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Creche Demand and Needs Assessment

for

Proposed Residential Development

Bloomfield Park, Bracklin Road, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford.

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Contents

CONTENTS	2
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. PLANNING POLICY	4
2.1 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001	4
2.2 Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)	4
2.3 Longford Development Plan 2021-2027	4
3. APPROACH	5
4. DEVELOPMENT NEED	5
4.1 CATCHMENT AREA	5
4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	6
5. EXISTING CHILDCARE PROVISION	8
6. ASSESSMENT OF CHILDCARE INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION	9
7. CONCLUSION	10

1. Introduction

The following report has been prepared by Cunningham Design & Planning in support of the proposal for a The development will consist of the construction of 100 no. dwellings and associated ancillary infrastructure as follows:

- 46 no. 2 storey houses
 - 24 no. 3 bedroom houses [House Types 3A & 3B],
 - 20 no. 4 bedroom houses [House Types 4A, 4B and 4D],
 - 2 no. 5 bedroom houses [House Type 5];
- 4 no. 3 storey houses [House Type 4C],
- 50 no. apartments/duplex apartments in 5 no. 3 storey buildings – (25 no. 2 bedroom apartments and 25 no. 3 bedroom duplex apartments) all with terrace;

The following report considers the need for a childcare centre based on the;

1. Demographics of the area,
2. Characteristics of the population who are likely to live within the scheme, and
3. Requirements of the relevant planning policy.

Cunningham Design & Planning have reviewed the following –

- A. The following planning policies –
 - *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 (the Guidelines)*
 - *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)*
 - *Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027*
- B. Available census data for the town of Edgeworthstown, as provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO).
- C. Existing planning approvals for childcare facilities in the area

The following provides an evidence-based opinion on the development need for a childcare centre within the subject proposal.

2. Planning Policy

2.1 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001

The *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001* (the Guidelines) state that one childcare facility should be provided for new large-scale housing developments unless there are significant reasons to the contrary for example, **where there are adequate childcare facilities in the area**. The Guidelines recommend that for new housing areas, an average of one childcare facility per 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.

2.2 Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009)

Chapter 4 of the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009' (Residential Guidelines) sets out criteria for planning for sustainable neighbourhoods. Specifically, Section 4.5 relates to Childcare (pg. 25 & 26), stating that:

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

The Childcare Guidelines are reiterated under the Residential Guidelines whereby one childcare facility (20 no. childcare spaces) is provided for every 75 dwellings. However, the Residential Guidelines also note that the threshold for such a provision should be established having regard to local circumstances. This Creche Demand & Needs Assessment reviews the relevant demographic profile as well as the existing and permitted / proposed childcare provision in the area, to determine whether a creche facility is warranted at this location.

2.3 Longford Development Plan 2021-2027

The Longford Development Plan 2021-2027 (the Plan) provides the overarching planning policy that applies to the County and accordingly, the town of Edgeworthstown. Section 6.4.2.3 of the Plan outlines the Council's aims and policies in relation to Childcare Facilities.

It is stated that *"The provision of childcare facilities within the County is underpinned by the following aims;*

- To encourage and facilitate the provision of a broad range of high quality childcare facilities in appropriate areas, in order to promote the social, emotional and educational development of children and increased economic development through the expansion of employment opportunities for parents/guardians.*
- To promote the provision and expansion of appropriate childcare facilities in suitable locations in accordance with national guidelines and the Childcare (pre-school services) Regulations, 2006."*

It is evident arising from the above aims of the County Development Plan that an assessment should be carried as to whether "appropriate childcare facilities" are provided for in "suitable locations". The aim of this Report is to make this assessment, relative to the childcare facility demands arising from the proposed development of 100 dwellings over a 5 year period.

3. Approach

Having due regard to the planning policy above, we must also consider the legacy of the economic crash over a decade ago and the potential of overprovision of childcare facilities. Purpose-built crèche facilities provided in accordance with the policy requirements, can remain vacant and unoccupied when space is not taken up by a childcare provider. This can be attributed to several factors including; the adequacy and profile of existing childcare facilities within the immediate area, or simply inadequate demand as a result of the development needs. The resultant effect can manifest into unused commercial property or floor space within a residential development which over time and without maintenance, can physically deteriorate reducing the visual amenity of the development for the residents and result in an uneconomic use of land.

