



Childcare Needs Assessment

Proposed Strategic Housing Development at the Former
Tedcastles Site, Centre Park Road, Cork

Tiznow Property Company Limited (Comer Group Ireland)

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01. Introduction

1.1 CONTEXT

This Childcare Needs Assessment has been prepared to accompany a planning application for a mixed used development including the construction of 823 no. residential units at lands known as the Former Tedcastles site. Specifically, it 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 proposed development site, c. 4.86 ha in area, is bound to the north by the Marina and to the south and south-east by Centre Park Road. Buildings and lands to the west were formerly occupied by the ESB.

02. Planning Policy Context

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 FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE SETTINGS 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

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 SUSTAINABLE URBAN HOUSING DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW APARTMENTS - GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES 2020

We note section 4.7 of the 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 823 no. apartments comprising approximately 34% 1-bedroom apartments, 51% 2-bedroom apartments and 15% 3-bedroom apartments. This housing mix is consistent with the latest 2020 Apartment Guidelines.

Total Residential Units	823	
1 Bedroom Apartment	282	34%
2 Bedroom Apartment	414	51%
3 Bedroom Apartment	118	15%

The proposed residential layout integrates private and social housing ranging from 3 bed units to 1 bed apartments. The proposed housing mix is consistent with all national and local planning policies relating to housing mix in residential developments (as outlined in the accompanying Statement of Consistency).

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

According to 2016 Census Figures, the average household size in the south docklands¹ is 3.28 no. persons per household. This is higher than the average across Cork City and suburbs at 2.6 persons per household². In 2016, 5.9% of the south docklands' resident population of 170 no. people were of pre-school age³.

3.3 CHILDCARE DISTRIBUTION

The following resources were investigated to establish the number of existing childcare services in the vicinity of the south dock lands.

- Tuslas' Database - <https://geohub.tusla.ie/>
- Childcare.ie, Ireland's National Childcare Directory - www.childcare.ie

¹ As defined by the CSO SAP Ref. 048041005

² As defined by the CSO Census of population

³ 10 no. persons between the ages of 0-4.

- Cork City Childcare Committee - www.corkcitychildcare.ie

At present there are 3 no. existing childcare facilities in the surrounding area, namely:

- Stepping Stones Pre-School, Ballintemple, (Tusla Reference: TU2015CC390) with a capacity of 22 no. children;
- Pea Pods Childcare, Ballintemple, (Tusla Reference: TU2015CC324) with a capacity of 40 no. children; and
- Rockboro Pre-School, Ballintemple, (Tusla Reference: TU2015CC351) with a capacity of 22 no. children.



Figure 3.1 Local Distribution of Existing Childcare Facilities (Indicative Location of the Subject Site Identified by star)

In addition to the above, the recently permitted mixed use scheme on the Former Ford Site (ABP 309059-20) will provide 2 no. childcare facilities with a capacity for 120 no. children.

3.4 CHILDCARE PROPOSAL

Appendix 2 of the Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities establishes a standard that where 75 dwellings are constructed, one childcare facility providing a minimum of 20 childcare places is considered reasonable. On this basis, the need to provide for 40 childcare places would be triggered by reaching a threshold of 150 units, 60 places by a threshold of 225 units, 80 places by a threshold of 300 units etc.

Furthermore, 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.”

We envisage that the primary market for the proposed apartments will be young professionals working in the Cork City Centre and other nearby employment centres, therefore 85 % of the units are 1 and 2 bed apartments. Given the strong connectivity of the site which includes access to high frequency bus routes, the future Light Rail Transit and interconnected pedestrian

and cycle routes, we envisage the proposed development will provide sustainably located residential accommodation that will allow workers to live close to their employment source as well as Cork City Centre and the wide array of associated services and amenities that the locale provides.

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.

Notwithstanding the above, the applicant intends to include childcare provision to accommodate c. 130 no. childcare places. We consider that the proposed quantum of childcare spaces is more than adequate to meet demand having regard to the demographic profile of the surrounding area as discussed at Section 3.2. It should be noted that if the current demographic pattern of 5.9% of the population being pre-school age were to continue then a maximum of 34 no. childcare spaces would be required based on the quantum of three bed unit bedspaces being provided. Where the proposed two bed units are included then a maximum of 144 no. childcare spaces would be required. We consider the proposed 130 no. childcare facility will adequately meet the demand for childcare spaces arising from the proposed development.

As previously identified, there are 3 no. existing creches operating in the vicinity (with a combined capacity of 84 no. childcare spaces) and 2 no. permitted childcare facilities on the Former Ford site (with capacity of 120 no. childcare spaces) therefore the 2 no. proposed creche facilities (with a capacity of 130 no. childcare spaces) would increase the existing/committed childcare facilities by more than 50%. There is also a childcare facility proposed on lands to the south of Centre Park Road at the Former Cork Warehouse site, which will provide 45 no. additional creche spaces and which will ultimately provide a choice of facilities for future residents in this area of the South Docklands.

3.5 LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED CHILDCARE FACILITIES

We consider the positioning of the proposed childcare facilities at ground floor level of blocks D and E as the optimal location within the subject site. The childcare facilities will be accessible directly at this level with enclosed childcare play areas at podium level. From an operational perspective, the proposed location is appropriate given it will be accessible to both residents and members of the public and will be within a short walking distance from the lands zoned schools directly to the south. In addition, the School of the Divine Child (c. 10 min walk to the south-east) and Ballintemple National School (c. 14 min walk to the south) are located in close proximity.

The Design Team were cognisant of the ZO18 – Schools zoning designation on lands to the south of Blocks D and E when positioning the childcare facilities. The location and proximity of the proposed childcare to future educational facilities will facilitate easy drop-off and collection for households with children at various stages of the school cycle by providing north-south desire lines for easy connectivity.

04. Summary

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

A review of public records indicates the presence of 3 no. existing childcare facilities in proximity to the subject site with another 2 no. permitted but as of yet unconstructed childcare facilities in the vicinity. Notwithstanding this and proposed mix of primarily one and two bed units in the proposed development, it is proposed to make provision on site for a 130 no. child place in 2 no. creches to cater for the projected demand.