



**THORNTON O'CONNOR**  
TOWN PLANNING

# **Social Infrastructure Audit (Incl. Childcare and Schools)**

**In Respect of a Proposed Development at a Site of  
4.72 Ha on New Road in Corballis East, Donabate, Co.  
Dublin**

**Prepared on Behalf of Fingal County Council**

April 2024

## CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Approach	1
1.2	Study Area and Accessibility	2
1.3	Proposed Development	6
1.4	Layout of this Report	7
<b>2.0</b>	<b>RELEVANT POLICY GUIDANCE</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1	<b>National Planning Policy</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1.1	National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040	8
2.1.2	Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (January 2024)	8
2.1.3	Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (July 2023)	9
2.1.4	Action Plan for Education (Statement of Strategy 2023-2025)	10
2.1.5	The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice	10
2.1.6	Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)	11
2.2	<b>Regional Planning Policy</b>	<b>12</b>
2.2.1	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region	12
2.3	<b>Local Planning Policy</b>	<b>13</b>
2.3.1	Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029	13
2.3.2	Donabate Local Area Plan 2016	14
<b>3.0</b>	<b>DEMOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	Demographic Drivers	17
3.2	Summary	20
<b>4.0</b>	<b>FACILITIES AUDIT</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1	<b>Education Facilities</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1.1	Primary Schools	26
4.1.2	Post-Primary Schools	28
4.1.3	Future Demand Analysis	29
4.1.4	Completed and Planned Infrastructure	32
4.1.5	Conclusion	33
4.2	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>35</b>
4.2.1	Estimated Childcare Demand Generated	36
4.2.2	Existing Childcare Facilities	37
4.2.3	Planned Facilities Network (Donabate)	39
4.2.4	Justification for Proposed Crèche	40
4.2.5	Conclusion	42
4.3	<b>Introduction – SIA</b>	<b>44</b>
4.4	<b>Social, Community and Culture Facilities</b>	<b>47</b>
4.5	<b>Healthcare and Emergency Services</b>	<b>48</b>
4.6	<b>Open Space and Recreation</b>	<b>49</b>
4.7	<b>Faith Institutions</b>	<b>50</b>
4.8	<b>Retail Centres and Services</b>	<b>50</b>
4.9	<b>Future Opportunities for Social Infrastructure Provision</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>53</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA) (incl. Childcare and Schools) has been prepared by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning on behalf of Fingal County Council in support of a Residential Development proposed at a site of 4.72 Ha at New Road, Donabate, Co. Dublin. The Report provides a detailed review of the statutory, strategic and policy context that relates to the provision of Social Infrastructure with the following aims:

- To provide a survey and audit of existing Community and Social Infrastructure, Open Space and Amenities serving the identified Study Area and the subject site;
- Catalogue all infrastructure under the facilities categories identified through policy guidance;
- Establish if suitable Social Infrastructure is provided in the area to support the needs of the existing population; and
- Assess the nature of the infrastructure and likelihood of the capacity of the existing facilities to support the needs of future residents.

This Report, therefore, identifies existing Community Facilities in the local area and includes an analysis and identification of potential shortfalls in infrastructure.

### 1.1 Approach

As part of this Design Pack, an assessment of the existing facilities in the area has been carried out in order to assess the need for Social and Community Infrastructure. A desktop study was used to collect the baseline information. The facilities in each category were recorded in an Excel Table, and then mapped using the ArcGIS Ecosystem. A large number of public and private geospatial datasets were used in the course of the survey, including but not limited to:

- 2024 Google Places Dataset;
- 2024 ESRI and Mapbox Ireland Basemaps;
- 2011, 2016 and 2022 Census Boundaries and Small Area Population Statistics;
- 2010-2024 Department of Education and Skills – Irish Schools;
- 2024 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Register of Private Higher Education Institutions in Ireland;
- 2024 Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Reports – Registered Childcare Facilities; and
- 2024 HSE – ‘Find Your Local Health Service’.

Social Infrastructure (SI) includes a range of services and facilities that contribute to quality of life. SI is a key part of the fabric of an area, not just in terms of wellbeing, but also in terms of creating a sense of place for the population of the area and forming a part of the local identity. For the purpose of this Report, the array of services and facilities defined as Social Infrastructure have been categorised into a defined number of typologies that correspond to those set out in Chapter 4 and Chapter 14 of the *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029* (Table 1.1).

A radius of 1 km from the subject site was used as the focus for this assessment as it is considered a relatively short distance for residents to access via foot, bicycle or public transport. It is also aligned with the principles of the policy objectives for Social Infrastructure Assessments outlined in Section 14.14 of the *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029* (outlined in greater detail in Section 2.0).

Category	Facility Type
<b>Education and Training Services</b>	Primary, Post-Primary, Third Level, Further Education, Other Lifelong Training Centres
<b>Childcare Facilities</b>	Registered Childcare Facilities Incl. Full Day, Part-Time and Sessional Services
<b>Social, Community and Cultural Facilities</b>	Community Centres, Libraries, Senior and Youth Centres, Post Offices, Banks and Credit Unions, Museums, Galleries, Theatres, Cinemas, Music Venues, Historical Cultural Sites
<b>Healthcare and Emergency Services</b>	Hospitals, Health Centres, Primary Care Centres, Doctors and Specialty Clinics, Dental, Physiotherapy, Counselling, Optician, Pharmacy, Garda Stations, Fire Stations
<b>Open Space and Recreation</b>	Parks, Playing Pitches, Playgrounds, Sports Centres and Clubs, Leisure Centres, Gyms and Training Facilities, Swimming Pools
<b>Religious Institutions</b>	Areas of Worship, Churches, Cemeteries
<b>Retail Centres and Services</b>	Convenience Retailing, Other Relevant Retail

**Table 1.1 Social and Community Infrastructure Categories Applied to Audit**

(Source: Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

## 1.2 Study Area and Accessibility

The subject site, which measures 4.72 Ha in area, is situated to the southeast bordering Donabate Town. Donabate itself is positioned approximately 18 km north of Dublin City Centre and approximately 10 km north of Dublin Airport. Bounded by Rogerstown Estuary to the north and Malahide Estuary to the south, the Donabate Peninsula also features the village of Portrane to the east. Conveniently, Donabate is connected by the Dublin-Belfast railway, with the Train Station located west of the subject site, within walking distance. Access to Donabate Town by road is facilitated through the M1 Motorway, utilising Hearse Road and Turvey Avenue.

The New Road lands lie southeast of Donabate town, and the proposed development would be located within walking distance of major public transport infrastructure links, as well as social and community infrastructure within the settlement boundary.

Note that the 'Subject Site' shown on Figure 1.1 below (and succeeding Figures) is based on the main developable area of the site – i.e. it excludes the road and water services works areas.



**Figure 1.1: Site Location**

**(Source: Bing Maps, Annotated By Thornton O’Connor Town Planning, 2024)**

The Study Area for this Assessment is defined by a 1 km radius of the subject site, equivalent to a c. 12- to 14-minute walking distance, which is considered accessible to future residents of the proposed development. A distance of 1 km has also been defined by Fingal County Council within the *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029* (Section 14.14) as the radius for future Community and Social Audits. Given that the subject site is located at the edge of a rapidly growing settlement, an additional indicative catchment of 2 km has been included (in some exceptions) to capture, survey and include relevant infrastructure that lies tangent to, or immediately outside of this Study Area but is directly relevant to assessing future needs of the settlement of Donabate.





**Figure 1.2: Study Area**

**(Source: Bing Maps, Annotated By Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)**

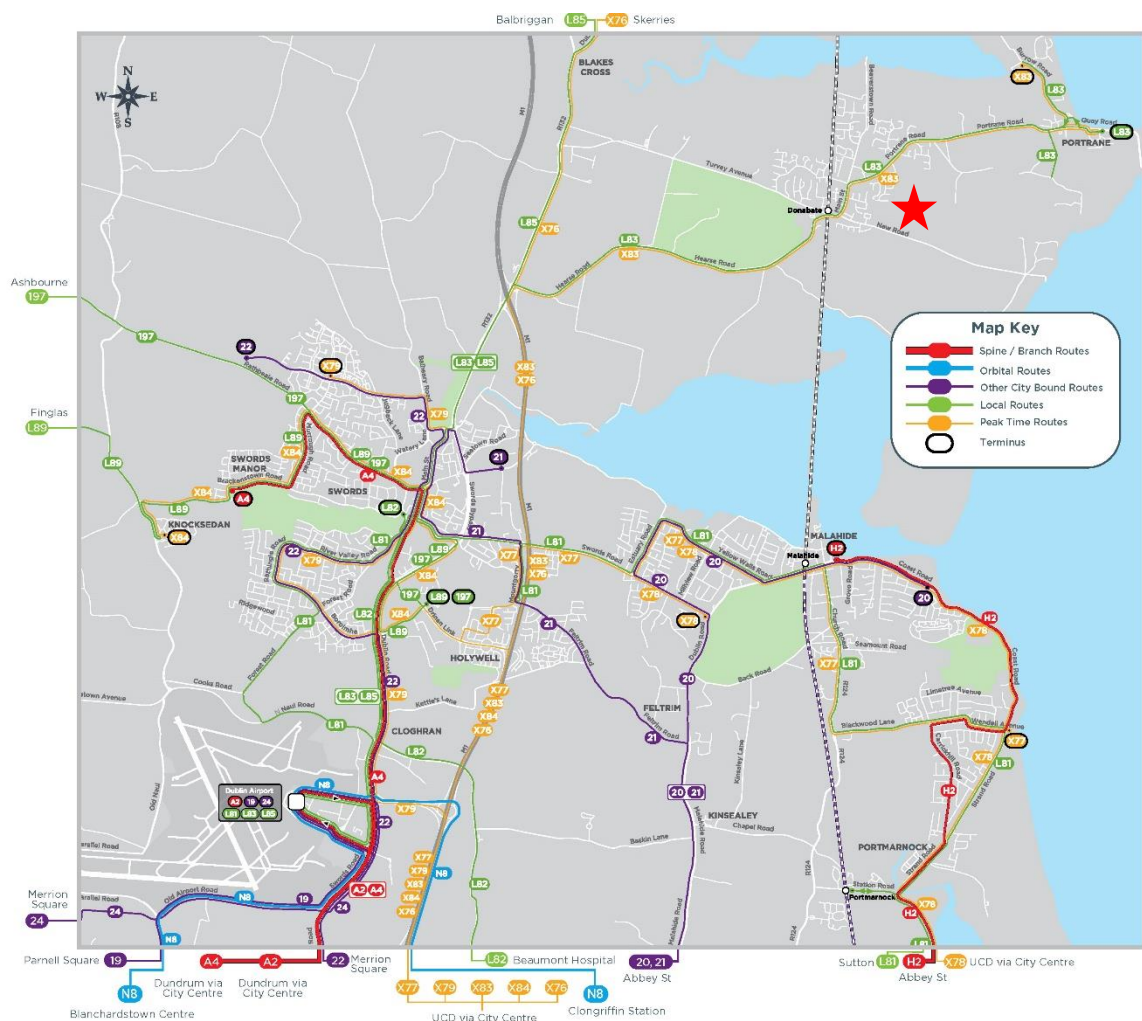
The *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029* states that the town of Donabate will continue to grow as a commuter location, due to its high quality transportation links to the Gateway Core of Dublin City, and as such is designated as a 'Self Sustaining Growth Town'. Strategically positioned along the North–South Strategic Corridor, Donabate stands to benefit from the upcoming DART expansion, scheduled for completion by 2027. This expansion aims to enhance capacity on the northern commuter line, reinforcing connectivity. The town's development strategy emphasises the establishment of a dynamic town core, fostering a high-quality living environment for both current and future residents. It seeks to provide essential community, commercial, cultural, and social facilities alongside new residential developments.