Therefore, this childcare assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the following three steps;

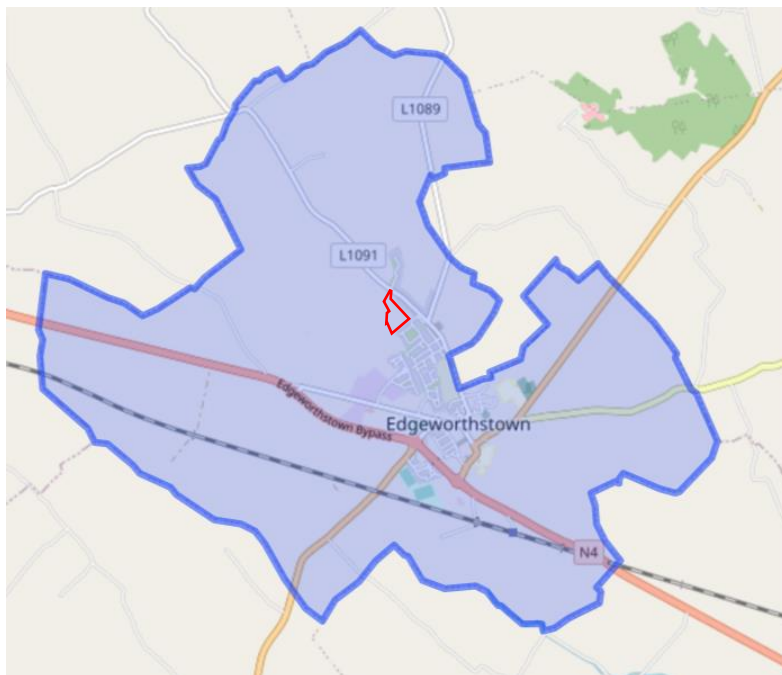
1. Determining the need arising from the development proposal;
2. Determining the extent and provision of existing childcare facilities within the neighbourhood; and
3. Analysing the characteristics of the demographics of the population who currently live in the area.

4. Development Need

4.1 Catchment Area

The catchment area for the study is defined as the Electoral Division of Edgeworthstown (see Figure 1 – Context Map – Site outlined in Red, catchment area outlined/coloured in Blue).

Figure 1 – Context Map – Site outlined in Red, Catchment Area outlined/coloured in Blue



Precise population figures from the Central Statistics Office have been used for both 2011 and 2016, based on Census data collected in those years, which are the most recent available figures. Specifically, the assessment uses Electoral Division data for a more disaggregated view of the local population. The population of the Electoral Division of Edgeworthstown was 2,072 in 2016, which was up 18.8% (or 328 persons) compared to the 2011 population of 1,744.

4.2 Demographic Profile

In accordance with census data for the area for both 2011 and 2016, it would appear that the percentage of private households **with children** remained constant at circa. 48% - see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 - Percentage of households in Edgeworthstown that are "Households with Children" (Aged 18 & Under) Per Census Figures 2011 & 2016

Composition of Private Household	2011	2011	2016	2016
	Households	Persons	Households	Persons
One person	159	159	188	188
Husband and wife (or couple)	101	202	106	212
Husband and wife (or couple) with children	184	756	220	895
Husband and wife (or couple) with children and other persons	22	105	26	134
Lone mother with children	79	250	81	241
Lone father with children	5	14	7	16
Husband and wife (or couple) with other persons	10	32	12	37
Lone mother with children and other persons	11	44	12	46
Lone father with children and other persons	3	10	6	23
Two family units with/without other persons	4	21	19	106
Three or more family units with/without other persons	1	10	-	-
Non-family households containing related persons	26	63	27	65
Households comprised of unrelated persons only	19	48	24	62
All private households	624	1,714	728	2,025
Total Households With Children (Yellow)	304		352	
Total Households With Children (Yellow) as % of All Household	48.7%	(304/624)	48.4%	(352/728)

The proposed development at Bloomfield Park consists of 100 dwellings. The minimum sized dwelling being proposed is a 2 bedroom type dwelling. Given this minimum size of proposed dwelling type, it is possible that all 100 proposed dwellings could cater for "Households with Children". However, given the above data over the 2011 and 2016 census results, it would appear likely that just circa 48% of households that take up residence in the proposed development will consist of "Households with Children" (**48.7% in 2011 census results and 48.4% per 2016 census results**). It would be prudent to expect therefore that circa 49 (rounding up) of the 100 proposed dwellings are likely to be "Households with Children".

We have further analysed the Age Distribution of the population in Edgeworthstown per the 2011 and 2016 census results and summarise same in Figure 3 below. It is noteworthy that the number and percentage of children aged between 0 and 4 years has remained consistent over the 2011 and 2016 data points (182/186no. children in 2011/2016, representing 10.4%/9% of all children in the respective years 2011/2016).

