



Social Infrastructure Assessment

In respect of:

Strategic Housing Development at Lissywollen, Athlone, County Westmeath



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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.0 .Introduction | 5 |
| 2.0. Development Overview..... | 6 |
| 3.0. Planning Policy | 14 |
| 4.0. Social Infrastructure Assessment | 20 |
| 4.1. Health Care..... | 20 |
| 4.2. Childcare Facilities..... | 22 |
| 4.3. Primary Education..... | 25 |
| 4.4. Post-Primary Education | 27 |
| 4.6. Sports and Recreation | 30 |
| 4.7. Public Parks | 32 |
| 4.8. Religious Facilities | 33 |
| 4.9. Other Facilities | 34 |
| 5.0. Conclusions | 35 |



List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 - Subject site in the context of Athlone. | 7 |
| Figure 2 -The LSFP land use and function strategy | 9 |
| Figure 3 - Existing health care facilities. | 20 |
| Figure 4 - Existing childcare facilities. | 22 |
| Figure 5 - Existing primary schools. | 25 |
| Figure 6 - Existing post-primary schools. | 27 |
| Figure 7 - Existing third level / further education facilities. | 29 |
| Figure 8 - Existing sports and recreation facilities. | 30 |
| Figure 9 - Existing public parks..... | 32 |
| Figure 10 - Existing religious and community facilities. | 33 |
| Figure 11 - Other existing facilities. | 34 |



List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1 - Proposed dwelling mix. | 11 |
| Table 2 - Existing health care facilities. | 21 |
| Table 3 - Existing childcare services sourced from Tulsa. | 23 |
| Table 4 - Existing childcare services sourced from Pobal. | 23 |
| Table 5 - Existing primary schools. | 25 |
| Table 6 - Existing post-primary schools. | 27 |
| Table 7 - Existing third level / further education facilities. | 29 |
| Table 8 - Existing sports and recreation facilities. | 31 |
| Table 9 - Existing public parks. | 32 |
| Table 10 - Existing religious and community facilities. | 33 |
| Table 11 - Other existing facilities. | 34 |



1.0. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.1.** This Social Infrastructure Assessment (hereafter 'assessment') has been prepared by Delphi Design, Architecture + Planning, on behalf of Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd. (the applicant) to accompany the application for Strategic Housing Development (SHD) submitted to An Bord Pleanála in respect of lands at Lissywollen, Athlone, County Westmeath.
- 1.1.2.** It is generally recognised that proposals for large-scale residential development should be accompanied by proposals for associated community infrastructure and /or an assessment of existing community infrastructure which demonstrates that there is sufficient existing infrastructure to meet the expected demand generated by a new development. This assessment satisfies the need for same and is put forward in support of the proposed SHD application at Lissywollen.
- 1.1.3.** This assessment aims to:
1. Review the existing planning policy context in relation to the provision of social and community infrastructure;
 2. Identify existing social and community infrastructure in Athlone;
 3. Consider the social and community infrastructure proposed as part of the subject development;
 4. Evaluate the if expected demand will be appropriately met by existing and proposed services.

1.2. Structure of Report

- 1.2.1.** The remainder of this assessment is structured in four sections. Section 2 provides for an overview of the proposed development. Section 3 reviews the existing planning policy context in relation to the provision of social and community infrastructure. Section 4 identifies existing social and community infrastructure in Athlone. Section 5 provides for conclusions of the assessment.



2.0. Development Overview

2.1. Site Location

- 2.1.1.** The subject site is located approximately 1 kilometre to the northeast of Athlone town centre, County Westmeath, in the townlands of Lissywollen, Kilnafaddoge & Retreat, and partially traversing the townlands of Curragh, Cloghanboy (Strain) & Cloghanboy (Homan).
- 2.1.2.** The site is located within lands designated for the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024 (hereafter LSFP). The LSFP lands are bounded to the north by the N6, which connects Kinnegad to Galway, to the west by the R915 (Ballymahon Road) and to the east by the R916. The LSFP lands are partially bisected along the south by the Old Rail Trail Greenway which forms a section of the Dublin-Galway National Cycle Network.
- 2.1.3.** The site to which the application relates (i.e. that within the red line boundaries detailed on the site location map / site layout drawings prepared by Delphi Design) is generally bounded to the north by the N6, and to the south by the Old Rail Trail Greenway. To the west, the site is bounded by Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí primary school and Athlone Regional Sports Centre. The eastern boundary of the site is defined by an old boreen road further east of which lies undeveloped greenfield lands and ESB Regional Headquarters.
- 2.1.4.** The development includes for the construction of a new east-west access route through the site which is being delivered as per the objectives of the LSFP and as such, the full extent of the application boundaries span from the existing Ballymahon roundabout (on the R915 - to the west) to the existing Garrycastle roundabout (on the R916 - to the east).

2.2. Site Description

- 2.2.1.** The subject site currently consists of undeveloped greenfield lands zoned for proposed residential development / open space. The site is bisected by the existing Brawny residential estate (c.160 no. dwellings). Access to the site is currently limited to a distributor road (Brawny Road) which serves the Brawny estate and enters from the west off the R915.
- 2.2.2.** The western boundary of the site is defined by an existing cycleway, running along the perimeter of the Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí, which connects to the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south. The western section of the site, i.e. that to the west of the Brawny estate, has a largely non-descript landscape character and slopes in a south westerly direction at an approximate gradient of 1 in 230.
- 2.2.3.** The eastern section of the site, i.e. that to the east of the Brawny estate, has a landscape typical of the rural countryside, with small, irregular and enclosed field patterns defined by hedgerows and trees. The eastern boundary of the site is defined by an old boreen which provides access to a former residence. The eastern portion of the development slopes in a north easterly direction at an approximate gradient of 1 in 165.



Figure 1 - Subject site in the context of Athlone.



2.3. Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024

- 2.3.1. The application site is located on lands subject to a specific local area plan known as the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024 (hereafter LSFP). The LSFP has been adopted and approved by the local planning authority (Westmeath County Council) to ensure coherent development of a significant, underutilised, landbank in the town.
- 2.3.2. The plan lands have been identified as having strategic importance to the future development of Athlone given their proximity to the N6, which connects Kinnegad to Galway, the Old Rail Trail Greenway, which forms part of the Dublin-Galway National Cycle Network, and a range of existing educational, sporting and employment facilities. As such the plan lands are designated to undergo comprehensive development which will transform vacant, underutilised, lands into a sustainable new urban quarter to support the projected population growth of the town, as well as the objectives to develop Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre contained in the National Planning Framework and the East and Midlands Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy.
- 2.3.3. The LSFP contains a detailed Land Use & Function Strategy which seeks to optimise the future development of the plan area by creating a sustainable mix of complementary uses such as residential; sporting; recreational; educational; employment; and community uses. To ensure same, the plan area is divided the lands into 6 no. designated land uses as per Figure 2 below.
- 2.3.4. The subject site is located in Area 4 - *'Residential'* of the Land Use & Function Strategy. Area 4 provides for more than 20 hectares of land zoned for residential use and as such, the proposed development largely consists of residential uses, however, in compliance with individual objectives for the residentially zoned lands of the LSFP, the proposed development also includes for a community hub and 2 no. childcare facilities - for full details please refer to the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which accompanies the application.
- 2.3.5. To summarise, the proposed development is located on lands subject to the LSFP. The LSFP contains a detailed and co-ordinated land-use strategy which designates the application site for residential development. This has implications for this assessment. Notwithstanding same, this assessment aims to assess the capacity of existing community infrastructure to support the proposed development.

