

CRECHE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In respect of a

Proposed Residential Development at

**LANDS AT NEWTOWNPARK AVENUE,
BLACKROCK, CO. DUBLIN**

On behalf of

Glenveagh Homes Ltd

Prepared by

John Spain Associates

October 2020

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION AND SITE DESCRIPTION.....	4
1.1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.2	SITE DESCRIPTION	4
2.0	DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	5
2.1	RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.....	5
3.0	PLANNING POLICY.....	5
3.1	NATIONAL GUIDELINES	6
3.2	DUN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN	7
3.3	BLACKROCK LOCAL AREA PLAN.....	7
4.0	CRECHE ASSESSMENT	8
4.1	EXISTING CRECHE PROVISION – CLUAIN MHUIRE	8
4.2	DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE – LOCAL CATCHMENT.....	10
4.3	CRECHE DEMAND.....	10
5.0	EXISTING PRECEDENT	12
6.0	CONCLUSIONS	13

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	– Site Location with approximate extent of site outlined in red.....	4
Figure 2.1	– Site Map	5
Figure 4.1	– Childcare Provision.....	8

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	– Overall Dwelling Mix	
Table 4.1	– Detail of Existing Childcare Operators within the Catchment Area	8
Table 4.2	– Children in 0-4 Age Cohort.....	10

Executive Summary

The proposed development provides for 140 no. apartments in 5 no. apartment buildings over basement, comprising 1 studio apartment, 59 no. 1 bedroom apartments (42% of total), 71 no. 2 bedroom apartments (51%) and 9 no. 3 bedroom apartments (6%). In addition, the scheme includes internal and external amenity space and public open spaces. Provision of 97 no. car parking spaces (29 no. surface car parking and 68 no. basement car parking); 226 no. cycle parking spaces (56 no. surface cycle parking space and 170 no. basement car parking) and 6 no. motorcycle spaces all on a site of c. 1.46 hectares, on lands adjacent to Cluain Mhuire Family Centre, Newtownpark Avenue, Co. Dublin, approximately 1.3km from Blackrock district centre and 950m from Seapoint Dart Station.

This Creche Needs Assessment has been prepared in response to the Opinion received from An Bord Pleanála. A creche is not proposed as part of the subject application due to the proposed unit mix of the scheme and the existing demonstrated capacity within creches in the surrounding area.

The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities, the Apartment Guidelines 2018, and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009), acknowledge that the standards are recommendations only and do not represent minimum mandatory requirements.

The Apartment Guidelines 2018 state that one bedroom or studio units should not be considered to contribute to childcare provision and that subject to location this may also apply in part or whole to units with two or more bedrooms. It is noted Objective EC1 of the Blackrock Local Area Plan that larger residential developments shall be required to provide one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is already adequate childcare provision in the area.

It is noted 94% of the 140 no. dwellings proposed are studio, 1 and 2 bedroom units (apartments and duplexes). 9 no. 3 bedroom apartments are proposed.

When the studio and 1 bedroom units are excluded, this results in a total of 80 units. This in turn results in a potential for 216 people to be accommodated within the scheme. This equates to 11 no. children potentially requiring childcare (based on 5.3% of the population). This would potentially generate a need to accommodate 11 no. children between 0 – 4, assuming all of the children used childcare.

However, it is noted that the percentage of children availing of childcare is just 25% as outlined in the QNHS 2016, while the remainder of children are minded by other relatives, au pairs etc. Using the CSO figures, and a similar proportion (25%) of the 0-4 age cohort which avail of childcare places, this would equate to a potential creche requirement of c.3 places (based on 25% of 11 no. children).

Recent permissions within the area for similar developments, without childcare facilities, also provide precedent for residential developments in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, comprising mostly 1 and 2 bedroom units not needed a creche.

The proposed unit mix comprises predominately 1 and 2 bedroom units and the site is within close proximity to Blackrock centre. This would prevent an over-provision of childcare spaces, support existing creche providers, while still catering for the initial spaces through the existing supply.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This assessment has been undertaken by John Spain Associates on behalf of Glenveagh Homes Limited, to review the need and timing of delivery of a crèche facility at the proposed residential development at lands at Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock, Dublin, on a site of c. 1.46 hectares.

1.2 The following report has had regard to the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016–2022, the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) as well as the Design Standards for Apartments 2018. The Report examines the existing level of childcare provision in the area.

