

CHILDCARE ASSESSMENT

FOR A

STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

AT

‘TEMPLAR PLACE’

FORMER MALL SHOPPING CENTRE

QUAY STREET & HIGH STREET

BALBRIGGAN

CO. DUBLIN

PREPARED BY



ON BEHALF OF

RHONELLEN DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED

AUGUST 2021

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
THE PROPOSAL.....	3
PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	3
SITE CONTEXT.....	5
AREA DEMOGRAPHICS AND CATCHMENT AREA	6
QUATERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY	8
CHILDCARE / CRECHE FACILITIES	9
DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE PLACES LIKELY TO BE GENERATED BY PROPOSED SCHEME	10
CONCLUSION.....	12

INTRODUCTION

McGill Planning Limited, 45 Herbert Lane, Dublin 2, is instructed by our client Rhonellen Developments Limited, 63 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2, to prepare this childcare assessment for a proposed Strategic Housing Development at The Former Mall Shopping Centre, Quay Street & High Street, Balbriggan.

This assessment has been prepared to demonstrate childcare capacity in the Balbriggan area. It will determine whether there is a sufficient supply of crèches to cater for the demand of the existing and proposed developments in the area. The report will assess the childcare demand and the likely demand for childcare places resulting from the proposed development at the proposed site.

The following report has had regard to the Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023, Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, 2020 and The Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001.

The report assesses the vacancy rates within local childcare facilities and determines if the demand for places generated by the proposed developments can be accommodated within the existing childcare facilities without the need for an additional facility on the site.

THE PROPOSAL

The development will comprise a Strategic Housing Development (SHD), Build to Rent (BTR) consisting of: Demolition of the existing buildings (former shopping centre and associated structures). Construction of 3 no. apartment blocks (Blocks A – C) ranging in height from 3 to 6 storeys (with Block B over 3 no. lower courtyard floors) providing a total of 101 units (19 no. studios, 41 no. 1-beds, 41 no. 2-beds). Provision of Resident Support Facilities/Resident Services and Amenities, 2 no. retail units, car parking (at undercroft), cycle parking, ESB substation/switch room, plant, bin stores, open space, landscaping, boundary treatments, all associated site works and services provision.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001

The Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) generally recommend that 1 no. childcare facility is required per 75 no. dwellings. However, it is acknowledged that this is not always appropriate, and the omission of a childcare facility may be allowable *“where there are significant reasons to the contrary for example, development consisting of single bed apartments or where there are adequate childcare facilities in adjoining developments”*. In short, the provision of a childcare facility for new schemes of 75 no. dwellings is a guideline and not an absolute requirement.

In considering this issue, it is further stated that *“in relation to new housing areas, a standard of one childcare facility providing for a minimum 20 childcare places per approximately 75 dwellings may be appropriate. This is a guideline standard and will depend on the particular circumstances of each*

individual site [own emphasis added]”, (Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001, p.9).

Using the “*Childcare Facilities Guidelines*” of 20 no. childcare facility required per 75 no. dwellings, we have found that c. 27 no. childcare places (101 total units / 75 dwellings * 20 childcare places) would need to be provided as a result of this proposal. However, as this development primarily has one and two bed apartments it is considered that the development is unlikely to generate this level of demand.

It is worth noting that by applying this crude measure for calculating demand for crèche facilities for every residential application it is likely that there would be an overprovision of crèche facilities. If there is an over provision, then crèche facilities will not be commercially viable. There are numerous examples of small crèches throughout Ireland built as part of a new residential scheme which have either remained unoccupied or a change of use planning application has been submitted for an alternative use.

As a result, and as noted in the Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines 2020, the childcare guidelines are to be revised with a view to ensuring that childcare facilities are of sufficient size and scale to be commercially viable. In the interim, until the new childcare guidelines are produced, the New Apartment Guidelines 2020, advise that crèche provision should be on the basis of the population in the area, the number of children who actually attend pre-school and the existing provision in the area.

As a result, and following on from the advice set out above, we have carried out an assessment, identifying the existing facilities, their capacity, and demand in the area as well as an assessment of the demand that will be generated by the proposed BTR development.

Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, 2020

The Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2020 include specific guidance on childcare provision. This gives an indication of revised approach currently evolving in relation to childcare facilities particularly in the context of the current guidelines which were published nearly 20 years ago. Section 4.7 of the Guidelines states as follows:

*“Notwithstanding the Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities (2001), in respect of which a 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.”*

The unit mix for the proposed development is 19 no. studios, 41 no. 1-beds & 41 no. 2-beds. As assessment of the need for a childcare facility during the design phase of the subject scheme was carried out. It was found that there is at present sufficient capacity available within the existing facilities in the town, all within walking distance of the development, to cater for the likely demand generated by the proposed development, without the need for an additional facility.

Fingal Development Plan, 2017–2023

The following Childcare objectives are in place:

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.

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.

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.

The proposed development has given due consideration to Policy PM74 for the provision of 'childcare facilities in appropriate locations.' This audit has been completed to ascertain the current capacity of facilities and compare this with the demand generated by the current development.

As previously discussed, the use of the 2001 Guidelines does not provide an accurate measure for demand or need for a crèche based on the 'evidence based' method.

As will be demonstrated below, there is sufficient capacity within a large number of existing childcare facilities in the town to serve the low private childcare demand created by this Build to Rent proposal.

SITE CONTEXT

The subject site is located in the heart of Balbriggan, a bustling coastal town located within the Greater Dublin Area.

The land is a strategic infill site located c.250m away from Balbriggan Train Station, 200m from Balbriggan Beach and Harbour and 3km from the M1 motorway. It is located within an existing employment centre and is within easy walking distance of numerous local facilities and amenities.

The site has a frontage onto two centre streets, Quay Street and High Street. High Street is a predominantly residential street with a mixture of single and double storey houses and 3- 4storey apartment buildings. Quay Street contains a mixture of retail and commercial uses to the west and residential uses to the east. Quay Street directly connects to Bridge Street which is one of the main pedestrian and retail arteries within Balbriggan Town.