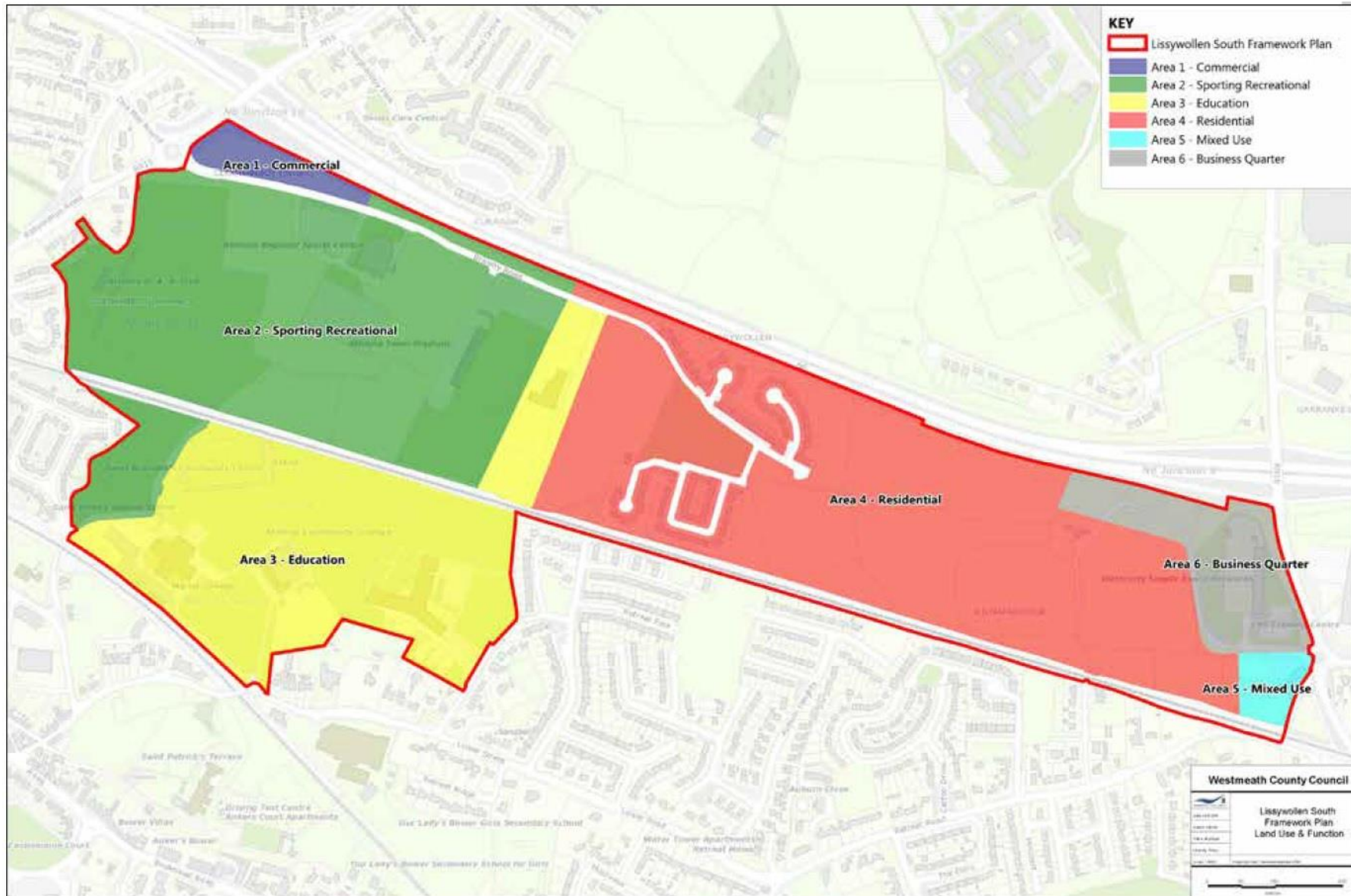


Figure 2 - The LSFP land use and function strategy .



2.4. Development Proposal

2.4.1. The subject application for SHD is detailed in full below, as per the public notices:

Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd. intend to apply to An Bord Pleanála for permission for a strategic housing development, on a site of c. 17.64 hectares, located in the townlands of Lissywollen, Kilnafaddoge & Retreat, and partially traversing the townlands of Curragh, Cloghanboy (Strain) & Cloghanboy (Homan), Athlone, County Westmeath. The development site is bisected by the existing Brawny residential estate and is generally bounded to the north by the N6, to the south by the Old Rail Trial Greenway, to the west by Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí, and to the east by undeveloped lands, further east of which are ESB Regional Headquarters. Access to the development will be from the Ballymahon roundabout (on the R915 - to the west) and the Garrycastle roundabout (on the R916 - to the east).

The development will consist of the following:

- (1) Construction of 576 no. residential dwellings comprised of 285 no. houses and 291 no. apartments and duplex units consisting of:
 - 285 no. 2 storey semi-detached & terraced houses (50 no. four beds, 200 no. three beds & 35 no. two beds);
 - 8 no. apartments & duplexes (4 no. one beds & 4 no. three beds) in Block A (3 storeys);
 - 8 no. apartments & duplexes (4 no. one beds & 4 no. three beds) in Block B (3 storeys);
 - 15 no. apartments (15 no. two beds) in Block C (3 storeys);
 - 16 no. apartments & duplexes (7 no. one beds, 5 no. two beds & 4 no. three beds) in Block D (3 storeys);
 - 9 no. apartments & duplexes (5 no. one beds, 1 no. two bed & 3 no. three beds) in Block E (3 storeys);
 - 8 no. apartments & duplexes (4 no. two beds & 4 no. three beds) in Block F (3 storeys);
 - 4 no. apartments (4 no. one beds) in Block G (2 storeys);
 - 12 no. apartments & duplexes (12 no. three beds) in Block H (3 storeys);
 - 21 no. apartments (21 no. two beds) in Block K (3 storeys);
 - 36 no. apartments (36 no. two beds) in Block L (part 4 storey / part 5 storey);
 - 20 no. apartments (6 no. one beds, 6 no. two beds & 8 no. three beds) in Block M (part 3 storey / part 4 storey);
 - 27 no. apartments (27 no. two beds) in Block N (3 storeys);
 - 43 no. apartments & duplexes (14 no. one beds, 24 no. two beds & 5 no. three beds) in Block O (2 to 4 storeys);
 - 12 no. apartments (6 no. one beds & 6 no. two beds) in Block P (3 storeys);
 - 8 no. apartments & duplexes (4 no. two beds & 4 no. three beds) in Block Q (3 storeys);
 - 18 no. apartments (6 no. one beds & 12 no. two beds) in Block R (3 storeys);
 - 12 no. apartments & duplexes (6 no. two beds & 6 no. three beds) in Block S (3 storeys);
 - 14 no. apartments (4 no. one beds & 10 no. two beds) in Block T (3 storeys).
- (2) Construction of 2 no. crèches comprised of: a 2 storey crèche of c. 321m² located on the ground & first floors of Block C & a 1 storey crèche of c. 448m² located on the ground floor of Block T.
- (3) Construction of 1 no. community hub of c. 101m² located on the ground floor of Block D.
- (4) Construction of basement level car parking of c. 1,089m² comprising 34 no. car parking spaces & 36 no. bicycle parking spaces, forming part of Block L.



- (5) Construction of an east-west access road through the development site, extending from the Ballymahon roundabout (on the R915 - to the west) to the Garrycastle roundabout (on the R916 - to the east) and all associated road development works.
- (6) Provision of public open spaces, hard and soft landscaping, public lighting, car & bicycle parking, pedestrian and cyclist connections to Old Rail Trail Greenway, bin storage, 6 no. ESB sub-stations, drainage and attenuation, utility services etc. and all associated site development works.

The application contains a statement setting out how the proposal is consistent with the objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024, and also contains a statement indicating why permission should be granted for the proposed development, having regard to a consideration specified in section 37(2)(b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, notwithstanding that the proposed development materially contravenes a relevant development plan or local area plan other than in relation to the zoning of the land.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared in respect of the development proposal and accompanies the application. The application, together with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, during public opening hours at the offices of An Bord Pleanála and Westmeath County Council. The application may also be inspected online at the following website set up by the applicant: www.lissywollenshd.ie.

2.5. Residential Development

2.5.1. The proposed development caters for 576 no. dwellings comprised of the following mix of units:

| Unit Type | 1 bed | 2 bed | 3 bed | 4 bed | Total |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| Houses | - | 35 | 200 | 50 | 285 |
| Apartments | 60 | 169 | 17 | - | 246 |
| Duplex Units | - | 9 | 36 | - | 45 |
| Overall Mix | 10% | 37% | 44% | 9% | 576 (100%) |

Table 1 - Proposed dwelling mix.

