

Social and Community Infrastructure Audit

In respect of

Proposed Strategic Housing Development

At

Southgate North, Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co. Meath

Prepared for

Rockmill Ltd

Prepared by

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1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 On behalf of the applicant, Rockmill Ltd, this Social and Community Infrastructure Audit (SCIA) has been prepared by John Spain Associates to accompany an application to An Bord Pleanála in relation to a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) located on lands at Southgate North, Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co Meath. The application site is located on lands to the immediate north of the Southgate Shopping Centre, on a site fronting Dublin Road.
- 1.2 This report provides for a detailed review of the relevant planning policy context in relation to a new proposed residential development at Southgate, Drogheda, with emphasis paid to the existing provision and capacity of childcare and educational facilities within the area. This report details a contextual overview of the social infrastructure in proximity to the subject site, whilst providing a population estimate for the proposed development and any impact this new population may have on the existing social infrastructure.
- 1.3 This report provides a detailed review of the strategic, statutory and policy context in relation to the proposed new strategic housing development at Southgate, Drogheda. This report outlines a contextual overview of the area surrounding the site, a review of the social infrastructure within its catchment and identifies possible future needs in the area.
- 1.4 The proposed development consists of 201 no. residential units across 5 apartment blocks on a site totalling 1.74 hectares in area at Southgate, Drogheda.
- 1.5 Social Infrastructure, under this audit, is categorised and recorded as follows:
- Health & Wellbeing- Hospital & Specialist Care, GP & Medical Centres, Dental, Pharmacy's and nursing homes
 - Education & Childcare- Childcare, Primary, Post Primary and Third Level
 - Religious Facilities
 - Sports & Recreation
- 1.6 The report is structured as follows:
- Site Context
 - Policy Context
 - Methodology
 - Profile of the Area
 - Existing Facilities
 - Assessment of Needs
 - Conclusion
- 1.7 This report shall demonstrate that the existing and proposed social infrastructure within the surrounding area is sufficient to support the proposals that are being put forward under this application.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

Site Description

- 2.1 The proposal's 201 no. units consist entirely of apartments split across 5 different blocks. The proposal includes residential underground and surface car parking, public open space between the blocks, communal open space and a children's playground. The breakdown of the proposed development consists 56 no. one bed apartment units, 128 no. two bed apartments units and 17 no. three bed apartment units.
- 2.2 The site is at a strategic location along the Dublin Road, proximate to public transport (bus and rail), and c. 2km south of Drogheda Town Centre itself.
- 2.3 The subject site is located on C1 zoned lands, with an objective 'To provide for and facilitate mixed residential and business uses' at Southgate, on a site adjacent to the Dublin Road and the Southgate Shopping Centre, which occupies the southern portion of the C1 zoned lands.
- 2.4 The site in question is currently undeveloped with an area of c. 1.74 hectares, with no existing structures, surrounded by paladin fencing and with a slight gradient. The site has previously been subject to clearance (unrelated to the current development). Little vegetation exists on the site at present.
- 2.5 The site is located to the northern side of the Dublin Road, with the large Grange Rath housing development to the north and east of the site, with the Grange Preschool and Early Years Centre immediately bordering the site to the north. The South/Southeast of the site is bounded by the Southgate Shopping Centre, which is a mixed use development with a significant commercial office element, retail area, and an element of residential accommodation.
- 2.6 The proposal for the site includes a high degree of interconnectivity with the existing Southgate and Grange Rath developments adjacent.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The key provisions of national and local planning policy as it relates to the proposed development and this social infrastructure assessment is set out in the following sections. The key policy and guidance documents of relevance to the proposed development are as follows:

- Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework;
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009);
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018);
- Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027;
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities (2001).

Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

- 3.2 The National Planning Framework (hereby abbreviated to NPF) is the core high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland until 2040. The NPF sets out the aim for *'Effectively planning and developing large centres of population and employment along the main economic corridor, including in particular*

Drogheda and Dundalk. In relation to the proposed development itself, National Policy Objective 35 states the desire to *'Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights'*. The proposed development will help to meet these objectives through allowing for a greater population to live within Drogheda, whilst increasing residential density of the settlement at a well located and underutilised site.

- 3.3 The NPF approach includes National Strategic Outcome 10 which seeks to provide *'access to quality Childcare, Education and Health services'*. While the NPF provides no guidance on what infrastructure is required to service new developments of different sizes, a hierarchy of settlements and related infrastructure notes that cities, i.e. central and/or urban locations, may provide all infrastructure within accessible walking area or accessible on transport networks. Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchy of settlements and related infrastructure.
- 3.4 National Policy Objective 31 states the need to *'Prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with investment in: A childcare/ECCE planning function, for monitoring, analysis and forecasting of investment needs, including identification of regional priorities; 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; The expansion and consolidation of Higher Education facilities, particularly where this will contribute to wider regional development, and Programmes for life-long learning, especially in areas of higher education and further education and training where skills gaps are identified'*.
- 3.5 In order to provide a policy and evidence-based approach this Social and Community Infrastructure Audit / Assessment, we will use the NPF hierarchy of settlements to assess the infrastructure within the pedestrian catchment (1 and 2kms) of the site.
- 3.6 The subject site is located along the Dublin Road, a key access route into Drogheda Town Centre from the south. A stop for the 101 bus service between Drogheda and Dublin is located adjacent to the development, with a frequency of service of 20 minutes, and immediately adjacent to a suburban shopping centre and employment location in the form of the Southgate Shopping Centre. Accordingly, the site can be defined as an Intermediate Location, which the apartment guidelines state are *'Such locations are generally suitable for smaller-scale (will vary subject to location), higher density development that may wholly comprise apartments, or alternatively, medium-high density residential development of any scale that includes apartments to some extent (will also vary, but broadly >45 dwellings per hectare net)'*.

