

**SCHOOLS, CHILDCARE & SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE
ASSESSMENT**

In respect of
**LANDS AT CORNAMADDY & BALLYKEERAN
ATHLONE**

Prepared by
GENESIS PLANNING CONSULTANTS

On behalf of
BALLYMORE STATION WALK LTD

JULY 2026

Document Control Sheet

Job Title: Ballykeeran Gardens

Job Number: 2026-04

Report ref: Schools & Childcare Capacity Assessment

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Date: July 2026

Client: Ballymore Station Walk Ltd

Document Status				
Rev	Purpose of Document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Review Date
1	Draft	N Carr	R Woods	16/06/26
2	Final	R Woods	R Woods	30/07/26

Approval for Issue		
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TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE NO
1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Overview	5
1.2 Methodology	5
1.3 Categories	5
1.4 Report structure	6
1.5 The proposed development	6
2 AREA CONTEXT	7
2.1 Study area	7
3 POLICY CONTEXT	8
3.1 Overview	8
3.2 Action Plan for Education 2018	8
3.3 Design Standards for New Apartments	8
3.4 The Provision of Schools and the Planning System	9
3.5 Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities	9-10
3.6 Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027	
3.7 Circular PL3/2016	10
3.8 Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Childcare Settings (2019)	10
4 APPROACH & METHODOLOGY	12
5 CHILDCARE & SCHOOL SUPPLY	12
5.1 Overview	12
5.2 Existing childcare provision	
5.3 Population demographics	13
5.4 School demand generated by the proposed development	13
5.6 Existing primary schools	13
5.6 Existing secondary schools	15
5.7 Third level education provision	16
5.8 Summary	16
5.9 Department of Education & Skills Projections	16-17
5.10 Future Demographics and School Places	17
6 CHILDCARE DEMAND	20
6.1 Demographics and childcare facilities	21
6.2 Planned facilities	22
6.3 Childcare demand generated by the proposed development	23
7 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT	24
8 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS	27

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This schools and childcare demand assessment has been prepared by Genesis Planning Consultants on behalf of Ballymore Station Walk Ltd as part of the LRD application. This report provides a detailed review of the strategic, statutory and policy context supporting the development proposal for lands at Cornamaddy with an emphasis on existing education and childcare facilities located in the area.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of this report is to demonstrate there remains adequate capacity in the area to cater for school places, childcare and social infrastructure provision, having regard to the 2022 Census findings and emerging profile of the area
- 1.1.3 The proposed development seeks the construction of 136 no. residential units as a LRD amendment to the parent permission 318736-23 which remains extant until 2029.
- 1.1.4 Having regard to the extant LRD permission which enures to the lands, under LRD permission reference 318736-23, the purpose of this report is to demonstrate there remains adequate capacity in the area to cater for school places, childcare and social infrastructure provision, having regard to the 2022 Census findings and emerging profile of the area
- 1.1.3 The audit identifies the catchment area for the lands and the concept of the 15 Minute City is a useful guide to determine local services for this audit.

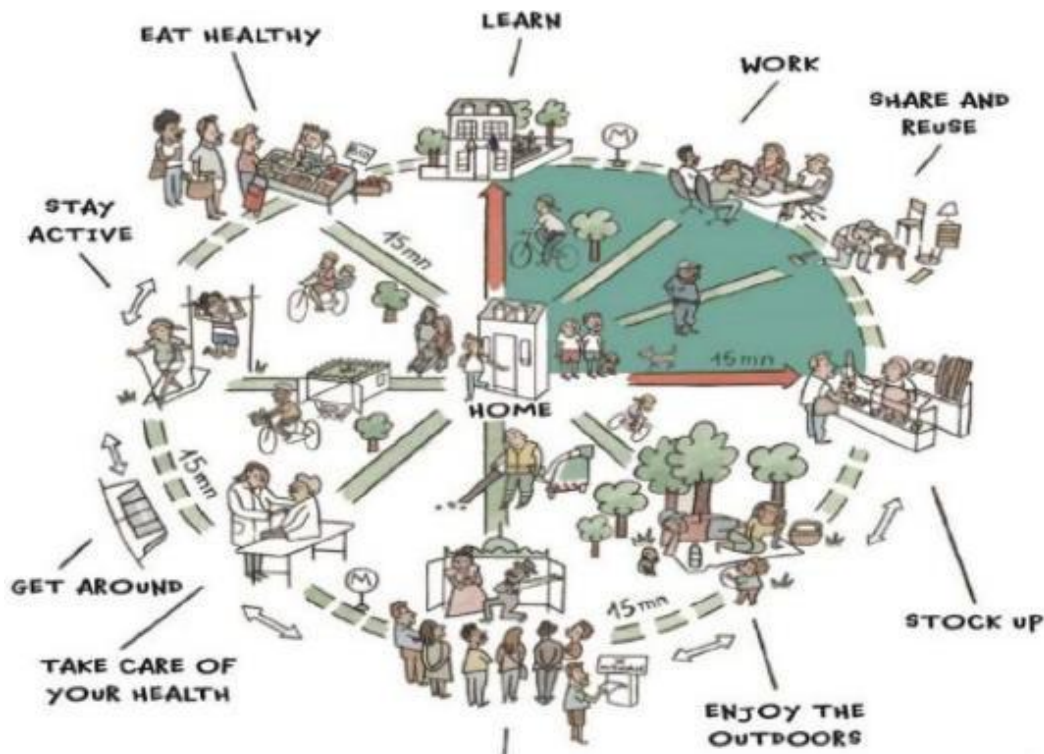


Figure 1 The 15 Minute City (source: Decomposing the New Planning Eutopia, 2021)

- 1.1.4 For reference community infrastructure includes a wide range of services and facilities that address the quality of life needs of the local community and can support the proposed housing development. In particular, health, education, community, cultural, play, faith, recreation and sports facilities. Accordingly this assessment will consider playgrounds, parks and other green spaces. Also the scope will include for:

- Education
- Healthcare and other related uses
- Retail
- Banks
- Post offices
- Community meeting rooms/centres and recreational facilities
- Other Community Facilities

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 The capacity assessment was based on the following steps. Specifically a set of inventories of local education facilities was created. These facilities and services have been identified on a map relating to the area within a 6km radius from the site. In summary the report seeks to:

- establish the resident population's profile;
- provide an assessment of existing educational and childcare infrastructure within the study areas;
- comment on future requirements.

1.2.2 The assessment uses policy recommendations on school provision, data and statistics from the Central Statistics Office and Higher Education Authority (HEA) to establish a comprehensive picture of infrastructure in the area and how that aligns with the populations and demand side considerations.

1.3 Report Structure

1.3.1 The report addresses the various relevant aspects of this school and childcare capacity assessment in the sections outlined below:

- Section 2 looks at the site location and placement within the wider context;
- Section 3 reviews the changing demographic profile in the area;
- Section 4 reviews the current planning policy requirements;
- Section 5 sets out the current position with respect to education infrastructure provision across the study area and establishes a needs profile with respect to various tiers of education service provision;
- Section 6 provides an overview of the analysis and determines school capacity for development in the area.
- Section 7 provides an overview of Social Infrastructure and Community Facilities in the area.