Donabate is located approximately 18 km from Dublin City Centre and benefits from good connectivity to the City Centre, the wider City Region and its international ports and airports via the M1 multimodal transport corridor, high capacity rail and road networks. This includes a direct connection to the intercity Train Station (c. 600 metres away), facilitating access to neighbouring commuter zones, employment hubs, and retail destinations along the Dublin–Belfast corridor. Dublin City Centre, Swords and Dublin Airport are the primary locations for employment in the wider area. The nearest bus stop (from the proposed entrance of the subject site) is located approximately 600 metres away (approximately an 8-minute walk). Donabate, and the proposed development, are adequately served by public transport with access to a number of bus stops

within walking distance from the site;

- Go Ahead Route No. 33B: Portrane – Swords;
- Dublin Bus Route No. 33D: Portrane – Custom House Quay/St. Stephen’s Green;
- Dublin Bus Route No. 33E: Skerries – Abbey Street Lower;
- Go Ahead Route No. 33T: Donabate – Portrane and/or Lusk (Route Varies Throughout Day); and
- Fingal Express Service 534: Portrane – Custom House Quay.

BusConnects is the National Transport Authority’s (NTA) programme to greatly improve bus and sustainable transport services across the Dublin Region. Relative to the development site, the most relevant are the proposed L83 and X83 bus routes as per the current BusConnects network proposals. The L83 bus route will connect Donabate to the Airport, Swords and Portrane at 30-minute intervals in each direction. The X83 will provide connections from Donabate to UCD via the City Centre at peak times. As illustrated above, the subject site would encourage active travel due to its proximity to the town centre within walking distance but is also suitably located close to multiple bus stops and Donabate Train Station which has frequent services to and from the City Centre from morning to midnight daily. This will provide significantly improved bus transport access to the subject site in the coming years.



**Figure 1.3: BusConnects Network (Indicative Location of the Subject Site Denoted By Red Star)**

(Source: BusConnects.ie, Annotated By Thornton O’Connor Town Planning, 2024)

### 1.3 Proposed Development

Per the Statutory Notices, Fingal County Council intend to deliver the following development:

*"The development is proposed at a site of 4.72 hectares at New Road, Donabate, Co. Dublin. The site is generally bound by: a site which is currently being developed to the north; Lanestown View residential development to the east; New Road and existing residential dwellings fronting same to the south; and Saint Patrick's Park residential development to the west. The site includes: part of New Road for road junction, cycle track, footpath and water service connection works; and part of the site to the north for water service connection works.*

*The proposed development will principally comprise the construction of 175 No. residential dwellings (123 No. houses and 52 No. apartments) and a single-storey crèche of 365 sq m (with outdoor play area and external stores). The 123 No. houses, which are part-1-/part-2-storey and 2-storey in height, include 30 No. 2-bed units, 82 No. 3-bed units and 11 No. 4-bed units. The 52 No. apartments include 26 No. 1-bed units, 20 No. 2-bed units and 6 No. 3-bed units and are contained in a single block ranging in height from 1 No. to 4 No. storeys.*

*The development will also include the following: 2 No. new multi-modal entrances/exits at New Road; 2 No. multi-modal connections to existing and under construction residential developments to the east and north respectively; cycle track and footpath along New Road; 139 No. car parking spaces; 4 No. set down bays; 6 No. motorcycle parking spaces; cycle parking; hard and soft landscaping, including public open space, communal amenity space and private amenity spaces (which include gardens, balconies and terraces facing all directions); boundary treatments; 1 No. sub-station; bin stores; lighting; PV panels atop houses; green roofs, PV panels, lift overruns and plant atop the apartment block; green roofs and PV panels atop the crèche building; and all associated works above and below ground."*

Unit Type	Units	% of Total
1-Bedroom Units	26	15%
2-Bedroom Units	50	29%
3-Bedroom Units	88	50%
4-Bedroom Units	11	6%
<b>Total No. of Units</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1.2: Schedule of Accommodation**

(Source: Fingal County Council, 2024)





## 2.0 RELEVANT POLICY GUIDANCE

For the purposes of this Social Infrastructure Audit, a range of National, Regional and Local Planning Policies relating to Social Infrastructure have been reviewed, including those within the *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029*. These documents provide guidance with respect to the provision of new social and community facilities in residential development areas in a number of categories, including education and childcare services, healthcare facilities, cultural institutions, recreational facilities and other key services. The key points relating to this study, as derived from each policy document, will be highlighted in this Section.

### 2.1 National Planning Policy

#### 2.1.1 National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

The *National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040* ('NPF') sets a vision for the planning and development of Ireland to 2040 which is to be implemented through Regional, County and Local Plans. The NPF sets out 50% of future population are to be accommodated within the existing footprint of Dublin and the four other cities. The proposed development will contribute to this target.

A key focus of the NPF is on sustainable and compact development within pre-existing urban areas and the provision of accessible services and facilities for all communities. Chapter 6 of the NPF states that the "ability to access services and amenities, such as education and healthcare, shops and parks, the leisure and social interactions available to us and the prospect of securing employment" is intrinsic to providing a good quality of life for new and existing communities.

The NPF includes National Strategic Outcome 10 which seeks to provide access to quality childcare, education and health services. This requires an evidence-led planning approach. While there is no guidance on what infrastructure is required to service developments of different sizes, the NPF does provide a hierarchy of settlements and related infrastructure.

With the lack of alternative guidance and in order to provide a policy and evidence-based approach to the Assessment, within this Report we use the NPF hierarchy to assess the infrastructure but defer to catchment specification prescribed in Local Development Plan Policy.

#### 2.1.2 Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities (January 2024)

The *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* provide national planning policy and guidance on sustainable residential development and the creation of compact settlements in both urban and rural areas in Ireland. The aim is to promote environmentally friendly practices, efficient land use, and community-focused development. The guidelines recognise the importance of compact growth in urban areas and the importance of walkable well-designed neighbourhoods that can meet day-to-day needs of residents within a short 10 to 15 minute walk of homes. These day-to-day needs refer to social infrastructure, including access to educational facilities and childcare, as essential to good quality of life, and state that new development should take into consideration the SI needs of the community and the existing provision of same. Under the chapter titled 'Sustainable and Compact Settlements', the process for the delivery of successful quality placemaking is reviewed and the

provision of key community facilities such as amenities, schools, crèches and other community services are referenced as forming essential elements. In applying this methodology, the guidelines note it will be necessary to make an *“informed estimate of net developable area taking account of factors such as the need for roads and parks, schools”* and planning for same.

The Guidelines promote a move away from segregated land use areas (residential, commercial and employment) that have reinforced unsustainable travel in favour of mixed-use neighbourhoods. Ensuring that there is a good mix and distribution of activities around a hierarchy of centres has many benefits in terms of reducing the need to travel and creating active and vibrant places. It states that specific key principles (noted below) should be applied in the preparation of local plans and in the consideration of individual planning applications:

- a) *“In city and town centres and at high capacity public transport nodes and interchanges (defined in Table 3.8), development should consist of high intensity mix-use development (residential, commercial, retail, cultural and community uses) that responds in scale and intensity to the level of accessibility. At major transport interchanges, uses should be planned in accordance with the principles of Transport Orientated Development.*
- b) *In city and town centres, planning authorities should plan for a diverse range of uses including retail, cultural and residential uses and for the adaption and re-use of the existing building stock (e.g. over the shop living). It is also important to plan for the activation of outdoor spaces and the public realm to promote more liveable city and town centres. Much of this can be achieved through the implementation of urban enhancement and traffic demand management measures that work together to free up space for active travel and create spaces that invite people to meet, mingle and dwell within centres.*
- c) *In areas that are less central, the mix of uses should cater for local services and amenities focused around a hierarchy of local centres that support residential communities and with opportunities for suitable non-residential development throughout.*
- d) *In all urban areas, planning authorities should actively promote and support opportunities for intensification. This could include initiatives that support the more intensive use of existing buildings (including adaption and extension) and under-used lands (including for example the repurposing of car parks at highly accessible urban locations that no longer require a high level of private car access).*
- e) *It will be important to align the integration of land uses and centres with public transport in order to maximise the benefits of public transport.*
- f) *The creation of sustainable communities also requires a diverse mix of housing and variety in residential densities across settlements. This will require a focus on the delivery of innovative housing types that can facilitate compact growth and provide greater housing choice that responds to the needs of single people, families, older people and people with disabilities, informed by a Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) where possible. Development plans may specify a mix for apartment and other housing developments, but this should be further to an evidence-based Housing Needs and Demand Assessment.”*

This audit has regard to these Guidelines which set out the distribution of uses and community infrastructure as being most relevant in the development of new residential areas. These criteria were considered in the development of the comprehensive infrastructure categories applied during the course of the study area audit.

