

School Demand and Concentration Report

Proposed Strategic Housing Development

Clonminch/Gayfield, Tullamore, Co.Offaly.



Prepared on behalf of
Steinfort Investment Fund

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report supports a planning application for a proposed strategic housing development on a site in Tullamore, Co.Offaly. In accordance with the written opinion of An Bord Pleanála (ABP-309529-21), a school demand and concentration report is required pursuant to article 285 (5) (b) of the Planning and Development (SHD) Regulations 2017. This report will detail the concentration of schools in Tullamore in relation to the application site and the potential demand generated by the proposed SHD.

2.0 SCHOOL CONCENTRATION

Figure 1 identifies the primary and post-primary schools in Tullamore town and environs. All schools assessed are within 3km radius of the application site. Information was obtained from the Department of Education and Skills online data records and site visits undertaken as part of the preparation of this report.

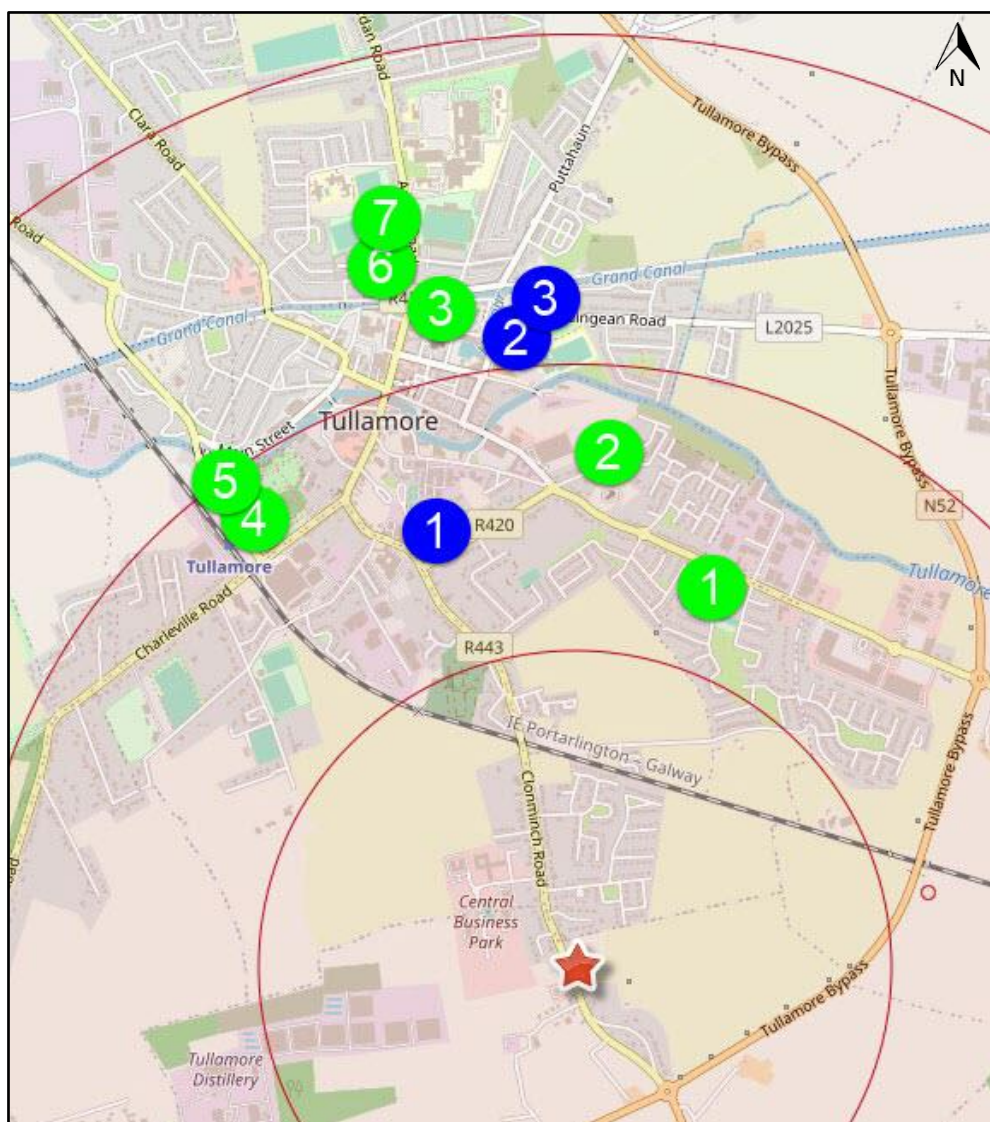


Figure 1: Primary and Post-Primary Schools in Tullamore

	Primary School		Secondary School
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The Sustainable Development Goals Initiative record that in County Offaly, the majority of the population is within 5km of a primary school and post primary school. It is considered that the 3km radius utilised in this report is reflective of this pattern and realistic for an urban area

2.1 SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND EXPANSION PLANS

Primary Schools		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
No.	School				
1	Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada	204	205	207	212
2	Charleville National School	97	92	90	100
3	St. Philomena's National School	162	164	177	178
4	Scoil Mhuire	319	317	313	300
5	Scoil Bhride	173	168	171	155
6	St. Joseph's National School	414	395	408	399
7	Scoil Eoin Phoil	171	202	206	202
	Total	1540	1543	1572	1546

Table 1: Primary School Enrolments

Post-Primary Schools		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
No.	School				
1	Colaiste Choilm	611	608	610	619
2	Tullamore College	633	662	684	680
3	Sacred Heart Secondary School	611	590	595	543
	Total	1855	1860	1889	1842

Table 2: Post-Primary School Enrolments

As illustrated above, enrolments for the academic year 2020-2021 in primary schools in Tullamore within a 3km catchment amount to 1,546 students and post-primary school enrolments amount to 1,842 students.

According to the Department of Education and Skills online information sources, there are three additional 80m² classrooms being constructed (on site) at St. Joseph's National School, Arden View, Tullamore (no. 6 figure 1) and two additional 80m² classrooms at design stage for Scoil Eoin Phoil (no.7 figure 1).