2.5.2. All the proposed houses are 2 storey dwellings. The proposed apartments and duplex units are catered for in 18 no. blocks which range from 2 to 5 storey in height. The proposed dwelling mix is put forward to cater for a range of user needs/requirements and is capable of supporting traditional family living, older residents who may be looking to downsize, young couples, single workers, and mobility impaired residents. The proposed dwellings will be made available to both purchasers and the rental market.

2.5.3. In compliance with the requirements of Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), 10% of the proposed dwellings (58 no. dwellings) will be offered for Part V. Furthermore, as part of the development agreement between the applicant and landowner (Westmeath County Council), the applicant has committed to providing a total of 174 no. dwellings (c. 30% of dwellings) for social housing (inclusive of the Part V requirements).

2.5.4. Given the above it is considered that the development provides an appropriate mix of housing options which can cater for abroad demographic. For full details on the residential elements of the proposed development please refer to the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which accompanies the application.

2.6. Proposed Childcare Facilities

- 2.6.1.** The development caters for 2 no. childcare facilities. These childcare facilities are put forward in compliance with the recommendations of the Childcare Facilities-Guidelines for Planning Authority (2001).
- 2.6.2.** The proposed childcare facilities also support the following objectives of the LSFP:
- **Objective P1-KS06** - *“To provide for a childcare facility to serve the needs of new residential communities which should cluster with existing Primary School”.*
 - **Objective P2-KS05** - *“To provide a childcare facility to serve new residential communities and the adjacent Business Park”.*
- 2.6.3.** The first of the proposed childcare facilities is a 2 storey crèche measuring c. 321m² located on the ground & first floors of Block C. This crèche has an associated outdoor play area of c. 167m². The proposed crèche has capacity for c. 62 no. childcare places based upon the internal spatial standards detailed in the Childcare Facilities-Guidelines for Planning Authority (2001).
- 2.6.4.** The second of the proposed childcare facilities is a 1 storey crèche measuring c. 448m² located on the ground floor of Block T. This crèche has an associated outdoor play area of c. 241m². The proposed crèche has capacity for c. 83 no. childcare places based upon the internal spatial standards detailed in the Childcare Facilities-Guidelines for Planning Authority (2001).
- 2.6.5.** The Childcare Facilities -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) recommend that, in general, one new childcare facility catering for 20 no. childcare places should be developed for every 75 new residential dwellings. Based on the proposed development of 576 no. dwellings, this would equate to a childcare requirement of c. 154 no. childcare places, however, with regard to the development of childcare facilities, the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018) recommend that:
- “One-bedroom or studio type units should not generally be considered to contribute to a requirement for any childcare provision”*
- When 1 bed apartments are discounted (60 no. 1 bed apartments) as per the above guidance, the development caters for 516 no. dwellings. Based on the provision of 20 no. childcare places for every 75 new dwellings, the development therefore has a requirement to provide for c. 138 no. childcare places.
- 2.6.6.** The development caters for 2 no. childcare facilities which have a combined capacity for c. 145 no. childcare places.
- 2.6.7.** For full details on the proposed childcare facilities forming part of the application please refer to the associated block plans / site layout drawings prepared by Delphi Design and the Childcare and School Demand Assessment, also prepared by Delphi Design, which are enclosed with the application.



2.7. Proposed Community Hub

- 2.7.1. In the context of this assessment, it is noted that the LSFP states that the existing Brawny residential estate, which bisects the application site, has limited access to neighbourhood facilities and social infrastructure in the immediate vicinity.
- 2.7.2. The development therefore caters for a community hub located on the ground floor of Block D. This community hub is a double height, 1 storey unit, measuring circa 101m². The proposed community hub is centrally located, fronting onto the proposed east-west avenue which traverses the development and urban open space adjacent. It is considered that the proposed community hub will form an important community space capable of catering for a number of potential functions and will offer a focal point for future residents.
- 2.7.3. For full details on the proposed community hub please refer to the Architectural Design Rationale and Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which are enclosed with the application.

2.8. East – West Avenue

- 2.8.1. While a community may have capacity in existing services to support new developments, it is essential that such services are reasonably accessible. The LSFP notes that general access to the plan area is currently limited. As such the LSFP contains a key objective to develop a new east-west avenue through the plan lands, to be known as 'Lissywollen Avenue'. The development of this avenue will open access to the plan lands and ensure the provision of permeability throughout the plan area. The LSFP details that this avenue should be in the form of an urban boulevard, capable of supporting public transport and prioritising pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2.8.2. The development caters for this new avenue, which will connect the existing Ballymahon Roundabout (on the R915 – to the west) to Garrycastle Roundabout (on the R916 – to the east). The design and layout of this avenue has formed an integral part of the design process. The provision of this avenue will ensure that the development will adequately cater for permeability and connectivity.
- 2.8.3. For full details of the rationale behind the east-west avenue please refer to the the Architectural Design Rationale and Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which are enclosed with the application.

3.0. Planning Policy

3.0.1. For the purposes of this assessment Delphi Design have reviewed national, regional, and local planning policy relating to the provision of community infrastructure. These policy documents are discussed in detail in this section of the assessment.

3.1. The National Planning Framework

3.1.1. The National Planning Framework (hereafter NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to cater for a projected population increase of c. one million people up to the year 2040. The NPF is accompanied by the National Development Plan, a 10 year capital investment strategy, and together they are known as Project Ireland 2040.

3.1.2. Of relevance to this assessment is the following objective of the NPF:

- **National Policy Objective 31** - *“Prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with investment in:*
 - *A childcare/ECCE planning function, for monitoring, analysis and forecasting of investment needs, including identification of regional priorities;*
 - *The provision of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations;*
 - *The expansion and consolidation of Higher Education facilities, particularly where this will contribute to wider regional development, and*
 - *Programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of higher education and further education and training where skills gaps are identified.”*

3.2. Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031

3.2.1. The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019 - 2031 (hereafter E&MRSES) is the relevant regional strategy. The E&MRSES is a strategic plan and investment framework which aims to shape the future development of the Eastern and Midland region up to the year 2031 and beyond. The Eastern and Midland region is the smallest in terms of area but the largest terms of population. The region is therefore considered to be the primary economic engine of the State.

3.2.2. The E&MRSES emphasises the important role social infrastructure has in developing strong, inclusive, and successful communities and re-iterates the need for local authorities, service providers, and stakeholders to work together to ensure that future demands for facilities are identified and met proactively.

3.2.3. Of relevance to this assessment are the following objectives of the E&MRSES:

- **Regional Policy Objective 9.13** - *“Local authorities and relevant agencies shall ensure that new social infrastructure developments are accessible and inclusive for a range of users by adopting a universal design approach and provide for an age friendly society in which people of all ages can live full, active, valued and healthy lives”.*
- **Regional Policy Objective 9.20** - *“Support investment in the sustainable development of the Region’s childcare services as an integral part of regional infrastructure to include:*
 - *Support the Affordable Childcare Scheme.*
 - *Quality and supply of sufficient childcare places.*
 - *Support initiatives under across Government Early Years Strategy.*
 - *Youth services that support and target disadvantaged young people and improve their employability”.*

- **Regional Policy Objective 9.21** - *“In areas where significant new housing is proposed, an assessment of need regarding schools provision should be carried out in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and statutory plans shall designate new school sites at accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations”.*

3.3. Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)

3.3.1. The Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) set out the core principles of urban design to ensure the creation spaces with a distinct identity and sense of place. The principles contained in the guidelines are to be used by Planning Authorities in writing their County Development Plans and in assessing development proposals.

3.3.2. The guidelines state that:

“The relationship and linkages between the area to be (re)developed and established neighbourhoods, including the availability of existing community facilities, and the provision of pedestrian and cycle networks”.

