



Childcare Needs Assessment

Proposed Strategic Housing Development,
'The Farm', Bessborough, Ballinure, Blackrock, Cork.

Client Estuary View Enterprises 2020 Limited

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01. Introduction

1.1 CONTEXT

This Childcare Needs Assessment has been prepared to accompany a planning application for the development of 140 residential units at 'The Farm', Bessborough, Ballinure, Blackrock, Cork. Specifically, it examines the demand for childcare places to be generated by the proposal and the extent to which this can or will be catered for on or off-site.

The subject lands previously formed part of the 'Bessboro Farm' and parkland in the Bessboro Demesne, and are now adjacent to Mahon District Centre (to the east) and within the South-eastern Suburbs of Cork City, as defined in the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021.

The majority of the site is within the '*Landscape Preservation Zone*' zoning use in an area that is described in the Mahon Local Area Plan as a 'key development area', with a small infrastructure element running around the south and west of the zoning. There has been significant change in this area over recent years through the development of the N40 South Ring Road, Mahon Point Shopping Centre and Retail Park, City Gate, Lough Mahon Technology Park and Mahon Industrial Estate, in addition to various residential developments particularly in nearby Jacobs Island. It is an area where further residential development is planned and anticipated in the future.



Figure 1.1 Site Context

02. Planning Policy Context

2.1 CHILDCARE GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES 2001

The national Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities provide a framework to guide both local authorities in preparing development plans and assessing applications for planning permission, and developers and childcare providers in formulating development proposals.

Appendix 2 of the guidelines establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas. One facility providing a minimum of 20 childcare places is considered to be a reasonable starting point in this regard. The guidance acknowledges that other case-specific assumptions may lead to an increase or decrease in this requirement.

The guidelines emphasize that the results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a county childcare strategy should also be considered.

Appendix 2 also states that the threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas.

2.2 CIRCULAR PL 3/2016

In March 2016, the Government issued a circular in relation to childcare facilities under the early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. In accordance with the stated aspiration to increase access to childcare nationally, the circular requests that local planning authorities:

- *“Expedite all pre-planning application consultation requests from childcare facility providers in relation to proposals to extend opening hours, to increase capacity or to provide new facilities.*
- *Expedite, insofar as is 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”.*

2.3 UNIVERSAL DESIGN GUIDELINES 2019

On 10th June 2019, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, launched the Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings. These guidelines are an important step in making all Early Learning and Care services accessible to all children. This publication offers guidance on the refurbishment, renovation and building of centres for Early Learning and Care in Ireland. The guidelines apply to both new-build and retrofit projects and provide a flexible Universal Design framework to ensure that settings are accessible, understandable and easy to use for all children, staff, families and visitors.

- The Universal Design ELC setting comprises four quality features;
- Site Location, Approach, Entry and Site Layout

- Entering and Moving about the ELC setting
- Key Internal and External Spaces
- Elements and Systems

2.4 CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015

Objective 7.7: Childcare Facilities of the Cork City Development Plan 2015 (CDP) relates to the provision of childcare facilities. It states that Cork City Council will:

'Cork City Council will support the provision of high-quality childcare facilities throughout the city suited to the needs of a given area and will:

- » *Require purpose built childcare facilities as part of proposals for new residential developments of more than 75 dwelling units. However, where it can be clearly established that existing facilities are sufficient, alternative arrangements will be considered;*
- » *Consult with the Cork City Childcare Company and the HSE on planning applications where childcare facilities are proposed;*
- » *Require employers with more than 500 members of staff to provide childcare facilities as part of planning applications for significant new and extended development.'*

2.5 DRAFT CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022

Objective 3.21 of the Draft Plan set out to support the provision and expansion of high-quality childcare facilities throughout the city. The Council will:

