



## **Childcare Needs Assessment**

Proposed Strategic Housing Development,  
Jacob's Island, Ballinure, Mahon, Cork.

**Hibernia Star Limited**

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**Connecting places.**



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# 01. Introduction

## 1.1 CONTEXT

This Childcare Needs Assessment has been prepared to accompany a planning application for a Strategic Housing Development comprising the construction of a mixed-use residential, creche, office development and all ancillary site development works. The proposed residential development provides for the construction of 489 no. residential units, a two storey creche, and 4,112 m<sup>2</sup> of office development. The proposed development will be constructed on lands of c. 3.9 hectares in area in Jacob's Island, to the south of the N40 South Link Road.

Specifically, this assessment examines the demand for childcare places to be generated by the proposal and the extent to which this can or will be catered for on or off-site.

The subject site is located at Jacob's Island, Ballinure, Mahon, Cork, adjacent to the Mahon District Centre which lies within the south-eastern suburbs of Cork City, as defined in the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022. The subject site zoned for 'Mixed Use Development – Jacob's Island' in an area that is described in the Mahon Local Area Plan as a "key development area" where residential development is planned and anticipated in the future.



Figure 1.1 Site Context

# 02. Planning Policy Context

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## 2.1 CHILDCARE GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES 2001

The national Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities 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.

Appendix 2 of the guidelines establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas. 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 guidelines emphasize that 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.

## 2.2 CIRCULAR PL 3/2016

In March 2016, the Government issued a circular in relation to childcare facilities under the early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. In accordance with the stated aspiration to increase access to childcare nationally, the circular requests that local planning authorities:

- *“Expedite all pre-planning application consultation requests from childcare facility providers in relation to proposals to extend opening hours, to increase capacity or to provide new facilities.*
- *Expedite, insofar as is possible, consideration of all planning applications or Section 5 declaration submissions in respect of childcare facilities in order to facilitate the expansion of required capacity as appropriate”.*

## 2.3 UNIVERSAL DESIGN GUIDELINES 2019

On 10th June 2019, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, launched the Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings. These guidelines are an important step in making all Early Learning and Care services accessible to all children. This publication offers guidance on the refurbishment, renovation and building of centres for Early Learning and Care in Ireland. The guidelines apply to both new-build and retrofit projects and provide a flexible Universal Design framework to ensure that settings are accessible, understandable and easy to use for all children, staff, families and visitors.

- The Universal Design ELC setting comprises four quality features;
- Site Location, Approach, Entry and Site Layout
- Entering and Moving about the ELC setting

- Key Internal and External Spaces
- Elements and Systems

## 2.4 CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015-2021

Objective 7.7: Childcare Facilities of the Cork City Development Plan 2015 (CDP) relates to the provision of childcare facilities. It states that Cork City Council will:

*‘Cork City Council will support the provision of high-quality childcare facilities throughout the city suited to the needs of a given area and will:*

- » *Require purpose built childcare facilities as part of proposals for new residential developments of more than 75 dwelling units. However, where it can be clearly established that existing facilities are sufficient, alternative arrangements will be considered;*
- » *Consult with the Cork City Childcare Company and the HSE on planning applications where childcare facilities are proposed;*
- » *Require employers with more than 500 members of staff to provide childcare facilities as part of planning applications for significant new and extended development.’*

## 2.5 DRAFT CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

Objective 3.21 of the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 sets out to support the provision and expansion of high-quality childcare facilities throughout the city. The Council will:

- *Require purpose built childcare facilities as part of proposals for new residential developments of more than 75 dwelling units. However, where it can be clearly established that existing facilities are sufficient, alternative arrangements will be considered.*
- *Consult with the Cork City Childcare Company and the HSE on planning applications where childcare facilities are proposed.*
- *Require employers with more than 500 members of staff to provide childcare facilities as part of planning applications for significant new and extended development.*

## 2.6 SUSTAINABLE URBAN HOUSING DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW APARTMENTS - GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES' (2020)

We note section 4.7 of the 2020 Apartment Guidelines which states 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’.*

# 03. Assessment

## 3.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed scheme will consist of 489 no. apartments comprising approximately 33.1% 1-bedroom apartments and 66.9% 2-bedroom apartments.

