

SLA

Stephen Little
& Associates

Planning
Application to
An Bord
Pleanála

Childcare
Needs
Assessment

Dunshaughlin West /
Phase II Strategic
Housing Development

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

For Castlethorn
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 Construction Unlimited Company, Usher House, Main Street Dundrum, Dublin 14 to prepare this Childcare Needs Assessment to accompany this Strategic Housing Development (SHD) Planning Application.

The proposal comprises a residential-led development comprising 415no. residential units, ancillary uses and all associated site works at Roestown, Redlands and Knock, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath

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

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed development includes the provision of 1no. childcare facility to serve the future residents of the proposed development.

The assessment of potential childcare demand associated with the proposed development includes analysis of existing and permitted childcare facilities in the catchment area and local demographic trends. When childcare facilities within and neighbouring the proposed development are considered, it is anticipated that there is sufficient childcare capacity to cater for the existing and future needs of the proposed scheme.

We set out a summary of the findings of the Childcare Needs Assessment Report (see Section 4) below for the convenience of the Board.

Proposed Childcare Facilities

- Provision of 1no. purpose built childcare facility (c. 409sq. m) which can cater for 80no. children.
- The *'Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)'*, recommend the provision of 1no. childcare facility or 20no. spaces for every 75no. new dwellings.
- The New Apartment Guidelines (2018) identify that 1-bed units do not generally contribute to childcare demand. Some flexibility may be similarly applied to 2-bed units.
- The theoretical demand for childcare spaces arising at the proposed new neighbourhood is conservatively estimated at approximately 102no. spaces when the proposed number of 1 bed units is excluded based on the provision set out in the New Apartment Guidelines 2018.
- When utilising the Quarterly National Household Survey statistics and taking the lower Meath uptake (only 14% of parents utilising childcare facilities) this theoretical demand could be reduced to 14no. children.
- Therefore, it reasonable to consider that the actual demand could potentially range from c. 14 – 102no. children.

Existing Childcare Provision

- There are 6no. existing childcare facilities with approximately 274no. childcare spaces within c. 1.5km of the subject site.
- The proposed permanent childcare facility which is designed to provide approximately 80no. childcare spaces in combination with the existing 6no. childcare facilities within 1.5km of the subject site will provide approximately 354no. childcare spaces to the immediate area of the subject site.

- There is an estimated current capacity of approximately 5no. childcare spaces within these existing childcare facilities. Furthermore, the childcare facility operators we were in contact with have indicated that more spaces will become available in January 2021, however they were unable to quantify how many spaces are likely to be available and therefore we cannot provide a definitive number at this time.
- The scope of this survey did not extend to alternative local unregistered or informal childcare arrangements, or childcare facilities outside the immediate catchment that may absorb some local demand.

Demographic Trends

- The population levels within the 0 – 4 age group cohort within the Dunshaughlin ED have increased slightly over the last 2no. Census periods (2006 – 2011 and 2011 – 2016).
- An examination of the surrounding Dunboyne and Rathoath EDs within the study area, indicate that the percentage population within the 0 – 4 age group cohort is slightly higher than the Dunshaughlin ED.
- Therefore, at an ED level, the rate of population growth is increasing over time and the rate of growth is consistent with Meath as a whole. Furthermore, the percentage population with the 0 – 4 age group has decreased slightly over a 10 year period and generally in line with the same age cohort within the Dunshaughlin ED.

A permanent purpose-built childcare facility with approximate capacity of 80no. spaces will be delivered as part of the proposed development. It is considered that 80no. childcare spaces in the purpose-built childcare facility as part of the proposed development in addition to existing capacity in current registered local childcare facilities (currently approximately 274no. childcare spaces), which is subject to fluctuation, is sufficient to absorb the potential local childcare demand. It is also considered that the purpose-built (permanent) childcare facility is adequately sized to be attractive to future commercial childcare facility operators.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & SITE CONTEXT

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 & Planning Context

3.2.1 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, overlay by SLA).

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.).