- *Require purpose built childcare facilities as part of proposals for new residential developments of more than 75 dwelling units. However, where it can be clearly established that existing facilities are sufficient, alternative arrangements will be considered.*
- *Consult with the Cork City Childcare Company and the HSE on planning applications where childcare facilities are proposed.*
- *Require employers with more than 500 members of staff to provide childcare facilities as part of planning applications for significant new and extended development.*

2.6 SUSTAINABLE URBAN HOUSING DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW APARTMENTS - GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES' (2020)

We note section 4.7 of the 2020 Apartment Guidelines which states that:

- *'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'.*

03. Assessment

3.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed scheme will consist of 140 no. apartments comprising approximately 50% 1-bedroom apartments, 49.3% 2-bedroom apartments and 0.7% 3-bedroom apartments. This housing mix is consistent with the latest 2020 Apartment Guidelines.

Unit Type	No. Units	Percentage of Overall Mix
Studio Apartment	-	-
1 Bedroom Apartment	70	50%
2 Bedroom Apartment	69	49.3%
3 Bedroom Apartment	1	0.7%
Total	140	100%

Table 01 – Unit Breakdown

The proposed residential layout integrates private and social housing ranging from 1 bedroom to 3 bedroom apartments. The proposed housing mix is consistent with all national planning policies relating to housing mix in residential developments (as outlined in the accompanying Statement of Consistency).

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Based on the CSO Census of Population 2016, children of crèche-going age accounted for 5.8% of the population in the Census Small Area within which the subject site lies. 6.9% of the immediately adjoining Small Area is of creche going age. For comparison, the same age cohort accounts for 6.0% of the Cork City Population. The childcare requirement in the immediate vicinity of the subject site is slightly less than the city average. The 6.9% figure relates to small

area 048043010, within which the Mahon District Centre is located. This indicates that there is a slightly larger than average crèche-going population in the area adjacent to the subject site.