### **2.1.3 Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (July 2023)**

*The Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (July 2023)* also includes specific guidance with respect to childcare provision in the

design and development of apartment schemes, as follows:

*"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."*

The document specifies the provision of 1 No. childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 No. child places) for every 75 No. proposed residential units. The application of this standard is however informed by the demographic profile of the area and the existing capacity of childcare facilities.

In line with the above National Guidelines, any one-bedroom units within the proposed development would have been discounted in estimating the total number of minors (children aged 0–4 years) and school going children (5–18 years) expected to reside within the development. Instead, in the case of the proposed development, 149 No. units have been included. The estimation of children population and the likely demand for childcare services arising from them has been further detailed in the Audit in Section 4.0.

#### **2.1.4 Action Plan for Education (Statement of Strategy 2023-2025)**

The Department of Education has operated an *Action Planning Framework* to provide an overview of the activity associated with the strategic progress of the 2021-2023 strategy and priorities since 2021. The plan sets out key priorities on an annual basis, with the most recent Plan published in September 2023. This Plan translates the strategic priorities to actions and makes progress towards achieving the high-level goals for the Department and the sector. The high-level roadmap of how to achieve the Department's priorities over 2023–2025 are:

1. Enable the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all children and young people, in schools and early learning and care settings;
2. Ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all children and young people are supported to fulfil their potential;
3. Together with our partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector;
4. Organisational Excellence and Innovation

The *Action Plan for Education (Statement of Strategy 2023–2025)* provides useful insights into the requirements for new schooling infrastructure and the standards to ensure high-quality learning for all students.

#### **2.1.5 The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice**

*The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice* is part of a wider package of initiatives designed to facilitate the provision of schools and schools-related infrastructure within



the planning system and in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. The following core objectives aim to provide an effective integration of schools in relation to the planning system:

1. Schools provision should be an integral part of the evolution of compact sustainable urban development and the development of sustainable communities;
2. The provision of any new schools (both primary and post-primary) should be driven by and emerge from an integrated approach between the planning functions of Planning Authorities and the Department of Education; and,
3. Local Authorities, as Planning Authorities, will support and assist the Department in ensuring the timely provision of school sites.

The document provides guidance when assessing future development potential of certain areas and establishing demand for schools. This document states that in some cases it *"may be more complex as it involves not just an assessment of likely population growth but also an appraisal of the capacity of existing post-primary schools, coupled with an assessment of the enrolment patterns in existing and anticipated 'feeder' national schools."*

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 education; and*
- *The number of classrooms required in total derived from the above."*

The Report addresses reasonable estimates of future demand based on the influx of population arising from the proposed development in a manner that is consistent with national and regional estimates sourced by CSO results.

#### **2.1.6 Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)**

Appendix 2 of the *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)* produced by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government state the following with respect to the provision of new communities/larger new housing developments (Paragraphs 2.4 and 3.3.1 also refer to this standard):

*"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."*

This document establishes an indicative standard of 1 No. childcare facility per 75 No. dwellings in new housing areas, where the facility provides a minimum of 20 No. childcare places. However, the guidance acknowledges that other case-specific insights may lead to an increase or decrease

in this requirement. Appendix 2 of the Guidelines states that the threshold and level of potential provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of an area.

The results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a County Childcare Strategy should also be considered.

## 2.2 Regional Planning Policy

### 2.2.1 *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region*

The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly) ('RSES') states that Social Infrastructure plays an important role in developing strong and inclusive communities. Section 9.1 of the RSES details that the availability of, and access to, services and facilities, inclusive of healthcare services, education facilities and community/recreational facilities is key to creating healthier places. The RSES includes the following Regional Policy Objectives which relate to access to Social Infrastructure and its overall improvement:

**RPO 9.14** – *"Local authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve."*

**RPO 9.18** – *"Support the implementation of local authority Local Economic and Community Plans, in collaboration with Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and through the use of spatial planning policies, to seek to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the Region."*

**RPO 9.19** – *"EMRA shall work collaboratively with stakeholders including the wide range of service providers through the LECs to effectively plan for social infrastructure needs."*

Regarding childcare facilities and schools, the RSES states that Local Authorities should consider demographic trends and patterns when carrying out an assessment of the need for Social Infrastructure.

**RPO 9.20** – *"Support investment in the sustainable development of the Region's childcare services as an integral part of regional infrastructure to include:*

- *Support the Affordable Childcare Scheme.*
- *Quality and supply of sufficient childcare places.*
- *Support initiatives under a cross Government Early Years Strategy.*
- *Youth services that support and target disadvantaged young people and improve their employability."*

**RPO 9.27** – *"In areas where significant new housing is proposed, an assessment of need regarding schools provision should be carried out in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and the statutory plans shall designate new school sites at accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations."*

Section 9.7 highlights that SI should be easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Shared use and co-location of facilities should be encouraged, in order to align service provision, use land more efficiently and facilitate opportunities for further inclusion and community participation.

The *RSES* has been consulted in this Social Infrastructure Audit to ensure the range of services, community facilities, and standards deemed to improve quality of life are considered.

## 2.3 Local Planning Policy

### 2.3.1 *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029*

The *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029* was adopted on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 and came into effect on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The *Development Plan* provides the statutory planning policy framework for the growth and development of the County during its lifetime, with an underlying and cross-cutting theme promoting the creation of sustainable, healthy communities where people can access jobs, housing, and services, and enjoy a high-quality of life. A key priority of the *Development Plan* is to create sustainable neighbourhoods, with a range of household types and tenures located in close proximity to community facilities and services. The following Policies and Objectives set out below are in relation to proposed developments and Community and Social Infrastructure Audits.

***“Objective DMSO78 – Community and Social Infrastructure Audit: Planning applications for large scale residential and mixed-use developments of 50 or more residential units, shall include a Community and Social Infrastructure Audit. This audit shall assess the provision of community and social infrastructure within the vicinity of the site and shall identify existing shortcomings in terms of these facilities and assess whether there is a need to provide additional facilities to cater for the proposed development.***

*A Community and Social Infrastructure Audit shall include the following:*

- *An assessment of existing community and social infrastructure facilities within 1 km of the subject site.*
- *An assessment of the need in terms of necessity, deficiency, and opportunities to enhance/share existing facilities based future population projections for the area.*
- *A justification as to whether or not a new community facility will be provided as part of the proposed development based on the findings of the audit.*

*Where new community facilities are required, they shall have regard to Objective DMSO79 above and the following:*

- *Community facilities shall be flexible in their design and promote optimum/multi-functional usage, for users of all age and abilities.*
- *Community facilities shall not have a detrimental effect on local amenity by way of traffic, parking, noise or loss of privacy of adjacent resident.*
- *Community facilities shall be provided in conjunction with residential/mixed use development.*
- *Community facilities shall be accessible by a range of travel modes with an emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport use, while providing appropriate car parking facilities to meet anticipated demand of non-local visitors to the centre.”*

**"Objective CIOSOS – Residential Developments and Community Facilities:** *Ensure proposals for large scale residential developments include a community facility, unless it can be established that the needs of the new residents can be adequately served within existing or committed community facilities in the area."*

**"Policy SPQHP1 – Healthy Placemaking:** *The Council will support the development and creation throughout Fingal of successful and sustainable settlements which endorse the principles of healthy placemaking and which through a multi-faceted approach to planning, design and management continue to ensure the development of attractive high quality places to live, work, recreate, visit and invest in, served by a range of local services, provision of quality public realms, diverse and accessible community facilities for all genders, non-binary or none and open spaces for the benefit of the community."*

With respect to new significant development and social infrastructure provision, the *Development Plan* states that it should only take place where sufficient schools, parks and other resources are already in place or are proposed for development. The proposed development is consistent with the abovementioned Policy Objectives. It provides for high-quality housing, on lands zoned for residential use, in accordance with the Core Strategy of the *Development Plan*, and in close proximity to the full range of Social and Community Infrastructure. The proposed development will provide much needed housing development to support the existing and future population of Donabate.

