

Childcare Demand Report

For Development at Ballymacaula, Drumbiggle,
Circular Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

on behalf of Glenveagh Homes Ltd.

August 2022



McCutcheon Halley
CHARTERED PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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Introduction

McCutcheon Halley Chartered Planning Consultants are appointed by Glenveagh Homes to prepare a Childcare Demand Report which considers the existing childcare facilities in Ennis, Co. Clare. The report will inform the proposed development The construction of 289 no. residential units comprising a mixture of 12 no. 1 bed apartments, 78 no. 2 bed townhouse/duplex units, 165 no. 3 bed dwelling houses, and 34 no. dwelling houses which will have an option of a 3- or 4-bedroom house-type, A 400.7m² creche/childcare facility. The provision of landscaping, open space and amenity areas, including play/exercise equipment, a linear amenity walkway, informal play areas and local play areas. The provision 2 no. pedestrian connections to the existing public footpath along the N85, 2 no. pedestrian connections into Ballymacaula View Estate, improvements/upgrades to the pedestrian footpaths along Circular Road including an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing and pedestrian footpath provision along part of the Drumbiggle and Cahercalla Roads. All associated infrastructure and services including 1 no. vehicular access point onto Circular Road, car parking and bin storage, lighting, 2 no. ESB substations, drainage and 1 pumping station, boundary treatments at Ballymacaula, Drumbiggle, Circular Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

This report provides details on the current and future capacity of existing and proposed childcare facilities in the area along with the demand for places likely to be generated by the proposed development.

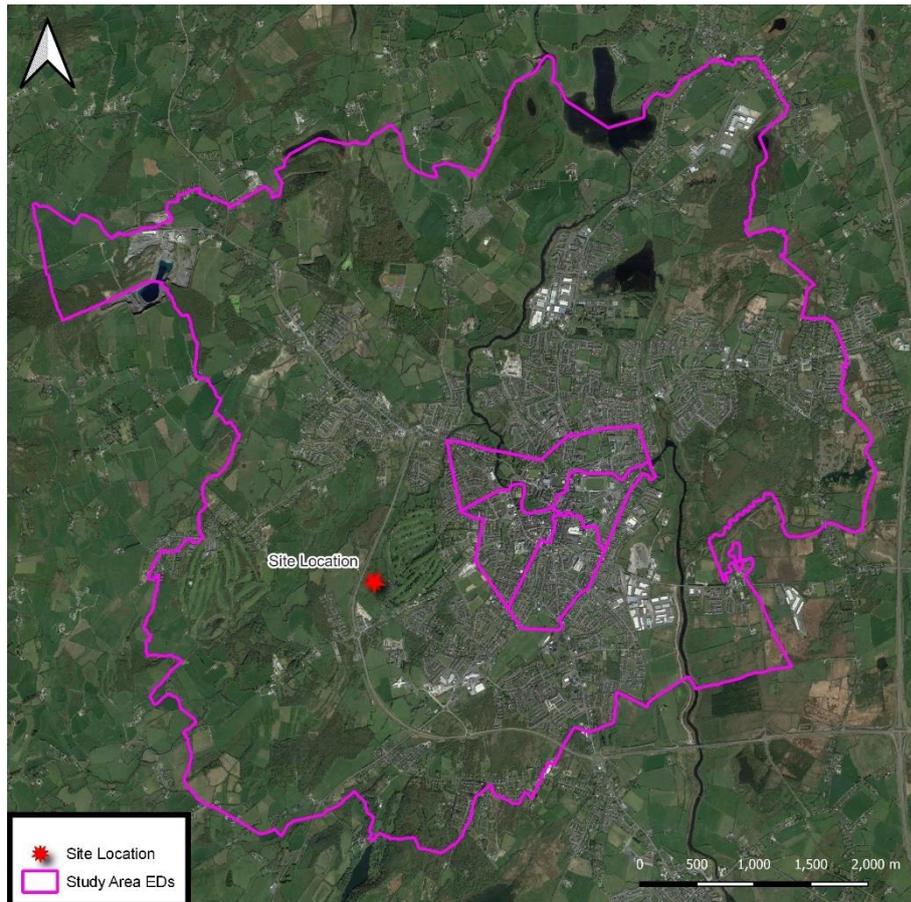


Figure 2: The Study Area composed of the Four Electoral Divisions

A number of sources were consulted in the preparation of this report.