The Guidelines also recommend that *“no substantial residential development should proceed without an assessment of existing schools capacity or the provision of new school facilities in tandem with the development”.*

3.3.3. As such the guidelines recommend that applications for 200 or more dwellings are accompanied by a report detailing existing school capacity and the impacts of the new developments on same. In tandem with the Childcare Facilities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities(2001) the guidelines also detail that 20 no. childcare places should be provided for every 75 no. new dwellings, however it is noted that existing facilities and demographics of the area should also be taken into consideration.

3.4. Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)

3.4.1. The Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines (2018) update the previous 2015 version of same and were adopted in response to growing demand for apartment living in the State. Of relevance to this assessment the guidelines state that:

“Notwithstanding the Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities (2001), in respect of which a review is to be progressed, and which recommend the provision of one child-care facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units, the threshold for provision of any such facilities in apartment schemes should be established having regard to the scale and unit mix of the proposed development and the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of the area. 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.”

3.5. Childcare Facilities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)

3.5.1. The Childcare Facilities - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) direct Planning Authorities to facilitate the provision of childcare facilities as part of the development of sustainable communities. The guidelines define childcare as:

“full day-care and sessional facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours. It includes services involving care, education and socialisation opportunities for children. Thus, services such as pre-schools, naíonraí (Irish language playgroups), day-care services, crèches, playgroups, and after-

school groups are encompassed by these Guidelines. Conversely childminding, schools, (primary, secondary and special) and residential centres for children are not covered by these Guidelines”

3.5.2. The guidelines require Planning Authorities to include childcare facilities as part of their County Development Plan objectives as a specific use in ‘*appropriate locations/zones*’. These locations include for ‘*new communities / larger new housing developments*’. The guidelines advise that sites should be identified for such facilities as an integral part of the pre-planning discussions.

3.5.3. In relation to new housing developments, the guidelines state:

“Planning authorities should require the provision of at least one childcare facility for new housing areas unless there are significant reasons to the contrary for example, development consisting of single bed apartments or where there are adequate childcare facilities in adjoining developments. For new housing areas, an average of one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings would be appropriate. The threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas. Authorities could consider requiring the provision of larger units catering for up to 30/40 children in areas of major residential development on the basis that such a large facility might be able to offer a variety of services – sessional/drop in/after-school, etc.”

3.6. Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020

3.6.1. The Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 (hereafter CDP) is the current statutory development plan relevant to the proposed development. The CDP recognises the need to provide housing in tandem with community infrastructure and defines community facilities to include for schools, community centres, health centres and childcare facilities, religious meeting places, cemeteries, sports and recreation areas, sports facilities, parks, open spaces and walking routes.

3.6.2. Of relevance to this assessment are the following CDP Policies:

- **Policy P-SI5** - *“To support the provision of appropriate community and centre based youth facilities and services”.*
- **Policy P-CF2** - *“To ensure the needs of communities including education facilities are appropriately provided for in newly developed areas”.*
- **Policy P-CF3** - *“To provide for the dual use of community facilities for new and existing premises and the clustering of such facilities with educational, recreational and open space facilities where practicable. Developments incorporating the after-hours use of school facilities by Community Groups will be encouraged where practicable”.*
- **Policy P-CC1** - *“To encourage and support the provision of childcare facilities, subject to locations and design throughout the county, and in accordance with the needs identified by Westmeath County Childcare Committee (WCC). All planning applications for childcare facilities shall be assessed in consultation with Westmeath County Childcare Committee. The dual use of such facilities will be encouraged to provide for the wider community needs”.*
- **Policy P- REC3** - *“To ensure that new open space and recreational facilities are located within walking distance of residential areas or close to public transport and are phased according to the level of development. High standards of design, landscaping, functionality and usability, safety and security will apply for open space areas”.*



- **Policy P-SEC1** - *“To ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate educational and community facilities available to meet the needs of residents of the area”.*

3.7. Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020

3.7.1. The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (hereafter DCDP) is yet to be adopted with the initial public consultation period for same having ended on 30th June 2020. While the DCDP is subject to change, it is acknowledged that the proposed development, if granted, will be built during the life of the next County Development Plan and it is therefore considered important to reflect on the draft provisions contained in same.

3.7.2. The DCDP seeks to ensure that that all significant developments can only take place where sufficient schools, public transport, employment opportunities, parks, community facilities and resources (gardai, fire services and ambulance provision etc.) are either in place or proposed. Section 4.11 of the DCDP has regard to Social Infrastructure and states that:

“Proposals for large-scale residential and/or mixed-use schemes must demonstrate how the proposal will contribute to the range of supporting community infrastructure necessary for a sustainable community”.

3.7.3. Of relevance to this assessment are the following Community Policy Objectives:

- **Community Policy Objective 4.17** - *“Maintain and, where possible, improve the provision of community facilities in the County to ensure that facilities are adequate to meet the needs of the communities they serve, are physically integrated with residential and employment areas and are provided concurrently with new residential development”.*
- **Community Policy Objective 4.19** - *“Consider cultural diversity and ethnic minorities in planning for the needs of communities and ensure community facilities and social services provided are accessible for all individuals, communities and sectors of society, including people with disabilities, people with special needs, elderly, youth, marginalised and disadvantaged groups”.*
- **Community Policy Objective 4.22** - *“Support and encourage the provision by voluntary and state agencies, of a wide range of appropriate community facilities and premises to meet the needs and demands of new and existing communities, especially in areas where there are deficiencies”.*
- **Community Policy Objective 4.24** - *“Support the provision of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations”.*
- **Community Policy Objective 4.27** - *“Ensure the needs of communities including education facilities are appropriately provided for in newly developed areas”.*
- **Community Policy Objective 4.33** - *“Provide for the development of dedicated youth spaces in key urban areas such as Athlone and Mullingar and the development of multifunction spaces in smaller communities/rural areas”.*
- **Community Policy Objective 16.24** - *“Increased residential density within Athlone Regional Centre and Mullingar (key town) is acceptable in principle where the subject lands are (i) within walking distance of the town centre, or (ii) are adequately serviced by necessary social infrastructure and public transport and/or (iii) designated regeneration sites and development lands which comprise in excess of 0.5ha, subject to quality design and planning merit in ensuring compact growth and the creation of good urban places and attractive neighbourhoods”.*

- **Community Policy Objective 16.42** - *“Childcare Facilities should:*
 - *Demonstrate compliance with the ‘Guidelines on Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) and Circular Letter PL3 2016 or any superseding guidelines.*
 - *Provide justification for proposed site location.*
 - *Provide details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development.*
 - *Identify adequate and safe set-down and collection areas to facilitate peak traffic movements*
 - *Identify adequate on-site car parking for staff*
 - *Identify adequate play area(s) for pupils.*
 - *New or expanded premises should have regard to traffic impact associated with the number of children and staff to be accommodated and should provide adequate set-down areas and car parking areas to prevent traffic congestion.*
 - *Large scale proposals may be required to present a Mobility Management Plan to mitigate against traffic volumes by proposing staggered opening hours and drop off times to avoid congestion at peak times.*

The following locations are considered appropriate for the provision of childcare facilities:

- *In communities/larger new housing estates.*
- *The vicinity of concentrations of work places, such as industrial estates, business parks and any other locations where there are significant numbers working.*
- *Near schools.*
- *Neighbourhood and town centres.*
- *Adjacent to public transport corridors, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways”.*

3.8. Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020

3.8.1. The Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 (hereafter ATDP) is the relevant development plan for the town of Athlone. Chapter 3 of the ATDP has regard to new residential development and states that the capacity of existing infrastructure and the adequacy of community facilities need to be considered in the assessment of new housing developments.

3.8.2. The ATDP notes that Local Area Plans, prepared for specific areas of Athlone and its environs, will provide the spatial framework for the development of sustainable residential communities in the town. It should be noted that proposed development is located on the lands designated for the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024, which is discussed in Section 3.9. of this assessment.

3.8.3. Section 10.8 of the ATDP has regard to the provision of new childcare facilities. It is stated that:

“Childcare facilities are required in residential areas but it is important that residential amenity is not adversely affected by the conversion of unsuitable dwellings or an over concentration of childcare facilities in one area. The Councils will require the provision of high quality, affordable childcare facilities at easily accessible locations, in association with housing and other developments. Such developments shall comply with the Westmeath County Childcare Strategy and the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 (DECLG) or any amendments thereto”.