1.3 The report assesses the vacancy rates within local childcare facilities and determines if the needs for places generated by the proposed development can be accommodated within the existing childcare facilities in the vicinity of the proposed development.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

1.4 The subject site is located at lands adjacent to the Cluain Mhuire Family Centre on Newtownpark Avenue, to the south of Blackrock district centre, with access to the N11 and Dun Laoghaire. The site is within an established residential area, with a variety of housing in all directions. To the immediate west and south there is a convent, a church and a school.

1.5 The site area is approximately 1.46 hectares and can be described as an L- shaped, infill site located between Daughters of Charity and Cluain Mhuire. The site slopes from north to south.

Figure 1.1 – Site Location with approximate extent of site outlined in red



(Source: Google Maps)

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The proposed development on an overall site of c. 1.46 hectares will comprise a residential development of 140 no. residential units, across 5 no. apartment and duplex blocks ranging in height from 2 to 5 no. storeys. Blocks A and B are located in the southern part of the site, whilst the remaining Blocks C, D and E located along the Y axis of the L-shaped site, moving north.

Figure 2.1 – Site Layout Plan



2.2 The proposed development comprises 5 no. apartment blocks 2-5 no. storeys in height. Blocks A and D are 4 no. storeys in height, Block C steps from 4 to 5 storeys in line with the topography of the site, Block B rises to 5 no. storeys whilst Block E drops to 2-3 no. storeys.

2.1 The overall proposed unit mix is as follows:-

Table 2.1 – Overall Dwelling Mix

	Studio	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	Overall
Apartments	1	59	71	9	140
Overall Mix	1%	42%	51%	6%	

Source: Henry J Lyons

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 NATIONAL GUIDELINES

- 3.1 The Department of Environment, Housing and Local Government published ‘*Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities*’ in 2001 under Section 28 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.
- 3.2 These Guidelines (currently under review) stipulate a requirement for a childcare facility within new housing areas at an average of one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings (which is the equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places). This is a guideline standard and will depend on the particular circumstances of each individual site.
- 3.3 The impending review of the Childcare Guidelines is predicated on the accepted view that the current standards and requirements are overly onerous and that they lead to an unnecessary level of provision in many new developments, for which there is often not a long-term market demand, and in many instances the facility is not suitably located to be commercially viable in the longer term. Commercial viability thresholds typically require 80 - 100 children.
- 3.4 We also note from our own experience of recent residential developments across the Greater Dublin Area that many planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála accept an evidence based approach in respect to the provision of childcare facilities, and do not require a creche facility to be delivered necessarily with every 75 units (see examples below).
- 3.5 Having regard to the above, it is highlighted that the standards set out by the Childcare Guidelines are recommendations only and do not represent minimum requirements, with reference to childcare provision within schemes.
- 3.6 The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) (SRD) aim to ensure the sustainable delivery of residential development. While the SRD acknowledge the 2001 Guidelines, they also state that the threshold “*for such provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas, in consultation with city/county childcare committees*”.
- 3.7 From the above, the SRD note the need to assess the creche provision in an area, having regard to the existing provision of creches and also the emerging demographic profile of an area.
- 3.8 It is noted that the exclusion of childcare facilities may be justified where ‘*significant reasons*’ exist, such as:
- Development consisting of single bed apartments;
 - Where there are adequate childcare facilities in adjoining developments; and
 - The emerging demographic profile of the area.

- 3.9 Further to this, the ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)’ state in relation to childcare facilities 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**’.*

3.2 DUN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 3.10 It is the policy of the council *‘in general’* to provide affordable childcare as part of new residential developments, depending on the demographics and geographic needs of an area;

SIC11: *It is Council policy to encourage the provision of affordable and appropriate childcare facilities as an integral part of proposals for new residential developments and to improve/expand existing childcare facilities across the County. In general, at least one childcare facility should be provided for all new residential developments subject to demographic and geographic needs. The Council will encourage the provision of childcare facilities in a sustainable manner to encourage local economic development and to assist in addressing disadvantage.*

- 3.11 In addition, *“in assessing applications for new childcare facilities, the Planning Authority will consult with the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Childcare Committee to assess the need for the type of facility proposed at the intended location.”* The childcare committee has been contacted as part of this assessment.

3.3 BLACKROCK LOCAL AREA PLAN

- 3.12 The Blackrock local area plan outlines the following in relation to childcare:

POLICY BK15 *It is Council policy to facilitate and/or retain access to a full range of childcare and educational facilities required for the needs of the local population.*

EC1 *It is an objective of the Council that all planning applications for larger residential developments shall be required to provide one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units **unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is already adequate childcare provision in the area.*** (emphasis added).

- 3.13 Similarly, to the development plan, the local area plan requires new residential developments to provide childcare facilities, unless it can be shown that there are adequate provisions in the area already.

