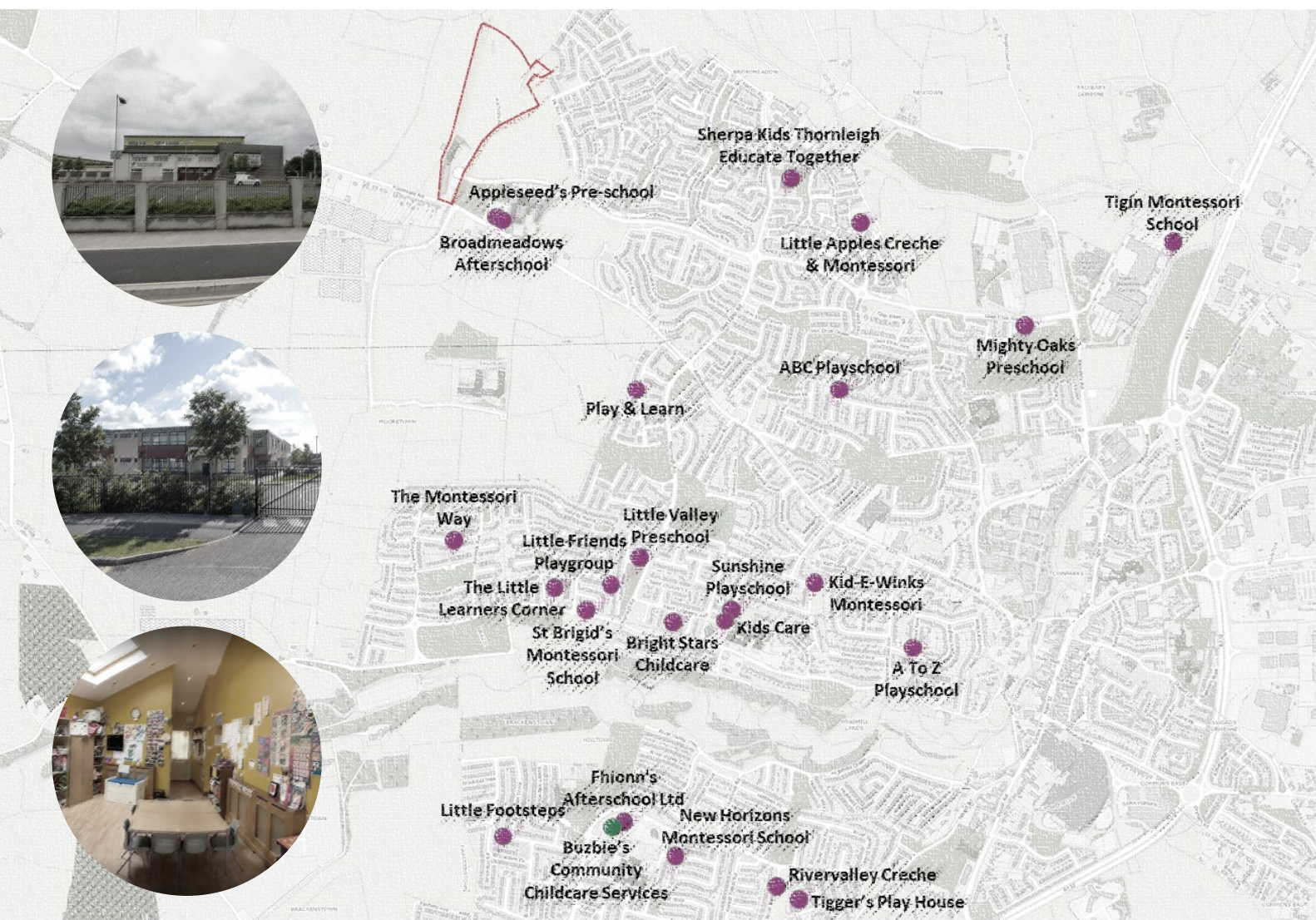


## CHILDCARE PROVISION ASSESSMENT REPORT



### Proposed Strategic Housing Development

Lands at Oldtown, Swords,  
Co. Dublin

Applicant: Gerard Gannon Properties

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Downey, Chartered Town Planners, 29 Merrion Square, D02 RW64, have prepared this Childcare Provision Assessment Report, on behalf of the applicant, Gerard Gannon Properties, to accompany a planning application for a proposed Strategic Housing Development on lands at North of Rathbeale Road and to the west of Miller's Avenue and Glen Ellan Road, Oldtown, Swords, Co. Dublin. The proposed development subject to this SHD application provides for construction of a total of 377 no. residential dwellings, comprising 173 no. houses (9 no. 2 beds, 147 no. 3 beds, and 17 no. 4 beds), 204 no. apartment/duplex units (98 no. 1 beds, 104 no. 2 beds, and 2 no. 3 beds), with 1 no. childcare facility and associated car parking and bicycle parking, landscaping, boundary treatments, and all associated engineering and site development works necessary to facilitate the development including the proposed stormwater storage tank and overflow outfall gravity sewer to the Broadmeadow River with associated manholes on lands locally known as the Celestica/Motorola site, junction of Glen Ellan Road and Balheary Road, and at/on Balheary Road, along with the proposed vehicular/service access onto Balheary Road.

This report is being submitted in support of the justification for the proposed development and to provide a detailed assessment of the existing childcare facilities within the subject area, thus assessing the current capacity of the surrounding environs as well as whether the proposed childcare facility would be sufficient to cater for the proposed development. As such, this report will provide an overview of the current existing childcare provision in Oldtown and surrounding environs, as well as the future demand arising from the proposed development. An overview of the pertaining planning policy and guidance is also provided.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the proposed development is anticipated to generate a requirement of 63 no. childcare spaces when utilising the demographic trending of the area over 2011-2016. The proposed childcare facility would provide c. 102 no. childcare spaces to cater for the proposed residential scheme and the community residing in the wider area. This report demonstrates that based on the results provided by the assessment, the additional childcare facility proposed as part of the development is considered sufficient to cater for the potential demand generated by the proposed development. The following planning policy and guidance documents have been reviewed in the preparation of this report:

- *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Department of Environment (2001),*
- *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (December 2020), and*
- *Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023.*

It is noted that the subject site forms part of the Oldtown and Mooretown lands in Swords, which were previously informed by the Oldtown-Mooretown Local Area Plan 2010-2016. The LAP had also been extended for a further five years from 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2015 up to 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020. This final phase of the Oldtown lands has been designed and proposed within the spirit of the LAP, which has since expired. In addition, the assessment of current and future childcare facilities for the area includes the analysis of CSO data and childcare facilities located within the Oldtown area and the current trends and details provided by the Tusla and Pobal websites, as well as information provided by the Fingal County Childcare Committee.