3.8.4. Of relevance to this assessment are the following ATDP Policies:

- **Policy P-CC1** - *“To encourage and support the provision of sufficient childcare facilities to support new and existing communities in Athlone, in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities (June 2001), or any revision thereof”.*



- **Policy P-CC2** - *“To encourage the establishment of high quality childcare facilities in suitable locations in Athlone, such as neighbourhood centres, areas of concentrated employment, in the vicinity of schools, adjacent to public transport corridors and /or pedestrian areas, and in larger new housing estates”.*

3.9. Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024

3.9.1. The Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024 (hereafter LSFP) is the relevant local area plan for the development. The LSFP contains a detailed Land Use & Function Strategy which is designed to ensure coherent development of the LSFP lands and divides the plan lands into 6 no. designated land uses. The proposed development is located in Area 4 - *‘Residential’* of the LSFP Land Use & Function Strategy. Area 4 of the LSFP provides for more than 20 hectares of land zoned for residential use and accordingly the proposed development largely consists of residential development.

3.9.2. Notwithstanding same, in compliance with individual objectives for the residentially zoned lands of the LSFP, the development caters for a community hub and 2 no. childcare facilities.

3.9.3. Of relevance to this assessment are the following LSFP Objectives:

- **Objective O-LUF1** - *“To reinforce, consolidate and foster activity and a sense of community in Brawny through a mix of housing and household types, new community uses, facilities and new local services”*
- **Objective O-LUF5** - *“To ensure the timely provision of community facilities and services in tandem with the development of lands”*
- **Objective O-LUF7** - *“To support and encourage the provision of educational, community, recreational, healthcare and social infrastructure facilities, within the Lissywollen South Framework Plan, including promotion of optimum use of existing facilities and encouragement of shared/dual use of existing and future facilities”*
- **Objective P1-KS06** - *“To provide for a childcare facility to serve the needs of new residential communities which should cluster with existing Primary School”*
- **Objective P2-KS05** - *“To provide a childcare facility to serve new residential communities and the adjacent Business Park”*

3.10. Policy Conclusions

3.10.1. Having regard to all the foregoing planning policy documents, it is evident that an analysis of the existing social infrastructure available to serve the development should be undertaken. This assessment can be found in Section 4.

4.0. Social Infrastructure Assessment

4.0.1. The Westmeath CDP defines community facilities to include for schools, community centres, health centres and childcare facilities, religious meeting places, cemeteries, sports and recreation areas, sports facilities, parks, open spaces and walking routes. The categories have been considered in the following sub-sections.

4.1. Health Care

4.1.1. This section identifies and examines the existing health care provision in Athlone. The sourced health care providers include for medical doctors, dentists, mental health professionals, physiotherapists, optometrists etc. Overall, there are 31 no. health care providers in Athlone which are identified in Figure 3 and Table 2 below.



Figure 3 - Existing health care facilities.



| Number | Name | Type of Facility |
|--------|--|----------------------|
| 1 | Town Centre Surgery | Medical Centre |
| 2 | Newtown Medical Centre | Medical Centre |
| 3 | Dr. John J. Keane Eye Specialist | Opticians |
| 4 | Saint Vincent's Health Centre | Medical Centre |
| 5 | Clonbrusk Primary Care Centre | Medical Centre |
| 6 | Tom Boland & Associates | Dental Practice |
| 7 | Fitzgerald's Dental Surgery | Dental Practice |
| 8 | Bonavalley Medical Centre | Medical Centre |
| 9 | Renew Health | Medical Centre |
| 10 | Boland Dental Surgery | Dental Practice |
| 11 | Emer Dunne Physical Therapy | Physiotherapy Clinic |
| 12 | DBC Chartered Physiotherapy | Physiotherapy Clinic |
| 13 | Midland Physiotherapy Clinic | Physiotherapy Clinic |
| 14 | Campbell's Dental | Dental Practice |
| 15 | Westside Dental Athlone | Dental Practice |
| 16 | Meares Dental Surgery | Dental Practice |
| 17 | Dental Excellence Athlone | Dental Practice |
| 18 | Shannon Orthodontics | Dental Practice |
| 19 | Clonbrusk Resource Centre | Medical Centre |
| 20 | Midoc Athlone | Medical Centre |
| 21 | Civil Registration Service Primary Care Centre | Medical Centre |
| 22 | Midlands Counselling Clinic | Counselling Clinic |
| 23 | The Dancing Soul | Family Counselling |
| 24 | Paul Gill Hypnotherapy Athlone | Hypnotherapy Clinic |
| 25 | Olivia Feehan Counselling | Psychotherapy |
| 26 | Michelle Mulligan Counselling | Psychotherapy |
| 27 | Athlone Foot Clinic | Podiatrist |
| 28 | Elliot Opticians | Opticians |
| 29 | Specsavers Athlone | Opticians |
| 30 | Athlone Opticians | Opticians |
| 31 | Cooney's Opticians | Opticians |

Table 2 - Existing health care facilities.

- 4.1.2.** As outlined above there are a total of 9 no. medical centres, 8 no. dentists, 5 no. optometrists, 3 no. physiotherapists, 5 no. mental health / counselling specialists and 1 no. foot specialist available in Athlone to serve the future population of the development.
- 4.1.3.** The list of health care providers detailed in this section is not exhaustive and, given the status of Athlone as a regional growth centre, it is considered that other health care providers may be available to serve future residents of the development.
- 4.1.4.** Furthermore, it is noted that a number of health care providers listed above operate out of their own homes. It is considered that the size and range of accommodation proposed within the development caters for opportunities for provision of new services to serve the development in addition to existing services.
- 4.1.5.** It is evident from the above that there is a wide-ranging number and variety of existing health care facilities in Athlone to serve the future population of the development.

4.2. Childcare Facilities

- 4.2.1. As part of the subject application a detailed Childcare and School Demand Assessment has been prepared by Delphi Design and is submitted with the application as a separate document. For convenience and clarity, the assessment of existing childcare facilities is summarised in this section however for full details please refer to the Childcare and School Demand Assessment.
- 4.2.2. Existing childcare services were sourced from the information available from Tusla (www.tusla.ie); Pobal (www.pobal.ie); and the Westmeath Childcare Committee (www.westmeathchildcare.ie).
- 4.2.3. In total, 23 no. existing childcare services were identified within a 2 kilometre radius of the development as detailed in Figure 4.

