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CHILDCARE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Proposed Development of 74 Residential Units at Craddockstown Road,
Craddockstown Demesne, Naas, Co. Kildare

Kildare County Council



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Title:	16048 NTMA Social Housing Bundle 1 – Craddockstown
Project:	Proposed Development of 74 Residential Units at Craddockstown Road, Craddockstown Demesne, Naas, Co. Kildare
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001, (DEHLG)* recommends that planning authorities should require the provision of at least one childcare facility for new housing areas unless 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. The Guidelines recommend that for new housing areas, an average of one childcare facility for each seventy five dwellings would be appropriate although it does state 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.

It should be noted that the proposed development of 74 no. units is under the threshold of 75 no. units recommended in the Guidelines. Furthermore, it should be noted that 6 no. of the 74 no. units comprise of one bed only. Accordingly, 68 no. units (substantially below the 75 no. unit threshold) are to be provided to accommodate families and must be considered in the context of generated requirements for an additional childcare facility.

Notwithstanding the provision of the Childcare Facilities Guidelines published in 2001, some fifteen years ago, the legacy of the economic crash illustrates that there needs to be a defined need and critical mass before a childcare facility can be successful. All too often, the purpose built crèche facilities provided in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines, remains vacant and unoccupied as the space was 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.

In accordance with the requirements of Kildare County Council and as discussed at pre-planning application stage, a childcare facility audit and assessment has been undertaken to ascertain the need and demand for a crèche facility in conjunction with the provision of 74 no. units on the subject site.

2.0 APPROACH

The childcare assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the following three steps:

- Determining the need arising from the development proposal;
- Determining the extent and provision of existing childcare facilities within the neighbourhood; and
- Analysing the use of those existing facilities to determine if there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the need generated by the proposed scheme.

Policy HP22 of the Naas Development Plan (NDP) requires the provision of childcare facilities in all new residential developments as appropriate. The indicative standard is one childcare facility accommodating twenty children, for each 75 no. dwellings. This standard may be modified in any particular case where there are significant reasons for doing so. Section 13.4 of the NDP further clarifies that this standard may be enforced depending on local circumstances but that the Council will consult with the Kildare County Childcare Committee in this regard.

It is noted that Policy HP22 of the NDP was relaxed in the case of a recent decision by Kildare County Council and An Bord Pleanála (P15/176 & PL09.246340) in respect of a development of 284 no. housing units on the adjoining land to the north east by Ballymore Developments Ltd. It is considered that such a development sets an important precedence for residential development in the area, particularly relating to the proposed development which is providing only a little over a quarter of the number of housing units (74 no.) relative to the development permitted and which did not require the provision of a crèche.

3.0 DEVELOPMENT NEED

The proposed development comprises 74 no. units with 6 no. of those units comprising of one bed only. Accordingly, 68 no. units are to be provided to accommodate families and must be considered in the context of generated requirements for an additional childcare facility. Utilising an average household size of 2.6 persons per unit, in accordance with standardised Census of Population data, 68 no. houses will yield a population of 177 persons. Through further analysis of 2011 Census Report¹ data, it has been determined that the average family contains 1.38 children (persons aged 18 and under) of which 30 per cent are children aged between 0-4 years old. The proposed development would therefore, theoretically in accordance with current rates of population, yield 94 no. children of which 28 no. would be between the 0 and 4 years of age, that is within the crèche requirement age. It is relevant to note that the *Quarterly National Household Survey, Childcare, Quarter 4 2007*¹ reports that only 19% of pre-school children attend a childcare facility. Therefore, if this ratio was applied, to the development, then theoretically, only 5 no. childcare spaces would be required. However, for the purpose of this exercise it is intended to assume a worst-case scenario, and assume that all children within crèche going age group would require childcare. The assessment then proceeds with a requirement of 28 no. childcare spaces.

4.0 EXISTING CHILDCARE PROVISION

In accordance with best principles of sustainable development and urban planning, it is reasonable to consider and expect childcare facilities to be provided proximate to residential development. Within the context of this urban location, it was deemed appropriate to audit existing childcare provision within a 1.2km catchment of the subject site, equitable to a 15-minute walk time. There would of course be additional childcare facilities beyond the 1.2km catchment but these have not been included in this assessment. The 1.2km study catchment is considered to reflect, a typical 15 minute walk time based on an average walking speed within an urban environment. The spatial extent of this study area is clearly illustrated in the maps appended to this document. There are 4 no. childcare facilities within a 15 minute walk of the subject site.