4.0 CRECHE ASSESSMENT

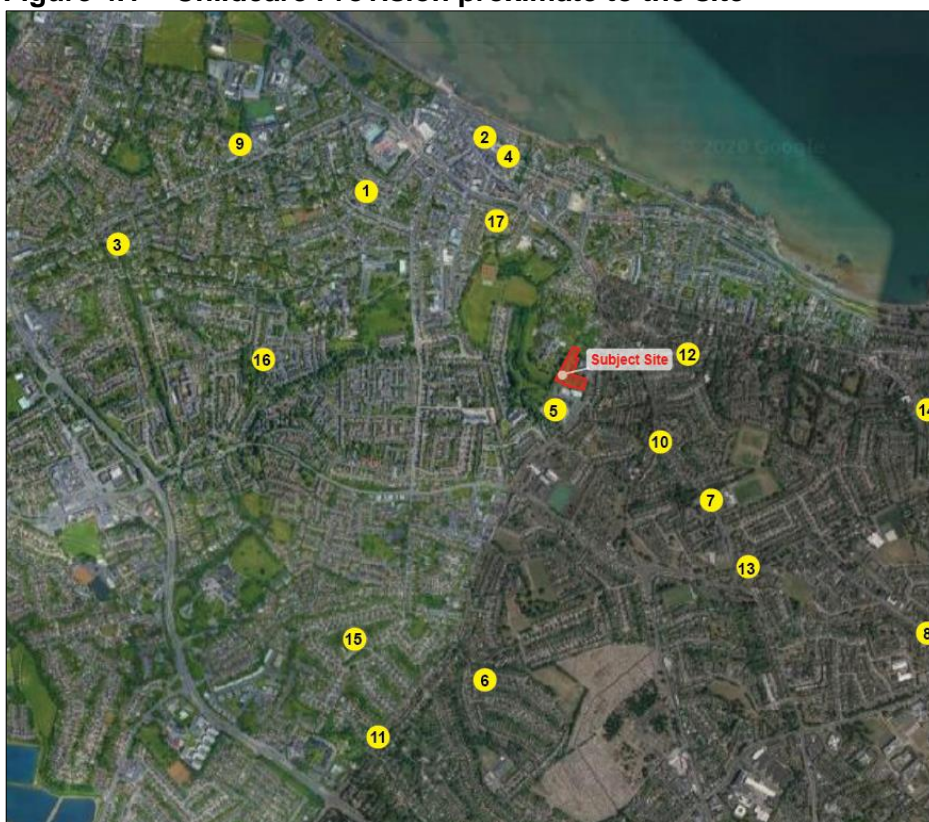
4.1 Based on the above Departmental Guidelines and Planning Policy within the Local Development Plan, the exclusion of a crèche facility at the site is required to be justified based on the following:

- The emerging demographic profile of the area; and
- Adequate childcare facilities in adjoining developments.

4.1 EXISTING CRECHE PROVISION – CLUAIN MHUIRE

4.2 John Spain Associates undertook a review of the local creche provision in the locality using the www.Pobal.ie website. In addition to the Pobal review, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Childcare Committee were contacted and details sought in relation to the childcare services and capacity available in the catchment area. Individual creches were also contacted during the course of the assessment to obtain an understanding of the current capacity in the area.

Figure 4.1 – Childcare Provision proximate to the site



Source: Google Maps

Table 4.1 – Details of Existing Childcare Operators within the Catchment Area

	Childcare Service Name	Services Offered	Age Groups Provided for	Capacity	Current Vacancies
1	Applehouse Childcare	Part time	SAC	-	-
2	Blackrock Community Playgroup	Part time, Sessional	PS, SAC	-	-
3	Coco's Childcare	Full Day Care	PS	44	0

	Childcare Service Name	Services Offered	Age Groups Provided for	Capacity	Current Vacancies
4	Little Apples Academy	Full Day Care, Part time	PS, SAC	70	12
5	Guardian Angels Montessori School	Full Day Care	PS	20	0
6	Hollypark Montessori	Full Day Care	PS, SAC	-	0
7	Links Childcare	Full Day Care, Part time, Sessional	PS, SAC	-	-
8	Naíonra Lorcáin	Sessional	SAC	18	0
9	Our World Montessori School	Part time	PS	75	0
10	Rowan House Afterschool	Part time, Full Time	PS, SAC	-	-
11	Willow House Childcare	Full Time	SAC	36	6
12	Simba's Playgroup and Montessori	Part time, Sessional	PS, SAC	40	0
13	Wee Care	Full time, Part time, Sessional	PS, SAC	170	0
14	Little Puddles Childcare	Part time, Full Time	PS, SAC	-	0
15	Ardagh Froebel Pre-school		PS	-	-
16	Little Gems Montessori	Full Day Care	PS	60	6
17	Explorers Afterschool club	Full Day Care, Part time, Sessional	PS, SAC	77	0
	Total Existing			610	24
	Proposed 286sqm Creche at St Teresa's House, Blackrock - Ref. ABP30380419	-	-	47	47
	Total Overall			667	71