At a post-primary level, plans to extend Colaiste Choilm (no.1 figure 1), are at design stage for 3 classrooms, one tech room and two science labs in addition to a Design Communication and Graphics room, art room, multi-media room and two SEN classrooms. Works were completed in 2020 at Sacred Heart School (no.3 figure 1), Tullamore to provide a new PE room and create an ASD unit while a new art room has been approved under the additional accommodation scheme.

3.0 POTENTIAL DEMAND GENERATED FOR SCHOOL PLACES AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development of 349no. residential units has the potential to yield a total population of 942no. on completion based on the State average household size of 2.7 determined by the 2016 Census(CSO). This new community could potentially include 245no. children. Approximate 113no. of these children would be considered primary school age and 75no. would be considered secondary school age (Census 2016 – An Age Profile of Ireland).

While it is recognised that the assessment of need and provision of new schools is ultimately the responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills, it is submitted that Tullamore is well catered for in terms of primary and secondary schools which could absorb the development proposed.

3.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND NODAL MASTERPLAN

This application is accompanied by a Nodal Masterplan for the Eastern Node of the Southern Environs Masterplan area. A school site is provided for as part of the development of the Eastern Node on lands in the ownership of the applicant. Figure 2 illustrates the position of the school site in relation to the proposed SHD. The proposed development has been designed with full regard to the future school site with roads and services brought to the site boundary and in terms of urban design and pedestrian/cyclist connections. The reserved school site falls within sequence phase 1 masterplan lands and as a non-residential use is not affected by the core strategy. As such, it could be released at any time.

In response to the concerns of An Bord Pleanála in case ABP-307832, the link street has been realigned within the application site. DBFL have provided an indicative alignment for the remainder of the Eastern Node as well as details of a possible bridge crossing point in recognition of Plan policy. The access road to the reserved school site is located to the north of the Link Street and east of the application site in recognition of the strategic role of the link street and in order to provide the school site with appropriate and independent access to the node as a whole.