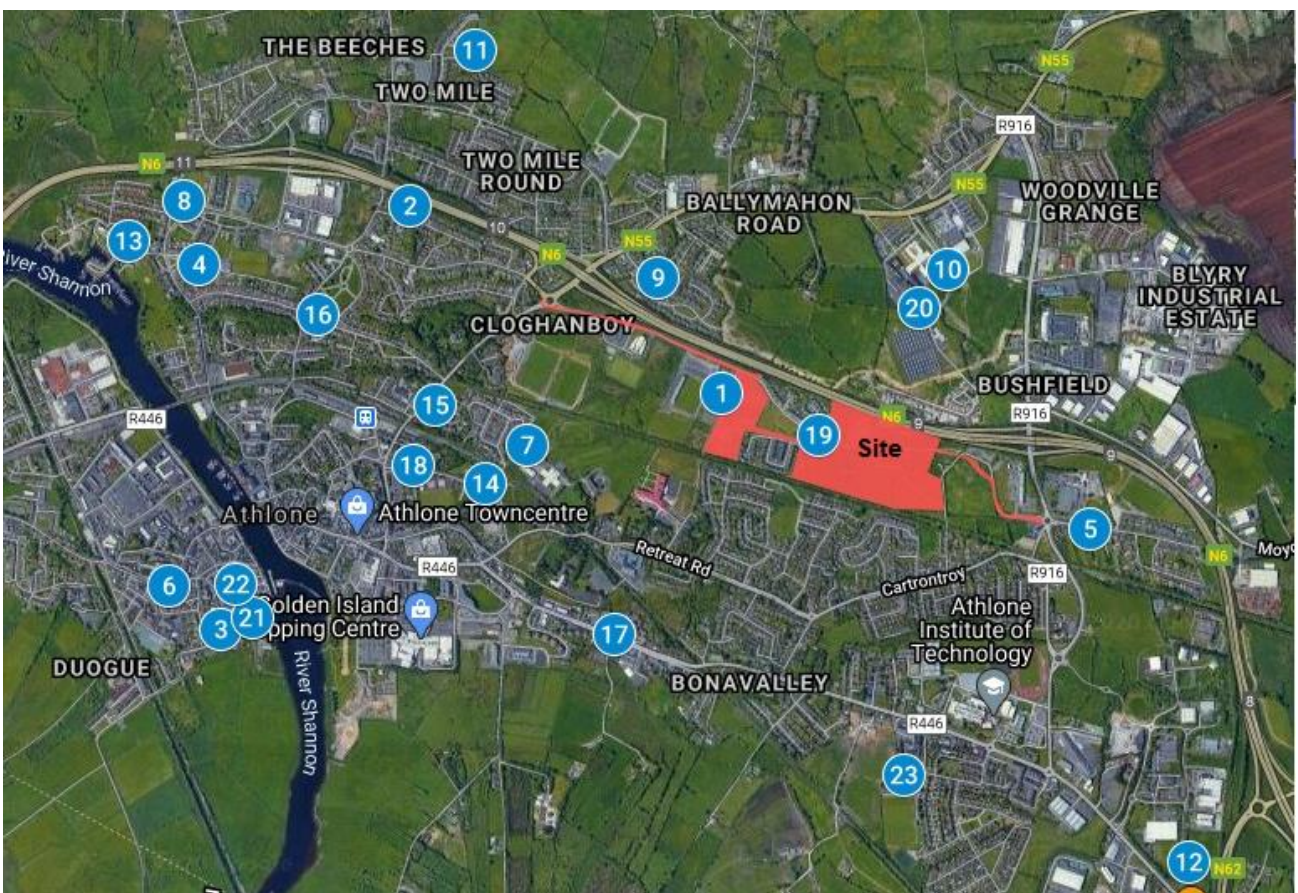


Figure 4 - Existing childcare facilities.

- 4.2.4. Information on the capacity of each existing service was sourced from the aforementioned websites and through direct contact with each facility. Table 3 details the existing childcare services located within the 2 kilometre radius of the development sourced from the Tusla website while Table 4 details the childcare facilities located within a 2km radius of the development site sourced from the Pobal website. Details on the capacity of each facility were sourced from Tusla. Where information on capacity was not available, individual facilities were contacted directly. The response of each facility contacted is detailed under the 'Vacancies' column in Tables 3 & 4. The numbers in the left column correspond to the location of the facilities identified in Figure 4.



| Number | Name | Capacity | Vacancies | Facility Type |
|--------|---|----------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Naionra Lios na Nog | 22 | Not Disclosed | Part Time, Sessional |
| 2 | Treasures Island | 22 | Not Disclosed | Sessional |
| 3 | Little Acorns Montessori | 22 | Not Disclosed | Sessional |
| 4 | Saint Kieran's Childcare Centre | 36 | Not Disclosed | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 5 | Sallywags Childcare Centre | 50 | At Capacity | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 6 | Peek A Boo Pre-School | 22 | Not Disclosed | Part Time, Sessional |
| 7 | Sarsfield Pre-School | 22 | At Capacity | Part Time, Sessional |
| 8 | Clonbrusk Childcare Centre | 95 | c. 5 no. vacancies | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 9 | Busy Kids Creche | 105 | c. 35 no. vacancies | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 10 | Chatterboxes Childcare | 39 | At Capacity | Full Day |
| 11 | Realta Gael Montessori | 55 | At Capacity | Part Time |
| 12 | Grovelands Childcare IDA | 147 | c. 3 no. vacancies | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 13 | Jolly Mariner Childcare | 52 | Not Disclosed | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 14 | Clonros | 12 | Not Disclosed | Part Time |
| 15 | Grovelands Childcare Centre Ballymahon Road | 35 | At Capacity | Sessional |
| 16 | Na Fea Montessori | 22 | At Capacity | Part Time, Sessional |
| 17 | Cam Community Pre-School | 22 | At Capacity | Sessional |

Table 3 - Existing childcare services sourced from Tulsa.

| Number | Name | Capacity | Vacancies | Facility Type |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 18 | Saint Mary's After School Service | 30 | At Capacity | Part Time, Sessional |
| 19 | Brawny After School Service | 30 | At Capacity | Sessional, After School |
| 20 | Páistí Beaga | Not Disclosed / Unable to Confirm | Not Disclosed | Part Time, Full Day, Sessional |
| 21 | Saint Paul's After School Service | 30 | At Capacity | Sessional, After School |
| 22 | Saint Peter's After School Service | 50 | c. 7 no. vacancies | Sessional, After- School |
| 23 | Willow Park After School Service | 30 | At Capacity | Sessional, After School |

Table 4 - Existing childcare services sourced from Pobal.

4.2.5. In total, details of capacity and vacancies were found for 15 no. of the 23 no. existing childcare services located in the study area. 11 no. of these 15 no. facilities claimed to be at full capacity, with 4 no. of the 15 no. facilities stating they had capacity to enrol additional children. In total, these 15 no. childcare facilities have a capacity for 762 no. childcare places and have current vacancies for 50 no. children, which equates to a vacancy rate of c. 6.6%



- 4.2.6.** Taking into account the information available on capacity from the Tusla website and a reasonable estimate of the capacity for the 1 no. facility for which capacity information could not be obtained, and applying the above vacancy rate (6.6%) to the 8 no. childcare services for which existing vacancy rates could not be established, it is considered reasonable to suggest that there may be c. 14 no. further childcare places available in addition to the confirmed 50 no. available childcare places found above.
- 4.2.7.** In total, there are 23 no. existing childcare services located in the study area which have a total capacity for c. 972 no. children. This assessment has established a confirmed vacancy of 50 no. childcare places in these 23 no. childcare services. Based on reasonable estimates it is considered likely that there may be c. 14 no. further childcare places available in addition to the confirmed 50 no. available childcare places.
- 4.2.8.** In addition to existing childcare services, as detailed in Section 2.6. of this assessment, the development caters for 2 no. childcare facilities.
- 4.2.9.** The first of the proposed childcare facilities is comprised of a 2 storey crèche measuring c. 321m² located on the ground & first floors of Block C. This facility has an associated outdoor play area of c. 167m² located to its east. The proposed creche has a capacity for c. 62 no. children based upon the internal spatial standards detailed in the Childcare Facilities-Guidelines for Planning Authority (2001).
- 4.2.10.** The second of the proposed childcare facilities is comprised of a 1 storey creche measuring c. 448m² located on the ground floor of Block T. This facility has an associated outdoor play area of c. 241m² located to its east. The proposed creche has a capacity for c. 83 no. children based upon the internal spatial standards detailed in the 2001 Childcare Facilities-Guidelines for Planning Authority.
- 4.2.11.** The development therefore caters for 2 no. childcare facilities with a combined capacity for c. 145 no. childcare places.
- 4.2.12.** As detailed in Section 2.6. of this assessment, based on the recommendations of the Childcare Facilities-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) and the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) the development is expected to generate a demand for c. 138 no. childcare places.
- 4.2.13.** The development caters for 2 no. childcare facilities which has a combined capacity for c. 145 no. childcare places, which is in excess of the expected demand expected to be generated by the proposed development. Therefore, it is evident in all the foregoing that there the development will be adequately served by existing and proposed childcare facilities.

4.3. Primary Education

4.3.1. As part of the subject application a detailed Childcare and School Demand Assessment has been prepared by Delphi Design and is submitted with the application as a separate document. For convenience and clarity, the assessment of existing primary schools is summarised in this section however for full details please refer to the Childcare and School Demand Assessment.

4.3.2. In total 7 no. existing primary schools were identified within a 2 kilometre radius of the development site, as detailed in Figure 5.



Figure 5 - Existing primary schools.