Figure 1: NPF Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure



Source: National Planning Framework

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas

- 3.7 The sections outlined under this document that are relevant to this social and community infrastructure audit / assessment relating to the proposed development are outlined below.
- 3.8 Relating to educational provision, Section 4.3 states that ‘no substantial residential development should proceed without an assessment of existing schools capacity or the provision of new school facilities in tandem with the development.’ Whilst Section 4.4 states that ‘within the development management process, it is recommended that planning applications for 200+ dwelling units should be accompanied by a report identifying the demand for school places likely to be generated by the proposal and the

capacity of existing schools in the vicinity to cater for such demand. In very large-scale residential developments (say, 800+ units), planning authorities must consider whether there is a need to link the phased completion of dwellings with the provision of new school facilities.' Based upon this statement, the proposed development consists of 201 no. residential units, and so it is recommended that this report identifying demand be produced.

- 3.9 Section 4.5 referring to childcare states *'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. The location of childcare facilities should be easily accessible by parents, and the facility may be combined with other appropriate uses, such as places of employment'*.
- 3.10 Section 4.7 states that planning authorities should consult with the HSE regarding the provision of healthcare facilities, with additional consideration given to those who are elderly and disabled.

Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2020

- 3.11 The section as outlined below contained within the Design Standards for New Apartments (2020) is of relevance to this social infrastructure audit.
- 3.12 Section 4.7 relates to the provision of childcare facilities and states that *'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 childcare 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.'* Accordingly, this audit shall present the provision and distribution of childcare facilities surrounding the development site, and in turn justify the decision to not provide a childcare facility within the development, having regard to the location of a facility which has additional capacity available directly adjacent to the subject site.

Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and Draft Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

- 3.13 The current statutory plan for Meath is the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. At the time of preparing this document, the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 has reached the stage of Material Amendments to the draft plan. The Development Plan contains a number of policies and objectives which are of relevance to the proposed application, as outlined below:
- 3.14 Policy SOC POL 25 relates to the provision and location of childcare facilities within the county. It states *'To require the provision of childcare facilities of an appropriate type and scale in suitable locations throughout the County. In particular, the development of childcare facilities at the following locations will normally be required:*
- *Areas of concentrated employment and business parks;*
 - *Neighbourhood centres;*

- Large retail developments and retail warehouse parks;
- In schools or major educational facilities;
- Adjacent to public transport nodes, and; within new and existing residential developments.'

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities (2001)

- 3.15 Regarding the provision of childcare facilities and the requirements under new developments, the guidelines state that '*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. (See also paragraph 3.3.1 and Appendix 2 below). The threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical 5 distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas.*'
- 3.16 Further contained within the aforementioned appendix 2, it is stated that '*Any modification to the indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings should have regard to: 1. The make-up of the proposed residential area, i.e. an estimate of the mix of community the housing area seeks to accommodate. (If an assumption is made that 50% approximately of the housing area will require childcare then in a new housing area of 75 dwellings, approximately 35 will need childcare. One facility providing a minimum of 20 childcare places is therefore considered to be a reasonable starting point on this assumption. Other assumptions may lead to an increase or decrease in this requirement.) 2. The results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a county childcare strategy or carried out as part of a local or action area plan or as part of the development plan in consultation with county childcare committees, which will have identified areas already well-served or alternatively, gap areas where there is underprovision, will also contribute to refining the base figure*'.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The population statistics for the surrounding area has been calculated for the Drogheda settlement area, in which the subject site is located, as delineated by the Census Smap service. This is gathered for both the 2011 and 2016 census, to highlight to intercensal change in population and demographics whilst gauging the changes in demand on local social infrastructure resulting from this.
- 4.2 This SCIA provides an outline of existing social and community infrastructure located in proximity to the application site and which existing and future residents of the area will have access and help support, which are within a 2km radius of the subject site. In addition, educational infrastructure is displayed in the context of a 15 minutes walking distance and 5 minute drive from the subject site, to further portray the real world proximity of the proposal to educational and childcare facilities. Figure 2 below indicates a 2km radius around the subject site, with walking and driving range provided for.

Figure 2: 2km Radius from the Subject Site

Basemap Source: Census/OSI

- 4.3 The 2km catchment relates to broad figure for sustainable travel distance by foot. The area highlighted as a 15 minute walk from the subject site provides for areas within the 2km radius that are immediately accessible to future residents by foot, whilst the 5 minute driving range provides for areas that can be easily accessed by car both within an outside of the defined radius.
- 4.4 The demographics for this area are assessed over 2011 and 2016 Census data, in order to obtain a profile of the area and its recent demographic changes.
- 4.5 The proposal was then assessed, and an estimated profile based upon unit mix and local profile is created to approximate the social and community infrastructure requirements and the effect of the development upon existing capacity within the local area.
- 4.6 The capacity of the social and community infrastructure identified within the catchment zone is assessed in the context of the proposed development.

