

## **Childcare Impact Assessment**

Proposed Residential  
Development at  
Claregalway, Co. Galway





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Prepared By: **MKO  
Tuam Road  
Galway  
Ireland  
H91 VW84**



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of Report

This report supports a Strategic Housing Development Planning Application for the development of 88 no. social and affordable residential units at Droim na Gaoithe, Baile Chlair, Co. Galway.

This report examines the level of demand for creche/childcare facilities in the Claregalway area, having regard to:

- The current and projected demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the area; and
- The quantum and capacity of existing creche/childcare facilities which service the identifies catchment area.

## 1.2 Development Description

The development description, as per the public notices is as follows:

*“The Development will consist of the construction of a total of 88 residential units, and creche. The proposal includes two estate entrances, one from R381 (to Oranmore) and one from the L7110. The proposed units mix is as follows: 2 four-bedroom two storey houses, 19 three-bedroom two storey houses, 18 two-bedroom two storey houses, 15 three-bedroom apartments, 21 two-bedroom apartments, 13 one-bedroom apartments and a Crèche. The development also includes a children’s playground to Lakeview Road, landscaped amenity public open space, and IW pumping station, ESB substation and all necessary site development works.*

*The Proposal also includes car parking, bicycle parking, hard & soft landscaping, site clearance works, roads, footpaths, amenity facilities, public lighting, signage, connections to existing services and all ancillary site development works.*

*A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of the proposed development. An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report has been undertaken in respect of the proposed development and concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is not required.”*

## 1.3 Relevant Policy

This assessment was framed in the context of the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, published in June 2001 and the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021.

### 1.3.1 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028:

The application site is governed by the policies and provisions contained in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 (CDP). The Galway County Development Plan came into effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The CDP sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of Galway County Council.

The relevant policies and objectives relating to Childcare Provision are outlined below:

#### Policy Objective CF 1 - Childcare Facilities:

*“Encourage and support the sustainable provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations and seek their provision concurrent with development, having regard to the distribution of the residential populations and population targets for the area and in*

*accordance with the Guidelines on Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2001), the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 and any other relevant statutory guidelines which may issue during the period of this Plan.”*

#### Policy Objective CF 2 - Consultation Childcare Facilities:

*“Promote and encourage the provision of a network of good quality affordable childcare facilities in consultation with the Galway County Childcare Committee, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla Child and Family Agency throughout the County.*

#### Policy Objective CF 3 – Crèche Facilities:

*“Require where appropriate the provision of crèche facilities in mixed use/residential developments in accordance with the ministerial guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities published in 2001. In general, childcare facilities outside of established settlements shall only be permitted adjacent to or in close proximity to existing educational or social facilities.”*

1.4

## Definition of Childcare

For the purposes of this report ‘childcare’ is defined in accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, where “childcare” is taken to mean *“full day-care and sessional facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours. It includes services involving care, education, and socialisation opportunities for children services such as pre-schools, naíonraí (Irish language playgroups), day-care services, crèches, playgroups, and after-school groups are encompassed by these Guidelines”*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Defined Study Area

A study area, encompassing the settlement of Claregalway, was defined for this assessment and is shown below in Figure 1. This red line corresponds with the settlement boundary for Claregalway as set out in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. For the purposes of undertaking a demographic and socio-economic assessment of the defined study area, Central Statistics Office (CSO) data from Census 2011 and 2016 was retrieved relating to the settlement of Baile Chláir/Claregalway.



Figure 1: Defined Study Area – Baile Chláir (Settlement)

3.

## ASSESSMENT

3.1

### Demographic and Socio-Economic Assessment

The following analysis is based on CSO data derived from the 2011 and 2016 Census in relation to the settlement of Baile Chláir.

Table 1: CSO 2011 and 2016 Population Data

Census Year	SAP Settlement	CSO ED Area Code	Total Population	0-4 Years	% of population 0-4 Years
2011	Baile Chláir	T27032	1217	143	11.7%%
2016	Baile Chláir	T27032	1248	183	14.6%
Change	-	-	+31	+40	+2.9%

Source: Central Statistics Office, 2011 and 2016 Census Results.

From the above table the following is evident:

- The total population for the defined study area was 1217 persons in 2011 and increased to 1248 in 2016, representing an increase of 31 persons over the 5-year period.
- The 0-4 age group (creche going age) which accounted for 143 persons or 11.7% of the total study area population in 2011 has increased both in real terms and as a percentage of the overall population of Claregalway. In 2016, 183 persons of creche going age within Claregalway were identified, which comprises 14.66% of the population, and an overall increase of 2.9% over the five years.

3.2

### Capacity Study Findings

For the purposes of carrying out a study of existing capacity we have utilised the development boundary of the village as per the settlement map contained in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028) as per Figure 1. MKO made contact with the existing facilities in this area in January 2022 and there are we understand that there are currently 5 no. operational childcare facilities in the study area. The findings of this survey are detailed in Table 2 below.