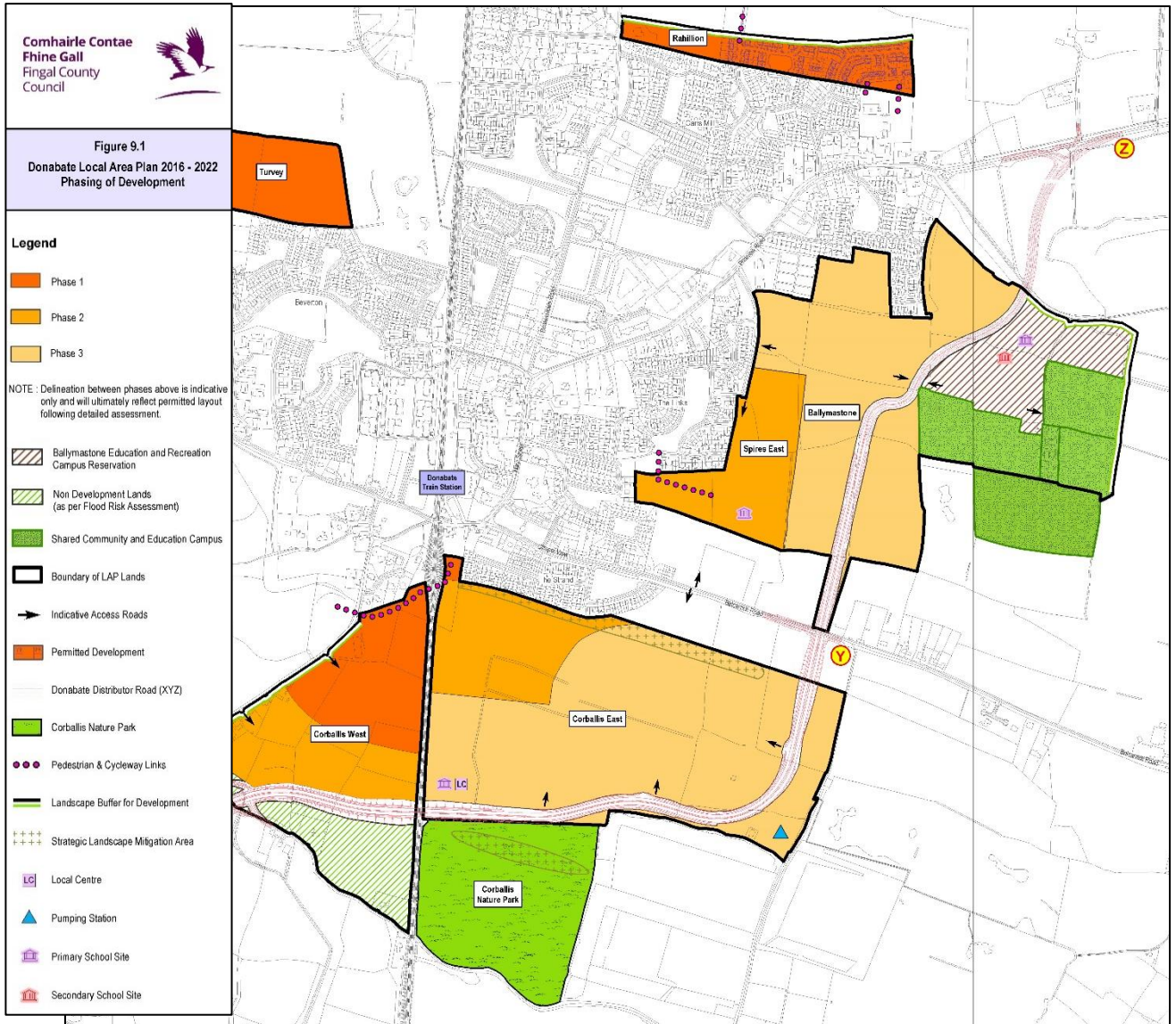
### **2.3.2 Donabate Local Area Plan 2016**

The proposed residential uses are not proposed within the area of the *Donabate Local Area Plan 2016* ('LAP'), although the Plan notes that educational infrastructure will need to be improved in order to meet future population demand. The *LAP* states that 3 No. primary school sites and 1 No. post-primary school site have been designated to meet the needs of future residents. Figure 2.1 below highlights the locations of each of the proposed school sites. A primary school site is proposed adjacent the subject site in the Ballymastone area. A further site is designated within the Ballymastone area, with the school to the north designated as a part of the Recreation and Education Campus. This Campus is also suitable for the provision of a post-primary school. A third school is located near the subject site to the southwest in Corballis East – east of the railway line.

It is additionally an Objective of the *LAP* to encourage the provision of full day care/crèche facilities as part of any new residential development.

**"Objective 6.1 – Implement Childcare Guidelines, as appropriate and support the provision of childcare and education facilities at appropriate locations and as required."**





**Figure 2.1: Proposed School Site Locations in Donabate**

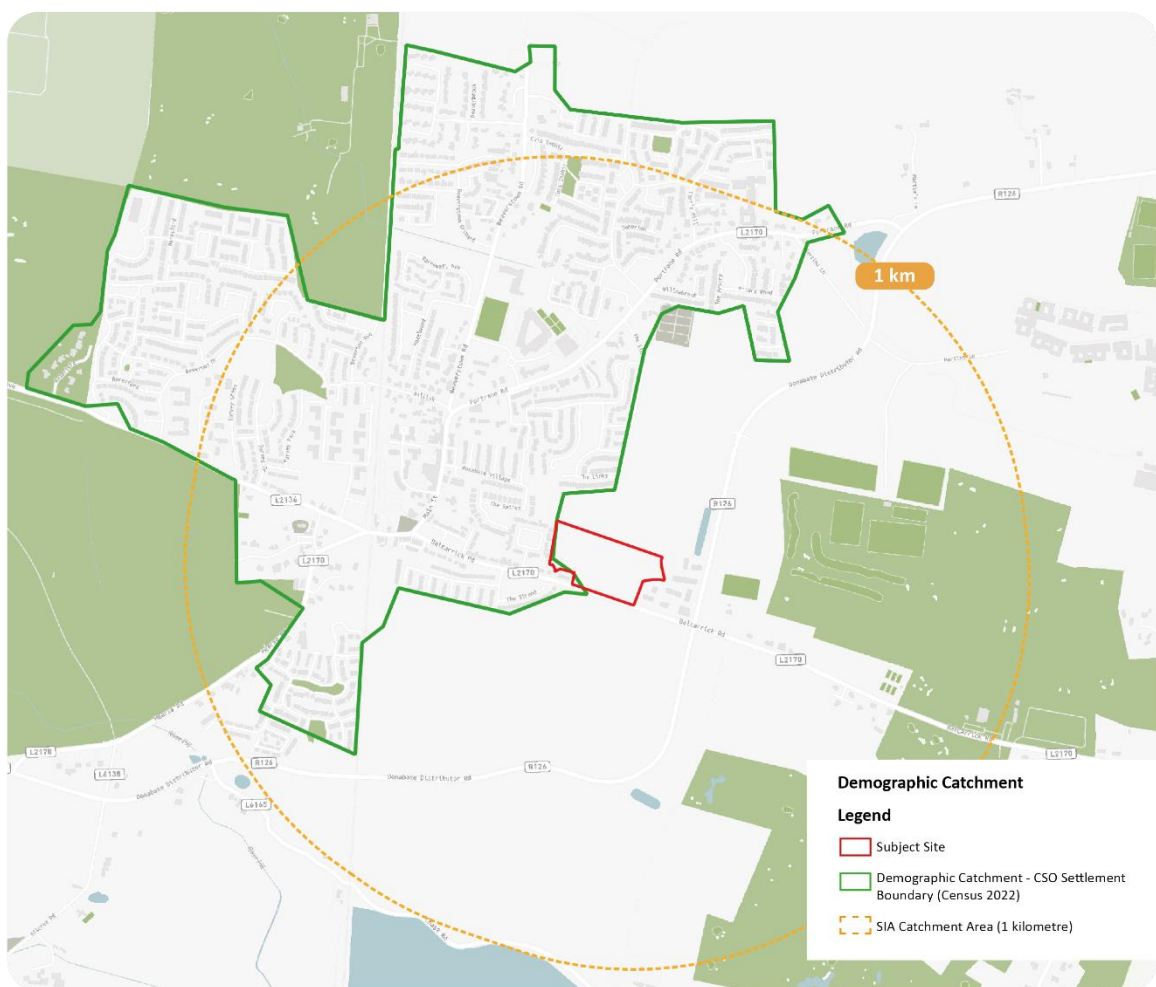
(Source: *Donabate Local Area Plan 2016*)

Each of the relevant National, Regional and Local Guidelines and Policy Documents outlined above have been consulted in the development of this Social Infrastructure Audit to review the existing capacity of community facilities within the Study Area.

### 3.0 DEMOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

The demographic profile of the area was examined using the results from the Census 2016 and 2022 (the latest available on the CSO website). The scope of the assessment is determined by overlaying the 1 km radius buffer zone over the subject site and assessing the relevant spatial unit in demographic analysis. For the subject site, given the lack of residential development and population in the area immediately surrounding the subject site, the CSO defined Settlement of Donabate boundary (as outlined in green in Figure 3.1) was selected as the statistical unit.

This Study Area provides insight into the composition of the local population and relevant demographic trends. Specifically, the study reviews the population’s age profile, educational attainment and economic status to best understand the needs of the population regarding social and community services and facilities. This Study Area (based on the CSO Settlement Area) is also compared to wider trends within Fingal County in Sections 3.1 – 3.4 to follow.



**Figure 3.1: Extent of Demographic Study Area Comprising the CSO Defined Settlement of Donabate**

(Source: CSO, 2022, and Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

### 3.1 Demographic Drivers

To fulfil the strategic priorities of Fingal County Council, it is essential that all areas have a strong sense of community, provide access to natural surroundings, and are well integrated with essential services, public amenities and open spaces. This will contribute to fostering a healthy, resilient and sustainable community. To gain insights into the specific requirements of the local residents, an in-depth examination of the demographic features of both the Study Area and the broader Fingal County has been conducted using data from the Census of 2016 and 2022. This analysis aims to identify the significant traits of the local population.

According to the 2022 Census, Ireland’s population reached 5,149,139 in April 2022 – representing growth of 8.1% from the previous Census in 2016. Fingal’s population stood at 330,506 at the time, an increase from 2016 of 11.6%, or just over 34,000 people. The County hence accounts for 6.4% of Ireland’s population, with only Dublin City and Cork City and County accounting for higher proportions. Fingal’s population is expected to continue to grow with the *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029* forecasting that the County’s population will increase by approximately 73,000 people by 2031 (+22.1% versus 2022). Between 2016 and 2022, Fingal was the third fastest growing County in Ireland, with only Longford (+14.4%) and Meath (+13.2%) growing at faster paces. Further breakdowns show that 26.7% of the Fingal population was under 18 years old in 2022, while 134,264 people (40.6%) were under 30. This compares to 28.3% of the population under 18 years old and 42.2% under 30 years old in 2016. The proportion of the population under 30 years of age in Fingal was higher than the national average, where 38% of the population was under 30. Fingal had the youngest average age in 2022 at 36.2 years, with some 63% of its population below the age of 44, compared to 58.3% nationally.