5.0 PROFILE OF THE AREA

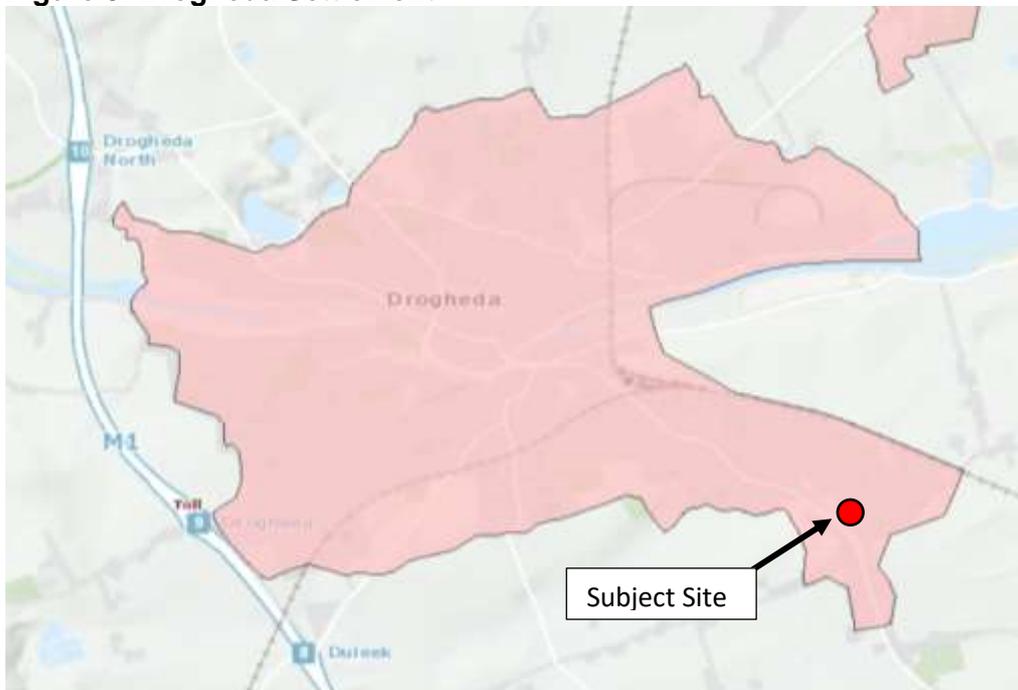
5.1 The profile of the area has been reviewed against the following criteria:

- Demographics
- Population Growth
- Population Change
- Age Profile
- Future Demographic Trends

Demographics

5.2 Population figures and age groups from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) are provided for the Drogheda settlement, with the following sections providing figures for the 2011 and 2016 census, with any demographic changes over the intercensal period captured.

Figure 3: Drogheda Settlement



Basemap Source: Census/OSI

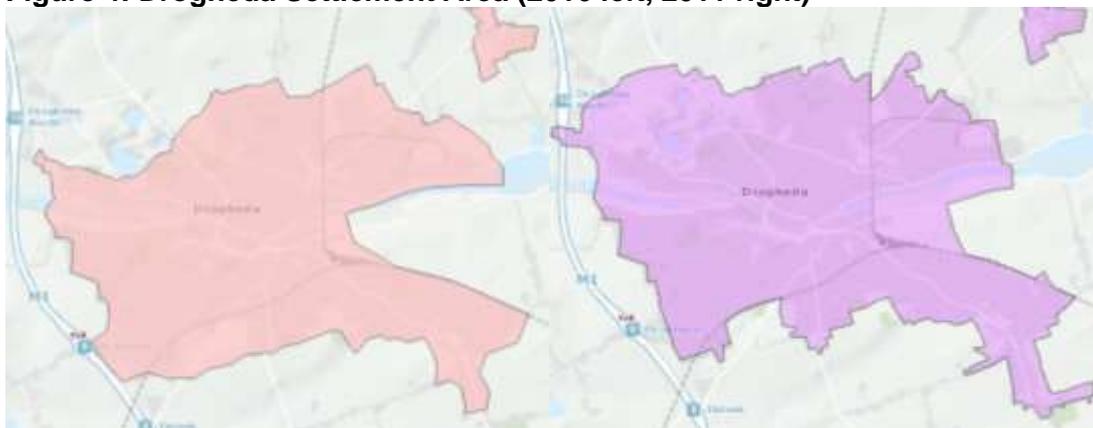
5.3 As of the 2016 census, the total population for the Drogheda settlement was 40,956. This represents an increase of 2,378 over the intercensal period, or 6.1%. Over the same period, housing stock increased by 112, or 0.7%. The table below provides for a population breakdown of the Drogheda Settlement by age group for each of the last two census years, with the percentage change for the intercensal period included.