3.2.2 Planning Policy Background

The Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 (hereafter referred to as the Development Plan) came into effect on the 22 January 2013 and is the statutory land-use plan governing the subject lands at this time. In line with the statutory provisions, this Plan remains the statutory plan for the area pending the adoption of the new Development Plan for Co. Meath.

Land Use Zoning

Under the Development Plan, the site is subject to the zoning objective 'A2' and 'F1', as are the lands in the immediate vicinity of the site. The zoning objective for A2 reads as follows: -

"To provide for new residential communities with ancillary community facilities, neighbourhood facilities and employment uses as considered appropriate for the status of the centre in the Settlement Hierarchy."

A portion of the lands between Character Area 3 & 4 of the subject site are zoned Objective F1, the objective of which is: -

"To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities."

The subject lands are primarily zoned as objective A2 – New Residential with some of the lands proposed as Open Space being zoned Objective F1.

A large portion of the Objective A2 lands are currently designated as Phase II – Post 2019 residential lands under the current Development Plan.

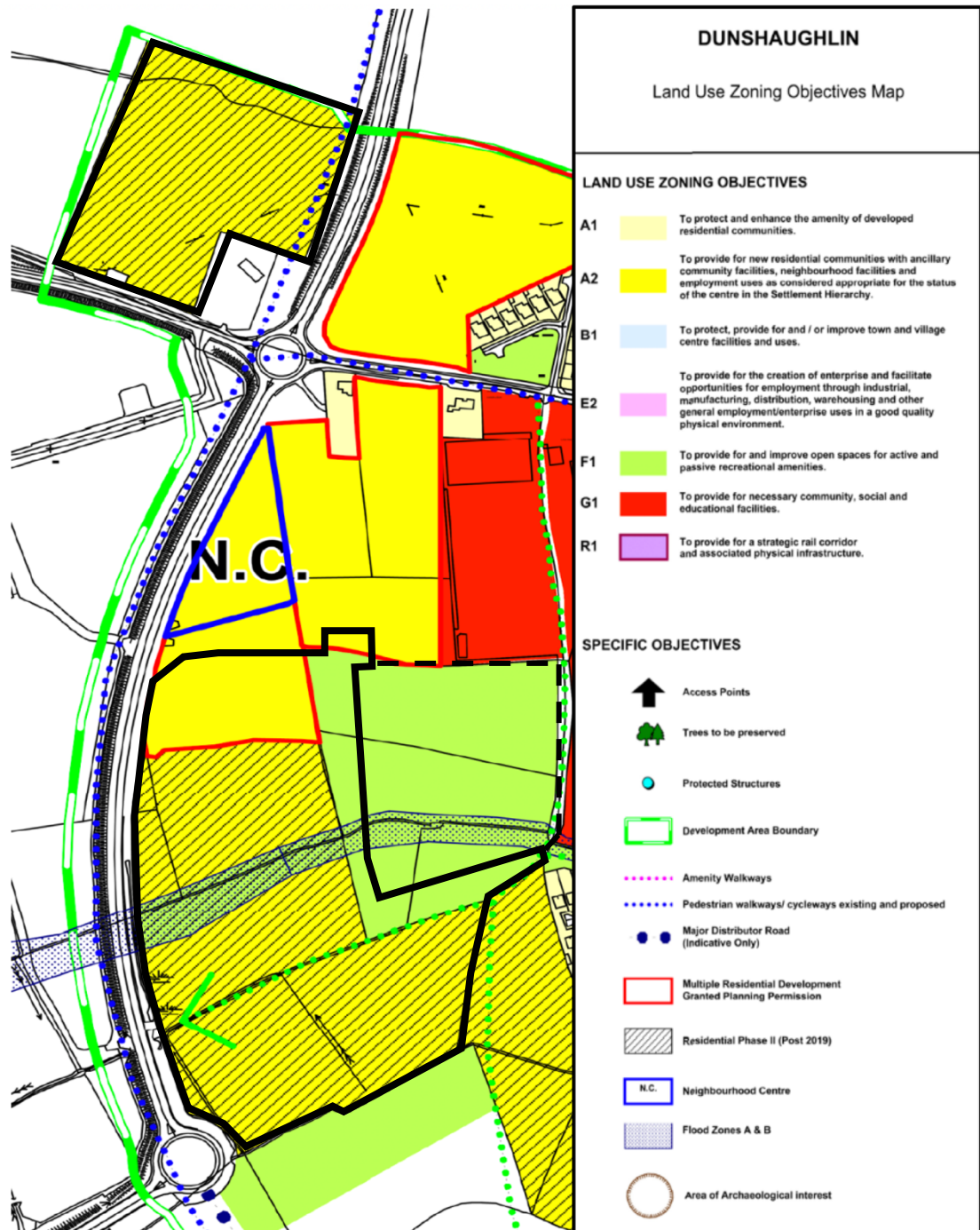


Figure 2: Land use Zoning Map outlining subject site in black, taken from Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

4 CHILDCARE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This Childcare Assessment seeks to confirm that the proposed provision of childcare facilities as part of the proposed development, can support the future childcare demands of this scheme. The following childcare provision is proposed: -

- Provision of 1 no. purpose built childcare facility (c. 409 sq. m) which can accommodate 80no. children.

It is considered that the purpose-built (permanent) childcare facility is adequately sized to be attractive to future commercial childcare facility operators.

As such, this Childcare Assessment considers the following: -

- Review of relevant guidelines and policies in relation to the provision of childcare facilities.
- Assessment of the childcare facilities as part of the proposed development.
- Assessment of existing and permitted / proposed childcare facilities in the surrounding area.
- Analysis of population and childcare demand within this area.
- Conclusions drawn from review undertaken.

4.1 Guidelines & Policies on the Provision of Childcare Facilities

The following provides a review of relevant guidelines and policies applicable to childcare facilities and the current proposal.

4.1.1 Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)

Under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, the then Minister issued guidelines in relation to Childcare Facilities entitled '*Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities June 2001*'. The document sets out general standards and guidance for the land use planning of childcare facilities in Ireland. It advocates a more proactive role by the planning authority in the promotion and management of childcare provision in their area.