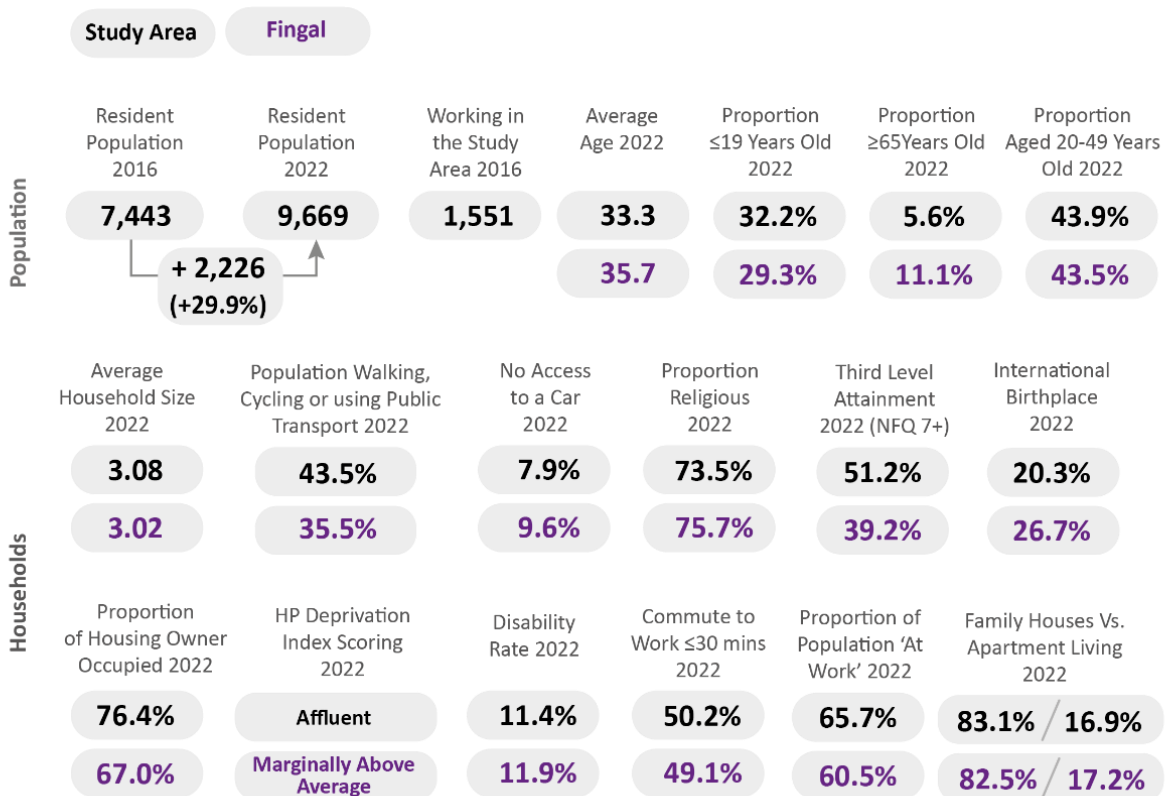
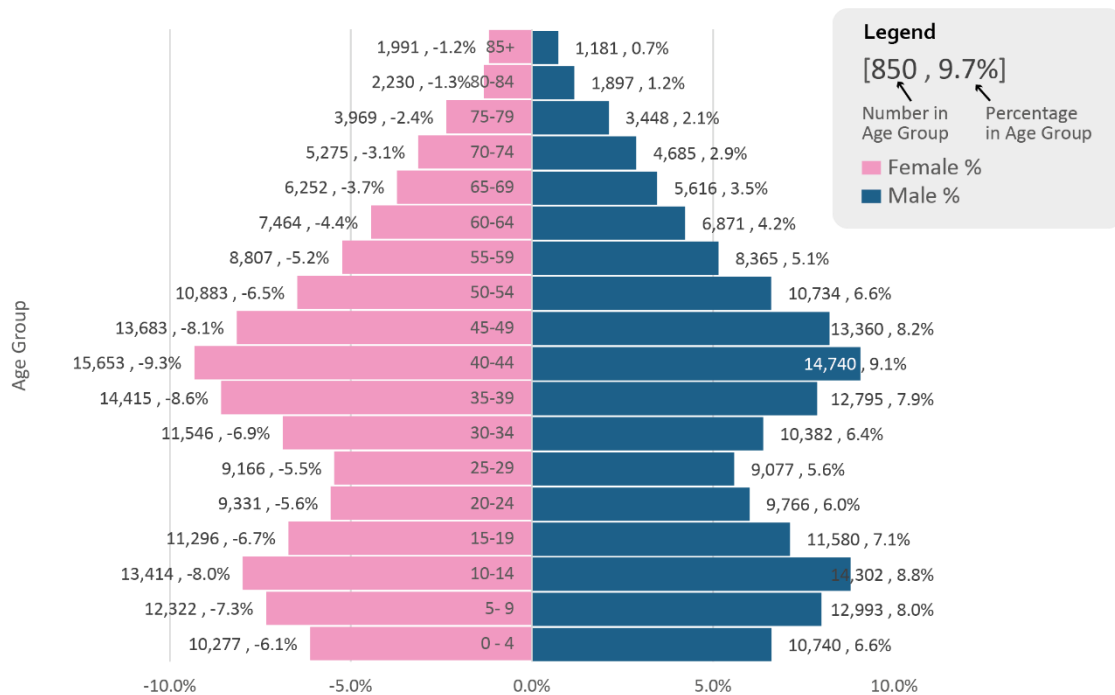


Figure 3.2: Summary Demographic Findings of Study Area and Fingal County

(Source: CSO, 2022, developed by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

Over the same period, the population within the Study Area grew at a significantly faster rate of 29.9% (2,226 No. additional persons). The analysis of the CSO data illustrates a strong representation of working age population within the 20–65 age groupings, with 62.2% of the total resident population classified within these age cohorts. The 20–49 age cohort further highlights this concentration of young professionals, with 43.9% of the total population classified in this group. The area has a low average age at 33.3 years with a lower proportion of population older age cohorts. Some 24.0% of the population is aged under 14 years old, while just 5.6% of the population are aged over 65 years old. Notably, while the proportion of population under 14 years of age has decreased in the period since 2016, the overall population under 14 years of age has increased slightly by 184 No. persons, indicating a sustained but potentially a lowering demand for schooling and childcare infrastructure into the future.



**Figure 3.3: Population of the Study Area by Age – 2022**

(Source: CSO, 2022)

While the area immediately around Donabate would not be classified as a major employer, given the proximity of the Study Area to Dublin City Centre and Dublin Airport, this increase in the population of working age is likely to continue into the future. Higher concentrations of population in younger age groups would indicate an increasing demand for facilities and services such as childcare and sport and recreation. A very lower proportion of population in older age groups indicates potential lower demand for health facilities and aged care in the Study Area.

The Study Area predominantly consists of houses with 83.1% of dwelling units in 2022 registered as such. The average household size in 2022 was 3.08 persons per household, above the average for Fingal County. Some 15.1% of all households consist of 1 No. person, with 41.1% of all households consisting of 4 No. or more persons living together.



Household Type	Study Area Households 2022	Fingal County Households 2022
1 Person Households	15.1%	4.9%
2 Person Households	23.8%	15.5%
3 Person Households	20.0%	19.5%
4 Person Households	25.5%	33.2%
5+ Person Households	15.6%	26.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 3.1: Persons Per Household in the Study Area and Fingal County – 2022**

(Source: CSO, 2022)

Compositional data indicates that 79.3% of all households have children, with a further 18.3% of all households consisting of either a 'single' person, or 'non-related' persons living in Group Accommodation (Shared). Taken collectively, the data suggests that the unit typology of the catchment area are persons living in family houses, predominantly in the pre-family stage, or families with children.

The economic profile, based on Census 2022, suggests a relatively young population within the active workforce age bracket, with a higher percentage at work, and lower retired and student percentages. The majority of the population over 15 years of age are categorised as 'At Work' in 2016 (65.7%). The percentage of people unemployed in the area is lower (4.3%) than Fingal County (5.1%). The number of people retired in the Study Area is lower (7.6%) than Fingal County (12.6%). The percentage of students (14.0%) in the Study Area is higher than the percentage of students in Fingal County (11.5%).

When reviewing the levels of educational attainment, the largest proportion of residents had completed 'Third Level' education (48.7%) in 2022. This is higher than the levels of educational attainment in Fingal County, with 43.2% of the population having completed 'Third Level' education, and is significantly higher than the national average. It should be noted that a further 21.3% of the population have also completed 'Post-Graduate Education or Higher' at the time of the Census, compared to 14.7% in Fingal County, and just 2.3% were recorded as having 'No Formal Education'. Taken together, these figures indicate an extremely well educated population in the Study Area, which surpasses attainment in the wider county and nationally.

Education Level	Study Area	% of Total	Fingal County	% of Total
No Formal Education	64	1.1%	3,368	1.7%
Primary Education	155	2.7%	9,576	4.7%
Secondary Education	1,373	23.8%	58,791	29.0%
Third Level Education (Any Level)	2,808	48.7%	87,485	43.2%
Postgraduate or Higher	1,228	21.3%	29,725	14.7%
Not Stated	134	2.3%	13,685	6.8%
Total	5,762	100.0%	202,630	100.0%

**Table 3.2: Population Aged 15+ Years by Highest Level of Education Completed**

(Source: CSO, 2022)

The purpose of an affluence and deprivation index is to assess social conditions using a single indicator. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index (2022) is used by public bodies across Ireland to identify potentially disadvantaged communities and target investment/policy to improve the quality of life and access to opportunities for those living in them. The subject site is located in an area (based on Small Areas) that is classified as 'Affluent' indicating that the area is very prosperous with higher than average educational attainment, low unemployment, low age dependency, lower rates of disability, etc. relative to other parts of the country.