Table 1: Drogheda Settlement Demography 2011-2016

Age Group	2016	2011	Population Change	% Population Change
0-19	12,264	11,442	882	7.7%
20-39	11,648	12,601	-953	-7.5%
40-59	10,848	9,276	1,572	16.9%
60-79	5,180	4,462	718	16%
80+	1,016	797	219	27.4%
Total	40,956	38,578	2,378	6.1%

Source: CSO

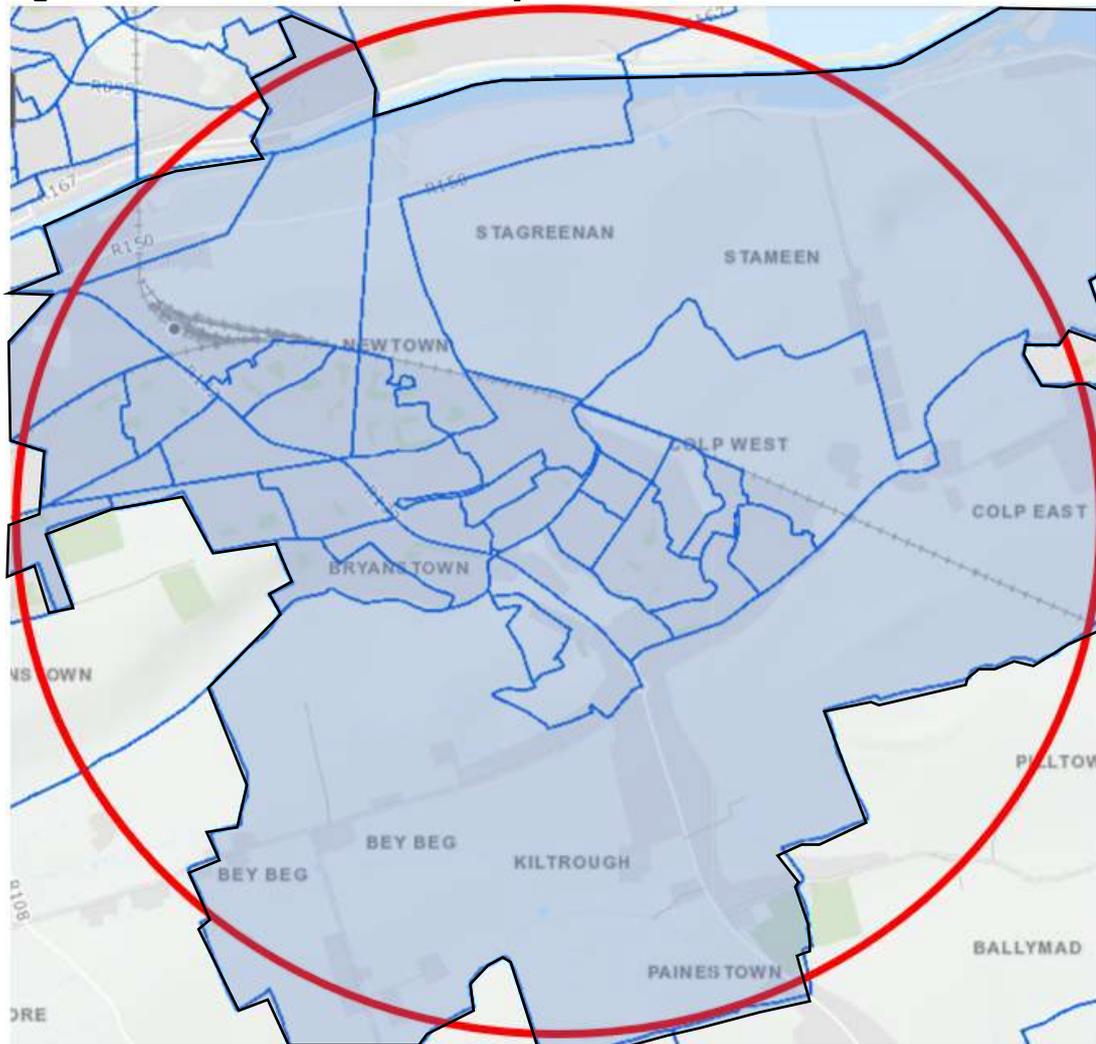
- 5.4 It is worth noting that the Drogheda settlement area boundary has varied marginally over the intercensal period, as highlighted within the map below. However, it is still put forward that the broad similarities of the settlement area allows for broad comparison to be made.

Figure 4: Drogheda Settlement Area (2016 left, 2011 right)

Source: CSO Sapmap

- 5.5 A more detailed analysis of the local demography can be provided for by looking at the demography of Small Area Populations (SAPs). Within the defined 2km radius, there are 35 no. Small Areas (SAs). By analysing the population of these individual SA's it allows for the immediate population context to be accounted for. The following figure provides an outline of the SA's considered to be within the defined radius.

Figure 5: Small Areas within the subject site catchment



**Source: CSO
Population Growth**

5.6 The table below outlines the population growth for the catchment area over the intercensal period.

Table 2: Drogheda Settlement, County and State Population Change 2011-2016

	State	Meath	Drogheda
2011	4,588,252	184,135	38,578
2016	4,761,865	195,044	40,956
Change	173,613	10,909	2,378
Percentage	3.8%	5.9%	6.1%

Source: CSO

Population Change

5.7 This population breakdown is based upon the wider Drogheda settlement that intersects the subject site while painting a picture of the wider population trends for the area. The age profile is compared across the 2011-2016 time periods to provide a comparison upon which future projections may be developed.