## 2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

### 2.1 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2001)

Government policy on childcare is to increase the number of childcare places and facilities available and to improve the quality of childcare services for the community. These ‘*Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities*’ 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.

The following definition of Childcare is included in the Guidelines:

*“In these Guidelines, “childcare” is taken to mean 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.”*

For housing schemes, the Guidelines provide a benchmark provision of 1 no. 20 space childcare facility per 75 dwellings. The threshold for provision should be established having regard to existing location of facilities and the emerging demography of the area where new housing is proposed. The recommendations provided within the Guidelines must be considered in the context of the ‘*Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments*’ (2020), which state that:

*“Notwithstanding the Department’s Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities, which are currently subject to review and recommend the provision of one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units, the threshold for provision in apartment scheme 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 for the area.”*

It is important to note that the apartment guidelines also state 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*”. Excluding the 1-bedroom apartment/duplex units from the overall provision for 377 no. residential units, this leaves a total of 279 no. units that can be deemed to accommodate families and therefore may generate demand for childcare places. With respect to the foregoing and as per the following calculations, the proposed scheme would require c. 74 childcare places.

$$(279 \div 75) \times 20 = 74.4 \text{ childcare places}$$

Therefore, with respect to the Childcare Facilities Guidelines, 1 no. childcare facility capable of catering for c. 74 pre-school children would be required to cater for the influx of population arising from the proposed scheme.

## 2.2 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

As stated within the Development Plan, “the provision of childcare facilities is an important factor for economic and social wellbeing. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy 2007-2016 states that the provision of childcare is essential to enable parents to participate in the workforce and to obtain an income that provides an acceptable standard of living for both them and their children. Quality childcare can also make a significant contribution to child development in the early years of a child’s life. Currently Fingal County Childcare Committee supports a childcare infrastructure of 364 early childhood facilities that collectively employ in excess of 3,000 staff.”

By acknowledging the vitality of childcare services as local support facilities, Fingal County Council seeks to enhance childcare provision as to assist people to return to work and to facilitate training for persons in long term unemployment.