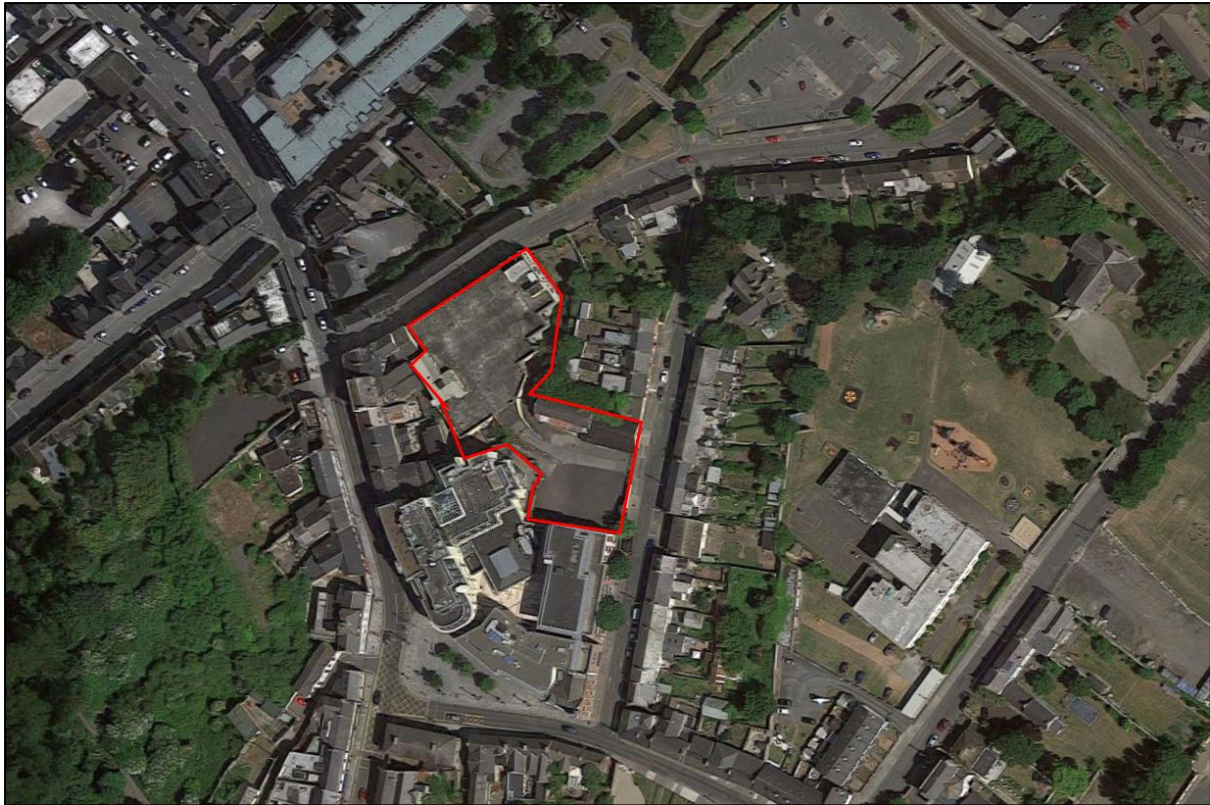


Figure 1- Site Location Map

AREA DEMOGRAPHICS AND CATCHMENT AREA

Approximately 8,116 no. people were living within the Balbriggan Urban electoral division which constitutes the primary catchment area (where the subject lands are located) at the time of the 2016 Census. There was an increase in the population between the 2011 and 2016 Census for both electoral divisions. Balbriggan Urban Area increased by 7.4% whereas Balbriggan rural electoral division increased by 8.9%. The analysis of CSO data showed that the population was aging with a 33.8% increase in population over the age of 65, an increase of 22.2% in population of older adults (35-64 years old) and a decrease of 20.4% for young adults (19-34 years old).

Of the total 2016 population for Balbriggan electoral divisions, 9.8% or 2,415 people, were of pre-school age, and this age cohort has decreased by 12.1% since 2011 which is an extremely significant decrease compared to other age groups.

	Electoral Divisions	Population 2016 (Total)	2016 Population aged 0-4	% of population aged 0-4
1	Balbriggan Urban	8,116	652	8%
2	Balbriggan Rural	16,495	1,763	10.7%
	Total	24,611	2,415	9.8%

Table 1- CSO Data of the Electoral Divisions within a 1km Radius of the site

Electoral Divisions	2011 Population	2016 Population	Population Change 2011-16	Percentage Change 2011-16
Balbriggan Urban	7,555	8,116	+561	7.4% increase
Balbriggan Rural	15,140	16,495	+1,355	8.9% increase

Table 2- CSO Data of the Electoral Divisions within a 1km Radius of the site. 2011 / 2016 Comparison

Age	2011	2016	Change	Percentage Change
0-4 Pre-school	2,752	2,415	-337	12.2 % decrease
5-18 School Children	4,900	6,241	1,341	27.4% increase
19-34 Adults	6,015	4,787	-1,228	20.4% decrease
35-64 Adults	7,852	9,594	1,742	22.2% increase
65+ Adults	1,176	1,574	398	33.8% increase