Within the Study Area, just 23.3% of the population identify as 'Not Religious' with the remaining 73.5%<sup>1</sup> identifying as religious and likely have some need for religious place of worship. Equally, ensuring there is adequate SI to help diverse communities feel included and empowered is critical. The Study Area has a comparably large international community with 20.3% of the local population born outside of Ireland.

Some 43.5% of people rely on green modes of transport for daily activities, with 'Bike' (2.4%), 'Walking' (18.2%), and 'Public Transport' (17.8%) making up a large portion of transportation. Daily commuting patterns show 50.2% of trips to work/school are under 30 minutes, with just 14.7% indicating a travel time of over an hour. Trips by 'Private Car (Driver or Passenger)' constitute a comparably lower 40.2% of all daily movements.

The daytime population of the Study Area was registered at 4,452 No. persons in 2016. This refers to those persons that are typically located within the area during the daytime hours for school, work or living and not leaving for work. Some 1,551 No. persons are employed within the Study Area, classifying it a smaller employment destination in Fingal County. Those working in the area largely do so in either 'wholesale, retail trade' (41.0%), or 'education, human health and social work activities' (16.4%).

### 3.2 Summary

The majority of the population in the catchment of the Study Area are living in lower density family housing estates. They are more likely to live in owner-occupied family houses, rather than private or socially renting, than recorded nationally. Population in the catchment has grown significantly over the past 6 years by 2,226 No. persons, largely living within the 764 No. new units recorded as completed since 2016. The population has a comparably high ethnic diversity, with an above average number of residents from India, EU accession countries and countries outside of Europe, aligning with a lower than average proportion of persons stating their country of birth as Ireland.

The population of the Study Area is characterised by a young population within the active workforce age bracket, and a large minority are young families with children. Jobs in the catchment reflect the major employers in the area (schools and retail) requiring a mix of lower skilled residents and those with higher educational attainment. The resident population of the catchment is very highly educated with a plurality commuting outside of Donabate to Dublin City for employment. The area is classified as 'Affluent' in terms of affluence and deprivation, signifying high average rates of educational attainment, employment, within stable family structures, and usually indicates higher disposable income, demand for social infrastructure, but also greater social mobility and means to travel.

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<sup>1</sup> 3.1% of the population did not state their religion in 2022, which constitutes the remaining percentage value.

The demographic assessment indicates that a higher proportion of community facilities may be required for the working population and families with school-aged children in this area than other demographic groups.

#### 4.0 FACILITIES AUDIT

As stated previously, the subject site, measuring 4.72 Ha, is situated to the southeast of Donabate Town. Donabate itself is positioned approximately 18 km north of Dublin City Centre and approximately 10 km north of Dublin Airport. Bounded by Rogerstown Estuary to the north and Malahide Estuary to the south, the Donabate Peninsula also features the village of Portrane to the east. The subject site benefits from very good accessibility with its close proximity to the M1 Motorway and Irish Rail corridor. Main Street Bus Stop (No. 82971) is located within a c. 600 metres walking distance of the site (c. 8 minute walk time) which provides high-quality local bus transportation.

The Study Area for this assessment is defined by a 1 km radius of the subject site, equivalent to a c. 12- to 14-minute walking distance, which is considered accessible to future residents of the proposed development. A distance of 1 km has also been defined by Fingal County Council within the *Development Plan* as the development standard for future Community and Social Audits. Given the proximity of the subject site to the settlement of Donabate, an additional indicative catchment of 2 km has been included in the study to capture, survey and include relevant infrastructure that lies tangent to, or immediately outside of this Study Area.

The survey identified a large range of community facilities within the Study Area. A total of 7 No. categories of facilities that align with the Policies set out in the *Development Plan* were utilised for this Audit. Some 38 No. social infrastructure facilities were identified as part of this Audit within a radius of 1 km of the subject site, with that figure increasing to 70 No. social infrastructure facilities located within 2 km of the subject site.

Category	Facility Type
<b>Education and Training Services</b>	Primary, Post-Primary, Third Level, Further Education, Other Lifelong Training Centres
<b>Childcare Facilities</b>	Registered Childcare Facilities Incl. Full Day, Part-Time and Sessional Services
<b>Social, Community and Cultural Facilities</b>	Community Centres, Libraries, Senior and Youth Centres, Post Offices, Banks and Credit Unions, Museums, Galleries, Theatres, Cinemas, Music Venues, Historical Cultural Sites
<b>Healthcare and Emergency Services</b>	Hospitals, Health Centres, Primary Care Centres, Doctors and Specialty Clinics, Dental, Physiotherapy, Counselling, Optician, Pharmacy, Garda Stations, Fire Stations
<b>Open Space and Recreation</b>	Parks, Playing Pitches, Playgrounds, Sports Centres and Clubs, Leisure Centres, Gyms and Training Facilities, Swimming Pools
<b>Religious Institutions</b>	Areas of Worship, Churches, Cemeteries
<b>Retail Centres and Services</b>	Convenience Retailing, Other Relevant Retail

**Table 4.1: Community Infrastructure Categories Applied to Audit**

(Source: Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)





**Figure 4.1: Principal Study Area**

(Source: Bing Maps, Annotated By Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

#### 4.1 Education Facilities

A Schools Demand Assessment has been carried out to examine the capacity of existing primary and post-primary school facilities located in the vicinity of the subject site, alongside the demographic demands, to understand the direction of demand and the resulting need for additional schooling infrastructure in the future.

A methodology for the assessment of educational facilities and schools has been developed in accordance with the directions provided in planning policy, and it involves the following steps:

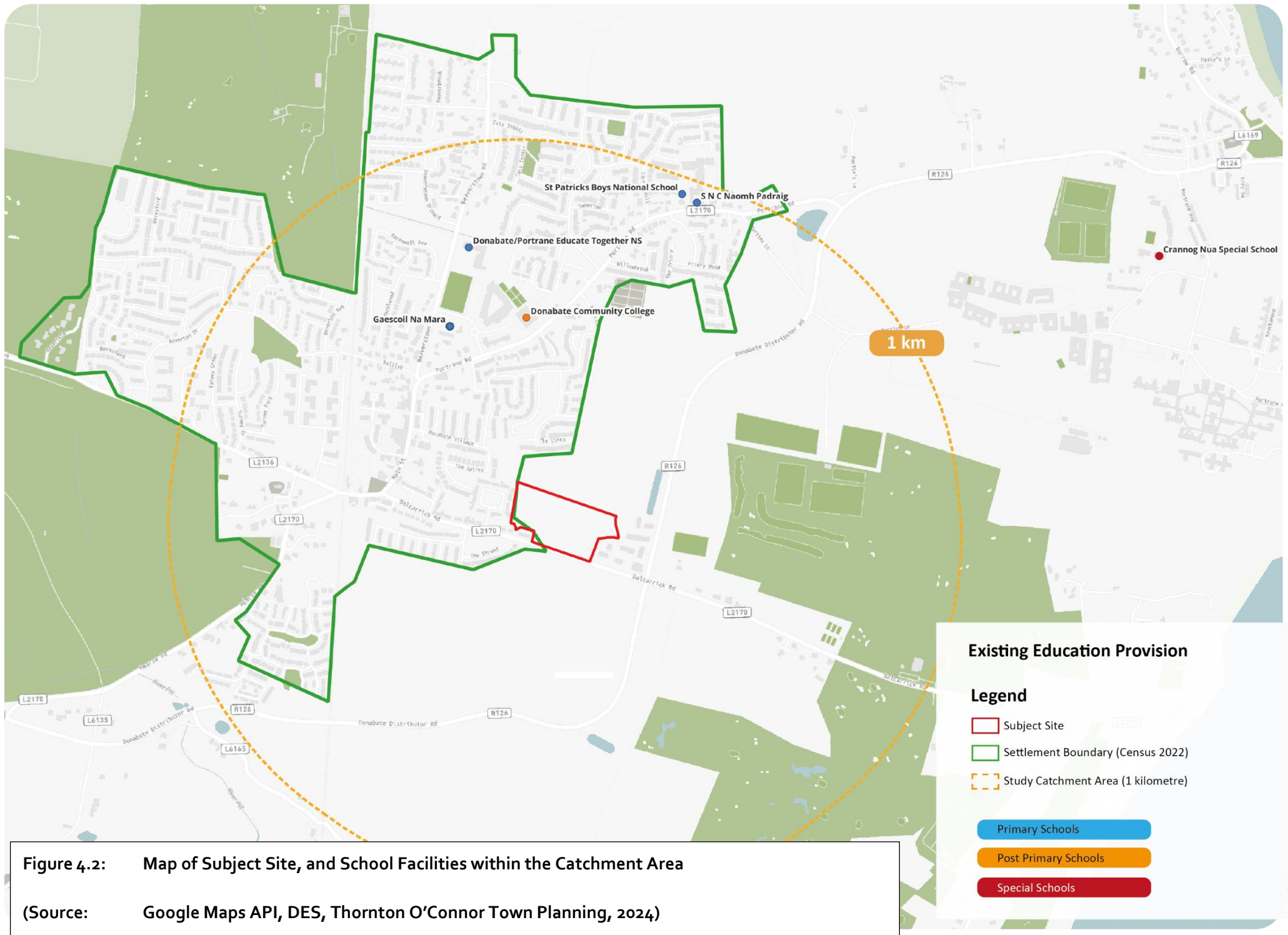
1. Defining a Study Area using relevant spatial jurisdictions;
2. A demographic and socio-economic evaluation of the composition of population within the Study Area;
3. Determining the extent and provision of existing educational facilities and schools within the Study Area; and
4. Estimating the level of demand for schools that may arise from the development proposal.