The Development Plan reinforces the views taken within the Guidelines in which the Council aims to:

**Objective PM74:** Encourage the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations, including residential areas, town and local centres, areas of employment and areas close to public transport nodes.

**Objective PM75:** Ensure that childcare facilities are accommodated in appropriate premises, suitably located and with sufficient open space in accordance with the Childcare (Pre-School) Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006.

**Objective PM76:** Require as part of planning applications for new residential and commercial developments that provision be made for appropriate purpose built childcare facilities where such facilities are deemed necessary by the Planning Authority.

It is submitted that given the nature, scale, and proposed mix of units of the proposed development, as well as the potential demand arising from the proposed scheme and available capacity within the area, it is considered that the provision of 1 no. childcare facility within the subject lands is sufficient to cater for the proposed development.

## 3.0 CHILDCARE PROVISION ASSESSMENT

In accordance with current guidelines, the following provides a detailed examination of local need for a new childcare facility at the subject lands. Accordingly, TUSLA Pre-School Inspection Reports for different facilities in the locality were examined in detail. However, it was found that these are often outdated and/or not necessarily an accurate reflection of current provision in the area. Thus, in order to provide for a more accurate information, a survey of different childcare facilities in the area was carried out by contacting these facilities, seeking numbers of current pre-school goers registered for the academic 2021-2022 school year, as well as the available capacity of each facility. It is important to note that not all the childcare facilities decided to participate in the assessment. Therefore, where proprietors did not participate or could not be contacted, figures from the most recent TUSLA reports are referenced. In accordance with the childcare guidelines, the assessment is set out as follows:

- The existing childcare facilities in the vicinity of the subject lands, and their spatial distribution in the area,

- Catchment area of the existing childcare facilities, and
- The emerging demand for childcare facilities including the future demand in the town and the generated demand from the proposed development.

### 3.1 Existing Early Childcare Facilities

#### 3.1.1 Existing Childcare Capacities

As part of this Audit, Downey carried out an analysis of the provision and capacity of childcare facilities in the area. The TUSLA database, as shown on the Figure 1 below, indicates that there is a total of 16 registered childcare providers within 2km radius of the lands.

Downey have assessed the Early Years Inspectorate inspection reports in relation to details pertaining to these facilities, and contacted these childcare providers to update the existing and available capacities. The relevant details on these facilities are summarised in the Table 1 on the next page.

As illustrated in Table 1, the existing childcare facilities within the area provide for a total maximum potential capacity of 514 children, of which 30 no. after-school spaces are available currently with one of the facilities (The Little Learners Corner) looking to increase its capacity for the coming year.