A feasibility study was undertaken for the reserved school site during the preparation of the Nodal Masterplan and the Department of Education and Skills confirmed the proposed site is deemed sufficient for a 16-24 room primary school.



Figure 2: Nodal masterplan drawing here with school highlighted

4.0 FUTURE PROJECTED DEMAND FOR SCHOOL PLACES

The Department of Education publication 'Projections of full-time enrolment Primary and Second level 2020-2038' outlines the projections for full-time enrolments in primary and secondary schools up to 2038.

Section 4 of the Report projects that primary school enrolment will fall over the coming years reaching a low point by 2034 before rising slowly to 2038. The sharpest fall is predicted during the period 2022-2027, when the proposed development is likely to be constructed. In 2026 it is projected there will be some 8,000 fewer children entering junior infants than in September 2020.

Figure 1 Actual and projected enrolments in primary schools, 1989-2051

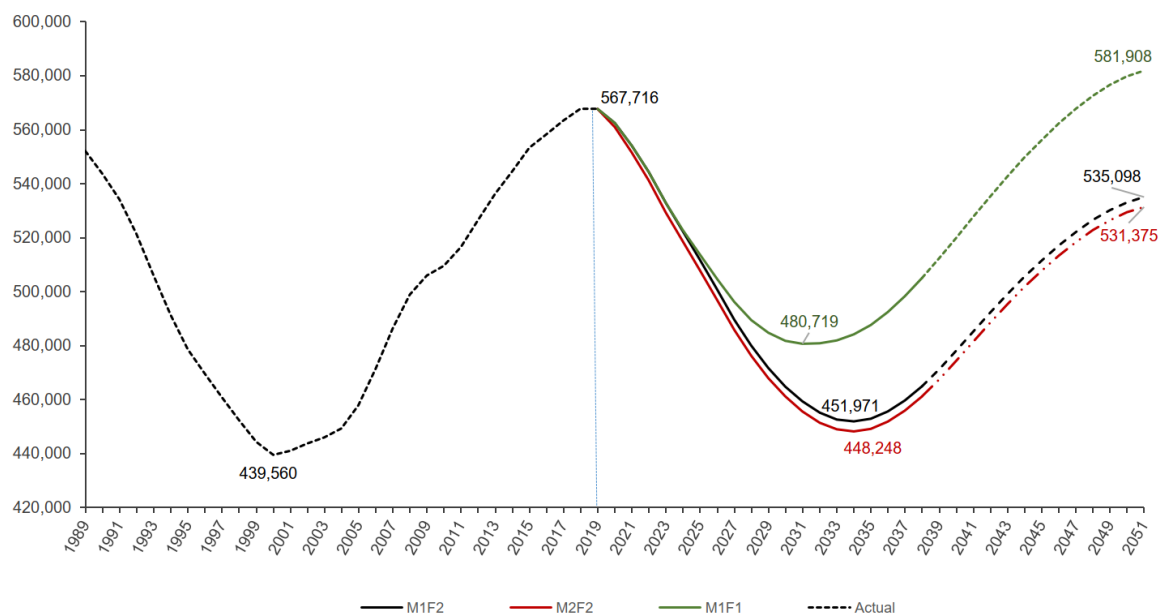


Figure 3: Projected enrolment at Primary Level, 2018 to 2036 extracted from the Department of Education 'Projections of full-time enrolment Primary and Second level 2020-2038'

Post-primary school enrolments are projected to peak in 2024 after which there will be a gradual fall in numbers towards the end of the projected period. Extended projections (2051) show a likely increase in future enrolments.

4.1 DEPARTMENTAL SUBMISSION ON THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Offaly County Development Plan is currently under review. A submission was made by the Department of Education and Skills on the draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 dated the 7th of October 2020. The submission states *"Based on its analysis, this Department anticipates that some requirements for additional educational accommodation may emerge over the lifetime of the Plan, should the projected population increases materialise. Given the National Planning Framework's objectives around compact growth, the facility to **expand existing schools and/or to otherwise maximise the use of existing school sites will be critical** for this Department in the future, to meet emerging requirements in Offaly and nationally (emphasis added).*

As detailed above at section 2.1 of this report, the Department is undertaking works at existing schools in Tullamore to increase capacity which is in keeping with the overall objective of compact growth.