Unit Type	No. Units	Percentage of Overall Mix
Studio Apartment	1	0.2%
1 Bedroom Apartment	161	32.9%
2 Bedroom Apartment	327	66.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 01 – Unit Breakdown

The proposed residential layout integrates private and social housing ranging from studio to 2-bedroom apartments. The proposed housing mix is consistent with all national planning policies relating to housing mix in residential developments (as outlined in the accompanying Statement of Consistency and the Statement on Housing Mix prepared by HW Planning).

## 3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Based on the Cork City Neighbourhood Profile 2021<sup>1</sup>, children of crèche-going age accounted for 7% of the Mahon neighborhood population; marginally higher than the city-wide figure of 6.1%. This indicates that there is a slightly larger than average crèche-going population in the small areas within a 10 – 15 no. minute walking distance from the subject site.

## 3.3 CHILDCARE DISTRIBUTION

The Mahon neighbourhood contains 7 no. existing creches/childcare facilities, 2 no. primary schools and 1 no. secondary school. Details of existing childcare facilities are shown below.

<sup>1</sup> The [Cork City Neighbourhood Profile](#) report was published in 2021 as a supporting document to the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028. Each neighborhood profile was produced using CSO Census 2016 data.



Figure 3.1 Childcare Providers in vicinity of the subject site

Tusla Reference no.	Name	Capacity	Theoretical Capacity
TU2015CC308	Nurture Childcare Blackrock	135 (65 in attendance)	70
TU2015CC406	Bessborough Centre Creche	124 (78 in attendance)	46
TU2016CC008	The Village Montessori AMI	88 (81 in attendance)	7
TU2015CC056	Beginnings Creche Mahon	31 (13 in attendance)	18
TU2015CC253	Mahon CDP	22 (16 in attendance)	6
TU2015CC254	Mahon Community Preschool	40 (24 in attendance)	16
TU2015CC289	Naíonra Cró na nÓg	22 (22 in attendance)	0

TOTAL	7 No. Facilities	462 places	163 vacancies
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Table 02 – Childcare Providers

In addition, we note that a 60 childcare place facility has been permitted in the adjoining site (ABP-301991-18). Furthermore, an additional 60 childcare places are included in 2 no. SHD applications, within the lands of the former Bessborough Demesne (application ref ABP-313206-22, ABP-313216-22) which are currently under consideration by An Bord Pleanála.

The Cork City Childcare Committee were engaged at an early stage of the EIAR process, providing valuable information on childcare provision in the Mahon area. This information has directly informed this study.

### 3.4 CHILDCARE PROPOSAL

Appendix 2 of the Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities establishes a standard that where 75 no. dwellings are constructed, one childcare facility providing a minimum of 20 no. childcare places is considered reasonable. However, we note section 4.7 of the 2020 Apartment Guidelines which states 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.*

In accordance with the recommendations of these Guidelines, discounting the one-bedroom units, the proposed development could generate a demand for 87 childcare spaces.

We note that the Guidelines state that similarly two-bedroom units, 'in part or whole' should not generally be considered to contribute to a requirement for any childcare provision. As the proposed scheme comprises only one and two bedroom units we consider the generated demand will be significantly less than 87 childcare spaces.

We envisage that a significant market for the proposed apartments in the development will be young professionals working in Mahon, Cork City Centre and other nearby employment centres, therefore 33% of the units are studio and 1 bed apartments. In view of the central and accessible location and proposed housing mix of the development, it is envisaged that it will house relatively few families when compared to a typical residential scheme. As a result, we consider that the resulting demand for childcare will not be comparable to an average suburban residential development.