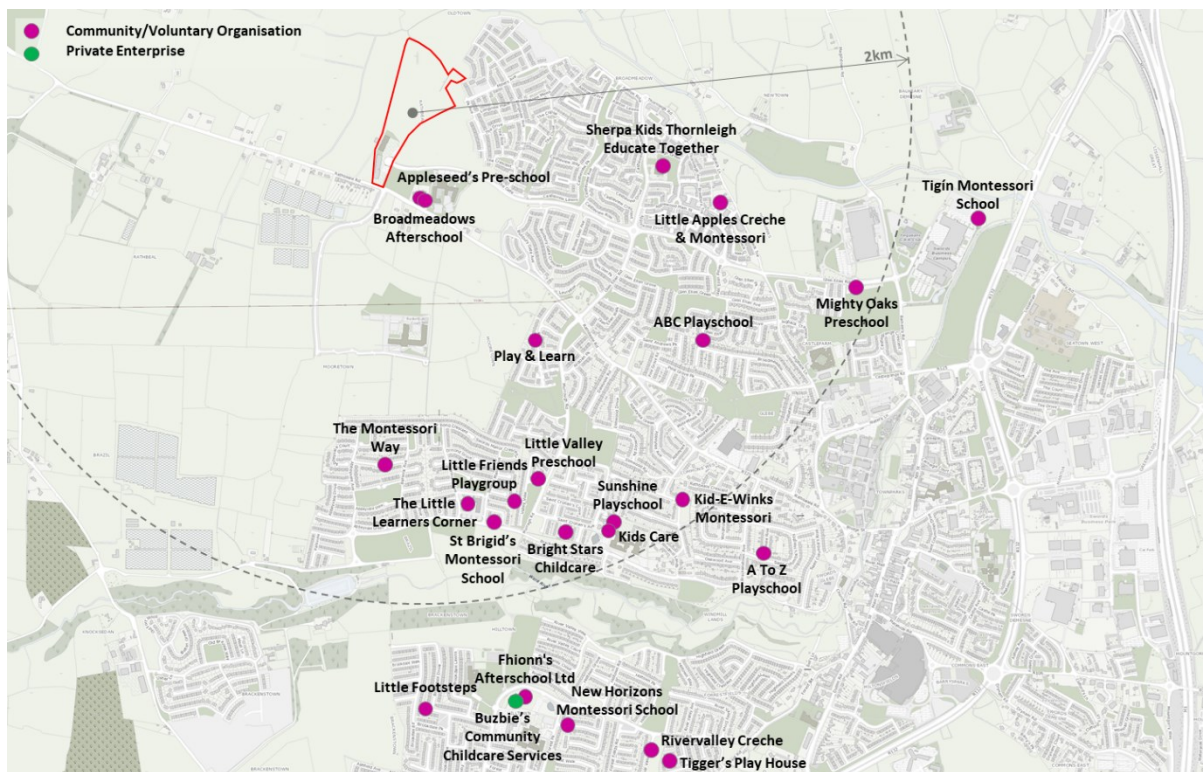


Figure 1. Existing Childcare Provider within the Area and 2km Radius of the Subject Lands

As shown on the Table below, of the overall registered childcare providers within the area, 3 no. childcare facilities are within 1km radius of the subject lands. With respect to Downey's survey, there is some spare capacity for pre-school children in the vicinity of the subject lands.

Table 1. Childcare Facilities within 1-2km Radius of the Subject Lands (source: Tulsa.ie updated by Downey)

	Name	Address	Max Capacity	Type of Service Age Profile
Within 1 Km Radius of the Subject Lands	Appleseed’s Pre-school	Applewood Community Centre, Applewood, Swords, Co. Dublin	33 children	Sessional (2-6 years)
	Appleseed’s Afterschool	Applewood Community Centre, Castlevew Lawn, Bunbury Gate Ave, Swords, Co. Dublin	32 children	Afterschool Standalone Service (4-10 years)
	Sherpa Kids Thornleigh Educate Together	Thornleigh Educate Together National School, Applewood Village, Swords, Co. Dublin	39 children	Afterschool Combined Service (4-12 years)
Within 2 Km Radius of the Subject Lands	Little Apples Creche & Montessori	Applewood Lane, Applewood Village, Swords, Co. Dublin	105 children	Full Day/Sessional (0-6 years)
	ABC Playschool	21 Glen Ellan Crescent, Swords, Co. Dublin	16 children	Sessional (2-6 years)
	Play & Learn Playschool	68 Cianlea, Swords, Co. Dublin	22 children	Full Day/Part Time/Sessional (2-6 years)
	The Montessori Way	27 Berwick Way, Swords, Co. Dublin	16 children	Sessional (2-6 years)
	The Little Learners Corner	Swords Manor, Brackenstown Road, Swords, Co. Dublin	40 children	Full Day/Part Time/Sessional (0-6 years)
	St Brigid’s Montessori School	5 Swords Manor Grove, Swords, Co. Dublin	15 children	Sessional (3-6 years)
	Little Friends Playgroup	23 Swords Manor Way, Swords, Co. Dublin	15 children	Sessional (2-6 years)
	Little Valley Preschool	9 Valley View, Swords, Co. Dublin	11 children	Sessional (2-6 years)
	Bright Stars Childcare	1 St Cronan’s View, Swords, Co. Dublin	54 children	Part Time/Sessional (2-6 years)
	Sunshine Playschool	The Scouts Den, Brackenstown Road, Swords, Co. Dublin	33 children	Full Day/Part Time/Sessional (2-6 years)
	Kids Care	B.A.S.E. St Cronan’s School Grounds, Brackenstown Road, Swords, Co. Dublin	41 children 30 spare after-school places	Part Time/Sessional (2-6 years)
	Kid- E-Winks Montessori	147 Glasmore Park, Swords, Co. Dublin	20 children	Sessional (2-6 years)
Mighty Oaks Preschool	St. Colmcille’s GFC, Holybank, Glen Ellan Road, Swords, Co. Dublin	22 children	Sessional (2-6 years)	
<b>Total Maximum Potential Capacity</b>			<b>514 Children (30 spare after-school spaces)</b>	

In addition, there are 3 no. childminders registered and/or unregistered as operating childcare providers in Swords on the TUSLA website catering for an overall total of 15 no. children. Details on these services are summarised in the Table below.



