 3no. Primary Schools within the Dunshaughlin School Planning Area. Based on the calculations provided in Table 4, utilising the current accepted PTR, it is considered that the existing population is catered for within these schools with no available spaces at present.

There is 1no. Post-Primary Schools within the catchment area of the proposed development. It is noted that the manner in which capacity of Post-Primary Schools is determined is more complex. The Forward Planning Unit assess the demand for post-primary schools by using information obtained from long-term enrolment figures for ‘feeder schools’ (i.e. primary schools within the catchment area of the post-primary school) and projected population forecasts for the area.

In general, enrolment figures for both Primary and Post Primary schools are set to decline, which suggests a corresponding increase in existing capacity within schools over time within the catchment area.

8 SCHOOLS PLANNING & DEVELOPEMNT

The information contained within this section of the Assessment is based on data contained in recent School Building Programmes, as detailed on the DES website and the policies and objectives detailed in the Development Plan.

At present there are 3no. Primary Schools and 1no. Post Primary Schools located within 1.5km of the subject site.

Based on telephone consultation with the DES we understand that there is currently no specific policy document or plan relating to the provisions of schools in the Meath Area. Internal assessment carried out by the DES based on enrolment figures and population projections form the basis for the Capital Investment Programmes.

8.1 Policies & Objectives contained in the Development Plan

The Development Plan seeks to facilitate the development of schools as required in Meath in accordance with the relevant policy guidance published by the DES.

The Development Plan encourages the provisions of schools throughout the County, particularly with any large residential developments. This is outlined in the following Development Plan policy: -

***SOC POL 2** “To ensure that, where practicable, community, recreational and open space facilities are clustered, with the community facilities being located in local centres or combined with school facilities as appropriate. Community facilities should be located close to or within walking distance of housing, accessible to all sectors of the community and facilitate multi-use functions through their design and layout.”*

***SOC POL 5** “To require as part of all new large residential and commercial developments, and in existing developments where appropriate, that provision is made for facilities including local/neighbourhood shops, childcare facilities, schools and recreational facilities, and to seek their provision concurrent with development.”*

***SOC POL 20** “To encourage, support and develop opportunities to open up schools to wider community use.”*

This policy requires the Planning Authority, in conjunction with the DES, to identify suitable locations for schools which accounts for future development patterns.

8.2 Planned School Provision

Under the current status of large-scale projects being planned under the school building programme, which was published on the 31 July 2020, 1no. project identified: -

- **New Primary School:** 8no. Classrooms & 2no. Special Needs Classroom – Potential to expand to 16no. Classrooms. (Located on the R147 adjacent new residential development – ‘The Willows’ on the eastern side of Dunshaughlin).

The Louth & Meath Education & Training Board have confirmed that a planning application for the above proposed Primary School was submitted in July 2020. This school is intended to replace the temporary Primary School located in the ground of Dunshaughlin GAA Grounds as identified in Table 4 above.

The Additional Accommodation Programme (available on the DES Website), sets out that upgrades are proposed to schools proximate to the application site: -

- **Dunshaughlin Community College:** Additional Classrooms (General Classroom, Design Room,, Technology Room, Science Laboratory, Arts/Crafts Rooms, Construction Studies, Library & Staff / Storage Rooms), Multi-Use Hall Facility (1,140 sq. m), Special Needs Education Accommodation (4no. Classrooms and ancillary facilities) and external works (play facilities, sensory garden and parking).
- **Gaelscoil na Rithe:** 1 x 80m² Mainstream classroom in en-suite toilets & 2 SET (Special Education Teaching) rooms and 1 x 10.5m² WC for assisted users

Overall, it is clear that the DES are actively catering to meet future demand within the general area by providing the capital investments for both extensions to existing schools and the provision of new schools in the catchment area.

Having regard for Section 6.2 of this Report the estimated Primary and Post-Primary School demand created by the proposed development is approximately 238no. children. On that basis, the expansion of existing schools and development of a future Primary School site could adequately accommodate all of the potential demand created by the proposed development.

The requirement for new schools will be subject to on-going review by the DES.

These schools have been specifically developed to cater for the demand generated in the local area which the site forms part of within Dunshaughlin. The future school going population would be expected to attend these schools.

9 CONCLUSION

From the outset, we wish to reiterate that the date and information contained within this assessment is only as accurate as the sources of data retrieved would allow. As part of this assessment, we Stephen Little & Associates Chartered Town Planners & Development Consultants liaised directly with the DES, in the interest of undertaking and preparing a comprehensive Educational Needs Assessment, in respect of proposed development on lands at Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath.

At present there are 3no. Primary Schools and 1no. Post Primary Schools within the Dunshaughlin School Planning Area, in which the proposed development is situated.

In terms of population projection for the proposed development at Dunshaughlin, employing the methodology used by the DES the school going population was estimated. It is likely that at Primary Level, a projection of 139no. persons is expected and at Post-Primary Level, a projection of 99no. persons is expected. The population projection of the development is also likely to be effected by the falling housing occupancy rate.

Having regard to the capacity of existing Primary and Post-Primary Schools in the catchment the capacity of existing schools the current demand generated by the local population is being met. Notwithstanding, there is ongoing capital investment in the schools infrastructure with the provision an extension to an existing school and new schools either in the planning process or being developed at this time. Therefore, it is considered that there will be sufficient local capacity to cater for the theoretical demand generated by the proposed development of 415no. residential units at Roestown, Readlands and Knocks, Dunshaughlin, co. Meath

The development will not be fully operational before 2023. This timeline aligns with projections set out by the DES which sees the rate of enrolment for Primary Level peak in 2018 / 2019 and begin to decline thereafter. This suggests that capacity in various schools at Primary Level might increase.

In our professional opinion, the demand created for school places by the proposed development will be comfortably absorbed by the existing and future planned educational facilities in proximity to the application site. Given the likely timeframe for permission, construction and occupation of the proposed development in its entirety (3 – 5 years), the DES would have an opportunity to consider local demand for school places and any requirement to expand existing or provide new facilities in this area in the next tranche of its Capital Investment for Schools Infrastructure, should the need arise.

Stephen Little & Associates are committed to progressing and achieving sustainable development goals.

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