Considering this, the proposal provides for a 53-place childcare facility. While having regard to the Guidelines statement that two-bedroom units 'in part or whole' can be considered not to contribute towards a childcare requirement, a conservative approach has been taken and a childcare provision for 60% of the two-bedroom units has been made. In addition to adherence to the guidelines, we consider this reduction in childcare spaces to be appropriate, given the following:

**Adequate access to existing and planned childcare facilities:**

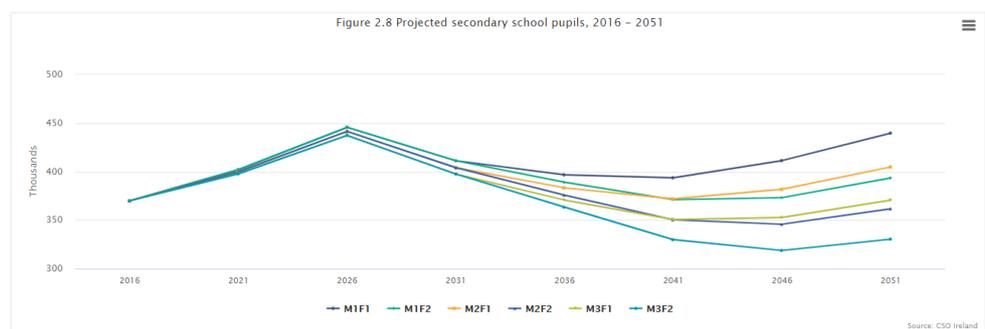
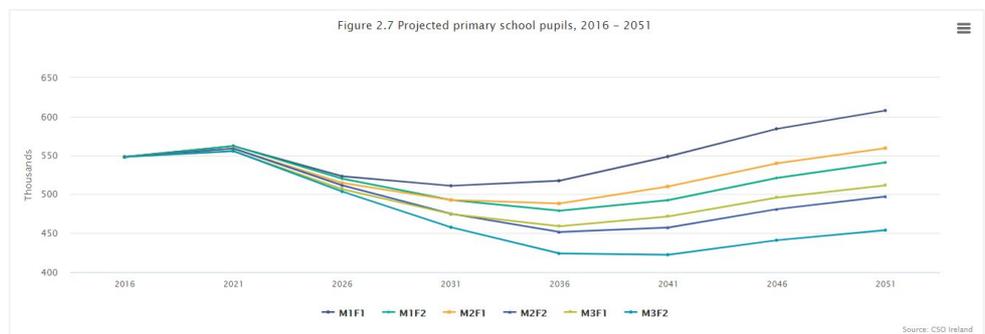
The proposed development will be within walking distance of two existing childcare facilities. The scheme is also located adjacent to a yet to be constructed creche, granted under application ABP-301991-18.

## A changing demographic:

Similar to national trends, Mahon's demographic is changing. Birth rates and children born per mother are decreasing, and the population is ageing.<sup>2</sup> According to Central Statistics Office (CSO) projections, total births under all six scenarios will continue to decrease until 2025/2030.



Source: [CSO Population and Labour Force Projections 2017-2051 \(2021\)](#).



Source: [CSO Population and Labour Force Projections 2017-2051 \(2021\)](#).

7% of Mahon's population were between the ages of 0 and 4 in 2016. We expect the next Census to report a further decline in the 0-4 age group within Mahon to below the 2016 Cork City average. In support of this argument, the CSO projects decreases in both primary and secondary school pupils out to 2036 and 2042 respectively. This decrease in total numbers is disproportionate to the expected population growth of 145,000 people that Cork City is envisioned to accommodate out to 2040. In light of national and local trends, we conclude that there will be a decrease in demand for childcare spaces in the Jacobs Island area, further justifying the proposed 53-space creche.

<sup>2</sup> Nationally, the average number of children born to women aged 45 to 64 years had fallen from 2.55 to 2.33 children between 2011 and 2016. (Census, 2016)

## 04. Summary

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This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the adopted policies of Cork City Council and the National Childcare Guidelines.

A review of public records indicates the presence of 7 no. childcare facilities in proximity to the subject site with another permitted but not yet constructed crèche adjoining the site in Jacob's Island. It is proposed to make provision on site for a 53-child place creche. The justification for this being:

- there is sufficient existing and planned childcare services in proximity to the subject site (163 vacancies within existing facilities);
- it is projected that there will be a decrease of creche-going-age children in Mahon; and
- in view of the proposed housing mix and in line with the Guidelines recommendation that one-bedroom units and 'in part or whole' two-bedroom units can be considered not to contribute towards a childcare requirement the proposed 53 no. creche-spaces will adequately provide for the creche-going-children that could be expected to be accommodated within the proposed development.