Table 2. Registered Childminders in the Area (source: TUSLA.ie updated by Downey)

Name/ Person in Charge	Address	Max. Capacity
Clever Cats Montessori	9 Glen Ellan Court, Swords, Co. Dublin	5 children
Colette Furlong	18 Ormond Drive, Swords Manor, Swords, Co. Dublin	5 children
Cora Moran	Little Forest, Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin	5 children
<b>Total Maximum Potential Capacity</b>		<b>15 children</b>

It is noted that a quick search through Mindme.ie, as an online service helping families find carers including childminders, indicates that there were c. 50 childminders available within 5km radius of Swords at the time of carrying out this study. However, these have not been included within the calculations. Therefore, with respect to the above tables, it is submitted that there is an overall potential capacity for 529 no. childcare places within the area.

### 3.1.2 Catchment Area of the Existing Childcare Facilities

As part of the threshold for provision of childcare facilities, a spatial analysis of the catchment area of the existing childcare providers within Swords was also carried out. This is to identify the *walkable distances* from the childcare facilities, which is defined as 500 to 800m distances from the childcare facilities on the street network. As shown on the Figure 2 below, existing childcare facilities are evenly distributed across the town, providing a good level of accessibility for the residents. Given the location of the subject site, this catchment area does not cover the lands, i.e., to use the available childcare facilities require driving.

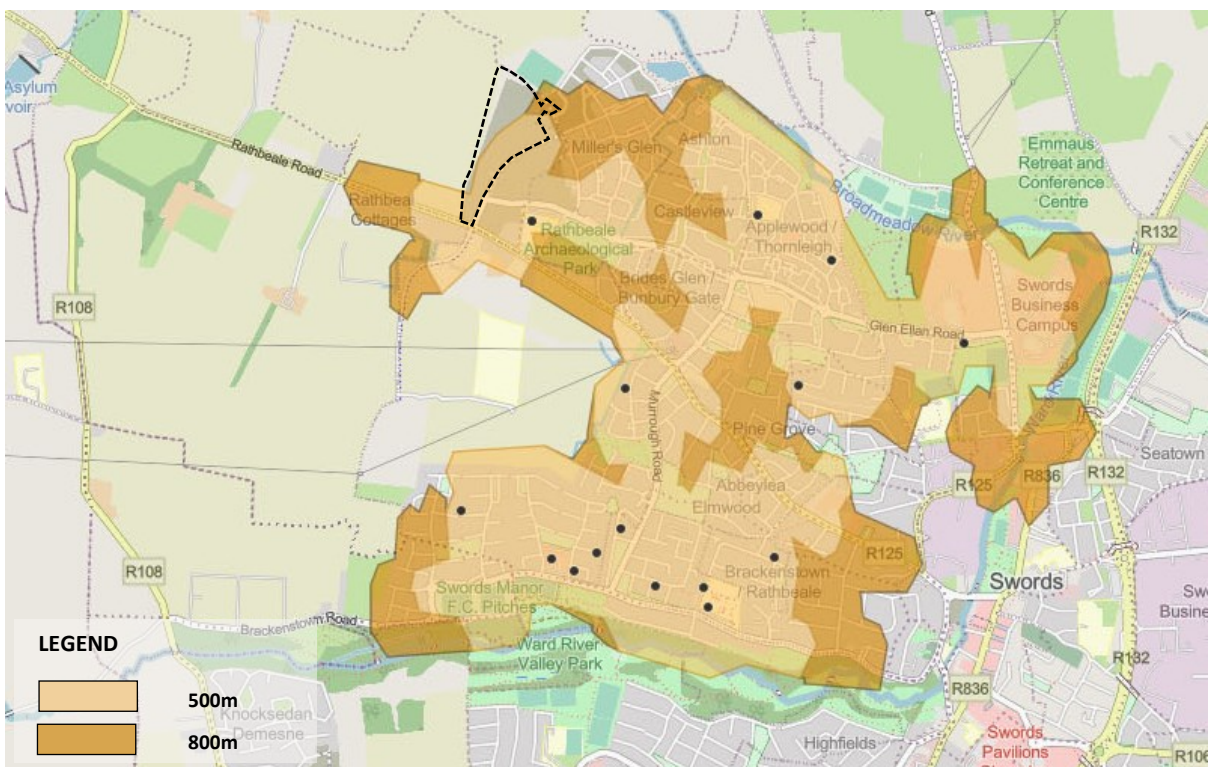


Figure 2. Walkable Buffer Zones from Existing Childcare Facilities on Street Network, Swords (approximate boundaries of the subject site dashed in black)