Section 2.4 of the guidelines set out the appropriate locations for childcare facilities, stating that: -

"Planning authorities should require the provision of at least one childcare facility for new housing areas unless there are significant reasons to the contrary or where there are adequate childcare facilities in adjoining developments."

There is sufficient flexibility therefore, under the guidelines, to ensure that childcare facilities are not required in instances where they are not necessary due to local circumstances. The guidelines recommend the provision of 20no. childcare spaces for every 75no. dwellings permitted in a scheme.

The guidelines acknowledge the factors associated with determining the appropriate level of childcare facilities required in an area, namely: -

- The current provision of childcare in the area.
- The nature of emerging new communities.
- Current demographic trends.

and specifically states 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."

It is possible, therefore, to demonstrate in accordance with the Guidelines that the childcare facilities proposed as part of the proposed development in combination with existing childcare provision in the immediate geographic area can cater for the demand created by the proposed development.

4.1.2 Sustainable residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)

Chapter 4 of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas guidelines sets out criteria for planning for sustainable neighbourhoods. Specifically, Section 4.5 relates to Childcare (pg. 25 & 26), stating that: -

*“The Department’s guidelines on childcare facilities (DoEHLG, 2001) emphasise the importance of local assessment of the need to provide such facilities at the development plan or local area plan stage, having regard to the provision of existing facilities in the area. When considering planning applications, in the case of larger housing schemes, the guidelines recommend the provision of one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units. **However, the threshold for such provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas**, in consultation with city / county childcare committees. The location of childcare facilities should be easily accessible by parents, and the facility may be combined with other appropriate uses, such as places of employment.”*

This Childcare Assessment reviews the relevant demographic profile and existing childcare provision in the area, to determine whether the proposed crèche facilities have the capacity to cater for the needs of the proposed development.

4.1.3 Circular Letter PL3/2016

The Department of Environment, Community & Local Government issued a Circular Letter (PL3/2016 – Childcare facilities operating under the Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Scheme (Planning System support for childcare post September 2016-Implementation of the Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001) in which it is noted that the Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) has been expanded to make it available to all children from the age of 3 years until they transfer to primary school.