In accordance with current guidelines, the following Section provides an examination of local need for educational facilities at the subject site and its wider surroundings. Accordingly, the latest data was obtained from the Department of Education and Skills, Primary Online Database (POD)<sup>2</sup> and the National School Census, for existing educational facilities in the locality. Reporting also provides detail on the current and future capacity of existing and planned schools in the area. The aim of this assessment is to establish projected demand for school places within the existing schools network generated by the proposed development.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Education and Skills – National School Annual Census for 2023/2024, which is returned via the Primary Online Database (POD). This includes both the Census and the Special School Annual Census. Only schools aided by the Department of Education and Skills are included in this list. Data was published June 2023.





**Figure 4.2: Map of Subject Site, and School Facilities within the Catchment Area**

(Source: Google Maps API, DES, Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

**Existing Education Provision**

**Legend**

- Subject Site
- Settlement Boundary (Census 2022)
- Study Catchment Area (1 kilometre)
- Primary Schools
- Post Primary Schools
- Special Schools

### 4.1.1 Primary Schools

The 4 No. existing primary schools identified within Donabate held a combined provisional enrolment of 1,256 No. students during the 2023/2024 school year as per the Department of Education and Skills (DES) records. Some 2 No. of the schools identified are co-educational (mixed) schools. The primary school that is located nearest to the subject site (Gaelscoil Na Mara National School – identified in blue in Table 4.2) is a newly formed school with significant capacity to grow, and held a co-educational enrolment of 76 No. students in 2023/2024.

Supplementary to the enrolment information acquired from the DES, a review of the schools’ websites and the 2024/2025 Schools’ Admission Notice was carried out in March 2024 by Thornton O’Connor Town Planning to ensure that available spaces in classes are captured in this Audit. Table 4.2 provides a detailed breakdown of this available capacity per school. As per Section 63 of the *Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018*<sup>3</sup>, schools are required to publish an Annual Admissions Notice each year with key information about the annual admissions process.

This review helped determine the trend in schools for admitting students into the classes each year. For the 2024/2025 academic year, the Admissions Notices for primary schools indicated a total enrolment capacity of 193 No. students in the catchment (186 No. spaces for Junior Infants, and 7 No. spaces for Other Years). These 193 No. places refer to the places made available each academic cycle resulting from graduating students, rather than any additional capacity to the overall schooling infrastructure. Where schools have not provided sufficient information on their intake for the next academic year, these have been assumed to be zero.

No.	Roll No.	School Name	Distance from Site (km)	Females	Males	2023-2024 Enrolment	Available Capacity per School Websites (2024/2025)		
							Junior Infants	Other Years	Total
1	16267G	St Patricks Boys National School	1.3 km	0	371	371	54	0	54
2	18412W	S N C Naomh Padraig	1.2 km	389	0	389	56	0	56
3	20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Together National School	1.0 km	197	223	420	50	7	57
4	20530R	Gaelscoil Na Mara	0.9 km	26	50	76	26	0	26
<b>Total</b>				<b>614</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>1,256</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>193</b>

*\*Note: Where there was no information on the number of spaces made available, we have assumed that the capacity is 0.*

**Table 4.2: Recorded Enrolments for Primary Schools**

(Source: DES, 2023, and Individual School Admission Notices, 2024)

Table 4.3 below provides information on each of the primary schools, inclusive of their enrolment numbers for the previous 5 No. academic years (2019–2020 to 2023–2024). The overall enrolment figure associated with the 4 No. primary schools within the catchment has moderately decreased over the past 5 No. years (108 No. fewer children, -8.2%), but has remained stable despite the rapid population increase in the town. Gaelscoil Na Mara National School (identified in blue in Table 4.3), which formed in 2020–2021, has 76 No. students in the 2023–2024 academic year. This school has enough capacity to grow with increases in the population of the area well into the future, and would indicate that there is significant available capacity within the existing primary schools.

<sup>3</sup> Section 62 of this Act requires that, from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020, Boards of Management have 3 No. months to revise their Admission Policies in line with the commenced provisions of the Act.



School	Roll No.	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
St Patricks Boys National School	16267G	394	398	378	365	371
S N C Naomh Pdraig	18412W	437	435	405	402	389
Donabate/Portrane Educate Together National School	20161M	454	444	447	429	420
Gaelscoil Na Mara	20530R	-	12	29	53	76
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,285</b>	<b>1,277</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>1,196</b>	<b>1,180</b>

**Table 4.3: Existing Primary Schools: Enrolment Figures 2019–2020 to 2023–2024**

(Source: DES, 2023)

There is also 1 No. additional special education school located within the area (Table 4.4), that held an enrolment of 6 No. students in the 2023–2024 academic year. It was not possible to determine the enrolment capacity in the 2024–2025 academic year from Admissions Notices, but given that historically the school can support 33% more children, it's likely that additional capacity may exist for the upcoming year.

No.	Roll No.	School Name	Females	Males	2023–2024 Enrolment	Available Capacity per School Websites (2024/25)
1	20136N	Crannog Nua Special School	4	2	6	-
<b>Total</b>					<b>6</b>	<b>No Data</b>

**Table 4.4: Recorded Enrolments for Special Education School**

(Source: DES, 2023, and Individual School Admission Notices, 2024)

Table 4.5 indicates that the enrolment figures for the special education school in the area have remained generally consistent from the 2018–2019 academic year to the 2022–2023 academic year, although the total enrolment reduced to 6 No. students in the latest academic year from 9 No. students in the previous year.

School	Roll No.	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024
Crannog Nua Special School	18936K	5	8	9	6	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

**Table 4.5: Existing Special Education School: Enrolment Figures 2019–2020 to 2023–2024**

(Source: DES, 2023)

In addition to the special education school located within the catchment, there are 2 No. special needs education schools in the vicinity of Donabate. They include:

- Foxfield Special School, Swords, Co. Dublin (5 km distance) – a multi-denominational, co-educational school for children with a dual diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and a moderate general learning disability, and
- St Michaels House, Hacketstown, Co. Dublin (9 km distance) – a facility which provides a comprehensive range of services and supports to men, women, and children with intellectual disabilities and their families in 170 No. locations in the Greater Dublin Area. It supports c. 2,300 No. people and this has an impact on thousands of family members. St. Michael's House is a company funded by the HSE, TUSLA and the Department of Education and Skills.

#### 4.1.2 Post-Primary Schools

There was 1 No. post-primary school identified within Donabate which held a co-educational enrolment of 810 No. students during the 2023–2024 school year, as per the Department of Education and Skills (DES) records. The post-primary school, Donabate Community College, is a mixed/co-educational school located in the centre of the settlement.

Supplementary to the enrolment information acquired from the DES, a review of the schools' website and the 2024/2025 Schools' Admission Notice was carried out in March 2024 by Thornton O'Connor Town Planning to ensure that available spaces in classes are captured in this Audit. Table 4.6 provides a detailed breakdown of this available capacity. As per Section 63 of the *Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018*, schools are required to publish an Annual Admissions Notice each year with key information about the annual admissions process.

This review helped determine the trend in the school for admitting students into the classes each year. For the 2024/2025 academic year, the Admissions Notice for the post-primary school indicated a total enrolment capacity of 156 No. students (144 No. spaces for First Years, and 12 No. spaces for Other Years). These 156 No. places refer to the places made available each academic cycle resulting from graduating students, rather than any additional capacity to the overall schooling infrastructure.

No.	Roll No.	School Name	Distance from Site (km)	Females	Males	2023–2024 Enrolment	Available Capacity per School Websites (2024/25)		
							First Years	Other Years	Total
1	76104O	Donabate Community College	0.9 km	349	461	810	144	12	156
<b>Total</b>				349	461	810	144	12	156

**Table 4.6: Recorded Enrolments for Post-Primary School**

(Source: DES, 2023, and Individual School Admission Notice, 2024)

Table 4.7 provides an overview of the post-primary school within the catchment, inclusive of their enrolment numbers according to data published by the DES for the academic years 2019–2020 to 2023–2024. As highlighted in Table 4.7, the overall enrolment figure associated with the 1 No. post-primary school in the catchment area has increased during this period from 762 No. to 810 No. pupils; 48 No. additional pupils (6.3%). This indicates recent growth in demand for post-primary school infrastructure within the catchment.

School	Roll No.	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Donabate Community College	76104O	762	764	804	837	810
<b>Total</b>		762	764	804	837	810

**Table 4.7: Existing Post-Primary School: Enrolment Figures 2019–2020 to 2023–2024**

(Source: DES, 2023)

##### 4.1.2.1 Historic Enrolment Statistics

Historic enrolment trends for the catchment show increases at post-primary school level for the historic 5-year interval, with an overall increase of 48 No. students (c. 6.3% increase) from

2019/2020 to 2023/2024. Over the past 10 No. years, Donabate Community College has experienced growth in student numbers of 78 No. additional students or 10.7%. The analysis of student population growth over the past 10 No. years indicates a continued demand for additional post-primary school places within the town, although the rate of growth has not increased over the 10-year period.

Catchment		Enrolment Year			Historic Change	
Roll No.	School Name	13/14	19/20	23/24	5-year	10-year
761040	Donabate Community College	732	762	810	48	78
<b>Total</b>		<b>732</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>78</b>

**Table 4.8: Historic Change in Enrolment (Post-Primary) in Recent 5- and 10-year Period**

(Source: DES, 2023)

There are also 2 No. neighbouring post-primary schools within 5 km of the subject site, both of which are mixed schools:

- St. Josephs Secondary School, Convent Lane, Rush, Co. Dublin; and
- Lusk Community College, Rathmore Road, Lusk, Co. Dublin.