It is submitted that the provision of 1 no. childcare facility as part of the scheme would provide additional capacity, catering for the proposed development, as well as its wider context. Moreover, it will extend the walkable buffer zones to access childcare facilities throughout the application site, promoting walkability.

### 3.1.3 Childcare Facilities in the Pipeline

With respect to the earlier phases of Oldtown-Mooretown lands and as summarised in the Table below, there is a total overall of 5 no. granted permissions for childcare facilities within these lands, of which 3 no. were built, but have not got an operator to run the service. This is submitted to further support the existing childcare facilities in the area, catering for the wider community as well.

Table 3. An Overview of Childcare Provision in the Earlier Phases of Oldtown-Mooretown

Phase of Development	Creche Area (sqm)
Oldtown Planning 01 Reg. Ref. F11A/0436	316 sqm creche
Planning 01F Reg. Ref. F16A/0091	253 sqm creche
Oldtown Planning 02 Reg. Ref. F11A/0473	193 sqm creche (amended under Reg. Ref. F18A/0410 to provide for 183 sqm creche)
Oldtown Planning 03 Reg. Ref. F15A/0390	300 sqm creche
Mooretown Planning 01 Reg. Ref. F18A/0701	352sqm creche

## 3.2 Future Demand

### 3.2.1 Demographic Profile of the Assessment Area

The demographic profile of the assessment area was examined using the Census 2016 result, as the latest Census available on the CSO website. With respect to the site location within the Swords-Lissenhall (ED), in the immediate vicinity of Swords-Glasmore and Swords Village ED’s (Figure 3), these ED’s were utilised within the following assessment.

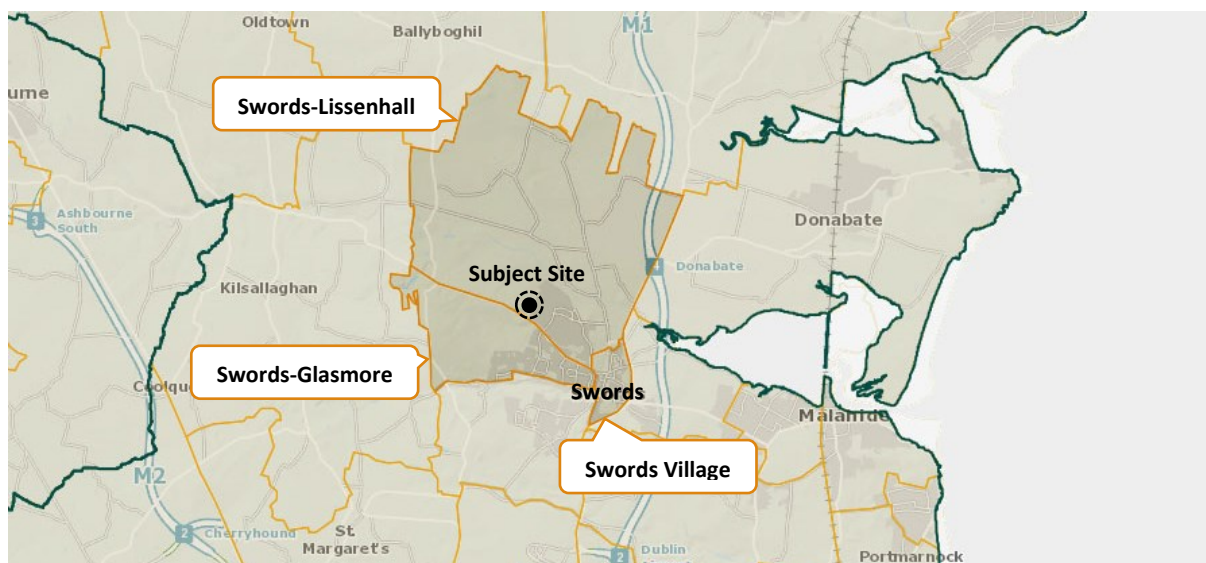


Figure 3. Subject Site Location within the Swords-Lissenhall, Swords-Glasmore, and Swords Villages ED’s