- Tusla Reports;
- Census 2016 SAPMAP data;
- The Clare County Development Plan; and
- The Childcare Guidelines.

2. Policy Context

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 and 2023-2029 Draft Clare County Development Plan and the Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 published by the Department of Environment require the provision of a creche be assessed where in excess of 75 dwellings are being proposed.

2.1 Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023

The Clare County Development Plan 2014 outlines the provision of childcare facilities within residential areas can provide a beneficial service to the surrounding community. Objective 5.16 of the Plan relates to the provision of childcare facilities.

It states that the Councils aims are:

“To encourage the provision of affordable and accessible childcare and preschool facilities throughout County Clare”.

“To facilitate the development of additional childcare services for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups in the community”.

“To have regard to ‘Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)’, or any updated version, in the assessment of applications for childcare facilities”.

3.1 Clare County Draft Development Plan 2023-2029

The Draft Clare County Development Plan outlines that it is an objective to;

“To encourage the provision of affordable and accessible childcare and preschool facilities on well- located sites that are close to the populations they intend to serve throughout County Clare and in line with population and employment growth”.

“To facilitate the development of additional childcare services for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups in the community; and

“To have regard to Childcare Facilities -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) or any updated version in the assessment of applications for childcare facilities’

2.2 Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001

Appendix 2 of the ‘Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas (Paragraphs 2.4 and 3.3.1 refer). 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 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.

2.3 Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018

In relation to the provision of childcare facilities as they relate to apartments developments, Section 4.7 of the 2020 Apartment Guidelines provides the following guidance in relation to studio and one-bedroom units:

Notwithstanding the Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities (2001), in respect of which 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. Assessment

The local childcare demand likely to be generated by the proposal and the number of existing facilities in the vicinity to cater for such demand was examined in accordance with current guidelines. In accordance with the Childcare Guidelines, the following was established:

- The emerging demographic profile of the area;
- The existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities in the area.

In assessing the current and likely childcare demand for the study area, an analysis of the CSO data for the settlement of Ennis (i.e. the study area) as well as an assessment of childcare facilities located within a 10-20 minute travel time (2 km) of the site was undertaken.

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Area

The demographic profile of the study area was examined from the CSO Census of Population Statistics 2016 and includes a comparative analysis with National averages across a number of datasets.

The population of the study area increased from 22,324 in 2011 to 22,671 in 2016 which represents an increase of 1.6%. In 2016, 7.6% of the total population were of pre-school going age (i.e., 0-4 years), which represents a decrease of 0.6% from 8.2% in 2011.

By way of comparison, 9.1% of the population were over the age of 65 in 2016. Approximately 16.7% (i.e., 3,792) of the population were aged between 30-39. The number of 'One Person' households and 'Married Couples' was 22% in 2016, the same percentage as the State average of 22% for the same period.

Demographic travel trends indicate that considerable numbers of people commute to Ennis Town Centre and other employment centres within Clare County.

A total of 11,567 of the total population aged 5 years and over travel a distance of between 15 minutes and 45 minutes each day to work, school or college. This equates to 83.6%, with a further 8.5% travelling for a longer period. This suggests that a considerable amount of commuting occurs from the study area. Owing to its proximity to Ennis town and its many employment locations including the town centre, it is considered very likely that a sizeable proportion of both the existing and future populations will avail of childcare facilities outside the study area.

3.2 Distribution of Childcare Facilities in the Area

The study area was defined as a 2 km radius from the proposed development which encompasses 5 no. ED areas. This in turn allowed for a travel time of 10-20 minutes to access childcare services via walking, cycling and driving. A total of 5 no. facilities were located within the study area.

The location of these facilities is outlined in figure 3 and the list of facilities, along with the approximate travel times is given in table 1.