Figure 3 – Analysis of Age Distribution of Edgeworthstown Population

Data	2011 Census Figure	% of Total 2011 Population	2016 Census Figure	% of Total 2016 Population	Number Increase	% Increase from 2011
Aged 0 - 4 years	182	10.4%	186	9.0%	4	2%
Aged 5 - 12 years	258	14.8%	270	13.0%	12	5%
Aged 13 - 18 years	95	5.4%	173	8.3%	78	82%
Total Children (Aged 18 & Under)	535	30.7%	629	30.4%	94	18%
Total Population	1744	100.0%	2072	100.0%		
Total Private Households With Children (Yellow) Per Figure 2	304		352			
Total Children (Aged 0-4) Per "Household With Children"	0.60	(182/304)	0.53	(186/352)		

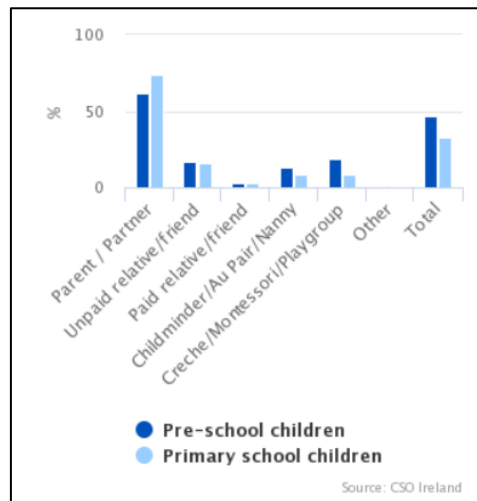
The most relevant finding however is that the average number of children aged 0-4 years per "Household with Children" was 0.60 in 2011 and 0.53 in 2016.

Applying the more recent figure for the Average Number of Children Aged 0-4 years per "Household with Children" per the 2016 Census (**0.53 Children Per "Household with Children"**) to the expected number of

“Households with Children” arising from the proposed development (**49 “Households with Children” expected per Figure 2 census data above**), would mean that the proposed development of 100 units is likely to yield 26 no. additional children within the crèche requirement age of between 0 and 4 years ($0.53 \times 49 = 25.97$).

The Quarterly National Household Survey, Childcare, Quarter 3 2016’ reports that **only 19% of pre-school children attend a childcare facility (crèche/Montessori/playgroup/after-school facility)** – see Figure 4 below for an analysis of types of childcare used in Ireland, with the darker navy colour representing “Childcare Used for Children of Pre-School Status”.

Figure 4 – Types of Childcare Used By Pre-School (and Primary School) Children (Source: CSO)



<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-chi/qnhschildcarequarter32016/>

This figure of 19% is entirely relevant to the subject proposal. When it is applied to the expected yield of 26 no. additional children arising from the proposed development, then only 5 childcare spaces would be required ($26 \times 19\% = 4.94$ children).

For the purpose of this exercise, in order to establish a “maximum need” of childcare places arising from the proposed development, it is intended to assume an extreme scenario and assume that all children within crèche going age group (i.e. all 26 children) would require childcare, despite the above survey confirming that only 19% of pre-children were availing of a crèche/Montessori/playgroup/after-school facility per the 2016 survey.

Figure 5 – Range of Maximum & Minimum Childcare Places Required

Variables	Value	Per Year Over 5 Years
Potential Children Aged 0-4 in Development	26	
Max Need (Assume 100% Take-up Rate)	26	5.2
QNHS Assumed Take-up Rate	19%	
Min Need	5	1

Furthermore, we understand the development of 100 units are proposed to be developed over a 5 year period, with 20 units being development per year. This would suggest that the overall requirement for childcare places would be spread over this 5 year period. **Accordingly, based on the above analysis, it is expected that only 1 childcare place would be required per year to cater for the phased development of 100 dwellings. Under an extreme and unlikely scenario that all children avail of childcare places, then the maximum demand would be 5 childcare places per year of development.**

5. Existing Childcare Provision

In addition to the above analysis, it was deemed appropriate to audit existing childcare provision within the catchment area of Edgeworthstown.

TUSLA provides a “Register of Early Years Services By County” and the list reviewed at time of preparation of this report confirmed there is one registered service provider in Edgeworthstown, which is St. Marys Childcare Campus CLG, Granard Road, Edgeworthstown – Tusla Registration No TU2015LD004 (see https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Longford_Jan22.pdf).

St. Marys Childcare Campus is a state-of-the-art childcare facility which opened in 2007 and which caters for up to 110 children per the TUSLA Register, offering a Full Day Care Service for 0 – 6 year olds. The facility is located a 3 minute drive from the proposed development site – see Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 – Location of TUSLA Registered Early Years Service from Bloomfield Park & Image



TUSLA provides independent data on childcare facilities generated from their inspections of childcare facilities. The inspections are undertaken yearly and updated accordingly. These inspections are undertaken by TUSLA to ensure that the childcare facilities are compliant with legislative requirements. From a planning perspective, this information provides standardised and comparative in relation to childcare capacity, number of children registered, and childcare take up (on day of inspection).