1.4 The Proposed Development

1.4.1 The proposed development incorporates the following amendments to the parent permission 318736-23:

1. Alteration to the permitted phasing with phase one incorporating a total of 130no. residential units of which there 102no. dwellings and 28no. duplex apartment units, in lieu of 129no. residential units as granted.
2. Phase one incorporating 102no. 2storey dwellings with the dwelling mix comprising 57no. 3bed units and 45no. 4bed units.
3. Phase one incorporating 2no. duplex apartment blocks which comprises 12no. 1bed triplex apartments, 8no. 2bed duplex apartments and 8no. 3bed duplex apartments. (overall units in phase one increasing from 129no. residential units as granted to 130no. residential units).
4. The provision of a Creche.
5. Alterations to the site layout in phase one comprising a reconfiguration of public open spaces, communal spaces and overall site layout along with public lighting, planting and boundary treatments to include boundary walls, railings & fencing.
6. Provision of a revised road layout to serve phase one.
7. All ancillary site development/construction works to facilitate foul, water and service networks for connection to the existing foul, water and ESB networks.
8. Provision of associated site infrastructure works to include for foul, water and storm water infrastructure.
9. Provision of 2no. ESB substations.



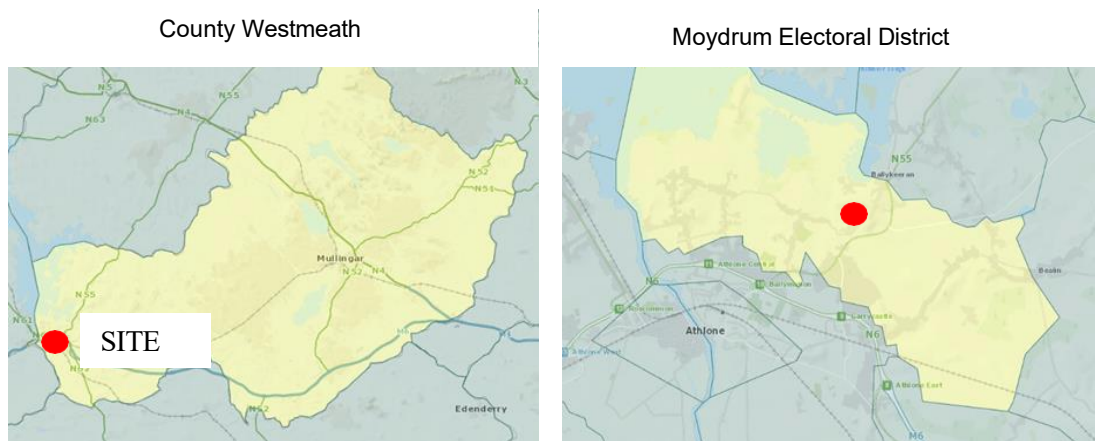
Figure 2 Site layout plan for reference purposes

- 1.4.2 In summary the overall residential units is only a 1 unit increase from the parent permission and not material in terms of population increase.
- 1.4.3 Also relevant to this study is the parent permission background wherein when originally submitted for planning it incorporated 332 residential units, and the final LRD permission then incorporated a reduction in units to 305no. given an apartment block was omitted through the Further Information process. This is to be noted as the original Schools, Childcare and Social Infrastructure Assessment was based on 332 residential units, against what is now proposed as 306 units in this LRD amendment application.

2 AREA CONTEXT

2.1 The Study Area

- 2.1.1 In terms of demographic context Athlone has a population of circa 22,869 and is an economic hub for the midlands region. There are a large number of multi-national companies across a range of sectors and in conjunction with the economic growth of the town there has been a steady increase in the local population.
- 2.1.2 As will be shown in section five of this report Athlone already has a wide variety of schools and childcare services located across the town which are readily accessible given the extensive local, regional and national road networks.
- 2.1.3 For the purposes of this study in terms of childcare assessment both Athlone and Moydrum Electoral Districts are examined, as the subject site is located in the Moydrum ED but as will be set out in section four the majority of local childcare facilities proximate to the subject site are located in both these ED's and therefore most relevant to gain an understanding of existing childcare capacity in the area.



Figures 3 & 4 Electoral areas from CSO SAPS database used for the study

- 2.1.4 Also in respect of an analysis of school capacity in the area the methodology used was based on the Department of Education and Skills (DES) forecasts for the area, in that a wholistic approach was adopted to identify all available schools in the Athlone area, and then reliance placed on the DES forecasts to ensure there is adequate capacity in the area for schools.

3 POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 For the purpose of this report a review has been carried out of national-level planning policy relating to childcare and schools, along with the relevant Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Athlone Development Plan. The key points relating to this study as derived from each policy are outlined below.

3.2 Department of Education and Skills: Action Plan for Education 2018

- 3.2.1 Goal 4 of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) 2018 'Action Plan for Education' seeks to *'build stronger bridges between education and the wider community'*. A fundamental part of this goal is the provision of increased choices in school type, affording parents of children with greater options. Action 66 aims to *'make progress towards increasing the diversity of school type, in order to offer parents more choice'*. As an indicator of whether this action has been achieved a target of 400 multi-non-denominational schools by 2030 is set.
- 3.2.2 Goal 5 seeks to 'improve national planning and support services' and one of the methods through which this can be achieved is via the delivery of appropriate infrastructure for learning environments. Action 105: *'Support infrastructural development within the school's sector, through the rollout of the 2016-2021 Construction Programme'*. Indicators for this action will require the meeting of demographic demand through the provision of additional permanent primary and post-primary school places. This sees targets of 9,000 additional primary school places and a further 8,000 additional permanent post-primary school places. Furthermore, new/replacement primary and post-primary schools will be built.

3.3 Design Standards for New Apartments (DSNA) – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2025)

- 3.3.1 The Guidelines references the provision of childcare facilities in new apartment developments. It states the following:
- '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.'*
- 3.3.2 This provides an element of flexibility in the provision of childcare facilities as it requires that the inclusion of such a facility is justified in terms of the sufficient demographic or/and geographical context.
- 3.3.3 Of note it also stipulates that one-bedroom apartments do not need to be included in any count that estimates the number of children in a development.

3.4 The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice (2008)

3.4.1 The Code of Practice stipulates the methodology for forecasting future education demand. Identification of future primary school demands should be based upon:

- The anticipated increase in overall population for the city/county plan area over the next nine years (as set out in relevant development or local area plans);
- The current school-going population based on school returns;
- The increase in school going population, assuming that an average of 12% of the population are expected to present for primary educations; and,
- The number of classrooms required in total derived from the above.

3.5 Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)

3.5.1 The guidelines instruct Local Authorities to set out objectives in Development Plans that relate to the provision of childcare facilities. A focus should be placed on promoting childcare facilities, as part of the development of sustainable communities, in locations such as: residential areas; places of employment; educational establishments; city, town, neighbourhood and district centres; and locations convenient to public transport nodes.

3.5.2 Additionally the guidelines state the following in relation to new housing developments:

‘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. For new housing areas, an average of one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings would be appropriate. The threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas. Authorities could consider requiring the provision of larger units catering for up to 30/40 children in areas of major residential development on the basis that such a large facility might be able to offer a variety of services – sessional/drop in/after-school, etc’.