While it is noted that there are 3 no. childcare facilities located in the rural hinterland around the settlement, for the purposes of the childcare capacity analysis, it was decided to exclude these from the study area. This is in keeping with Objective CF3 as outlined in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and as referred to in Section 1.1.2 of this report where childcare facilities are encouraged in residential and mixed-use areas close to where people live. The location of childcare facilities outside the settlement boundary will potentially displace childcare requirements and result in unnecessary and unsustainable commuting patterns.

Table 2: Childcare Facility Capacity & Availability

Facility	Name & Address	Contact Number	Uptake	Potential Additional Capacity
1	Cairde Childcare Unit 1, Summerfield, Baile Chláir	085 136 1939 085 878 4474	ECCE Spaces 22	9
2	Wonder Years Montessori 54A An Mhainistir, Lakeview, Baile Chláir	087 949 5776	N/A	N/A
3	The Growing Tree Montessori School Cahergowan, Claregalway	091 798 160	ECCE Spaces 33	10
4	Naoínra Clúidín na mBabai GAA Clubhouse, Claregalway Community Centre, Lakeview, Claregalway	087 207 0558	ECCE Spaces 22	9
5	Amy's House Churchview, Claregalway	086 383 8564	60	42
6	King Construction Claregalway SHD Childcare Facility <sup>1</sup>	N/A	-	32

Discussions with childcare providers in Claregalway indicates that the majority of the places offered are provided under the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). This Scheme provides places for children aged from 2 years and 8 months to primary school going age (i.e., 4-5 years old). Of the 4 no. facilities who provided responses 3 no. of them offer only this type of place and do not offer any places to younger children aged 0-2 years.

The survey above would indicate that there are a significant number of spaces available in terms of ECCE provision (approximately 28 no. spaces across Facility No's 1, 3 and 4). We have not been able to establish the exact breakdown in relation to the 60-no. spaces in Facility No.5 and the nature of the 42 no. of spaces that are available (i.e. ECCE or 0-2 years old).

It is important to note that the capacity identified in Column 5 of Table 2 above is the overall capacity that the specific premises can accommodate/is licensed to cater for.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that this Childcare Facility forms part of a live SHD application, currently being reviewed by An Bord Pleanála. It is understood that this facility does not currently exist or have a grant of permission. However, in the event of a successful outcome, this development will provide for 32 no. childcare spaces, and therefore should be considered at this time.



MKO's survey of existing facilities has established the following:

- There is ample potential ECCE capacity within the facilities. However, the facilities are not operating to capacity because of very severe staff shortages. We understand that staff shortages in childcare facilities is a nationwide challenge.
- There is a potential shortage of childcare spaces for children ages 0-2 years. This is mainly due to the ratios required of one staff member to 3 children in this age cohort and the associated staffing demand that this creates.

It is difficult to attribute the availability of capacity in the existing creches to a lack of demand or to an absence of sufficient staff to allow the facilities to offer these spaces. This makes it difficult to conclude whether demand generated by the proposed development could be met in existing facilities or whether a new facility is required.

In light of Claregalway's inclusion in the Metropolitan Strategic Area Plan and the significant population growth allocation assigned to it in the Draft County Development Plan (80% increase in population over the period 2022-2028) it is likely that significant additional childcare demand will be created in the coming years which will have to be met in existing and potentially future childcare facilities. Taking account of the Core Strategy set out in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 we estimate that there will be an additional 137 no. children of creche going age living in Claregalway by 2028.

## CONCLUSION

The scope of this Childcare Facility Assessment, in accordance with the agreed brief, has given all due regard to the context of the site location, the provisions of the relevant Development Plan (Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028) and Land Use Zoning Plan for Claregalway and the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

The proposed development consists of 88 no. residential units. 13 of these are 1-bed apartments and can be excluded when assessing childcare need (based on Apartment Guidelines 2018), giving a figure of 75 no. units for the purposes of assessing demand. Based on an average household size of 2.7 persons, the scheme in its entirety will have an estimated population of 205 people.

Based on the findings of Table 1 and taking the 2016 figure for the percentage of population 0-4 years, the typical creche going cohort will make up approximately 14.6% of the population of the housing scheme (2+ no. bedroom units) which equates to the requirement for 29.5 no. creche spaces to serve the proposed development.

Although there is a shortfall in creche spaces being provided for within this development proposal, it can be seen that in conjunction with the recently granted King Construction SHD, on adjacent lands at Claregalway, which has an overprovision of childcare/cheche spaces in conjunction with existing Childcare facilities, that any additional capacity can be outsourced accordingly.

Therefore, MKO would suggest that, in the event of a successful outcome to the planning process, the requirement for a childcare facility should be reconsidered due to the additional capacity within the surrounding facilities.