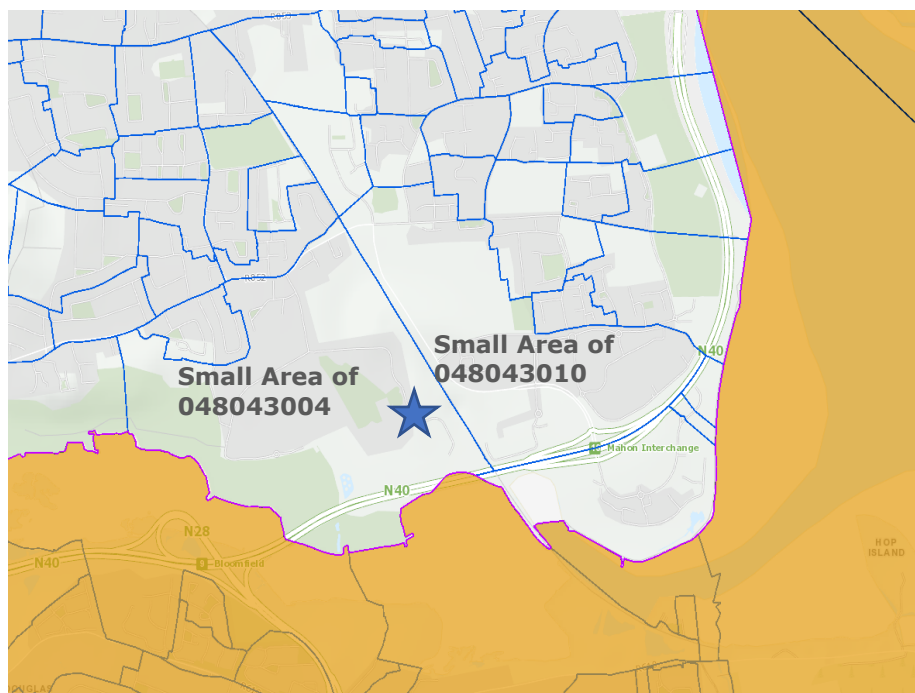


Figure 3.1 CSO Small Areas

3.3 CHILDCARE DISTRIBUTION

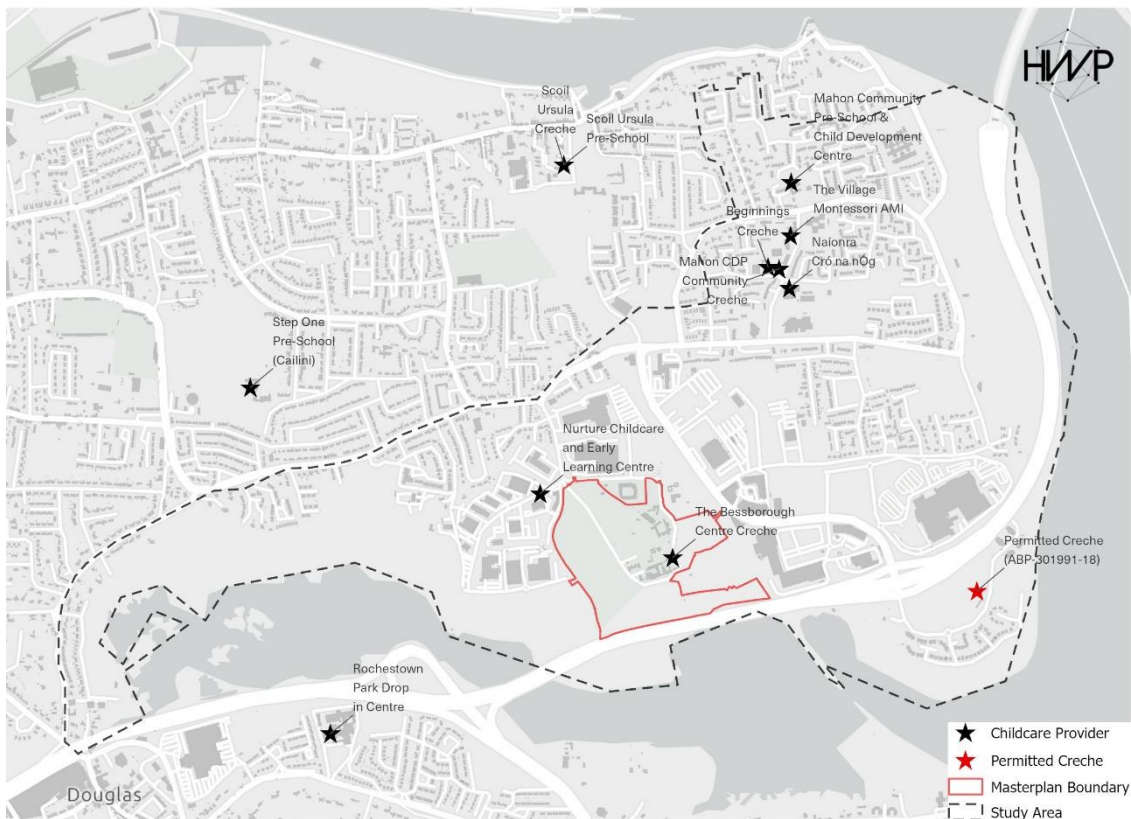
There are two existing childcare facilities in the immediate vicinity of the subject site, with seven in total in the surrounding area. These are listed in Table 02. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the availability of information contained in Tusla Pre-School Inspection Reports. Some childcare facilities have also confirmed fluctuating trends in attendance rates over the last two years. An overview of the proposed development was shared with Cork City Childcare Committee in December 2021 who helpfully provided information on capacity figures for local facilities. These were included in the presented analysis. Based on this and available Tusla information, it can be estimated that there are at least 462 existing childcare places within the study area with recorded attendance of 299 children, leaving theoretical capacity of 163 places. It is acknowledged that this figure represents a snapshot in time and is framed in the context of challenges over the last 18-24 months.¹

Tusla Reference no.	Name	Capacity	Theoretical Capacity
TU2015CC308	Nurture Childcare Blackrock	135 (65 in attendance)	70

¹ Calculation based on using the attendance figure from the Tusla Inspection Reports as the total capacity figure where this number was not available elsewhere. Capacity figures of each facility were obtained from the Cork City Childcare Committee during the consultation stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIR) process.