3.5.3 Section 3.3.1 elaborates further by stating that:

‘a standard of one childcare facility providing for a minimum 20 childcare places per approximately 75 dwellings may be appropriate’ for new residential developments. However, it clarifies that this “will depend on the particular circumstances of each individual site.”

3.6 Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

3.6.1 The current Westmeath County Development Plan (LCDP) covers the period between 2021 and 2027. It stipulates several requirements for development to ensure balanced and sustainable communities. Policies of particular relevance are noted below.

- *CPO4.24 Encourage and support the provision of childcare facilities, with consideration given to proper siting and design, in appropriate locations including residential areas, town and local centres, areas of employment and close to public transport throughout the County and in accordance with the needs identified by Westmeath County Childcare Committee (WCC). All planning applications for childcare facilities shall be assessed in consultation with Westmeath County Childcare Committee.*
- *CPO4.25 Support the provision of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations.*

- *CPO4.28 Ensure the needs of communities including education facilities are appropriately provided for in newly developed areas.*

3.7 Circular PL3/2016

3.7.1 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.

3.8 Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Childcare Settings (2019)

3.8.1 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.

3.8.2 In summary 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

4 APPROACH

- 4.1 Having regard to the planning policy outlined in the previous section it is evident that an assessment of the existing school and childcare facilities in the study area is required. A baseline is required which would then allow future demand estimations to be made based on demographic change and the associated impact of the proposed development.
- 4.2 Therefore a methodology for the assessment of school and childcare facilities has been developed in accordance with the directions provided in the aforementioned planning policies and involves the following steps:
- Determining the extent and provision of existing school and childcare facilities within the wider study area;
 - Undertaking a study of the current and potential future demographic make-up of the study area's population; and
 - Estimating the level of demand for childcare facilities that may arise from the development proposal.
 - Reliance placed on the Department of Education and Skills forecasts for the area which identify the Athlone area as having adequate primary and post primary school places available going forward.
- 4.3 Of relevance to this project is this being an amendment to an extant permission 305007-19; the provisions of Section 34(3c) of the Planning and Development Act are also highlighted wherein the assessment of the proposal is restricted other than in respect of the modifications proposed.
- 4.4 Having regard to the extant permission the following sections will utilise this methodology as a structural framework with the currently existing supply of facilities first established, followed by a demographic analysis. The demographic analysis will provide valuable insight into the characteristics of the study area's population, before finally determining the potential demand created by the proposed development.

5 CHILDCARE & SCHOOL SUPPLY

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 In order to establish a baseline of the existing capacity in the study area it was necessary to first identify each of the existing school and childcare facilities. This was undertaken through a comprehensive desktop research exercise which used publicly available information and sources. For the purposes of this study Pobla is considered to provide the most appropriate source of information on childcare facilities as it works on behalf of Government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion and development.

5.2 Existing Childcare Provision

- 5.2.1 While the various policies referenced make certain provisions for determining the requirements for childcare facilities in neighbourhoods, there is no reference to the most appropriate distances families should travel, or the quantum of facilities that are appropriate in a given area. Therefore for the purpose of this study it was deemed appropriate identify all facilities within a 6km radius and then specifically to audit all facilities within a 3km catchment of the subject site.
- 5.2.2 Figure 5 below provides the locations of all 34 childcare facilities in the area registered with Pobla, within both the 6km and 3km catchment areas denoted. For reference the purple and green symbols correspond to each childcare facility.

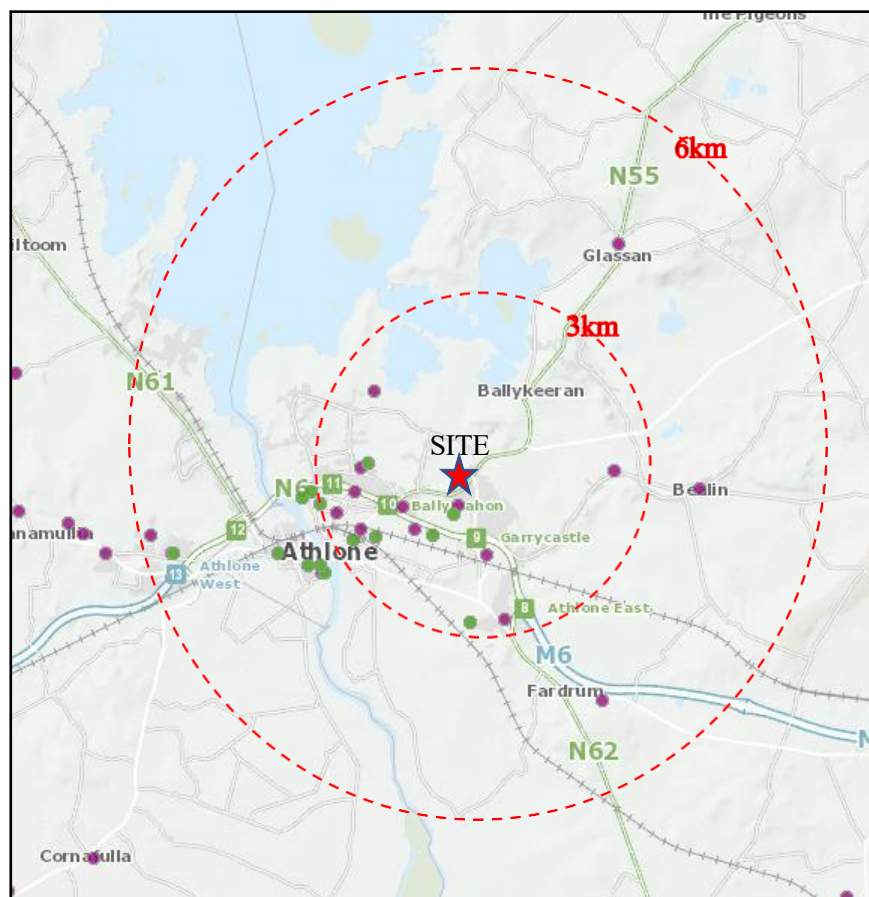


Figure 5 Existing childcare facilities in the Athlone area (source www.pobal.ie)

5.3 Population Demographics

- 5.3.1 The proposed development site is location within the Moydrum ED which has a population 3155. As noted above, the study will also include County Westmeath to examine the demographics and its provision of schools and childcare.

Breakdown of 0-18 Year Age Cohort for County Westmeath			Breakdown of 0-18 Year Age Cohort for Moydrum ED	
School Age	2022 Population	% of Total Cohort	2022 Population	% of Total Cohort
Age (0-4)	5751	22%	213	19.4%
Age (5-9)	6825	26.1%	279	30.5%
Age (10-14)	7203	27.5%	261	28.6%
Age (15-19)	6419	24.5%	197	21.6%
Total	26198	100%	914	100%

Table 1 Breakdown of Age Cohort

- 5.3.2 As per the table above the school age of the Moydrum ED (comprising persons aged 5-18 years) was 914no. persons at the time of the 2022 census, or 28.9% of the total population of the area.