- 5.8 This age profile analysis demonstrates a predominantly young population base for the area, with over 80% of the population aged 59 or younger (see Tables 3 and 4) over both periods. The growth in population over the intercensal period is relatively evenly distributed, with no significant fluctuations, aside from a minor shift to an older population, with the 60+ age cohort increasing by 2.5%.

Table 3: Population breakdown 2011 – Drogheda

Age Group	Population 2011	% of Total
0-19	11,442	29.6%
20-39	12,601	32.6%
40-59	9,276	24%
60-79	4,462	11.5%
80+	797	2%
Total	38,578	100%

Source: CSO

Table 4: Population breakdown 2016 - Drogheda

Age Group	Population 2016	% of Total
0-19	12,264	29.9%
20-39	11,648	28.4%
40-59	10,848	26.4%
60-79	5,180	12.6%
80+	1,016	2.4%
Total	40,956	100%

Source: CSO

- 5.9 The population growth over the five year 6.1%, which is marginally greater than that of Meath as a whole at 5.9%. The national average growth over the same period is 3.8%, as per table 2, suggesting high rates of growth and housing demand within the Meath and Drogheda area.

Age Profile

- 5.10 The age profile is based upon current data for the 35 Small Areas within the defined catchment area. The table below displays the gross and percentage population of each age group, as of the 2016 census. The total population for the 35 no. SA's within a 2km catchment of the subject site is 9,962, which is divided as follows;

Table 5: Age Profile in Catchment Area (Census 2016)

	0-19	20-39	40-59	60-79	80+
2016	3,123	2,766	2,780	1,025	268
Percentage of total	31.3%	27.7%	27.9%	10.2%	2.7%

Source: CSO

Future Demographic Trends

- 5.11 As demonstrated within table 2 previously, the intercensal growth for the Drogheda settlement was 6.1%. If this growth rate is assumed constant, ie., remaining at 6.1% for the 2016-2021 intercensal period, the population for 2021 will be 43,455.

Table 6: Age Profile and Population Prediction 2023

	0-19	20-39	40-59	60-79	80+	Total
2016	12,264	11,648	10,848	5,180	1,016	40,956
Predicted 2021	13,012	12,359	11,510	5,496	1,078	43,455

Source: CSO

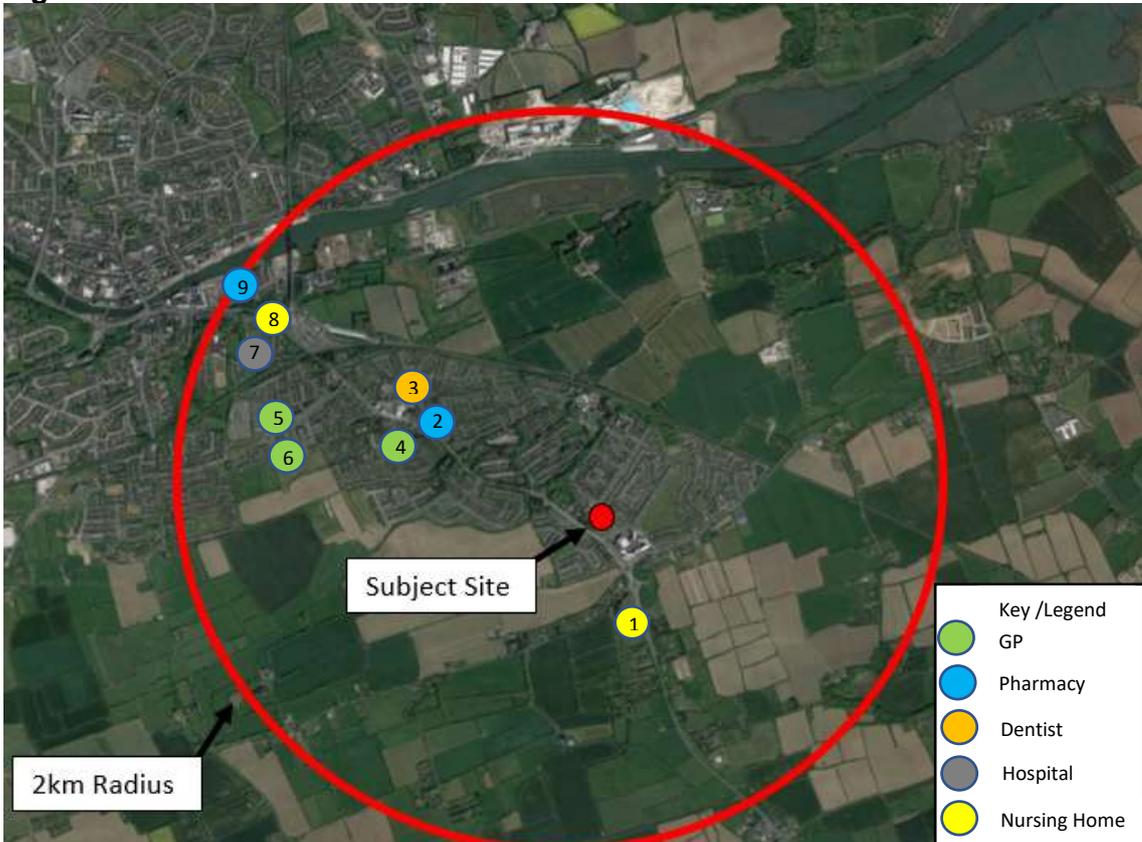
6.0 EXISTING FACILITIES

6.1 The baseline survey undertaken identified a broad range of community, recreational and educational facilities within the defined 2km catchment. Given the proximity of Drogheda town centre to this catchment area and good levels of accessibility as identified by the walking and driving maps previously, it was felt acceptable to include a number of facilities which are outside of the 2km radius but remain accessible and within reasonable proximity to the subject site.