Source: JSA Survey

- 4.3 There is currently a minimum of 24 no. vacancies within the area with an additional 47 no. spaces to be constructed, as part of the strategic housing development at St Teresa's house, Temple Hill Blackrock (ABP 303804-19). The figures above do not take into account childcare provided outside the catchment area. It is also noted that Applehouse Childcare, Blackrock Community Playgroup, Links Childcare, Rowan House Afterschool and Ardagh Froebel Pre-school were also contacted as part of the review but declined to provide detail on capacity etc. It is noted that additional spaces may be available at these creches.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE – LOCAL CATCHMENT

- 4.4 According to the most recent Census (2016), there were 140 no. 0-4 children in the catchment area of Electoral Divisions of Blackrock-Templehill, which is 5.3% of the total population, equating to 2,658. This compares to 7% of the overall population of the state within the 0-4 age cohort. We note the corresponding figure is 6.3% for Wicklow County.

Table 4.2 – Children in 0-4 Age Cohort

Location	2016 Total Population	Population 0-4 Pre-school	Percentage % 0-4 Pre-school
Blackrock-Templehill	2,658	140	5.3

Source: CSO Census 2016

4.3 CRECHE DEMAND

4.3.1 Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) 2016

- 4.5 The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) carried out by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) includes a special module on childcare. The most recent report on this module was published for Quarter 4 2016 (released July 2017). The QNHS states that 62% of pre-school children are minded by a parent, while the corresponding figure for primary school children is 74%. The most commonly used non-parental childcare type for pre-school children is a creche/Montessori/group/aftercare school facility. This type of care is used by 19%¹ of pre-school children, with the highest rate of use in Dublin at 25%.

- 4.6 A breakdown of the proposed 140 no. units at the site is noted as follows:

Apartments

- 1 no. studio apartment;
- 59 no. 1-bed apartments;
- 71 no. 2-bed apartments.
- 9 no. 3-bed apartments.

Total – 140 no. apartments.

- 4.7 From the above, excluding the studio and 1-bedroom apartments [140 – 60 = 80] (as per 2018 Apartment Guidelines), this leaves a potential requirement of 21 no. spaces using the 20 no. spaces per 75 no. dwellings (based on 80 no. units). However, both the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan and the 2001 Guidelines acknowledge that the requirements for a creche are based on a number of factors such as population below 4 years of age, location, and existing creche provision. It is further noted that there are 71 no. 2 bedroom apartments proposed within the scheme, which if excluded from the calculations would result in 9 no. 3 bedroom dwellings. If these units were excluded, the potential requirement would be c. 2 no. places using the Childcare and 2018 Apartment Guidelines methodology.
- 4.8 The overall number of dwellings proposed is 140 no. residential units. This equates to a potential population of 378 no. persons (based on 2.7 persons per household). This is considered an over-estimate due to the number of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings within the scheme. According to the 2016 Census, the proportion of 0-4 age cohort was 5.3%, which if applied to the 378 no. figure (for the 140 no. dwellings) would equate to 20 no. children potentially within the scheme requiring childcare.

¹ https://pdf.cso.ie/www/pdf/20170706100048_QNHS_Childcare_Quarter_3_2016_summary.pdf

- 4.9 As noted earlier, in accordance with the Childcare Guidelines, when the studio and 1 bedroom units are excluded, this results in a total of 80 units. This then results in a potential for 216 no. people to be accommodated within the scheme. This in turn would equate to 11 no. children potentially requiring childcare (based on 5.3% of the population). This would potentially generate a need to accommodate 11 no. children between 0 – 4, assuming all of the children required childcare outside of the home.
- 4.10 However, it is noted that the percentage of children availing of childcare is just 25% as outlined in the QNHS 2016, while the remainder of children are minded by other relatives, au pairs etc. Using the CSO figures, and a similar proportion (25%) of the 0-4 age cohort which avail of childcare places, this would equate to a potential creche requirement of c. 3 places (based on 25% of 11 children).