4.3.3. Details of existing primary schools found, their enrolment figures for the 2019/2020 academic year and their capacity can be found in Table 5 below.

| Number | Name | 2019/2020 Enrolment | Capacity | Facility Type |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí | 293 | c. 325 | Mixed |
| 2 | Saint Hilda's Special School | 43 | At Capacity | Mixed |
| 3 | Cornamaddy National School | 263 | c. 275 | Mixed |
| 4 | Saint Mary's Primary School | 412 | c. 440 | Mixed |
| 5 | Saint Paul's National School | 138 | c. 185 | Mixed |
| 6 | Saint Peter's National School | 147 | At Capacity | Mixed |
| 7 | Athlone National School | 64 | c. 75 | Mixed |
| Total | | 1,360 | c. 1,490 | - |

Table 5 - Existing primary schools.



- 4.3.4.** It is evident from the above that there are 7 no. primary schools within walking distance of the development which have a total existing enrolment of 1,360 no. students and 130 no. additional places currently available based on direct feedback from the schools.
- 4.3.5.** Based on the the assumption that there are 8 no. year groups in primary schools (Junior Infants, Senior Infants & 1st – 6th class) it is reasonable to assume that there is an average of 170 no. students in each year group in the primary schools detailed above. It is therefore reasonable to assume that 170 no. students will graduate from the primary school system into post-primary each year in the 7 no. schools detailed above.
- 4.3.6.** The proposed development consists of 576 no. dwellings. Based on 576 no. dwellings with an average household size of 2.72 persons, the development will likely generate a population of c. 1,567 persons. On the assumption that 12% of the population will be of primary school age this equates to c. 188 no. additional school places generated by the development.
- 4.3.7.** With the number of students graduating to post-primary school every year, taken in combination with the number of vacant places available in the 7 no. primary schools found, it is considered reasonable to assess that there is more than adequate capacity in existing primary schools to cater for the development. For full details please refer to the Childcare and School Demand Assessment prepared by Delphi Design which is enclosed with the application as a separate document.

4.4. Post-Primary Education

- 4.4.1. As part of the subject application a detailed Childcare and School Demand Assessment has been prepared by Delphi Design and is submitted with the application in a separate document. For convenience and clarity, the assessment of existing post-primary schools is summarised in this section however for full details please refer to the Childcare and School Demand Assessment.
- 4.4.2. In total 3 no. existing post- primary schools were identified within a 2 kilometre radius of the development site, as detailed in Figure 6.



Figure 6 - Existing post-primary schools.

- 4.4.3. Details of existing post-primary schools found, their enrolment figures for the 2019/2020 academic year, and their capacity can be found in Table 6.

| Number | Name | 2019/2020 Enrolment | Capacity | Facility Type |
|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Athlone Community College | 1,180 | At Capacity | Mixed |
| 2 | Marist Collage | 517 | c. 530 | Boys |
| 3 | Our Lady's Bower | 708 | c. 715 | Girls |
| Total | | 2,405 | c. 2,425 | - |

Table 6 - Existing post-primary schools.

- 4.4.4. It is evident from the above that there are 3 no. post-primary schools within walking distance of the development which have a total existing enrolment of 2,405 no. students and 20 no. additional places currently available based on direct feedback from the schools.
- 4.4.5. Based on the the assumption that there are 6 no. year groups in post-primary schools (1st - 6th year) it is reasonable to assume that there is an average of 401 no. students in each year group in the post-primary schools detailed above. It is therefore reasonable to assume that 401 no. students will graduate from the post-primary school system into the labour market/further education each year in the 3 no. schools detailed above.



- 4.4.6.** The proposed development consists of 576 no. dwellings. Based on 576 no. dwellings with an average household size of 2.72 persons, the development will likely generate a population of c. 1,567 persons. On the assumption that 8.5% of the population will be of primary school age this equates to c. 133 no. additional school places generated by the proposed development.
- 4.4.7.** With the number of students graduating from post-primary education every year, taken in combination with the number of vacant places available in the 3 no. post-primary schools found, it is considered reasonable to assess that there is more than adequate capacity in existing post-primary schools to cater for the development. For full details please refer to the Childcare and School Demand Assessment prepared by Delphi Design which is enclosed with the application as a separate document.

4.5. Tertiary / Further Education

4.5.1. This section identifies the existing third level / further education provision in Athlone. In total, 3 no. third level / further education providers were found. These are identified in Figure 7 and Table 7.



Figure 7 - Existing third level / further education facilities.

| Number | Name |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Athlone Institute of Technology |
| 2 | Athlone Training Centre |
| 3 | National Learning Network |

Table 7 - Existing third level / further education facilities.

4.5.2. The Athlone Institute of Technology 2018/2019 Annual Report states that facility had a student population of 5,316 persons. The report also establishes that Athlone Institute of Technology was first in Ireland's official league table for research and listed in U-Multirank's 'Top 25 Performing Universities in the World for Interdisciplinary Research'.

4.5.3. The Athlone Training Centre provides for a wide range of day courses, traineeships and apprenticeships delivered on a full-time and part-time basis and aimed at delivering practical skills and competencies which are in demand. All courses are certified and lead to qualifications ranging from Level 3 to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or third-party specialised certification.

4.5.4. The Athlone National Learning Network provides a range of free courses to people who have had an accident, illness, injury or have a disability and extra support needs. The facility caters for courses aimed at gaining practical skills to allow students to go onto further education or enter the workforce.

4.5.5. It is evident from the above that there is a wide-range of existing adult learning, further education and training services in Athlone to support the development.

4.6. Sports and Recreation

4.6.1. This section identifies the different sports and recreation-based facilities in Athlone. There were 31 of sports and recreation facilities found, these are identified Figure 8 and Table 8.

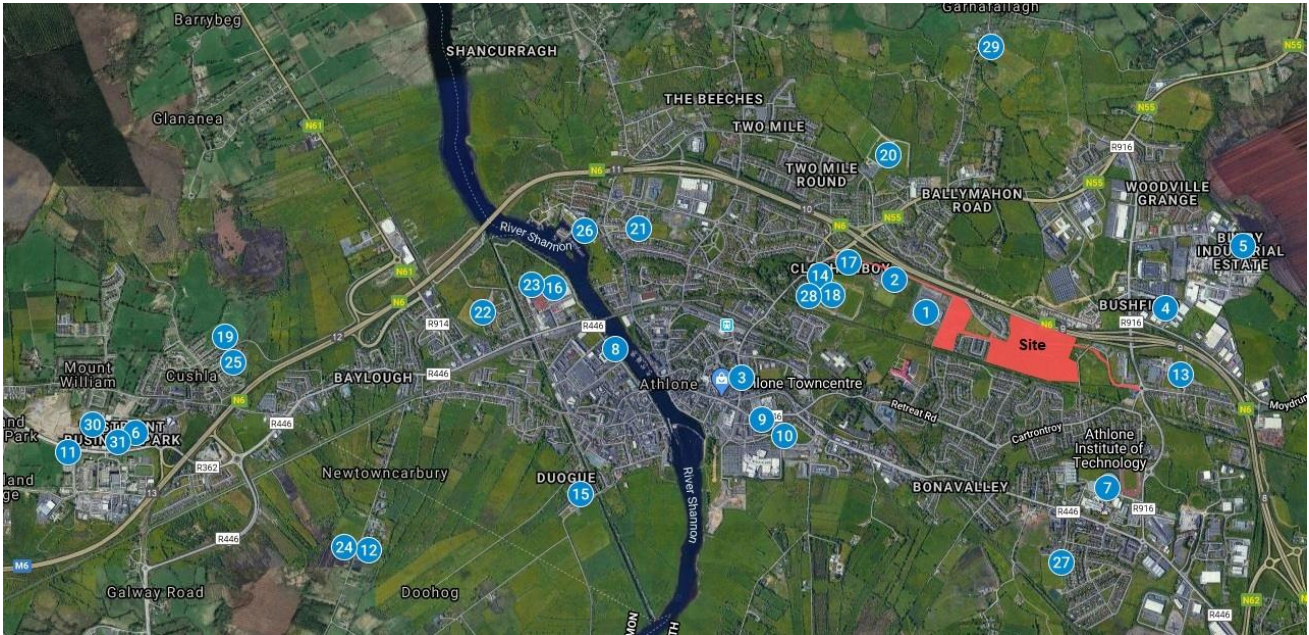


Figure 8 - Existing sports and recreation facilities.