5.4 School demand generated by the proposed development

- 5.4.1 The proposed development will comprise 130no. units, of which there will be 12no. 1 bed units, 8no. 2 bed units, 65no. 3 bed units and 45no. 4 bed units which can accommodate families. Discounting the 1 bed units this equates to 122no. units which can accommodate families/unit(s) that include for children.
- 5.4.2 We note the average household size recorded by the 2022 census was 2.74no. persons per unit, which generates a total indicative population of 334no. persons when applied to the entire development. Therefore for those units that can accommodate families (122no. units) an indicative total population of 334no. persons is also estimated for this LRD amendment proposal.
- 5.4.3 Also the average number of children per family recorded in the state in census 2022 was 1.38 children. Applying this 1.38 children per family to the family units (122 units) generates an indicated population of 168 children (between the ages of 0-18 years) when applied to the number of units that can accommodate families within the proposed development.
- 5.4.4 In terms of school-going age children (5-18 years) the CSO stats detail circa 70% of children fall into this bracket, which equates to an estimated 117no. school age children when the proposal is fully occupied. This figure is broadly split 50/50 between primary and secondary school children (59no. each).

5.5 Existing Primary Schools

- 5.5.1 The Department of Education and Skills (DES) provide details on enrolment figures for all primary schools on an annual basis. DES have also created their own units of analysis, 'School Planning Areas' (SPA), through which they compile data on schools and decision-making is based off.
- 5.5.2 On referencing a 5km buffer zone DES records show a total 10no. existing primary schools in the Athlone area.

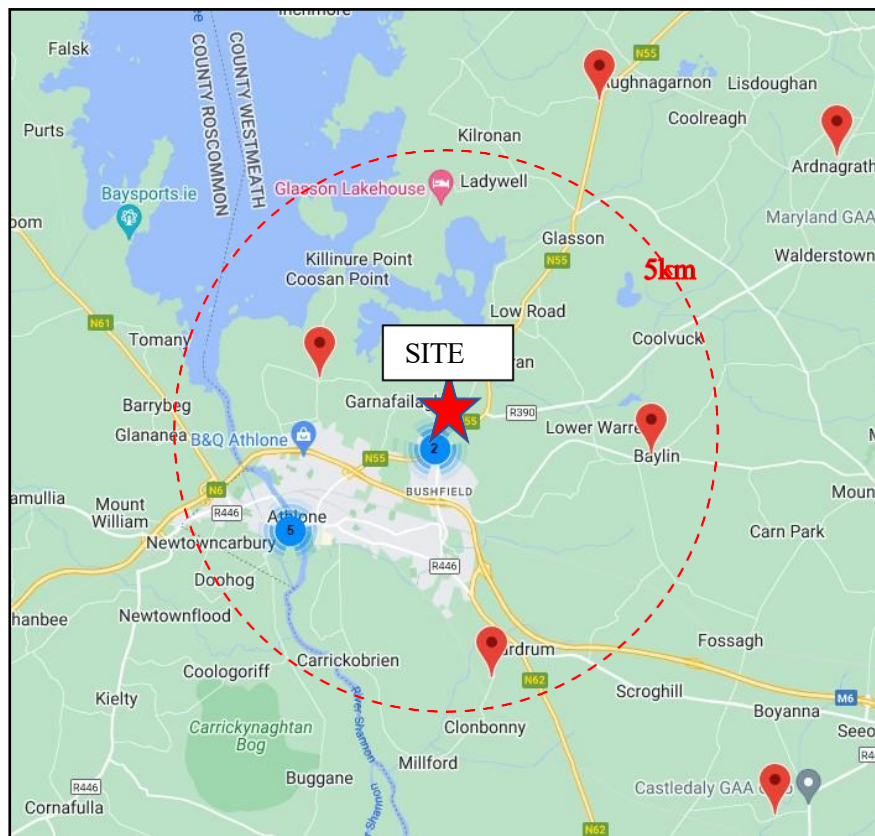


Figure 6 Existing primary schools in the Athlone area (source www.education.ie)

5.5.3 We have audited the enrolment and capacity of these primary schools as per the table below.

Primary School	Enrolment 2025-26	Remaining Capacity
Cornamaddy National School	308	0
Coosan National School	414	9
Scoil Na Gceithre Máistrí	219	106
Athlone Mixed Ns	56	19
St Marys Ns	586	0
St. Peter's Ns	129	18
St Paul's National School	131	54
Dean Kelly National School	93	25
Baylin National School	223	0
Clonbonny National School	150	0
Total	2309	213 (current school year)

Table 2 Primary schools in the area

5.5.4 Of note no additional schools are to be delivered under the school building programme, and this indicates the DES is satisfied there is adequate capacity in the Athlone area going forward in terms of primary school provision.

5.6 Existing post-primary Schools

- 5.6.1 In terms of post-primary schools, or secondary schools, in the study area, DES records a total of 3no. facilities. These schools are a mix of national and grammar schools and cater for all genders.
- 5.6.2 Again of note no additional schools are to be delivered under the school building programme, and this indicates the DES is satisfied there is adequate capacity in the Athlone area going forward in terms of secondary school provision and relevant population forecasts for the area.