6. Assessment of Childcare Infrastructure Provision

The most recent unannounced TUSLA inspection of St. Mary's Childcare Campus took place on the 18th of October 2021 - see Report here -

https://tuslaearlyyearsdiag806.blob.core.windows.net/earlyyearscontainer1/TU2015LD004_IR_1021_St_Mary_s_Childcare_Campus.pdf.

On that inspection date, there were 41 children present in the morning and 19 children present in the afternoon. **As the facility caters for up to 110 children, there would appear to be significant capacity available in the facility to cater for the expected requirement of 1 child space per year arising from the proposed development (5 places in total over 5 years).**

In relation to other Childcare Facilities in the area, Longford County Childcare Committee list all providers on their website and there are no other registered child-minding facilities available in Edgeworthstown, other than St. Mary's Childcare Campus.

There do not appear to be any other permitted childcare facilities in Edgeworthstown which are pending construction, nor are there any such facilities subject to a pending planning permission.

7. Conclusion

Cunningham Design & Planning have conducted a creche demand analysis and assessed the likely demand generated for a childcare facility (creche) as a result of the construction of 100 no. dwellings at Bloomfield Park, Bracklin Road, Edgeworthstown in the following mix -

- 46 no. 2 storey houses as follows
 - 24 no. 3 bedroom houses [House Types 3A & 3B],
 - 20 no. 4 bedroom houses [House Types 4A, 4B and 4D],
 - 2 no. 5 bedroom houses [House Type 5];
- 4 no. 3 storey houses [House Type 4C],
- 50 no. apartments/duplex apartments in 5 no. 3 storey buildings – (25 no. 2 bedroom apartments and 25 no. 3 bedroom duplex apartments) all with terrace;

The development need for a creche has been considered in the context of;

- The composition of the proposed development including unit mix and form,
- The demographics of the surrounding area, and
- The existing childcare capacity of the area.

Our review has concluded that the proposal does not generate a need for a childcare facility as follows;

1. Demographics

The demographics of the area demonstrate that the future occupants of the development will not warrant the construction of a purpose-built childcare facility as follows;

- Census data (2011 and 2016) show that only circa 48% of private households within the Edgeworthstown area are households **with children**. Applying this to the proposed development would mean that it would be prudent to expect that 49 (rounding up) of the 100 dwellings (which are all at least two bedroomed dwellings) would be “Households with Children”,
- Census data (2016) confirmed that there are 0.53 children of creche going age (0-4 years of age) per “household with children”. This figure indicates that it is expected that the proposed development will yield an additional 26 children aged between 0 and 4 years to Edgeworthstown.
- The Quarterly National Household Survey, Childcare, Quarter 3 2016’ (QNHC Q3 2016) reports that only 19% of pre-school children attend a childcare facility. When applied to the subject development, only 5 childcare spaces would be required. Furthermore, the demand for these 5 spaces would be spread evenly over the 5 years of the development, meaning 1 space per year would be required. **Under an extreme and unlikely scenario that all children avail of childcare places (i.e. the above QNHC Q3 2016 survey is ignored in order to stress test the demand), then the maximum demand would be 5 childcare places per year of development.** This finding alone suggest that the construction of a purpose-built facility is not warranted.

2. Existing Facilities Review

Our review of existing facilities in the area confirmed that there is a comprehensive, modern childcare facility located within a 3-minute drive of the proposed development, which facility appears to have significant capacity available (41 children present in October 2021, with capacity for up to 110 children). This capacity would generously cater for the expected requirement of 1 child space per year arising from the proposed development (5 places in total over 5 years). The facility appears to be the sole childcare facility to serve the childcare needs in the town of Edgeworthstown.

On this basis, it is considered that there will be sufficient childcare capacity and availability within the local catchment area to accommodate the likely childcare going age generated by the proposed development, being only 5 children in total over a 5 year period. Even in the unlikely and extreme scenario whereby all expected children generated by the proposed development attend the creche (26 over the 5 year period), there would still appear to be adequate capacity within the existing facility. Accordingly, we would conclude that it is not feasible or practical to provide a purpose-built childcare facility for this number of children onsite.

Therefore, in our opinion, due to the expected yield of children requiring childcare arising from the development, as well as the proximity and availability of existing childcare facilities to the proposed development, there is no need or requirement for the provision of additional childcare spaces as part of this development proposal.