TU2015CC406	Bessborough Centre Creche	124 (78 in attendance)	46
TU2016CC008	The Village Montessori AMI	88 (81 in attendance)	7
TU2015CC056	Beginnings Creche Mahon	31 (13 in attendance)	18
TU2015CC253	Mahon CDP	22 (16 in attendance)	6
TU2015CC254	Mahon Community Preschool	40 (24 in attendance)	16
TU2015CC289	Naionra Cró na nÓg	22 (22 in attendance)	0
TOTAL	7 No. Facilities	462	163

Table 02 – Childcare Providers



It can be seen from Figure 3.2 above that the subject area is well provided for in terms of childcare, with two of the larger facilities (Bessborough Centre and Nurture) in close proximity to the site. In addition, there are two further permitted creches, a 20 child place creche off the Bessboro Road (planning ref 18/37820) and a large 392m² creche, in Jacob's Island, part of a Strategic Housing Development (ABP-301991-18) as yet unconstructed. Permission was also recently granted (21/40453) to alter and extend the creche granted under 18/37820, to provide additional childcare and community facilities.

Furthermore, a 35 child place creche is proposed in the adjacent 'The Meadows' SHD – Phase 1 of the proposed overall development of the site.

3.4 CHILDCARE PROPOSAL

Appendix 2 of the Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities establishes a standard that where 75 dwellings are constructed, one childcare facility providing a minimum of 20 childcare places is considered reasonable. On this basis, the need to provide for 40 childcare places would be triggered by reaching a threshold of 150 units, 60 childcare places by reaching a threshold of 225 units, 80 places by a threshold of 300 units, etc.

Furthermore, we note section 4.7 of the 2020 Apartment Guidelines which states that:

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.

We envisage that a significant market for the proposed apartments in Ballinure will be young professionals working in Mahon, Cork City Centre and other nearby employment centres, therefore 50% of the units are 1 bed apartments. This rises to 99.3% when the 2 bed apartments are included. In view of the central and accessible location and proposed housing mix of the development, it is envisaged that it will house relatively few families when compared to a typical residential scheme. As a result, we consider that the resulting demand for childcare will not be comparable to an average suburban residential development.

Notwithstanding the above, the applicant intends to include childcare provision for all three-bedroom units (1 no. units), and to make provision for 75% of the two-bedroom units in the proposed scheme (52 no. units). At 53 units, it is noted that this total is actually below the '75 unit' threshold that may trigger the requirement for an onsite childcare facility.

The proposed development includes a 25-place childcare facility. This exceeds the threshold set out in Appendix 2 of the Childcare Facilities Guidelines requiring one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas providing a minimum of 20 childcare places.

04. Summary

This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the adopted policies of Cork City Council, the National Childcare Guidelines and the National Apartment Guidelines.

A review of public records indicates the presence of 7 no. childcare facilities in proximity to subject site, with another 2 no. permitted but as of yet unconstructed. Based on this and available Tulsa information, it can be estimated that there are at least 462 existing childcare places within the study area with recorded attendance of 299 children, leaving theoretical capacity of 163 places.

Notwithstanding this and the significant level of 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom units (99.3%) within the proposed development, it is proposed to make provision on site for a 25-child place creche. Demand has been calculated based on all 3 bedroom units (1 no. units) and provision for 75% of the 2 bedroom units in the proposed scheme (52 no. units). At 53 units, it is noted that this total is actually below the '75 unit' threshold that may trigger the requirement for an onsite childcare facility.

It should be noted that the subject application is being brought forward alongside another concurrent application on adjoining lands (Phase 1 'The Meadows') which also includes a childcare facility with 35 spaces. Collectively, demand is met in full for all 2+ bed units across the two phases.