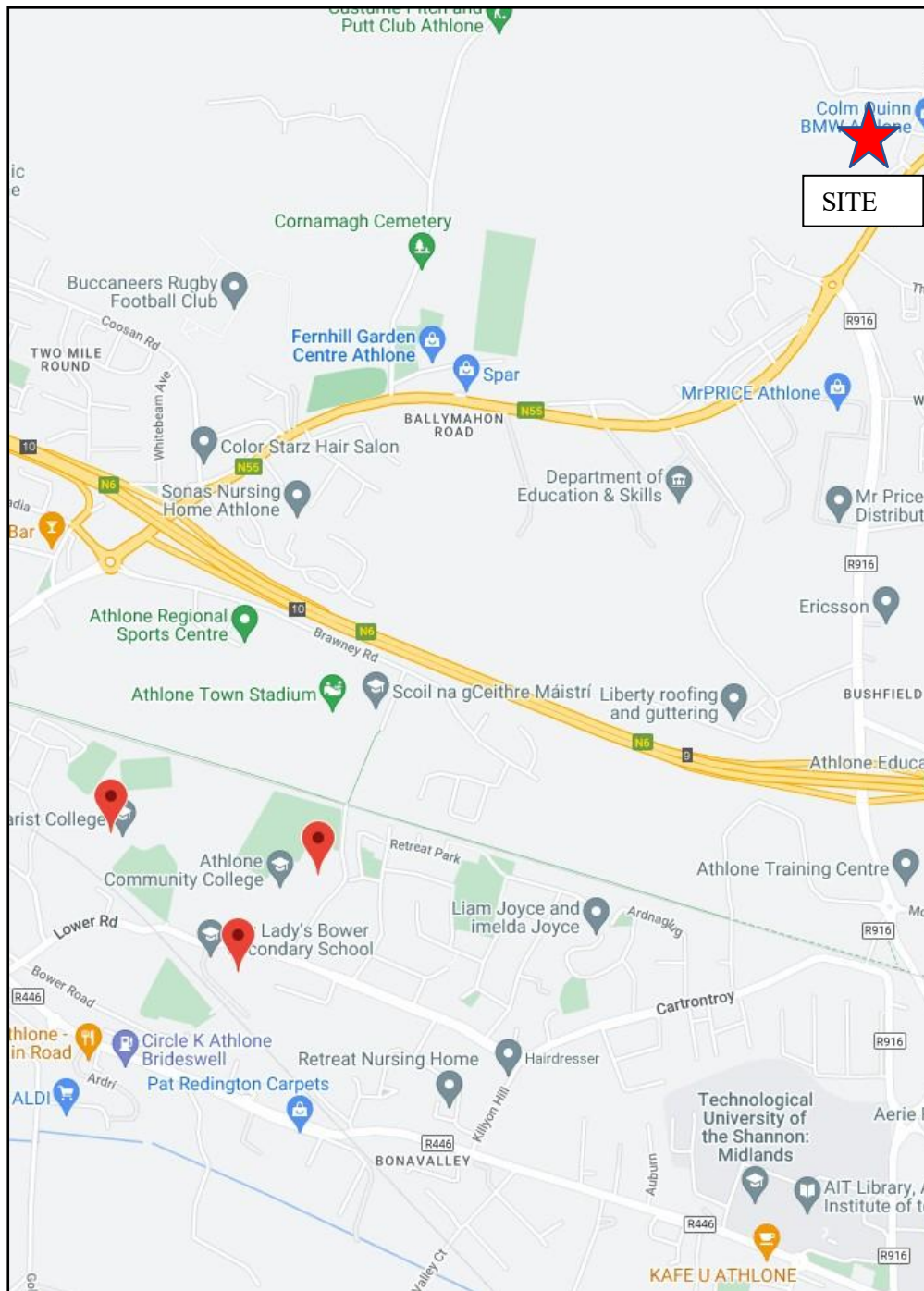


Figure 7 Existing secondary schools in the Athlone area (source www.education.ie)

- 5.6.3 We have also audited the enrolment and capacity of these primary schools as per the table below.

Post-primary School	Enrolment 2025-26	Remaining Capacity
Athlone Community College	1161	19
Marist College	608	78
Our Lady's Bower	638	77
Total	2407	174 (current school year)

Table 3 Primary school capacity

- 5.6.4 Also in terms of the wider catchment and capacity it is important to note that there is 1no. post-primary school located 6.5km from the proposed development, being Colaiste Chiaráin (created in 2017 from an amalgamation of two local schools). In this year 2026, the schools enrolment was 956no. students with a capacity of 1,000no. pupils meant there is remaining capacity of circa 42no. places.
- 5.6.5 Therefore in terms of capacity in the area we submit Colaiste Chiarain must be therefore taken into consideration as the Department of Education & Skills notes that post-primary students are more likely to travel greater distances to access education.

5.7 Third Level Education Provision

- 5.7.1 The Athlone Institute of Technology-Business School and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest is located approximately 2.5 km south of the site and provides a broad range of third level courses.

5.8 Summary

- 5.8.1 With regard to the information set out in this section above it is considered that the demand for primary and post primary school places generated by the proposed development will likely be absorbed by the surrounding schools in the Athlone region.
- 5.8.2 Having examined the current remaining capacity in both primary and post primary (387 places in the current school year) to cater for an estimated 59 over a period of 7 years (averaging 9 total places per annum) should not cause additional demand that cannot be catered for.

5.9 Department of Education & Skills Projections

- 5.9.1 Of relevance we also highlight the Department of Education & Skill projections under the publication 'Regional Projections of full-time enrolments Primary and Second Level, 2025–2044', which provides several scenarios for the estimated future enrolment figures based on the study of present trends.

- 5.9.2 In summary the Department's report builds on the State projections of enrolments published in 2025 and was modelled on the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Regional Projections published in 2025. The report is therefore considered to contain the most accurate and up-to-date projections for future primary and post-primary school demand.
- 5.9.2 In relation to specifics the report details that in 2025 there were 552,059 enrolments in primary schools and this is a decrease from 567,772 recorded in 2018.
- 5.9.3 Within the report details for the Midlands region are relevant to the proposed development. In terms of post-primary school projections, the report details that the midlands region is to decrease by 10%.
- 5.9.4 On review we note it is important to note that projection figures may differ from the actual outcome, as can be seen in the projections released by the Department of Education and Skills in previous years when compared to actual figures, however the data contained in the report assists in developing a holistic overview for the purposes of this assessment.
- 5.10 Future Demographics and School Places**
- 5.10.1 Also relevant to note the Department of Education and Skills (DES) review and provide details on enrolment figures for all primary schools on an annual basis. DES have also created their own units of analysis, 'School Planning Areas' (SPA), through which they compile data on schools and decision-making is based on.
- 5.10.2 The Department of Education and Skills (DES) regularly release enrolment projection reports which are the basis for their determination of whether new school infrastructure is required. In December 2025 they released the most recent report which analyses projections of full-time enrolment for the period.
- 5.10.3 Using three migration assumptions and two fertility assumptions the DES created six scenarios to model projected enrolments over that period. Of note the DES state that 2018 will prove to be the year when 'peak' primary school enrolments occur, totalling 567,772 pupils and gradually reducing after this, as per the figures below.

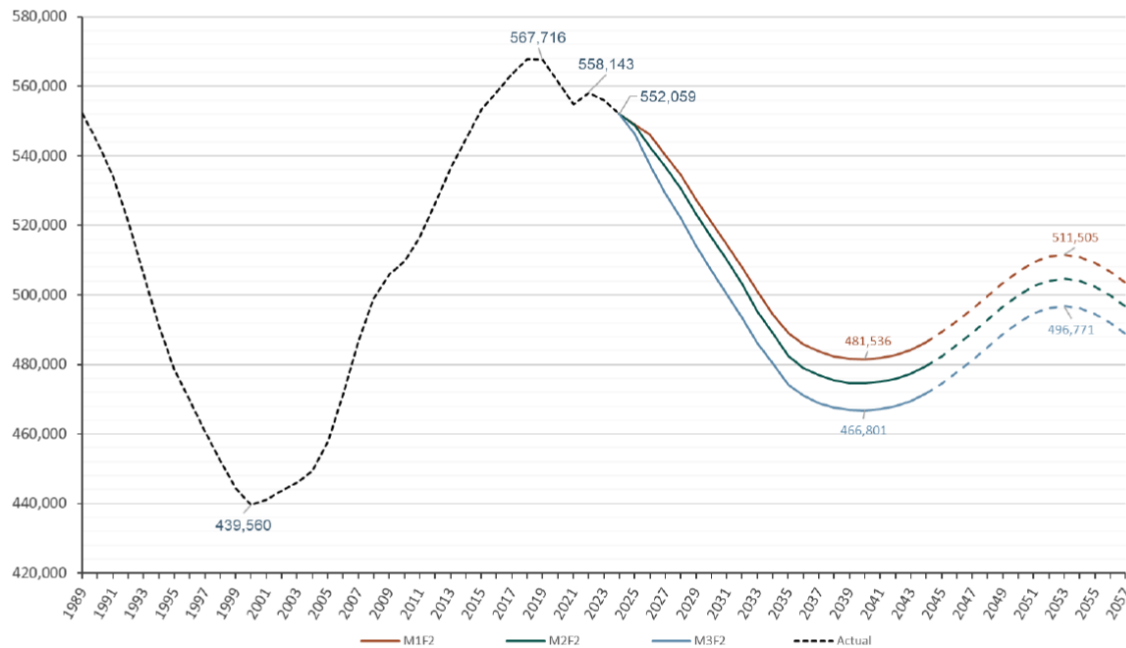


Figure 8 Projected primary school enrolment to 2057 (Source: DES)

- 5.9.4 Also it is noted post-primary school peak enrolments was reached in 2024, and it is anticipated that post-primary school enrolments will decrease annually thereafter under the M1F2 and M2F2 scenarios until 2042.