5.0 EXISTING PRECEDENT

- 5.1 Within Dun Laoghaire Rathdown there are four approved Strategic Housing Developments which do not include a provision for childcare facilities, they are the following;
- Ref. ABP-306421-20 is located in Dalkey and is comprised of 101 apartments. These apartments are studio, 1 and 2 bedroom units. The Childcare Capacity Assessment submitted with the application detailed a demand for 17 no. places from the new development as well as demonstrating capacity in the area to absorb this.
 - Ref. ABP-305176-19 is located within Stillorgan. It provided 232 apartments (studio, 1 and 2 bedroom units) in the Build-to-Rent scheme. The Childcare Audit showed a *“decrease in children between the ages of 0-4 and the provision of 1,018 no childcare spaces in the vicinity and concluded that the site was adequately serviced.”*
 - Ref. ABP-304249 in Dun Laoghaire is another Build-to-Rent scheme but is also Shared Living, with 208 no. bedspaces, all being single occupancy. Due to the nature of this development a childcare facility was not needed.
 - Ref. ABP-304068 in Foxrock is a 142 apartment, Build-to-Rent development. It is comprised of mostly 1 and 2 bedroom units, with one 3 bedroom unit. The Creche Demand and Needs Assessments notes that permission has been approved for four additional childcare facilities within the area, and two extensions to the existing facilities and concludes that there will be sufficient childcare capacity and availability within the local catchment area.
- 5.2 The above referenced permissions demonstrate precedent for apartment developments within Dun Laoghaire Rathdown where it was demonstrated that a creche facility was not required. The schemes referenced, similar to the subject proposal, are predominantly 1 and 2 bedroom units. A suitable justification arising from a lack of demand from the development itself, alongside existing capacity in the area was deemed acceptable by An Bord Pleanála. The subject application has sought to demonstrate this in the preceding sections.
- 5.3 Notwithstanding the above strong justification for the omission of a creche, we respectfully request, that should the Board, in the event of a grant of permission, consider that a creche be provided that this can be facilitated by way of condition. For example, the proposed reception/concierge building between Blocks A and B could be repurposed as a creche should this be deemed necessary.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Due to the proposed unit mix of predominantly 1 and 2 bedroom units and the overall proximity to Blackrock centre, it is not proposed to include a creche within the development. This would prevent an over-provision of childcare spaces, support existing creche providers, while still catering for the future residents through the existing supply. There is a significant risk that the provision of creche at the subject site would not be commercially viable and be left unused and vacant.
- 6.2 The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities, the Apartment Guidelines 2018, and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009), acknowledge that the standards are recommendations only and do not represent minimum mandatory requirements.
- 6.3 The Apartment Guidelines state that one bedroom or studio units should not be considered to contribute to childcare provision and that subject to location this may also apply in part or whole to units with two or more bedrooms. It is noted Objective EC1 of the Blackrock Local Area Plan that larger residential developments shall be required to provide one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is already adequate childcare provision in the area. The subject report demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity in the area to accommodate the projected demand of the subject application.
- 6.4 It is noted 94% of the 140 no. dwellings are studio and 1 and 2 bedroom units (apartments and duplexes). 9 no. 3 bedroom apartments are proposed.
- 6.5 JSA contacted the DLR County Childcare Committee to seek information on creche provision in the area. The DLRCCC indicated that they did not have information on capacity or numbers. While they considered that from a policy perspective a creche may be required, the creche needs assessment, has demonstrated that there are 17 no. creche operators in the area. Seven of the operators did not provide information on childcare numbers, but the remaining 11 no. childcare providers indicated c. 610 childcare places and a vacancy of c. 24 places in the environs of the subject site. Additional childcare capacity in the area would accrue from the 6 no. childcare operators which did not provide information. In addition, the St. Teresa's SHD included c. 47 no. childcare places, which would further add to overall capacity in the area. Having regard to the proposed nature of the mix of the proposed development, that even if all of the 2 and 3 bedroom apartments required childcare places, (a 21 place requirement) they could be accommodated within the existing spare capacity from the JSA survey (which equated to c. 24 places). The proposal would comprise (assuming all 2 and 3 bed units in assessment) just 3.3% of childcare places in the area (of 11 operators who gave information) and is likely to be lower if remaining 6 no. operators provided detail on childcare numbers. Having regard to the QNHS Survey, the actual demand is anticipated to be significantly below the 21 no. places and is considered to be as low as 3 no. places (c. 25% of pre-school children) of the overall population equivalent (216 population 80 x 2.7).
- 6.6 Having regard to the above, we respectfully submit that the proposed development does not require a creche due to the characteristics of the unit mix and the wide range of creche providers in the area.