Census 2016 results show that the study area's population stood at 20,832 in April 2016, which indicates an increase of 836 (4.2%) since the last Census in 2011. This is submitted to be in line with the overall demographic trend in the County, however, followed by a smaller growth rate than Fingal which stood at 8% for the intercensal period. Breaking down the growth into the ED's, as illustrated in the Table below, other than Swords-Glasmore ED which experienced a slight decline (-0.5% or -37 persons growth), the other two ED's had a growing population with Swords-Lissenhall recording a growth rate marginally higher (8.1% growth) when compared to the overall growth rate for the County. This is also indicative of spatial distribution of Sword's emerging housing demand. It is noted that the subject site falls under Swords-Lissenhall ED.

Table 4. Population Change in the study area against the overall Stats for the County

	Co. Fingal (Administrative Area)	Swords-Lissenhall ED (04038)	Swords-Glasmore ED (04037)	Swords Village ED (04040)
<b>Census 2016</b>	296,020	10,447	7,711	2,674
<b>Census 2011</b>	273,991	9,667	7,748	2,581
<b>Actual Change</b>	22,029	780	-37	93
<b>% Change</b>	8.0%	8.1%	-0.5%	3.6%

Source: CSO StatBank

With an average household size of 3, there were 6,837 private households in the study area in 2016. As shown in the Table 5 below, nearly 62% of the households residing in this area in 2016 were small sized households ranging from 1- to 3-person households (4,219 households). It is noted that the average household size in the Swords-Lissenhall ED stood at 3.1 in 2016.

Table 5. Private Households in the Study Area by Household Size, 2016

Size of Households	Households	Persons	%
<b>1-person Households</b>	1,026	1,026	15.0%
<b>2-person Households</b>	1,834	3,668	26.8%
<b>3-person Households</b>	1,359	4,077	19.9%
<b>4-person Households</b>	1,543	6,172	22.6%
<b>5-person and over Households</b>	1,075	5,853	15.7%
<b>Total</b>	6,837	20,796	-

Source: CSO StatBank

### 3.2.2 Childcare Demand

Investigating the age profile of the area, the proportion of the population that are of pre-school-going age are those children aged between 0 and 4 years old. Census 2016 recorded a total pre-school-attending population of 1,567 within the assessment area, which represents 7.5% of the total population residing in the area. As illustrated in the Table 6 below, the overall demographic trending of 0-4 years old age cohort experienced a notable decline of -16.2% or -304 persons over 2011-2016. Breaking down this population change into the electoral divisions, as shown in the Table below, Swords-Glasmore and Swords-Lissenhall had a declining pre-school age population, while Swords Village experienced a growing population at this age cohort. Considering the average household size in the assessment area, this may be an indication of smaller households' expansion in the area.

Table 6. Pre-school-age Going Population in the Assessment Area (0-4-year-old age cohort), 2011-2016

Assessment Area	ED ID	CSO 2016 0-4 years old	% Town Population	CSO 2011 0-4 years old	% Town Population	Change 2011-2016
Swords-Lissenhall	04038	978	4.7%	1,115	5.6%	-12.3%
Swords-Glasmore	04037	426	2.0%	606	3.0%	-29.7%
Swords Village	04040	163	0.8%	150	0.8%	8.7%

Source: CSO StatBank

As summarised in Table 1 (Section 3.1), there were 529 childcare places to cater for the pre-school population in the assessment area during 2021-2022 academic year. By 2023, if this proportion of pre-school age population remains constant with the figures and trends recorded in the intercensal period 2011-2016, the pre-school age population is expected to be 1,293<sup>1</sup> children in the study area, which is a decline of 274 children when compared to Census 2016. Therefore, the number of children within the study area requiring childcare places would remain lower than the capacity of existing childcare facilities.