Health and Wellbeing

6.2 This section assesses the health and wellbeing provision in the area. The data is provided via the HSE Health Atlas web application, and identifies nursing homes, GP's, Dentists, Pharmacies, nursing homes and hospitals within the 2km catchment of the subject site.

Figure 6: Health Facilities Within a 2km Radius



Data Source: HSE Health Atlas

Table 7: Health and Wellbeing Facilities

Name	Type	No. on Map
Moorehall Lodge Drogheda	Nursing Home	1
Blackbull Pharmacy	Pharmacy	2
Wheaton Hall Dental Practice	Dentist	3
Dublin Road Medical Practice	GP	4
Ard Bryan Clinic	GP	5
Bryanstown Medical Centre	GP	6
St. Marys Hospital	Hospital	7
Boyne View House	Nursing Home	8
Health Express	Pharmacy	9

Source: HSE Health Atlas

- 6.3 It is worth noting the broad range of health and wellbeing services that can be availed of within Drogheda Town Centre, adjacent to the 2km defined catchment of the subject site, as per figure 7.

Figure 7: Health and Wellbeing Facilities within Drogheda Town Centre

Source: HSE Health Atlas

Childcare

- 6.4 The subject site is located in an area with several childcare facilities in close proximity. As demonstrated within the figure below, there are 11 childcare facilities within a 2km catchment of the subject site, with a further 2 located in close proximity, bringing the total number of identified facilities to 13, which are listed accompanying the figure below.

Figure 8: Childcare facilities



6.5 The childcare facilities identified on the figure above include a significant facility which directly adjoins the subject site of the proposed Strategic Housing Development. This existing facility is in the ownership of the applicant. The Grange Early Years and Preschool Centre(which was developed by the applicant and in the same ownership as the applicant company) provides services for children of 0-1 up to 5 years of age and has a staffing level of 16 employees (as per the Meath County Childcare Committee website). The childcare facility has a capacity of 98 spaces at present, however the applicant has confirmed that a portion of the existing floorspace within the childcare facility is not currently being utilised. On that basis, an additional capacity of c. 156 sq.m (excluding ancillary and back of house areas) has been identified, which could accommodate c. 50 childcare spaces to meet the demand arising from the proposed development. A letter from the owner of the childcare facility is included an appendix to this report, confirming the extent of unused area within the facility which could be expanded into subject to the demand arising from the proposed development.

Primary Education

6.6 A survey was undertaken to identify the provision of primary school services within proximity to the subject site. Given the accessibility to the subject site by foot and car, it was felt acceptable to identify units which are marginally outside of the 2km catchment that remain accessible. The schools as recorded with their respective enrolment levels have been identified using school listings published by the Department of Education and Skills.

Figure 9: Primary School Locations



Source: Department of Education

Table 8: Primary Schools

Name	Enrolment	Type	No. on Map
St. Marys Parish Primary School	1,103	Mixed	1
Le Cheile Educate Together	437	Mixed	2
Gaelscoil an Bhradain Feasa	448	Mixed	3
Realt Na Mara (Cailini)	449	Girls	4
Realt Na Mara (Buachailli)	449	Boys	5
Marymount National School	290	Mixed	6
Scoil Aonghusa	209	Mixed	7
St. Josephs CBS	296	Boys	8
St. Peters NS	91	Mixed	9
TOTAL	3,772	-	-

Source: Department of Education

- 6.7 As identified within the figure above, the number of students enrolled within local primary schools is 3,772, split across the 9 no. primary schools, as per the most recently published enrolment figures.

Secondary Education

- 6.8 A survey was undertaken to identify the provision of secondary school services within proximity to the subject site. Similar to primary education identified previously, it was deemed acceptable to include secondary schools marginally outside of the defined 2km catchment.

Figure 10: Secondary School Locations

Source: Department of Education

Table 9: Secondary Schools

Name	Enrolment	Type	No. on Map
Drogheda Grammar School	351	Mixed	1
Sacred Heart Secondary School	634	Girls	2
St. Marys Diocesan School	845	Boys	3
Our Ladies College	941	Girls	4
St. Josephs CBS	789	Boys	5
TOTAL	3,560	-	-

Source: Department of Education

- 6.9 The number enrolled in local secondary schools is 3,560, with a range of types provided for across the 5 schools identified.

Third Level Education

- 6.10 It is noted that no third level educational institutions were identified within or proximate to the defined catchment. The nearest third level institution is the Drogheda Institute of Further Education, which is located c. 4km to the north of the subject site.