Table 3- Age Groups CSO Data of the Electoral Divisions

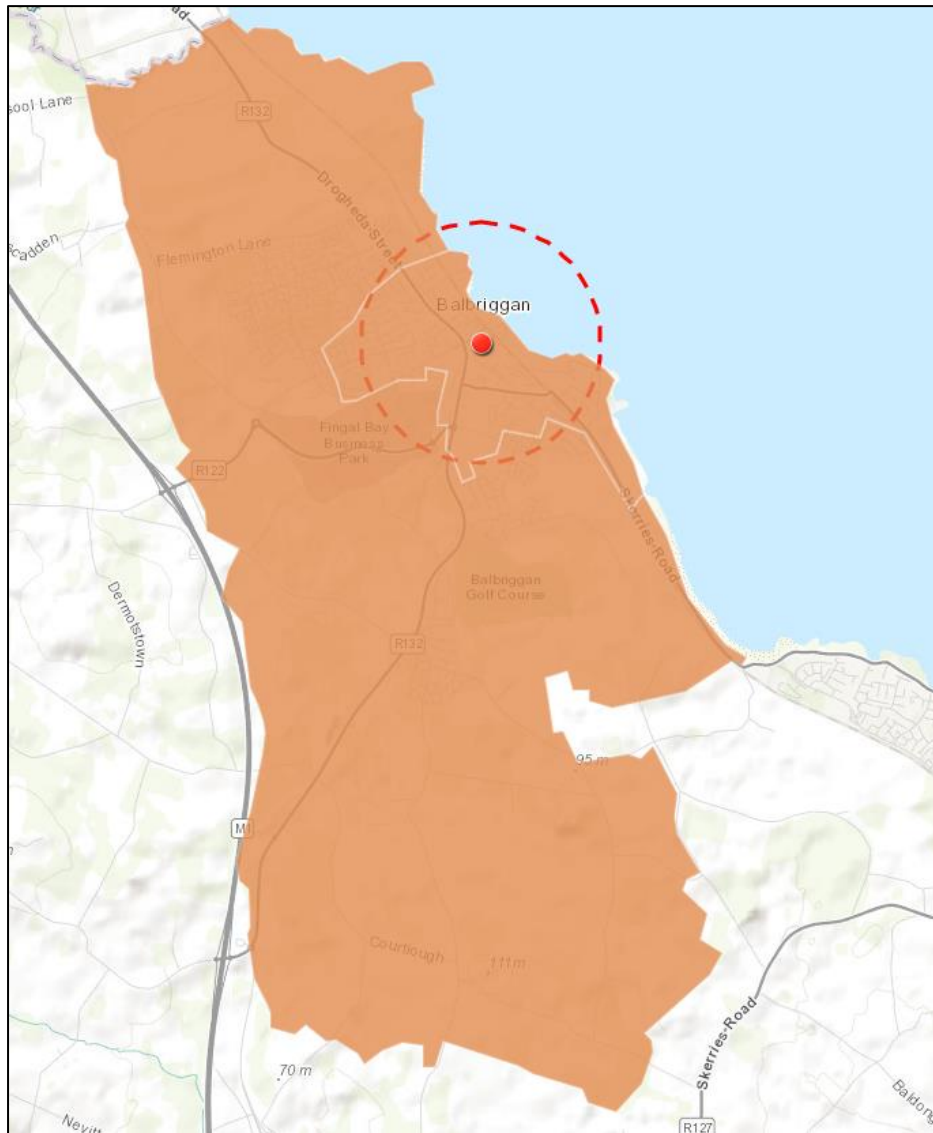


Figure 2- Site Location within Catchment Area for Population Analysis

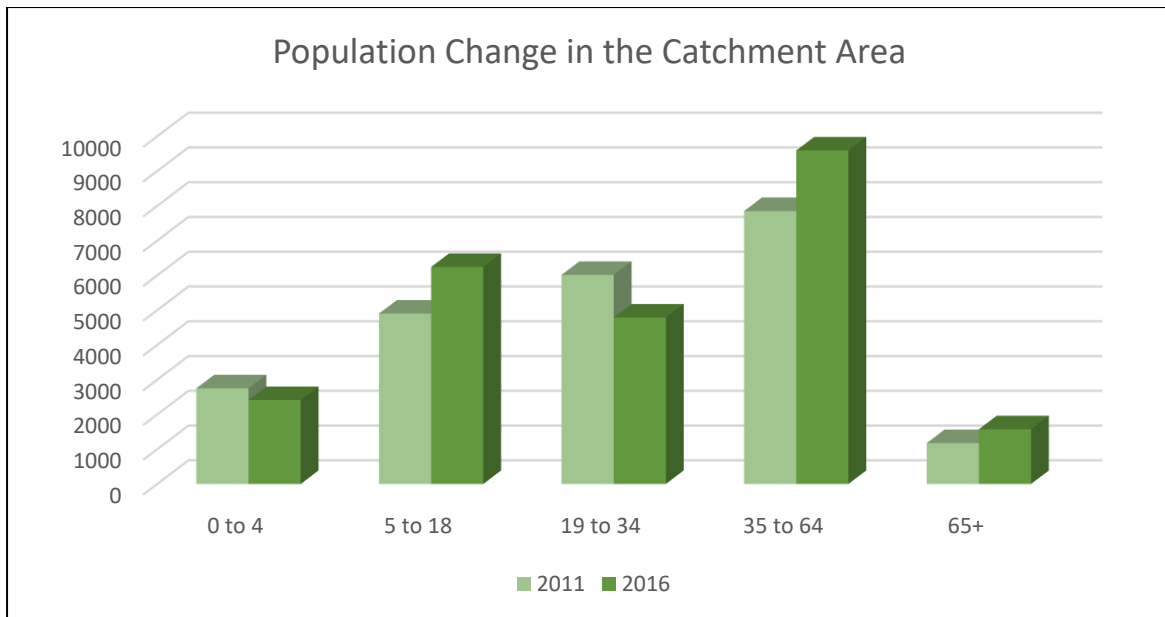


Figure 3- Changing Population in catchment area 2011-2016

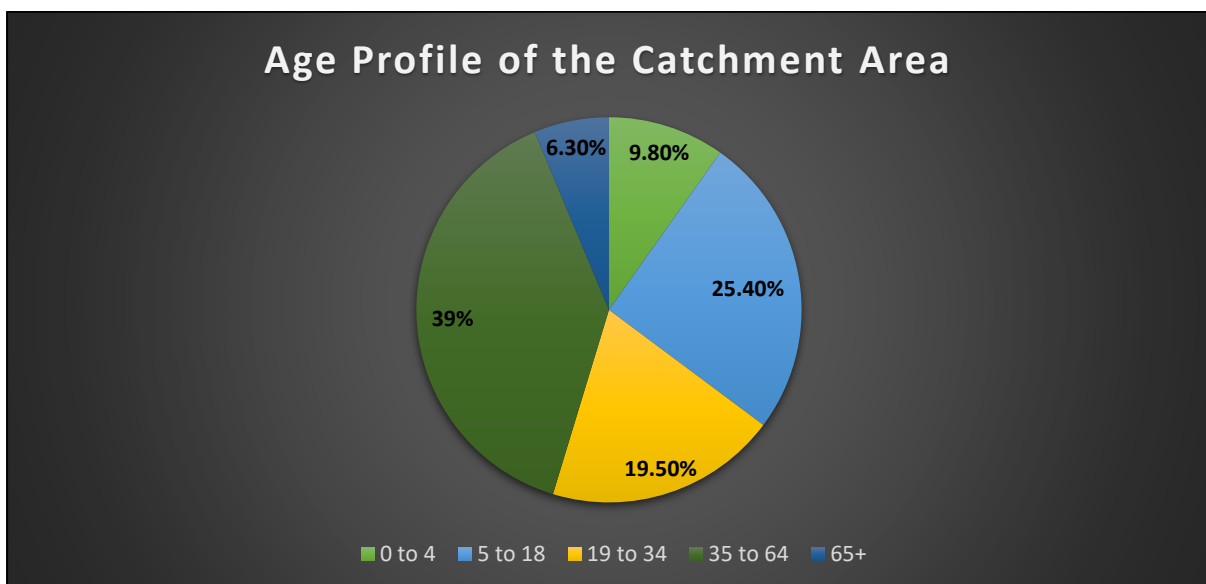


Figure 4 – Population breakdown for the catchment area for the 2016 census period.

QUATERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) carried out by the Central Statistics Office includes a Special Module on Childcare. The most recent report on this module was published for Quarter 4 2016. What the figures indicate is that Crèche/Montessori attendance for pre-school age children nationally is 19%, with the Dublin Region at 25% (Source: CSO.ie).

Interestingly the Southwest records the highest percentage of private childcare use at 28% with the Midlands and Mid-East being the lowest at 14%.

Parental childcare remains the largest type of childcare at 62% in the Dublin Region and nationally on average.

Type of childcare	Pre-school children								
	Border	Midland	West	Dublin	Mid-East	Mid-West	South-East	South-West	State
Parent / Partner	65	56	59	62	65	51	67	65	62
Unpaid relative or family friend	16	13	18	16	16	16	20	22	17
Paid relative or family friend	2	5	2	3	5	1	4	2	3
Childminder / Au Pair / Nanny	13	18	21	8	13	13	13	12	13
Creche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility	15	14	15	25	14	28	17	16	19
Other	1	<1	<1	1	<1	1	1	1	1
Total pre-school children using non-parental childcare	45	47	49	46	45	53	45	45	46
Unweighted sample	198	136	234	525	244	189	230	316	2,072

Figure 5 – Extract from Quarterly National Household Survey, 2016 Special Module on Childcare

CHILDCARE / CRECHE FACILITIES

Pobal, the government agency, maintains an up to date map of registered childcare facilities within Ireland, enabling more objective analysis of gaps in provision and the targeting of areas where facilities may be needed in the future.