The submission specifically states the following in relation to Tullamore:

"Having considered projected population growth in the settlement, this Department has identified a potential future requirement for additional primary and post primary school accommodation in Tullamore, subject to the projected population materialising, the age profile of that future population and other factors which influence school accommodation needs. Explicit support in the Plan for additional school accommodation in the settlement would be welcomed, in particular the reservation of a suitable site or sites for one new primary school and one

new post primary school, in order to meet potential requirements which may emerge over the lifetime of the Plan”.

The submission by the Department does not identify any existing need for a new primary or post primary school in Tullamore. Potential future demand for one primary school and one secondary school is dependent on Tullamore reaching projected population targets outlined by the National Development Plan among other factors.

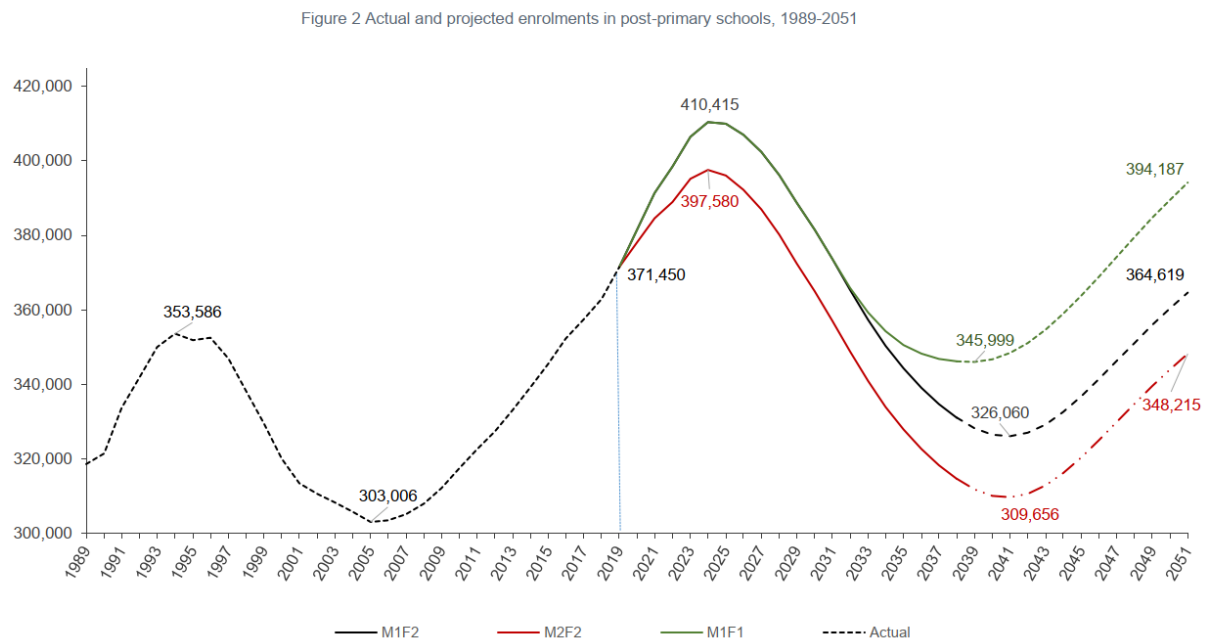


Figure 4: Projected enrolment at Post Primary Level, 2018 to 2036 extracted from the Department of Education ‘Projections of full-time enrolment Primary and Second level 2020-2038’

5.0 CONCLUSION

Tullamore is well catered for in terms of primary and post primary schools with major works planned to extend existing facilities. According to the Department of Education and Skills, there is no immediate need identified for a new primary or post-primary school in Tullamore. Future provision is required to be provided for in recognition of the targets contained in the NPF and the Nodal Masterplan submitted with this planning application responds to this approach.

It is submitted that the potential school age population generated by the proposed development can be adequately absorbed by existing schools in Tullamore and the projected fall in future enrolments.