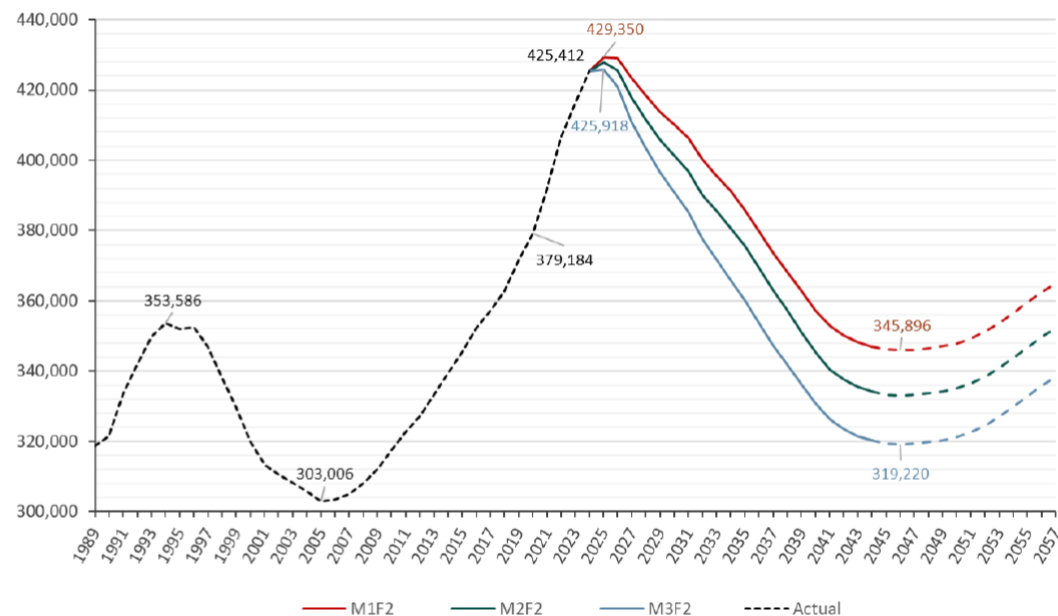


Figure 9 Projected secondary school enrolment to 2036 (Source: DES)

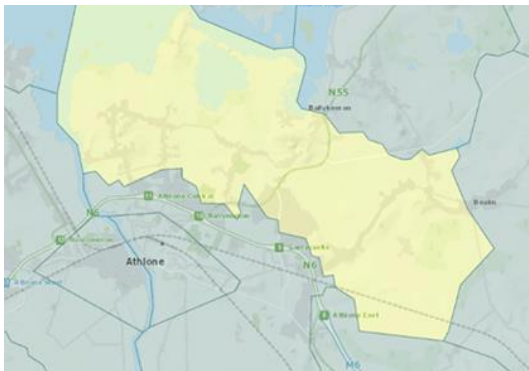
- 5.9.5 In summary on referencing the above projections and with enrolments figures peaking in 2019 for primary school children, and 2024 for secondary school pupils, the requirement for additional school facilities is declining at present.
- 5.9.6 We submit this is evident therefore in the analysis by DES of existing schools in the Athlone area in that no additional schools are to be delivered under the school building programme, and this indicates the DES is satisfied there is adequate capacity in the Athlone area going forward to cater for the proposed development in terms of both primary and post primary school provision.

6 CHILD CARE DEMAND

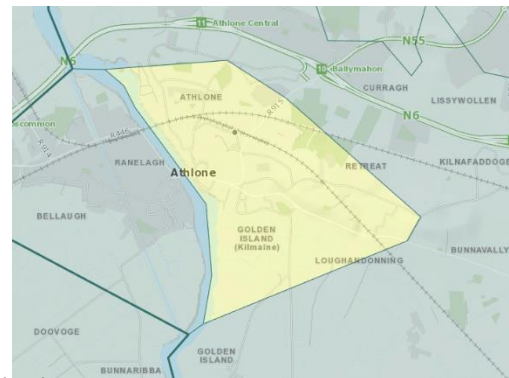
6.1 Demographics and childcare facilities

- 6.1.1 For the purposes of this study Athlone East Urban Electoral District and Moydrum Electoral District are both examined, as the subject site is located in the Moydrum ED but as set out previously the majority of local childcare facilities proximate to the subject site are located in both these ED's and therefore most relevant to gain an understanding of existing childcare capacity in the area.
- 6.1.2 Specifically this study will use available statistics on these two ED's based on census 2022 data to estimate demand for childcare facilities in the area against existing childcare provision in these areas.

Moydrum Electoral District



Athlone East Urban Electoral District



Figures 10 & 11 Electoral areas from CSO SAPS database

- 6.1.3 In terms of demographics, the Moydrum ED has a population of 3155 of which 213 are aged between 0-4 (preschool age).
- 6.1.4 The most recent CSO Quarterly National Household Survey¹ (Q3 update) identifies that the percentage of pre-school children that are minded by a parent is 62% with only 19% of pre-school children availing of non-parental childcare that includes services such as crèches/Montessori/playgroup or afterschool facilities. On analysis it is found this equates to 41 children attending childcare facilities in the Moydrum ED.
- 6.1.5 According to our research² there are nineteen registered childcare facilities in this area offering various services and based on the most recent available reports by Tusla these facilities can cater for 648 child places.
- 6.1.6 Also, as can be noted from the above map the ED of Athlone East Urban extends to lands in Athlone Town Centre, but has also been included to demonstrate accessibility to childcare in the surrounding area. This selection of childcare facilities takes account of journey to work patterns and what is considered to be a realistic option for childcare for future residents of the proposed development at Cornamaddy.
- 6.1.7 Specifically this ED has a total population of 4,811 of which 244 persons are aged between 0- 4 years. Based on the findings of the Quarterly National Household Survey 47 (19%) of these children will potentially use a formal crèches/Montessori/playgroup or afterschool facility.
- 6.1.8 On referencing the map database published by Pobal it is found there are a total of eight registered childcare facilities in this ED area and on referencing the most recent available

¹ Census 2022 Q3 update, 2023

² www.pobal.ie

reports by Tusla and from direct contact with other providers the data indicates a total capacity of 430 childcare places in the Athlone East Urban ED.

- 6.1.9 Furthermore, at a more local level childcare facilities within 3km of the site fall within parts of both the Moydrum ED and Athlone East Urban ED. As part of our research details of facilities within this 3km radius were provided by Westmeath County Childcare Committee as below.