The Department requests that Planning Authorities have: -

“Insofar as possible, consideration of all planning applications or Section 5 declaration submissions in respect of childcare facilities in order to facilitate the expansion of required capacity as appropriate.”

The recommendations under this circular make appropriate rather than blanket provision for childcare, through the development management process, having regard to childcare policy, local demographics, and existing or required (additional) provision within a given catchment

4.1.4 Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018)

The ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)’ also require that childcare facilities be provided in accordance with the demographic profile of the area and the existing capacity of childcare centres. The 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.” (SLA emphasis in bold)*

32no. of the proposed units (c. 7.7%) will comprise one bedroom apartments. These units, in accordance with the recommendations of the Guidelines, are unlikely to generate childcare demand.

Accordingly, taking a conservative approach 383no. of the proposed residential units (i.e. units with 2-beds or more) are considered in respect of their potential to generate childcare demand. In addition, it is considered that not all 2 bedroom units are likely to result in a need for childcare facilities considering that these apartments are likely to be more attractive to first time buyers and young professionals and not necessarily families.

4.1.5 Quarterly National Household Survey – Childcare

The Central Statistics Office Quarterly National Household Survey Quarter 3 2016¹ was published 6 July 2017 and is the most up to date reference for assessing childcare demand and uptake, based on the 2016 Census. This release is especially relevant for the purposes of this study as it indicates the extent to which childcare facilities are utilised by the general population.

The Quarterly Survey outlines that the percentage of pre-school children that are minded by a parent is 62%. The Report also states that the most commonly used type of childcare that is non-parental is Childcare / Montessori facility, which is outlined in the survey to 19% of pre-school children, with a lower uptake of 14% for Meath.

As noted in Section 4.1.6 the theoretical demand created by the proposed development based on 383no. units is approximately 102no. children. When utilising the Quarterly National Household Survey statistics and taking the lower Meath uptake this theoretical demand could be reduced to 14no. children. Therefore, it reasonable to consider that the actual demand could potentially range from c. 14 – 102no. children.

4.2 Demand Created by Proposed Development

This Childcare Assessment aims to demonstrate and justify that the proposed strategy for the provision of childcare facilities as part of this residential scheme can support the future demands for childcare provision. The following provision of childcare facilities is proposed: -

- Provision of 1no. purpose built childcare facility (c. 409 sq. m) which can cater for 80no. children.

As previously outlined above, 32no. of the proposed units (c. 7.7%) will comprise one bedroom apartments. These units, in accordance with the recommendations of the New Apartment Guidelines (2018), are unlikely to generate childcare demand. Accordingly, taking a conservative approach 383no. of the proposed residential units (i.e. units with 2 beds or more) are considered in respect of their potential to generate childcare demand of approximately 102no. children.

When utilising the Quarterly National Household Survey statistics and taking the lower Meath uptake this theoretical demand could be reduced to 14no. children. Therefore, it reasonable to consider that the actual demand could potentially range from c. 14 – 102no. children.

4.3 Review of Existing Childcare Facilities

The following sets out a review of existing childcare facilities in the vicinity of the subject site. Given that this study was a desk based study, the data and information contained herein is as accurate as the sources of data retrieved would allow.

A review was carried out to determine the number of existing childcare facilities in the vicinity of the site, as detailed within Table 1 below. A total of 6no. childcare facilities were identified within a c. 1.5km radius of the proposed residential development at Dunshaughlin

Although this assessment has been limited to a 1.5km radius of the subject site it is important to note that some childcare outside of this area may be preferred due to its location near workplaces, or schools that older children in the family may be attending.