Within this catchment, all registered TUSLA (The Child and Family Agency) childcare facilities were contacted directly by email, providing an opportunity to secure up to date capacity and demand statistics from each individual facility. It was difficult to secure such information due to commercial sensitivities and accordingly where the childcare facility did not respond, statistics for each facility were secured from TUSLA. TUSLA provides independent data on childcare facilities generated from their inspections of childcare facilities. 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 data inclusive of; childcare capacity, number of children registered, and, childcare take up (on day of inspection).

¹ *National Household Population Average*

Whilst a proportion of this study is based on the TUSLA information, it should be realised that this reflects a conservative estimate of childcare provision within this catchment area as there are other non-TUSLA registered childcare facilities within the catchment area for which (despite seeking it) there was no data forthcoming from existing operators. Those additional facilities are therefore excluded from this assessment.

The Kildare Childcare Committee were also contacted for information. The only update information that they hold relates to capacity of sessional childcare places and they advised that they do not have figures for fulltime or part-time places.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING PROVISION

A total of 4 (TUSLA registered) childcare facilities currently operate within a 15 minute walking distance of the site including Friendly Faces, Apple Tree, Soil Linbh Liosa Pre school and Chatterboxes. A fifth crèche with capacity for 100 children is proposed on the Blessington Road subject to planning permission.

- The Friendly Faces Creche located across the road to the west from the subject site is fully occupied.
- The Apple Tree Creche located on the Craddockstown Road, north of the subject site is full for sessional care but only has 4 no. places occupied for full time care. Accordingly it has significant capacity available for full time care.
- Scoil Linbh Liosa offers 2 no. pre school facilities and has capacity each year.
- Although the Chatterbox Childcare Facility on the Kilcullen Road is Tulsa approved, there was no information available on enrolment numbers or unit capacity. Numerous phonecalls were made to this facility but there was no success in securing information.
- Planning permission was granted to PTG Partnership (P151060) on the Blessington Road for a significant residential development and which included provision for a 100 unit crèche facility.

Just outside the 15-minute walk time distance and within 2km of the site are an additional 5 no. childcare facilities including Hill House pre-school, Saints & Scholars Creche, Sticky Fingers Main Street, Barneys Creche, and Tender Years. Cumulatively these facilities offer in excess of 300 childcare places. There is current capacity in Tir na nOg, Cocoon and Tender Years. Furthermore, there is additional capacity on the northern side of the town. Cocoon in Millenium Park confirms that they have significant capacity at their facility.

A detailed phone conversation with the owner of Apple Tree Creche in Craddockstown advised that there is significant capacity for full time childcare in the town but that there is demand for sessional care. However, she advised that a significant new sessional care facility is to open in January 2017 in the old St. David's National School on the Dublin Road within proximity to the subject site. This facility, she believes will provide adequate capacity for sessional childcare needs in the town and once operational there will be no additional demand arising in the town.

It is noted that the planning application permitted by Kildare County Council located on the adjoining land to the north and proposed by Ballymore Developments for 284 no. residential units (P15/176) states that there are 400+ childcare spaces available in the town with 60+ places available at any one

time. This development did not incorporate or propose a crèche and this confirms that there is adequate capacity to serve the 28 no. childcare spaces which are likely to be generated by the proposed development.