Childcare facility	Max capacity	Remaining Capacity	Type of childcare provided		
			Full time	Part-time	Sessional
Naionra na Cre Duibhe	22	Not Disclosed			x
Breise	25	Not Disclosed	x		
Chatterboxes Childcare Ltd	44	12	x		
Paisti Beaga	N/A	Not Disclosed	x	x	x
Brawny Community Centre	30	Not Disclosed			x
Naionra Lios na Nog	21	1		x	x
Busy Kids Athlone	105	63	x	x	x
Sallywags	33	7	x	x	x
Sarsfield Pre-School	11	Not Disclosed		x	x
Grovelands Childcare	131	16	x	x	x
Willow Park After School Service	30	Not Disclosed			x
St. Mary's After School (Harmony CDP)	30	Not Disclosed		x	x
Na Fea Montessori Preschool	18	11		x	x
St. Kierans Childcare Centre	40	Not Disclosed	x	x	x
Treasures Island Preschool	19	5			x
Coosan Childcare Centre	N/A	Not Disclosed			
Réalta Geal Montessori School	54	1			x
Little Scholars PreSchool	35	Not Disclosed		x	
Total capacity	648	116			

Table 4 Childcare facilities within 3km of the subject site

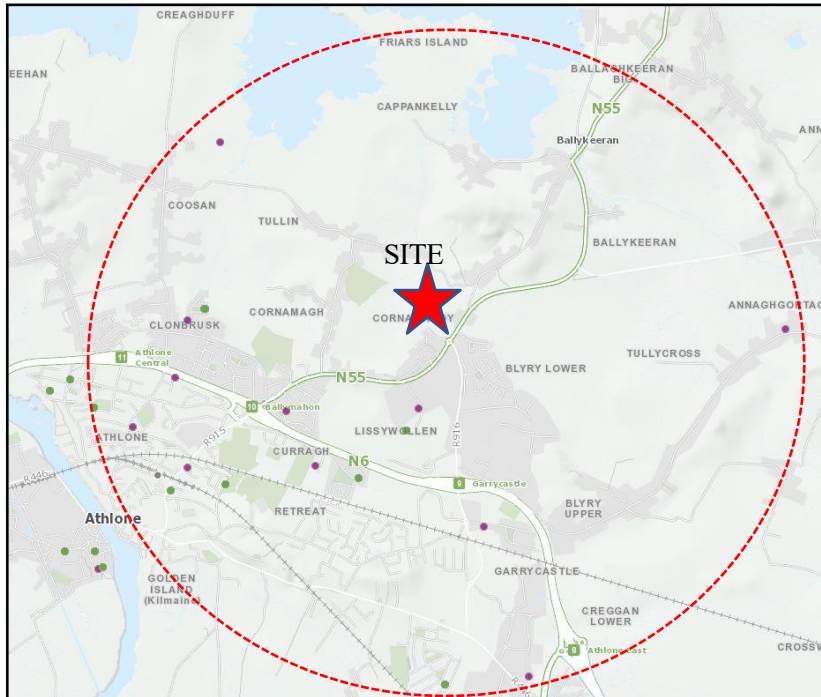


Figure 12 Approximate 3km radius from application site (source: www.pobal.ie)

6.1.10 Specifically, on review of the above it is found the existing childcare facilities within a 3km radius of the site have capacity for a total of 648 child places, against what the demographics and census data for the area indicate as a total demand of 88 places for this radius (ie. The relevant demographic data for both Moydrum and Athlone Rural ED's as per census data and childcare being availed of by 19% of survey respondents).

6.1.11 On this basis it is submitted that there is sufficient capacity in the area for existing childcare demand based on the take-up rates of childcare places as recorded in the quarterly household survey. Accordingly, we submit the proposed childcare facility does not need to cater for any existing surplus demand outside of the site area itself at Cornamaddy.

6.2 Planned Facilities

6.2.1 In addition to the existing childcare services located in the study area, it is noted that an SHD application located to the south-west of the subject site, adjacent to Athlone Rugby Club, has been granted permission by An Bord Pleanála (An Bord Pleanála Ref. 307508). This permitted development, known as Dún an Rí, includes for a childcare facility of approximately 545m² (up to 50 childcare spaces). This childcare facility will further add to the existing supply of childcare facilities in the area.

6.2.2 Furthermore, the recently granted SHD application (An Bord Pleanála Ref. 309513) will provide for 2no. further childcare facilities with a combined capacity for circa 145 no. childcare places.

6.2.3 In summary these planned facilities will add an additional 195no. childcare spaces for the town.

6.3 Childcare demand generated by the proposed development

- 6.3.1 The proposed development will consist of 135 residential units, of which there are 18no. 1 bedroom units and the remainder being a mixture between 2-4 bedroom units.
- 6.3.2 In summary the overall units is only a 6 unit increase from the parent permission and not material in terms of population increase. Having regard to the dwelling mix proposed the majority of the development is likely to accommodate families and as a result is likely to generate additional childcare demand, as per the parent permission.
- 6.3.3 Also relevant to this study is the parent permission background wherein when originally submitted for planning it incorporated 332 residential units, and the final LRD permission then incorporated a reduction in units to 305no. given an apartment block was omitted through the Further Information process. This is to be noted as the original Schools, Childcare and Social Infrastructure Assessment was based on 332 residential units, against what is now proposed as 311 units in this LRD amendment application.
- 6.3.4 Under the parent permission the Creche was sized to cater for 58no. children, and which had spare capacity/headroom above what the likely demand for Childcare spaces from within the scheme to be 40no. children.
- 6.3.5 As with the parent permission 318736-23 it is submitted that the location of a childcare facility within the proposed development will be adequately sized if it provides for a total of 40no. places. This is calculated on the following summary basis.
- 6.3.6 Unit mix proposed
- 1 bed units (12no.) should be discounted from the calculation;
 - 2 bed units (8no.) should be provided for at a rate of 50% which equates to 4;
 - 3bed units (64no.) should be provided for at a rate of 50% which equates to 33;
 - 4bed units (40no.) should be provided for at a rate of 50% which equates to 23.
- 6.3.7 In summary 60 units require provision of childcare for this LRD amendment, which is only an increased of 1 unit from the parent permission for phase 1 of the site.
- 6.3.8 In summary the overall population likely from the proposal aligns with the parent permission and there will no material increases in population or childcare demand to be considered.

7 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Policy SC8 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (LCDP) sets out a requirement for proposals to demonstrate how residential developments are catered for in terms of social and community infrastructure.
- 7.2 It is generally recognised that proposals for large-scale residential development should be accompanied by proposals for associated community infrastructure and /or an assessment of existing community infrastructure which demonstrates that there is sufficient existing infrastructure to meet the expected demand generated by a new development.
- 7.3 The Westmeath CDP defines community facilities to include for schools, community centres, health centres and childcare facilities, religious meeting places, cemeteries, sports and recreation areas, sports facilities, parks, open spaces and walking routes.
- 7.4 Set out below is a map detailing how the site is well provided for in terms of social and community infrastructure within a 3km radius.
- 7.5 As can be noted the proposed development will be located in a well-provided for neighbourhood and within a short distance of a wide range of services for future residents.
- 7.6 In this context the development will provide a range of residential types which create a sustainable community and support the existing services in the area.



Figure 13 Social infrastructure within a 3km radius of the site

- 7.7 As can be noted from the particulars above (3km radius) there is a good mix of social infrastructure facilities in the immediate area.
- 7.8 Health care, Sports and Recreation, Community, education, and other facilities are all well-represented within the wider area and cater for the existing and proposed new residential community as per the table below.