¹ The QNHS is released by the CSO each quarter and surveys a random sample of the population. Percentage totals may amount to over 100% due to some respondents providing multiple answers.
https://pdf.cso.ie/www/pdf/20170706100048_QNHS_Childcare_Quarter_3_2016_full.pdf

4.3.1 Existing Childcare Facilities

Map Ref. No.	Name	Address	Size of Facility (spaces)	Spaces Available at Present	Further Capacity – Jan. 2021	Approx. Dist. from Site (km)
1	Sandys Childcare LTD	Grange Hall, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath.	160no. spaces between both	0	Waiting List	c. 1.1km
2	Sandys Childcare LTD	Grangend, Dunshaughlin, Navan, Co. Meath				c. 990m
3	Naionra Na Ríthe	Gaelscoil Na Ríthe, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath	44	5	0	c. 790m
4	Little Treasures Montessoris	26 Supple Park, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath	No Response		-	c. 1km
5	Cookies Early Learning Centre	Unit 8/9 Ivy Hall, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath	70	0	Waiting List	c. 1.1km
6	Lagore Road Childcare Community Ltd	Lagore Road, Grangend, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath	No Response		-	c. 1.5km
Total			c. 274 *	c. 5 *	-	

Table 1: Assessment of Existing Childcare Facilities. Currently, approximately 5no. space currently. * Figure does not include facilities that did not respond to the request for information.

These childcare facilities were identified by reference to the current TUSLA childcare services information provided on the pobal.ie website. This list above may not represent a full representation of local childcare services. Additional unregistered or informal childcare facilities / arrangements may also be in operation in this area.

Figure 3 (below) highlights the location of each of the identified childcare facilities, within 1.5km of the subject site. It is evident that this area is well served by existing childcare facilities.

We would note that it is normal in any given year / semester that operators of childcare facilities would seek to fully occupy their facilities. Natural progression of children from the 0 – 4 age cohort through pre-school care would see constant turnover. Therefore, spaces become available and are subsequently filled on a regular basis.

It should be noted from the above table, that many of the operators would not disclose the number of spaces currently available, and were unable or unwilling to indicate how many vacancies are likely to arise in January 2021. This would indicate that there is more childcare spaces in the wider area than represented by the Table 1 above.

A number of operators, which were contacted in the course of gathering the above data, noted that the capacity of any given childcare facility may fluctuate, stemming from children being removed from the facility for various reasons. The assessment of the capacity of the childcare facilities identified above thus represents only a snapshot in time.

Effectively, this demonstrates that full capacity means that childcare spaces will naturally become available over time thus augmenting the potential availability of childcare spaces regularly.



Figure 3: Extract from Google Maps which identify TUSLA registered childcare facilities. The childcare facilities are numbered to reference the table above. The subject site is identified (red pin) with an indicative 1.5 km radius shown in red (Overlay by SLA).

4.3.2 Permitted Childcare Facilities

An online planning search was carried out in order to establish the number of permitted / proposed childcare facilities in the vicinity of the site. Unless otherwise stated in the application information, the capacity of each childcare facility is estimated on the basis of 20no. spaces per 75no. residential units, as per the standard contained in the 2001 Childcare Guidelines.

This planning search revealed that the following childcare facility has recently been granted permission as part of residential developments within a 1.5km radius of the subject site: -

Decided Applications

Reg. Ref.	Location	Childcare Facility Size	No. of Dwellings	Capacity
ABP-303433	Dunshaughlin East	1,282 sq. m	913	217
RA191726 (Dún Ríoga currently under construction by the Applicant)	Roestown, Readsland and Cooksland, Dunshaughlin	265 sq. m	142	60
ABP-307244	Grangend, Dunshaughlin	396 sq. m	212	57
			Total Childcare Spaces	334

A total of 334no. childcare spaces have been permitted in recent applications made to both Meath County Council and An Bord Pleanála. The 60no. childcare spaces provided within Dún Ríoga adjoin the southern site of the proposed development and will have the potential to meet some of the demand generated by the proposed SHD.

The additional childcare spaces potentially available through the implementation of the permitted developments outlined above further illustrate that there is capacity to absorb future demand.

Considering the scale of the proposed development and the lifetime of the permission sought is 5 years it is anticipated that further childcare facilities may be permitted in this period or become operational which will further add to the childcare provision in the area.

4.3.3 Summary

Based on the above, there are 6no. existing childcare facilities with approximately c. 274no. childcare spaces within c. 1.5km of the subject site.