Religious Facilities

6.11 A total of 5 no. religious institutions have been identified within and in close proximity to the defined catchment. Of these identified facilities, all are related to Christianity, with an Islamic centre located c. 4.5km from the subject site.

Figure 11: Religious Institutions



Source: Google Maps

Table 10: Religious Facilities

Name of Institution	Faith	No. on Map
Drogheda Presbyterian Church	Church of Ireland	1
Star of the Sea Church	Catholicism	2
St. Marys Church	Catholicism	3
St. Augustine’s Church	Catholicism	4
New Life Baptist Church		5

Source: Google Maps

Sports and Recreation

6.12 A desktop survey identified an extensive variety and number of sports and recreation facilities within the defined 2km catchment.

Figure 12: Sports and Recreational Facilities

Source: Google Maps

Table 11: Sports and Recreation Facilities

Name of Institution	Type	No. on Map
Inver Colpa Rowing Club	Sports Club	1
Boyne Valley Country Club	Sports Club	2
Boyne RFC	Sports Club	3
Chord Celtic FC	Sports Club	4
Pilstown Driving Range	Sports Club	5
Bryanstown Recreation Area	Park	6
McBride Pitch and Putt	Sports Club	7

Source: Google Maps

7.0 **ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS**

Proposed Development

- 7.1 The proposed development comprises of a Strategic Housing Development for 201 no. apartments within 5 no. proposed apartment blocks on a 1.74 hectare site along the Dublin Road at Southgate, Drogheda, Co. Meath. Development proposals include cycle and pedestrian facilities, all foul, surface and stormwater drainage facilities, 181 no. car parking spaces, public open space, road infrastructure, bin and bike stores, landscape treatments and all associated site works.

- 7.2 The proposed development is located to the northeast of the Dublin Road. The established Southgate Shopping Centre, featuring residential, retail and office uses, is immediately to the south. The existing residential development of Grange Rath lies to the north and east of the subject site, with additional detached houses fronting the Dublin Road bound the site to the northeast.

Figure 13: Site Context



Source: Google Maps

Proposed Development Demographic Assessment

- 7.3 The proposed development consists of 201 no. apartment units, comprising of 53 no. one bedroom apartments, 132 no. 2 bedroom apartments, and 16 no. 3 bedroom apartments.

The maximum occupancy for the development is calculated as 714 no. persons based on the following breakdown:

- Studio units: 0
- 1 Bedroom units: 53 x 2 people per apartment = 106
- 2 Bedroom units (4 Person): 132 x 4 people per apartment = 528
- 3 Bedroom units (5 Person): 16 x 5 people per apartment = 80
- Maximum Total = 714 bedspaces.

- 7.4 Please note that this figure represents an absolute maximum capacity for the development, and it is considered highly likely that actual capacity would be less than this working figure.
- 7.5 Based upon these figures, and excluding one bed and studio units, the theoretical maximum number of bedspaces occupied by children is 312. This is based on the assumption that the primary room in all 2 and 3 bed residences are occupied by adults, and that all additional rooms are occupied by children. One bedroom units are excluded as is considered appropriate.

- 7.6 Based upon population for the 35 no. Small Areas within the site catchment, children between 0-19 years old consist of 31.3% of the local population, or 3,123 people. Within the wider Drogheda settlement, this figure is 29.9%, or 12,264 people. Using the higher level figure to estimate the likely level of children living within the proposed development provides for a figure of 223 children (Assuming 31.3% of all beds are occupied by those between 0-19 as per the catchment area). It is put forward that this figure is more realistic for the development (whilst likely in excess of the real figure, given the majority of housing units within the catchment are 3 bedroom houses) given the surrounding demographics, and so the given figure of 223 children is to be used.

Childcare

- 7.8 The proposed development consists of 201 residential apartment units, and accordingly would require a childcare facility as per the '*Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' which requires a childcare facility of at least 20 spaces for any development of 75 units.
- 7.9 The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities (2001) recommend that 20 childcare spaces be provided for new housing developments of 75 units or more. However, the 2018 Apartment Guidelines acknowledge that one bedroom units can be omitted from this calculation, stating the following:

'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.'

- 7.10 Based upon the above, there are 148 units within the proposed development that are 2 and 3 bedroom units and to which this is applicable. Based on the requirement for 20 spaces per 75 units, this would therefore require the provision of a childcare facility with capacity for 39 children ($148 / 75 \times 20 = 39.46$).
- 7.11 It is noted that the proposed development does not include provision for a childcare facility. As noted previously, there are a number of childcare facilities within proximity to the proposed development, with a large childcare facility bounding the site to the north.
- 7.12 This section of the SCIA seeks to demonstrate, having regard to the extract below Apartment Guidelines 2018, that the proposal is sufficient in light of existing capacity within the catchment area. The relevant extract from the Apartment Guidelines is as follows:
- 'Notwithstanding the Department's Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities, which are currently subject to review and recommend the provision of one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units, the threshold for provision in apartment scheme 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 for the area.'*
- 7.13 Restrictions on the operation of childcare facilities due to Covid-19 has meant that all local operators could not be contacted and so the existing capacity in several providers could not be identified. However, as noted above, the adjacent Grange Early Years and Preschool Centre (which was developed by the applicant) provides services for children of 0-1 up to 5 years of age and has a staffing level of 16 employees (as per the Meath County Childcare Committee website). The childcare facility has a capacity

of 98 spaces at present, however the applicant has confirmed that a portion of the existing floorspace within the childcare facility is not currently being utilised. On that basis, an additional capacity of c. 156 sq.m has been identified, which could accommodate c. 50 childcare spaces.