We have undertaken an analysis of existing facilities in the local area as detailed in Figure 6 (below) using this data from Pobal. From this analysis it is shown that there are 9 no. childcare facilities operating within 1km (10 mins walk) of the subject site with two other creches just slightly outside the 1km buffer zone. These include:

	Crèche/Childcare Facility	Total no. Children	Current Availability**	Services Offered
1.	Busy Bees Pre-School	12	1	Sessional
2.	Balbriggan Community Childcare	50	8	Sessional
3.	Fun Times	95	0	Full day/Sessional
4.	Really Cool Millfield	40	2	Sessional
5.	Really Cool Georges Hill	50	5	Sessional
6.	Market Green	90	0	Sessional
7.	Little Wonders	24	1	Sessional
8.	Tots & Swots	50	20	Full day/Sessional
9.	Links Childcare	No Response	May have vacancies	No Response
10.	Sunbeams	No Response	May have vacancies	No Response
11.	Little Cherubs	No Response	May have vacancies	No Response

Table 4 – Location of Creche Facilities with the catchment area

** At the time of contacting (early July 2021) the creche's were operating in accordance with HSE and Tusla guidelines with respect to COVID-19.



Figure 6 – Location Crèche/Childcare Facilities

All of these facilities were contacted in July 2021 to confirm current availability. Most confirmed that they have at least some capacity as recorded in the above table.

DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE PLACES LIKELY TO BE GENERATED BY PROPOSED SCHEME

The table below provides a breakdown of the proposed units.

Unit Size	Number of Unit	Percentage %
Studio Apartment	19	18.8%
1 Bed Apartment	41	40.6%
2 Bed Apartment	41	40.6%
Total	101	100%

Table 5 – Unit Breakdown for Proposed Development

Based on an average household size of 2.7 then the estimated population of the proposed development would be c.273 persons. Based on the 2016 Census figures for the area then the population estimate for the 0-4 age cohort (pre-school at 9.8% of total population for Balbriggan Urban & Rural combined) may be c.27 children.

However, it is noted that this figure is likely overestimated, given the large proportion of studios/1-bed units and no 3+bed units in the scheme. An average household size of 2.7 is unlikely in this development and may in fact be closer to 2.0 in this instance.

Furthermore, as the 2020 Apartment Guidelines recommends, studio units and one bed units should be excluded when calculating childcare demand in new developments.

Excluding the studios and 1-beds leaves 41 units. This figure is well below the 75 unit threshold in the 2001 Guidelines for automatically requiring a creche to be provided as part of a new development.

The estimated 0-4 age cohort (9.8%) population for these future family households would be c.11 children.

However, as detailed above, not all 0-4 year olds are likely to require private childcare. The 2016 QNHS indicated that in the Dublin region on average only 25% of pre-school age children attended private childcare in 2016.

Applying the QNHS average for the Dublin Regions suggests that the family households in the future development would generate a private childcare demand of only c.3 no. places. Applying a much higher proportion of 50% of the household requiring private childcare would still result in an estimated demand of only 6 places. The above calculations are summarised in the table below.

	2001 Guidelines	2020 Apartment Guidelines
	All apartments	Without Studios + 1 beds
Calculation based on 2001 Guidelines		
No. of units	101	41
2001 Guidelines (20 no. spaces/75 no. units)	27	11
Refined estimate based on population analysis as advised in the 2020 Apartment Guidelines		
Total Population generated (2.7 per household)	273	111
Population 0-4 (9.8% of Pop)	27	11
Estimate based on inclusion of Quarterly National Household Survey Findings for Private Childcare Demand in Dublin Region		
Total Requiring Childcare (25%)	7	3
Worst case scenario total Requiring Childcare (50%)	14	6

Figure 6 Estimated Childcare Demand from Proposed Development

In summary, regardless of how the figures are run, the results indicate that the likely childcare demand of the proposed development is likely to be very low and not of a quantity to warrant a dedicated creche to be provided on site, particularly when there are already 11 creches operating in the town within walking distance and with confirmed spare capacity.

CONCLUSION

Considering the Build to Rent nature of the proposed development, the quantum and mix of units proposed, its town centre location, and the concentration and ongoing capacity of existing childcare facilities in the town, it is considered that there is sufficient capacity within the area to cater for the minimal additional childcare need that will be created by the proposed development.

It is therefore considered that an additional childcare facility is not required.