The proposed childcare facility which is designed to provide approximately 80no. childcare spaces in combination with the existing 6no. childcare facilities within 1.5km of the subject site will provide approximately 354no. childcare spaces to the immediate area of Dunshaughlin and neighbouring EDs.

Furthermore, a childcare facility is proposed as part of a recently permitted residential development (Dún Ríoga, currently under construction by the Applicant) which has additional future capacity of 60no. spaces also.

This will be supplemented further by the provision of 2no. permitted childcare facilities which are located approx. 2km from the site and within the settlement boundary of Dunshaughlin. This will add a further 274no. childcare spaces to the catchment area.

Based on the above, it is considered that there is more than adequate capacity between the proposed childcare facility, existing childcare facilities in proximity to the proposed development and future capacity of permitted childcare facility in proximity to the proposed development to cater for childcare demand generated by the proposed development.

4.4 Population & Childcare Demand

Having established the capacity of the childcare facilities as part of the proposed development and existing childcare spaces available within proximity of the site, a review of population data is set out below to establish local population trends. The following analysis is largely based on the Census 2016 and Census 2011 data.

Census data for the Dunshaughlin, Dunboyne and Rathoath Electoral Divisions (EDs) has been analysed. This has allowed for a detailed population analysis for the subject area.

4.4.1 Population Change 2006 – 2016

Census 2016 data indicates that at a national level, the population grew by 3.8%, over the period 2011 – 2016. The population of Meath grew by 5.9% for the same period (2011 – 2016).

Census 2011 data indicates that at a national level, the population grew by 8.2%, over the period 2006 – 2011. In the same period, the population of Meath grew by 13.1%.

This shows that population growth for the state has slowed, however the population growth rate of Meath has increased.

Census 2016 data indicates that the Dunshaughlin ED had a population of 5,840no. persons, compared to a population of 5,676no. persons in 2011. This amounts to a percentage population change of 2.9%, which is lower than the overall population growth of Meath (5.9%) for the same period.

This indicates that the Dunshaughlin ED is currently experiencing population growth lower than the averages for Meath and nationally. Neighbouring EDs, also assessed for the purposes of this Report, are growing at a higher rate than Dunshaughlin.

For convenience, this follow table summarises the population changes discussed above: -

Category	% Change 2006 – 2011	% Change 2011 – 2016
National	8.2%	3.8%
Meath	13%	5.9%
Dunshaughlin ED	9.9%	2.9%
Dunboyne ED	10.1%	5.4%
Rathoath ED	19.9%	4.9%

It is therefore clear that the population levels within the ED within which the subject site is located, have undergone lower growth rates over the most recent two intercensal periods than neighbouring EDs.

4.4.2 Population Age Distribution (0 – 4 Year Age Cohort)

Given that childcare provision applies to a specific population cohort, typically 0 – 4 years, it was considered appropriate to examine the age distribution of the population within the study area.

Nationally, Census 2016 data indicates that the population of pre-school children (typically 0 – 4 years) stands at 331,515no. persons which is a decrease of 7% compared to the 2011 Census. Meath experienced a significant decrease in its pre-school population by 10% for the same period (2011 – 2016).

As recorded in Census 2016 for the Dunshaughlin ED, there are 407no. children within the 0 – 4 age cohort, representing 7% of the total population of the ED. This age cohort represented 7.2% of the total ED population in 2011 and 7.3% in 2006. These Census results are illustrated below: -

Dunshaughlin ED	2006	2011	2016
Total Population	5,245	5,676	5,840
0 – 4 Age Cohort	382	411	407
% of Total Pop.	7.3%	7.2%	7.0%
Dunboyne ED	2006	2011	2016
Total Population	8,702	9,578	10,094
0 – 4 Age Cohort	725	764	713
% of Total Pop.	8.3%	8.0%	7.1%
Rathoath ED	2006	2011	2016
Total Population	8,805	10,561	11,082
0 – 4 Age Cohort	1,068	1,223	915
% of Total Pop.	12.1%	11.6%	8.3%
Overall Study Area	2006	2011	2016
Total Population	22,752	25,815	27,016
0 – 4 Age Cohort	2,175	2,398	2,035
% of Total Pop.	9.6%	9.3%	7.5%

It is evident that the population levels within the 0 – 4 age group cohort within the subject EDs has fluctuated somewhat over the last two Census periods. While it is evident that the population of the general area has increased between 2006 and 2016, the 0 – 4 age cohort has remained relatively consistent in the Dunshaughlin ED.