No.	Name	Distance	Walk	Cycle	Drive
1	Nurture Childcare and Early Learning	1.6km	21mins	9mins	3mins
2	Réalta Draíochta Preschool	1.3km	17mins	6mins	2mins
3	Cuddles Early Years Service	1.6km	20mins	7mins	4mins
4	Woodhaven Montessori & Childcare Academy	1.6km	20mins	7mins	4mins
5	Woodstock Montessori & Preschool	2.0km	26mins	7mins	3mins

Table 1: Childcare Facilities and Travel Times (all times in minutes)



Fig. 3: Location of Childcare Facilities (site boundary outlined in red)

The study area is located within the settlement of Ennis which has many employment locations. It is considered reasonable that a sizeable proportion of those commuting may also avail of childcare facilities in these employment areas. Tusla regulatory inspection reports are available for all 5 identified facilities. However, not all the relevant data necessary to carry out the assessment was available within these reports. In the absence of this data, information in relation to the facilities was gathered by speaking directly with their proprietors in December 2021 and June 2022 who advised on the total capacity of the relevant facility and the corresponding number of available places.

Childcare Facility	Capacity of Facility
Nurture Childcare and Early Learning	46
Réalta Draíochta Preschool	66
Cuddles Early Years Service	25
Woodhaven Montessori & Childcare Academy	40
Woodstock Montessori & Preschool	22

Table 2: Capacity of Childcare Facilities in the Study Area

3.3 Future demand as a result of the proposed development

The proposed scheme consists of development of 285 no. residential units, 1 no. childcare facility and residential amenity and all associated ancillary development works. The 2020 Apartment Guidelines indicate that studio and 1 bedroom units need not be considered in determining the appropriate level of childcare required. Based on this guidance, the 24 no. 1-bed units have been omitted from this assessment. The 261 no. 2-bed + units will be considered to determine the future childcare requirements for the proposed development.

Based on the study area average household size of 2.3, the 261 no. units (which require) childcare provision are likely to generate a population of 612 persons. Based on the assumption that 7.6% of the population of the study area are of pre-school age (i.e. 0-4 years), the number of pre-school children likely to be generated as a result of the completed development is approximately 47. As outlined previously, it is not probable that all children will require childcare so the figure of 47 is effectively a 'worst-case' scenario in relation to the demand for childcare spaces generated from the proposed development.

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Childcare, Q3 2016 states that the percentage of pre-school children minded by their parents is 62%, meaning that 38% of children attend some sort of childcare facility. The most common non-parental childcare type identified in the survey is crèche/Montessori/playgroup/after-school facility. This type of facility is used by 19% of the State's pre-school age children. In light of the foregoing, figures from the QNHS were applied to the proposed scheme resulting in the generation of a potential 11 no. childcare places.

The proposed residential development includes a 60 no. place childcare facility. The size of the proposed creche has had regard to the availability of capacity in the existing local facilities. In addition, consideration has been given to providing a creche which will provide childcare places for babies, toddlers and pre-school age children at a size which will attract a local operator.

4. Conclusion

This childcare demand Report has been carried out to determine the existing childcare facilities within a 10-20 minute travel time of the proposed development site and has been carried out in accordance with Clare County Council policy and National Childcare Guidelines.

Appendix 2 of the 'Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities' establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas (Paragraphs 2.4 and 3.3.1 refer). 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.

This assessment has found that a slight decrease in this requirement is appropriate for this development based on current Census data outlining the demographic of the area and evidence of national trends regarding the uptake of childcare facilities. Based on the 'worst-case' scenario, the subject site may generate an additional 47 no. childcare places, although it has been outlined previously that in accordance with national research it is not probable that all 47 children will require childcare.

The research undertaken identifies that there is some capacity in childcare places within a 10–20-minute travel time of the subject site. Currently, there is significant demand for childcare places in the area and it is anticipated that this situation is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. Having regard to the above, it is considered that the provision of a creche on site to cater for 60 no. children, which is in excess of the projected childcare needs of the proposed development, will meet current market demands for a viable operator.