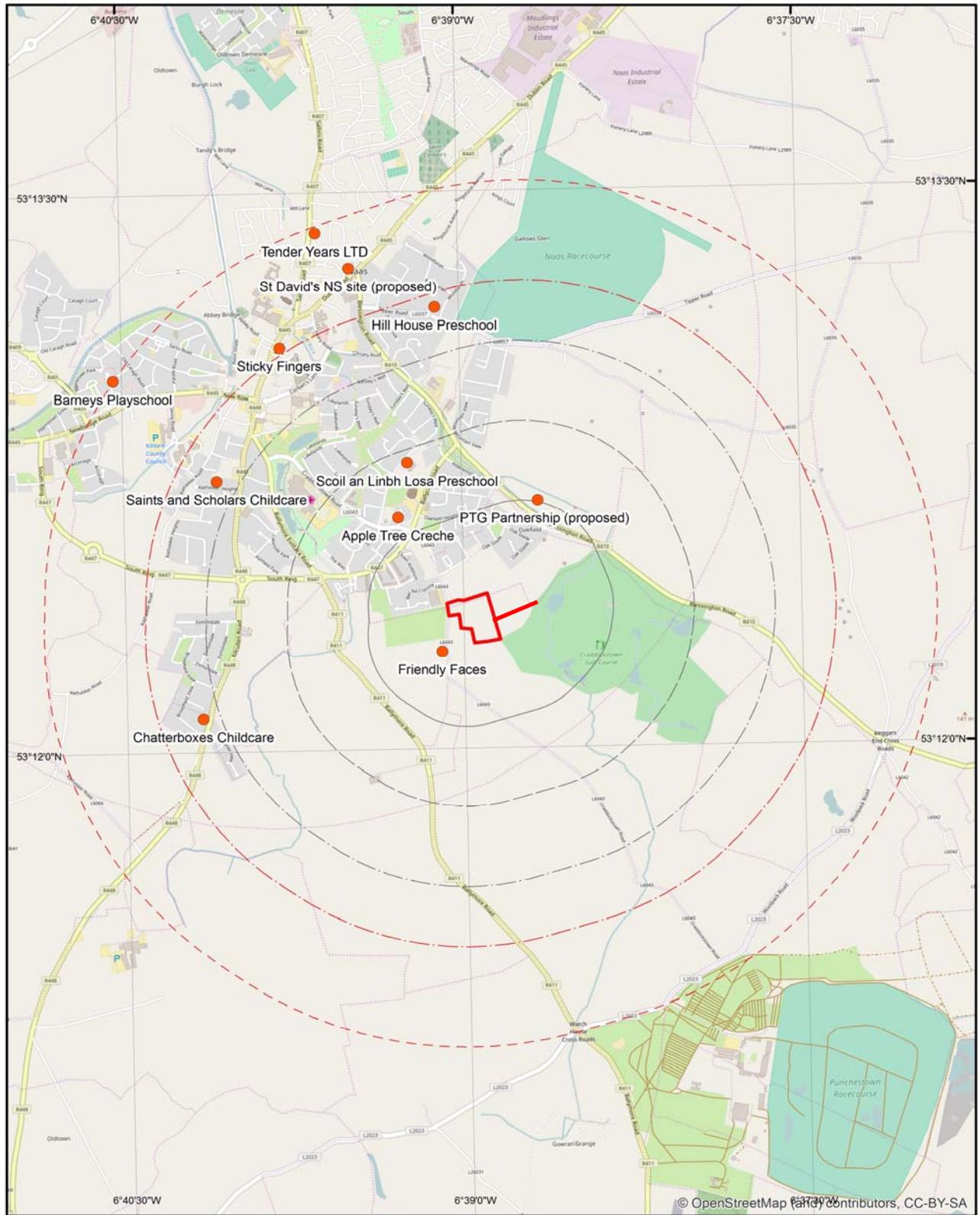
It also must be considered that having regard to the social housing nature of the development proposal, a number of the prospective occupants are already living in the Naas area in inappropriate accommodation and potentially using existing childcare facilities. The proposed development does not seek to attract or accommodate new families to the town of Naas but rather seeks to provide suitable accommodation for existing families to satisfy existing demand. Accordingly, the proposed development is unlikely to generate significant new or additional demand for childcare facilities.

From this assessment, and having regard to the proposed new sessional childcare facility to be operational on the old site of St. David's National School on the Dublin Road, it has been concluded that there is likely to be sufficient capacity available in childcare spaces to accommodate the childcare needs generated by the proposed development within the town of Naas. In accepting the statistics of this assessment, it is relevant to note that the take-up of childcare places within the study area is significantly higher than the national average.

The findings of the *'Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Survey 2013'* indicates that nationally, only 35 per cent of urban childcare facilities are reported as full in contrast with this instance, where childcare facilities are operating at almost 53 per cent capacity. Therefore, consideration of capacity is based on locational specific circumstances as they exist at this time and not on generalised average take-ups.

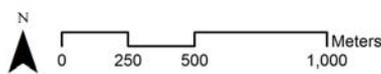
6.0 CONCLUSION

On the basis of this assessment it is considered that there is likely to be sufficient childcare capacity and availability within the town of Naas to accommodate the childcare going age generated by the proposed development. Therefore, having regard to 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.



Legend

- Craddockstown, Naas, Co. Kildare
- Childcare Facilities - Craddockstown
- 400m from Site (5 Minute Walk)
- 800m from Site (10 Minute Walk)
- 1200m from Site (15 Minute Walk)
- 1.5km from site
- 2km from site



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Figure 1 Childcare Facilities