4.4.3 Summary

Rates of population change locally, regionally and nationally have fluctuated significantly over the course of the last 2no. intercensal periods. The Dunshaughlin ED appears to be currently undergoing marginal population growth.

The share of children aged 0 to 4 as a percentage of the total population has remained relatively consistent in the Dunshaughlin ED over the last two Census periods.

Though the population of the Dunshaughlin and neighbouring EDs has increased overall during this timeframe, the overall number of children in the 0 – 4 age cohort has decreased slightly as a whole.

5 CONCLUSION

There is flexibility provided in the national guidance on the provision of new childcare facilities, rather than a rigid blanket approach. It is possible to demonstrate in accordance with the relevant policy, whether a childcare facility is required, based on an analysis of the existing and proposed level of childcare provision and the demographic structure of the area. Essentially, the delivery of childcare facilities needs to be balanced on the specific circumstances within a geographical area.

On this basis, this Childcare Assessment has sought to demonstrate that the proposed childcare facility can adequately meet the demand created by the proposed residential development on the basis that: -

Proposed Childcare Facilities

- Provision of 1no. purpose built childcare facility (c. 413sq. m) which can cater for 80no. children.
- The *'Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)'*, recommend the provision of 1no. childcare facility or 20no. spaces for every 75no. new dwellings.
- The New Apartment Guidelines (2018) identify that 1-bed units do not generally contribute to childcare demand. Some flexibility may be similarly applied to 2-bed units.
- It is generously estimated for the purpose of this assessment that 383no. units in the proposed development have potential to generate childcare demand based on the New Apartment Guidelines (2018). This is equivalent to 102no. childcare spaces.
- When utilising the Quarterly National Household Survey statistics and taking the lower Meath County uptake (only 14% of parents utilising childcare facilities) this theoretical demand could be reduced to 14no. children.
- Therefore, it reasonable to consider that the actual demand could potentially range from c. 14–102no. children.

Existing Childcare Provision

- There are 6no. existing childcare facilities with approximately 274no. childcare spaces within c. 1.5km of the subject site.
- The proposed permanent childcare facility which is designed to provide approximately 80no. childcare spaces in combination with the existing 6no. childcare facilities within 1.5km of the subject site will provide approximately 354no. childcare spaces to the immediate area of the subject site.
- There is an estimated current capacity of approximately 5no. childcare spaces within these existing childcare facilities. Further childcare spaces within these existing childcare facilities will become available in 2020. Childcare facility operators were unable to provide us with a definitive number in terms of future capacity. However, it is clear from speaking to the operators that additional spaces will become available in January 2021, providing more childcare spaces in the wider area.
- The scope of this survey did not extend to alternative local unregistered or informal childcare arrangements, or childcare facilities outside the immediate catchment that may absorb some local demand.

Demographic Trends

- The population levels within the 0 – 4 age group cohort within the Dunshaughlin ED have remained consistent over the last 2no. Census periods (2006 – 2011 and 2011 – 2016).

- An examination of the surrounding Rathoath and Dunboyne EDs within the study area, indicate that the percentage population within the 0 – 4 age group cohort is slightly higher than the Dunshaughlin ED.
- Therefore, at an ED level, the rate of population growth is decreasing over time and the rate of growth is slower with Meath as a whole. Furthermore, the percentage population with the 0 – 4 age group has decreased slightly over a 10 year period and generally in line with the same age cohort within the Dunshaughlin ED.

A permanent purposed built childcare facility with approximate capacity of 80no. spaces will be delivered as part of the proposed development. This permanent childcare facility in combination with the existing childcare facilities in proximity to the subject site coupled with the current demographic trends towards a declining 0 – 4 age cohort in the area, in our professional opinion, will address the childcare demand created by the proposed development.

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