### 3.2.3 Demand Generated by the Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises 377 no. residential dwellings, comprising of a mix of houses and apartments/duplexes. The breakdown of these units are as follows:

Table 7. Proposed Residential Mix Statistics

Dwelling Type	Bedroom Provision	No. of Units
Apartments & Duplex Units	1 Bed	98
	2 Bed	104
	3 Bed	2
Houses	2 Bed	9
	3 Bed	147
	4 Bed	17
<b>Total no. of Units</b>		<b>377</b>

Excluding the 1-bedroom apartment/duplex units, this leaves a total of 279 no. units that can be deemed to accommodate families and therefore may generate demand for childcare places. As mentioned earlier, Census 2016 recorded an average household size of 3 persons per unit for the assessment area. Applying the average household size to 279 no. houses and apartment/duplex units capable of accommodating families would generate 837 total residents within these units. Across the assessment area's population in 2016, 7.5% were in the 0-4 age cohort. When the proportion of pre-school-attending population applied to total number of potential residents in 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom units, it is estimated that up to 63 children will be at this age cohort.

<sup>1</sup> This is calculated by applying an annual growth rate of -0.03 to the assessment area over the 2017-2022. This growth rate is captured from the demographic changes of 0-4 years old age cohort recorded over the intercensal period of 2011-2016.

### 3.2.4 Cumulative Demand

As outlined above, there are currently 529 no. childcare places to cater for pre-school age population of the area. In 2023, should the population follow the same growth path that 2011-2016 intercensal figures, the pre-school age population is expected to be 1,293<sup>2</sup> children in the study area. An additional 63 potential children is expected to be derived from the proposed scheme. This suggests an overall total of 1,356 children by 2023.

On the other hand, Census 2016 identifies that the percentage of pre-school children minded by parents in the Dublin region is 62%, while 33% of pre-school children attended some sort of childcare facility or were minded by a childminder/Au Pair/nanny. Applying the Dublin region uptake ratio of 33% to the cumulative demand in the assessment area, then the overall number of childcare facilities required to meet the future demand in the area is expected to be 447 no. childcare spaces, which falls well below the actual existing childcare facilities.

However, as per the requirements of *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2001)*, the proposed development also provides for 1 no. childcare facility with a gross floor area of 519 sqm, capable of catering for c. 102 children. With respect to the spatial catchment of the existing childcare facilities, the proposed creche will further extend this catchment area and therefore facilitates the community's access to these facilities.

In light of the above, it is submitted that the current provision of early childcare facilities in the area can sufficiently cater for the town's future population and the influx of population arising from the proposed development, and therefore, the scheme is considered to be consistent with the relevant policies and guidelines.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Downey have prepared this Childcare Provision Assessment on behalf of Gerard Gannon Properties, in support of this planning application for the proposed Strategic Housing Development on lands at North of Rathbeale Road and to the west of Miller's Avenue and Glen Ellan Road, Oldtown, Swords, Co. Dublin. Planning permission is sought for construction of a total of 377 no. residential dwellings, comprising 173 no. houses (9 no. 2 beds, 147 no. 3 beds, and 17 no. 4 beds), 204 no. apartment/duplex units (98 no. 1 beds, 104 no. 2 beds, and 2 no. 3 beds), with 1 no. childcare facility and associated car parking and bicycle parking, landscaping, boundary treatments, and all associated engineering and site development works necessary to facilitate the development including the proposed stormwater storage tank and overflow outfall gravity sewer to the Broadmeadow River with associated manholes on lands locally known as the Celestica/Motorola site, junction of Glen Ellan Road and Balheary Road, and at/on Balheary Road, along with the proposed vehicular/service access onto Balheary Road.

This Assessment identifies 16 no. childcare facilities within 1-2km radius of the assessment area, which is defined as Swords-Lissenhall, Swords-Glasmore, and Swords Village ED's. It then provides a detailed

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<sup>2</sup> This is calculated by applying an annual growth rate of -0.03 to the assessment area over the 2017-2022. This growth rate is captured from the demographic changes of 0-4 years old age cohort recorded over the intercensal period of 2011-2016.

evaluation of maximum and available capacities of these facilities, as well as their catchment area, defined as the walkable distance to these childcares.

Having regard to the analysis of current childcares' capacities and available demographic data in the assessment area, together with the emerging demand of the proposed development, it is concluded that there is generally sufficient capacity of childcare facilities in the area to cater for the future population and proposed development.

However, as per the requirements of *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG (2001)*, the proposed development also provides for 1 no. childcare facility with a gross floor area of 519 sqm, capable of catering for c. 102 children. With respect to the spatial catchment of the existing childcare facilities, the proposed creche will further extend this catchment area and therefore facilitates the community access to these facilities. Therefore, the proposed development will also help to sustain the existing facilities, and support a sustainable development of residential lands within Oldtown.