- 6.65 On the basis of the significant number of childcare facilities in the area, the direct adjacency of the site to an existing significant childcare facility, and the nature of the proposed development and its likely target demographic, it is respectfully submitted that the provision of an additional childcare facility within the proposed development should not be required.
- 6.66 Any childcare facility within the subject site would be within c. 100 metres or less from the existing large childcare facility adjacent to the site, and it is considered that such an additional facility would not be commercially viable.
- 6.67 The proposed development (having regard to its proximity to amenities and the mix of unit types and sizes) will likely appeal to down sizers from the locality, who wish to move from larger detached or semi detached dwellings in the area.

Education

- 7.14 This section analyses the capacity of existing educational facilities for primary and secondary schools located within the locality of the proposed development. It will demonstrate the minimal impact of the proposed development on the existing educational within the surrounding area.

Primary Education

- 7.15 A total of 9 primary schools have been identified within close proximity to the subject site, with 3 of these located within the defined 2km catchment. These schools area mix of girls, boys and mixed enrolment. Based on the primary school age cohort representing 12% of the total population (this is utilising the methodology employed by the Department of Education for calculating school demand), the proposed development will create extra demand for c. 86 primary school places (12% of the 714 maximum population of the proposed development).
- 7.16 The total enrolment within these 9 schools is 3,772 pupils, as of the most recently published annual statistics. Based upon this the proposed development will increase demand by c. 2.3%, which is considered to be minor in the overall context. Having regard to this estimated level of demand and the surrounding school capacity, it is considered that the existing primary education infrastructure can accommodate the predicted increase in demand arising from the proposed development without undue strain.

Secondary Post Primary Education

- 7.17 There are a total of 5 Secondary schools located within close proximity to the subject site, 3 of which are located within the defined 2km catchment. Based on the post primary school age cohort representing 8.5% of the total population (based upon the methodology employed by the Department of Education for calculating school demand, see document titled 'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System), the proposed development will create extra demand for 61 post-primary school places (8.5% of the 714 maximum population of the proposed development).

- 7.18 The total enrolment within these 5 schools is 3,560 as of the most recently available statistics. Based upon this the proposed development will increase demand by 1.7%. Having regard to this estimated level of demand and the surrounding school capacity, it is considered that the existing post-primary education infrastructure can accommodate the predicted increase in demand.

Health

- 7.19 As previously indicated the health facilities within a 2km radius of the development site consists of 2 no. pharmacies, a hospital, 2 no. nursing homes, and dentist and 3 no. GP's.

Pharmacy

- 7.20 Given the 9,962 population and the 3 identified pharmacies within the 2km radius, this equals 3.01 pharmacies per 10,000 population. This is under the national average rate of 4.05 pharmacies per 10,000 population.
- 7.21 However, we note the extensive provision of pharmacies within Drogheda Town Centre, which is within 3km of the subject site. In addition, visual inspections have revealed 'Pure Pharmacy' operating immediately adjacent to the development within Southgate Shopping Centre, yet not appearing on the HSE database. Should this be included, the rate of pharmacies per 10,000 people broadly matches the national average, at 4.01 per 10,000 population.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Thus, in conclusion it is respectfully submitted that this report has demonstrated that the Social and Community Infrastructure in the area will be sufficient to cater for the needs of the proposed development.
- 8.2 The development does not include the provision of childcare facilities, as a broad range of existing capacity has been identified within the surrounding area and additional capacity has been identified will be made available within a directly adjoining childcare facility, which is owned by the owner of the applicant company and the main application site.
- 8.3 The extra demand created by the proposal for primary and post primary educational facilities will be relatively low in relation to current levels of local provision, while increased levels of demand from the scheme is unlikely to result in any undue strain on existing services.
- 8.4 There are a significant range of facilities for sports and recreation within a 2km radius of the site which are considered sufficient to cater for the needs of the additional population in the area which the proposed development will deliver, with a wide range and variety of clubs, pitches and related facilities within reasonable distance of the site.
- 8.5 The provision of healthcare and pharmacies within the area is considered sufficient to cater for the increase in local population which will arise from the proposed development.

APPENDIX 1: LETTER REGARDING ADJACENT CHILDCARE FACILITY AND AVAILABLE ADDITIONAL CAPACITY

An Bord Pleanála,
64, Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1.

Re: Strategic Housing Development at Southgate, Drogheda, Co. Meath.

To Whom It Concerns,

As the owner of a childcare facility which is located adjacent to the proposed Strategic Housing Development at Southgate, I offer childcare facilities for 98 no. children ranging in age from 1 month to 12 years of age.

There is 1,678 of unused usable space within the existing childcare facility building into which we can and would expand, catering for an additional 50 no children, should the demand arise.

We would support the proposed development at Southgate in Drogheda and look forward to meeting the future childcare needs which would arise should it be granted planning permission.

Kind regards,



PHIL REILLY