| Number | Name | Type of Facility |
|--------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Athlone Town Football Club | Football Club |
| 2 | Athlone Regional Sports Centre | Sports Centre |
| 3 | Sheraton Fitness Athlone | Gym |
| 4 | Crossfit Croí Athlone | Gym |
| 5 | JG Elite Gym | Gym |
| 6 | CrossFit Cu Chulainn Athlone | Gym |
| 7 | AIT Sport | Sports Centre |
| 8 | Athlone Boat Club | Water Sports |
| 9 | Westside Thai Boxing & Martial Arts Club | Martial Arts |
| 10 | Sasta fitness centre | Gym |
| 11 | Unique Health and Fitness Club | Gym |
| 12 | St Peter Astro pitch | Football Facilities |
| 13 | Garrycastle GAA | GAA Club |
| 14 | Southern Gaels GAA Club | GAA Club |
| 15 | Smart Fitness Athlone | Gym |
| 16 | Na Fianna Martial arts and Fitness Centre | Martial Arts |
| 17 | Olive Keyes Pilates | Gym |
| 18 | Athlone GAA Club | GAA Club |
| 19 | Saint Joseph's Football Club | Football Club |
| 20 | Buccaneers Rugby Football Club | Rugby Club |
| 21 | AC Celtic Football Club | Football Club |
| 22 | St Francis FC Athlone | Football Club |
| 23 | Gentex Football Club | Football Club |
| 24 | St. Peter's FC Athlone | Football Club |
| 25 | Athlone Minotaurs | American Football |
| 26 | Athlone Sub-Aqua Club | Water Sports |
| 27 | Willow Park Football | Football Club |
| 28 | Athlone Tennis Club | Tennis Club |
| 29 | Custume Pitch & Putt Club | Golf |
| 30 | Athlone Taekwondo | Martial Arts |
| 31 | Fusion Training Centre | Gym |

Table 8 - Existing sports and recreation facilities.

- 4.6.2.** In addition to the above, Athlone Golf Club (7km to the north-west), Mount Temple Golf Club (16km to the east) and Athlone Driving Range and Golf Academy (10km to the north-west) are all located in close proximity to Athlone.
- 4.6.3.** The list of sports and recreation facilities detailed in this section is not exhaustive and, given the status of Athlone as a regional growth centre, it is considered that other sports and recreation facilities may be available to serve future residents of the development.
- 4.6.4.** It is evident from the above that there is an extensive range of existing sports and recreation based amenities within the Athlone to support the development. The most prominent of these being sports clubs (14) and gyms (9).

4.7. Public Parks

4.7.1. Map 8 of the existing Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 details existing public open spaces in Athlone. There are 3 no. public parks identified in same which are detailed in Figure 9 and Table 9.



Figure 9 - Existing public parks.

| Number | Name | Approximate Size (Hectare) |
|--------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Burgess Park | 3 |
| 2 | Wansboro Park | 3.75 |
| 3 | Bogganfin Park | 14 |

Table 9 - Existing public parks.

- 4.7.2. In addition to the above identified public parks, there is a large variety of a smaller open spaces serving existing residential areas in Athlone, the most relevant one being the existing public open space which serves the Brawny estate that bisects the development subject to this assessment.
- 4.7.3. The development will also benefit from its location next to the Old Rail Trail Greenway, which abuts the development to the south. The Old Rail Trail Greenway provides for 40km of off-road cycling, runs from Athlone to Mullingar and forms part of the Dublin-Galway National Cycle Network. The proposed development has catered for 5 no. new connection/access points onto the Greenway and provides for segregated walking/cycle routes throughout the proposed scheme, as well as a variety of public open spaces.
- 4.7.4. Also of relevance are the Lough Boora Parklands (circa 25km to the south-east), Portlick Millennium Forest (circa 8km to the north), and Dún Na Sí Amenity & Heritage Park (circa 12km to the south-east) which offer popular recreational spaces for residents of Athlone, including for a number of walks and trails. Furthermore, the development will benefit from Athlone's location on the banks of the River Shannon and Lough Ree.
- 4.7.5. It is evident from the above that there is a wide-range of existing open and recreational space to support future residents of the development. In addition to these existing areas, the development caters for an appropriate provision of open space, walking routes and cycle routes.

4.8. Religious Facilities

4.8.1. This section identifies the different religious facilities in the Athlone to serve the development. 10 no. religious facilities were found. These are identified in Figure 10 and Table 10.



Figure 10 - Existing religious facilities.

| Number | Name |
|--------|---|
| 1 | Saint Mary's Church of Ireland |
| 2 | Saints Peter & Paul's Church |
| 3 | Saint Mary's Catholic Church |
| 4 | Athlone Methodist Church |
| 5 | Corpus Christi Catholic Church |
| 6 | River Of Life Athlone Le Ceile Christian Church |
| 7 | Redemption Baptist Church |
| 8 | Cherith Athlone Baptist Church |
| 9 | Franciscan Friary Hall |
| 10 | Coosan Church |

Table 10 - Existing religious and community facilities.

4.8.2. It is evident from the above that there is a wide-range of existing religious facilities in Athlone to serve the population of the development.

4.9. Other Facilities

4.9.1. This section identifies the remaining community facilities of relevance in Athlone and details the type of facility. 9 no. facilities were found. These are identified in Figure 11 and Table 11.



Figure 11 - Other existing facilities.

| Number | Name | Type of Facility |
|--------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Aidan Library | Public Library |
| 2 | Sonas Nursing Home | Care Home |
| 3 | Stella Maris Nursing Home | Care Home |
| 4 | Retreat Nursing Home | Care Home |
| 5 | Brawny Community Centre | Community Centre |
| 6 | Monksland Community Centre | Community Centre |
| 7 | Athlone Scout Group | Community Group |
| 8 | Athlone & Midland Samaritans | Homeless Services |
| 9 | Midlands Simon Community | Homeless Services |

Table 11- Other existing facilities.

4.9.2. It is evident from the above that there is a wide-range of existing community and support facilities in Athlone to serve the future population of the proposed development.



5.0. Conclusions

- 5.1.** This Social Infrastructure Assessment is put forward in support of the proposed SHD application submitted to An Bord Pleanála on behalf of Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd. The assessment aimed to:
1. Review the existing planning policy context in relation to the provision of social and community infrastructure;
 2. Identify existing social and community infrastructure in Athlone;
 3. Consider the social and community infrastructure proposed as part of the subject development;
 4. Evaluate the if expected demand will be appropriately met by existing and proposed services.
- 5.2.** With regard to Aim 1 of the assessment, Section 3 of the assessment reviewed the existing planning policy context in relation to the provision of social and community infrastructure and concluded that an analysis of the existing social and community infrastructure is required as part of the proposed SHD application submitted to An Bord Pleanála.
- 5.3.** With regard to Aim 3 of the assessment, it is considered that the proposed childcare facilities catered for within the development have a more than adequate capacity to cater for the expected number of childcare places generated by the development. The proposed community hub catered for within the development supports the objectives of the LSFP to provide for new community facilities, and will provide a focal point for residents of the scheme.
- 5.4.** With regard to Aims 2 & 4 of the assessment, it has been identified there are a wide range and variety of existing facilities in Athlone to support the development. In total, 120 no. social amenities and facilities were identified, consisting of 31 no. health care facilities, 23 no. childcare facilities, 7 no. primary schools, 3 no. post-primary schools, 3 no. tertiary and further education facilities, 31 no. sports and recreation facilities, 10 no. religious facilities, 3 no. public parks and 9 no. other community facilities.
- 5.5.** Health care, childcare, education, sports and recreation, religious and community facilities are all well-represented in Athlone to cater for the existing and future residential population. It is considered that the future population of the development will also benefit from Athlone's strategic location and transport routes which offer easy accessibility to all parts of the country.
- 5.6.** Having regard to the above, it is considered that the Athlone provides a wide-range of existing social and community infrastructure to support the development.



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