Number	Name	Type of Facility
1	Athlone Town Football Club	Football Club
2	Athlone Regional Sports Centre	Sports Centre
3	Sheraton Fitness Athlone	Gym
4	Crossfit Croi Athlone	Gym
5	JG Elite Gym	Gym
6	CrossFit Cu Chulainn Athlone	Gym
7	AIT Sport	Sports Centre
8	Athlone Boat Club	Water Sports
9	Westside Thai Boxing & Martial Arts Club	Martial Arts
10	Sasta fitness centre	Gym
11	Unique Health and Fitness Club	Gym
12	St Peter Astro pitch	Football Facilities
13	Garrycastle GAA	GAA Club
14	Southern Gaels GAA Club	GAA Club
15	Smart Fitness Athlone	Gym
16	Na Fianna Martial arts and Fitness Centre	Martial Arts
17	Olive Keyes Pilates	Gym
18	Athlone GAA Club	GAA Club
19	Saint Joseph's Football Club	Football Club
20	Buccaneers Rugby Football Club	Rugby Club
21	AC Celtic Football Club	Football Club
22	St Francis FC Athlone	Football Club
23	Gentex Football Club	Football Club
24	St. Peter's FC Athlone	Football Club
25	Athlone Minotaurs	American Football
26	Athlone Sub-Aqua Club	Water Sports
27	Willow Park Football	Football Club
28	Athlone Tennis Club	Tennis Club
29	Custume Pitch & Putt Club	Golf
30	Athlone Taekwondo	Martial Arts
31	Fusion Training Centre	Gym

Table 5 Social infrastructure within the wider Athlone Area

- 7.9 Also at a site level the proposed development also includes passive and active open spaces as well as pedestrian links throughout the site and the inclusion of a creche, which can be utilized as a neighbourhood centre when the creche is closed.

7.10 Finally in the wider Athlone area overall our analysis finds there are approximately eighty-one separate social amenities and facilities within the surrounding area of the subject site.

Number	Name	Type of Facility
1	Town Centre Surgery	Medical Centre
2	Newtown Medical Centre	Medical Centre
3	Dr. John J. Keane Eye Specialist	Opticians
4	Saint Vincent's Health Centre	Medical Centre
5	Clonbrusk Primary Care Centre	Medical Centre
6	Tom Boland & Associates	Dental Practice
7	Fitzgerald's Dental Surgery	Dental Practice
8	Bonavalley Medical Centre	Medical Centre
9	Renew Health	Medical Centre
10	Boland Dental Surgery	Dental Practice
11	Emer Dunne Physical Therapy	Physiotherapy Clinic
12	DBC Chartered Physiotherapy	Physiotherapy Clinic
13	Midland Physiotherapy Clinic	Physiotherapy Clinic
14	Campbell's Dental	Dental Practice
15	Westside Dental Athlone	Dental Practice
16	Meares Dental Surgery	Dental Practice
17	Dental Excellence Athlone	Dental Practice
18	Shannon Orthodontics	Dental Practice
19	Clonbrusk Resource Centre	Medical Centre
20	Midoc Athlone	Medical Centre
21	Civil Registration Service Primary Care Centre	Medical Centre
22	Midlands Counselling Clinic	Counselling Clinic
23	The Dancing Soul	Family Counselling
24	Paul Gill Hypnotherapy Athlone	Hypnotherapy Clinic
25	Olivia Feehan Counselling	Psychotherapy
26	Michelle Mulligan Counselling	Psychotherapy
27	Athlone Foot Clinic	Podiatrist
28	Elliot Opticians	Opticians
29	Specsavers Athlone	Opticians
30	Athlone Opticians	Opticians
31	Cooney's Opticians	Opticians

Table 6 Medical/care facilities in the wider Athlone area

7.11 In summary this Social Infrastructure Assessment is put forward in support of the LRD application to:

- Review the existing planning policy context in relation to the provision of social and community infrastructure;
- Identify existing social and community infrastructure in Athlone;
- Consider the social and community infrastructure proposed as part of the subject development;
- Evaluate the if expected demand will be appropriately met by existing and proposed services.

7.12 Having regard to the above, it is considered that Athlone provides a wide-range of existing social and community infrastructure to support the development and this is a good location for the residential scheme, as per the parent permission.

8 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 This study of schools, childcare and social infrastructure has been prepared to satisfy relevant policy requirements and demonstrate how the proposed development can be catered for both in terms of schools, childcare and social infrastructure facilities.
- 8.2 Of relevance to this project is this being an amendment to an extant permission 305007-19; the provisions of Section 34(3c) of the Planning and Development Act are also highlighted wherein the assessment of the proposal is restricted other than in respect of the modifications proposed.
- 8.3 Having regard to the extant LRD permission which enures to the lands under LRD permission reference 318736-23 the purpose of this report is to demonstrate there remains adequate capacity in the area to cater for school places, childcare and social infrastructure provision, having regard to the 2022 Census findings and emerging profile of the area.
- 8.4 The baseline scenario established by the parent permission incorporates a creche with provision for 58 children. Taking into account the revised unit mix hereby proposed a Creche is incorporated into this LRD amendment application and incorporates the same Childcare Capacity.
- 8.5 For completeness a desktop analysis of available data sources has been undertaken in order to understand both the demographic profile of the area to ensure there is adequate capacity for both schools and childcare provision as part of this planning application.
- 8.6 In this regard it is critical to have a clear understanding of the ability of education facilities to support the wider community, both now and in the future. We submit this study demonstrates that:
- The needs of the current population in the catchment area are adequately supported by the school infrastructure presently in existence.
 - The Department of Education and Skills do not identify any need for additional schools to be provided in the Athlone area.
- 8.7 The key conclusions from this study are:
- **Childcare/creche provision:** our analysis on existing creche demand and spaces within the catchment area of 3km demonstrates that at present there are 116 creche spaces available for take up. On this basis the proposed childcare facility does not need to cater for any existing surplus demand outside of the site area itself at Cornamaddy. The Creche incorporating capacity for 58 children will be adequate to cater for the overall development on the subject lands, with spare headroom capacity which is good practice.
 - **Demand generated by the proposal for childcare:** On analysis of the proposed scheme against the relevant childcare guidelines, the demographics of the area and the projected population have demonstrated that the proposal will be adequately sized by providing space to accommodate 20 children and therefore be consistent with the relevant guidelines in terms of provision.
 - **Primary and post primary School Provision:** Having examined the current remaining capacity in both primary and post primary (387 places in the current school year) to cater for an estimated 55 over a period of 7 years (averaging 8 total places per annum) should not cause additional demand that cannot be catered for.
Also the analysis by DES of existing schools in the Athlone area has determined that no additional schools are to be delivered under the school building programme; this indicates the DES is satisfied there is adequate capacity in the Athlone area going forward to cater for the proposed development in terms of both primary and post primary school provision.
- 8.8 Also section 7 demonstrates that Athlone provides a wide-range of existing social and community infrastructure to support the development and this is a good location for the residential scheme, as per the parent permission.

- 8.9 It is therefore concluded that the existing school provision in the area is sufficient to cater for the needs of the current and future population of the area and the proposed development will be adequately catered for both in terms of schools, childcare and social infrastructure provision.



Ronan Woods
Director