### 4.1.3 Future Demand Analysis

#### 4.1.3.1 Demographic Growth Projection

In November 2021, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) reported that enrolment figures for primary schools in Ireland were likely to have reached peak levels in 2019, and will fall gradually to a low point in 2033 (see Figure 4.3), in line with revised migration and fertility assumptions for the country as a whole. The latest statistical release<sup>4</sup> by the DES in this respect states:

*"Enrolments in primary schools in Ireland in 2020 stood at 561,411 down by almost 6,000 on 2019 (567,716). Enrolments are now projected to fall over the coming years under all scenarios, and under the M1F2<sup>5</sup> scenario will reach a low point of 440,551 by 2033. This is 120,860 lower than today's figure. Enrolments will rise again thereafter and are projected to stand at 474,888 by 2040, a rise of some 34,300 over the seven years 2033 to 2040."*

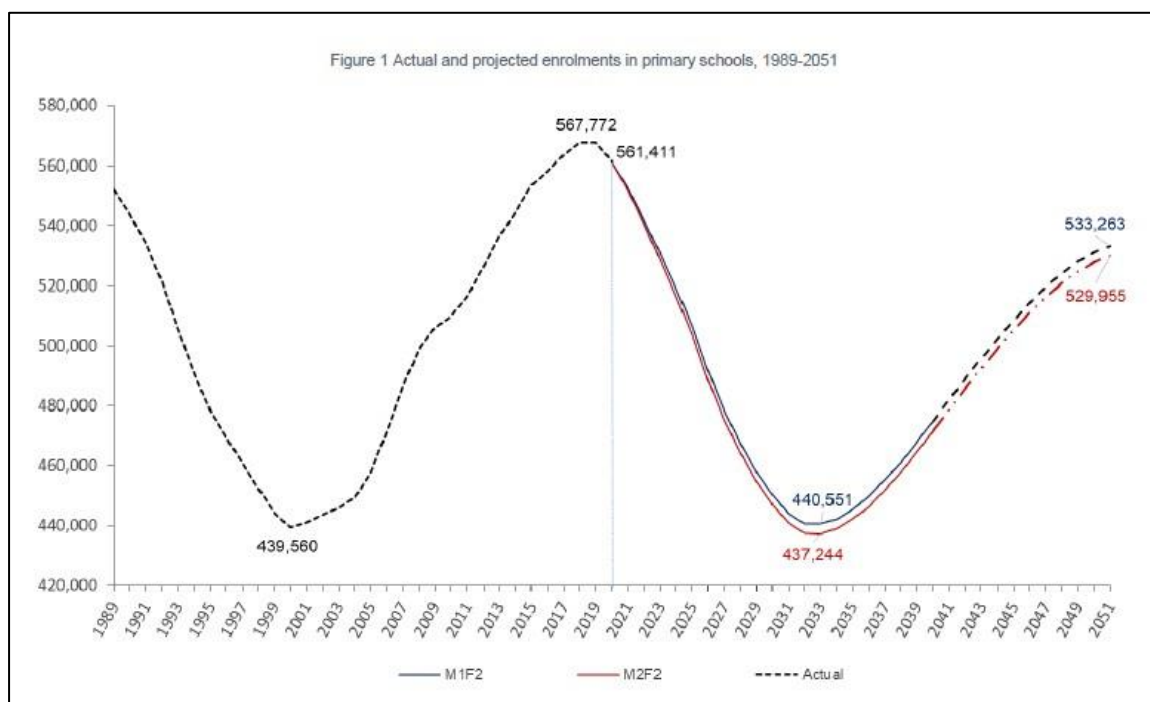
The study also concluded that post-primary school enrolments, however, will continue to rise in the short-term and will likely reach peak enrolment levels in 2024 (see Figure 4.4). The DES Report<sup>6</sup> states:

*"Enrolments in post-primary schools have risen by 26,923 (8%) over the past five years and are projected to continue rising over the short term. Under M1F2 they are projected to peak in 2024 with 408,794 pupils, some 29,610 higher than in 2020."*

<sup>4</sup> Source: *Projections of Full-Time Enrolment: Primary and Second Level, 2021–2040* (DES, November 2021), pg. 6.

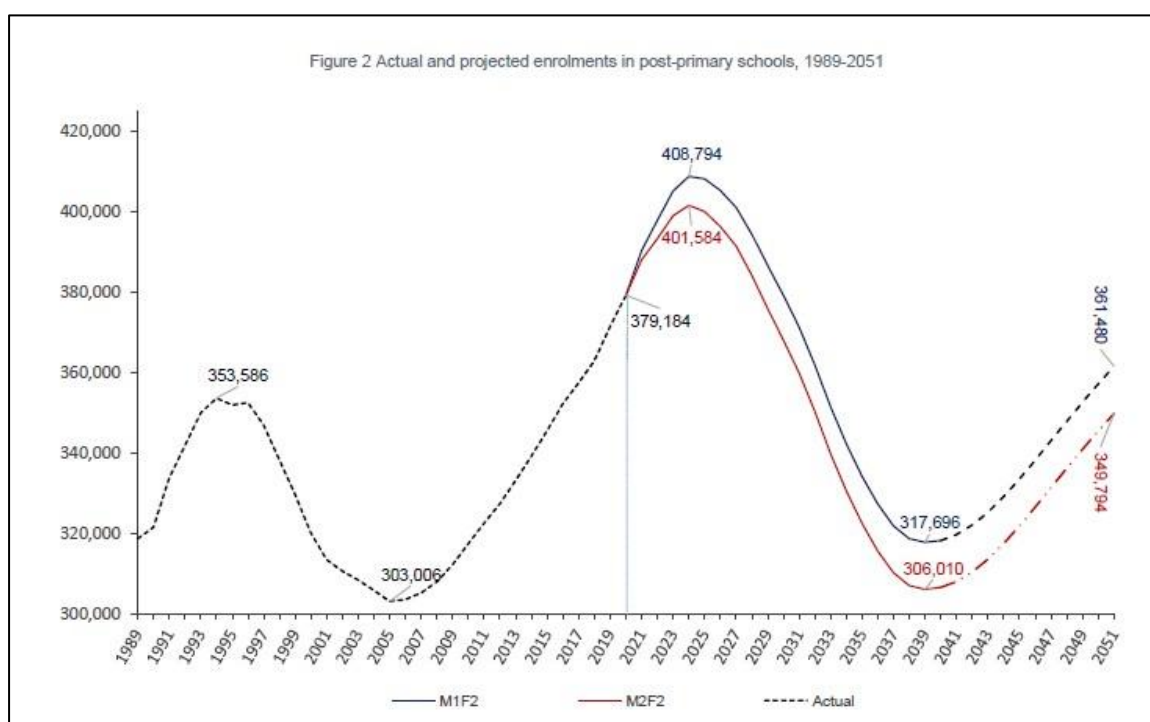
<sup>5</sup> The CSO's Regional Population Projections utilise six variant scenarios with relative assumptions in relation to regional fertility, mortality trends and external migration from and to each region. The Department of Education and Skills anticipates that M1F2 is the most likely scenario regarding migration and fertility, which encompasses the assumption of high migration and low fertility falling from 1.8 to 1.6 by 2031.

<sup>6</sup> Source: *Projections of Full-Time Enrolment: Primary and Second Level, 2021–2040* (DES, November 2021), pg. 11.



**Figure 4.4: Actual and Projected Enrolments in Primary Schools, 1989–2051, Organised by Growth Projection Scenarios Created by the CSO**

(Source: DES, 2021)



**Figure 4.5: Actual and Projected Enrolments in Post-Primary Schools, 1989–2051, Organised by Growth Projection Scenarios Created by the CSO**

(Source: DES, 2021)



#### 4.1.3.2 Potential Impact on Catchment Schools

Using the projected enrolment figures<sup>7</sup> for the Dublin Region, as set out in the Department of Education and Skills' *Projections for Full-Time Enrolment: Primary and Second Level, 2021–2040*, the study can extrapolate future enrolment for the 2027/2028 academic year for Donabate. The 2027/2028 academic year has been selected in this study as the year the proposed development should be completed and occupied. The Report projects the enrolment figures in primary schools within the Dublin Region to drop by 8.9% between the academic years 2023/2024 and 2027/2028 (4 year period). Applying this future projection figure to the current enrolment figures within Donabate it is estimated that enrolments in the 4 No. primary schools identified in the Assessment are set to reduce by 105 No. spaces by the 2027/2028 academic year.

At the post-primary level, the Report projects the enrolment figures to increase marginally by 4.6% between the 4 academic years from 2023/2024 to 2027/2028. This would result in an increase of 37 No. children in the 1 No. post-primary school identified within the catchment by the 2027/2028 academic year. We note that the indicative change figures provided are an estimate of potential enrolments is based on the regional population projections included in the DES Report<sup>8</sup> and do not represent localised values.

Catchment	Enrolment Year		% Change Estimate	Change
	23/24	27/28		
Primary Schools (4 No.)	1,180	1,075	-8.9% Decrease	-105
Post-Primary Schools (1 No.)	810	847	+4.6% Increase	+37

**Table 4.9: Projected Enrolment Trends – 2023 to 2028**

(Source: DES, 2023)

#### 4.1.3.3 Projected Demand Generated by Proposed Development

The proposed development will comprise 175 No. units of various typologies. In line with National Guidelines, one-bedroom units within the proposed development have been discounted in estimating the total number of minors (children aged 0–4 years) and school going children (5–18 years) expected to reside within the development. Thus, in the case of the proposed development, 149 No. units have been included. The average household size in the Study Area recorded by the 2022 Census was 3.08 No. persons per household, which generates a total indicative population of 459 No. persons when applied to the proposed development.

The average number of children per family recorded in the State in Census 2022 was 1.34 No. children<sup>9</sup>, which generates an indicative population of 206 No. children (between the ages of 0–18 years) when applied to the number of units that can accommodate families within the proposed development. Of this figure, an estimated 159 No. children would be considered school age (including 94 No. primary school children and 65 No. post-primary school children), as per the age cohorts recorded for Fingal<sup>10</sup> in the Census 2022 (Table 4.10).

<sup>7</sup> Source: *Projections of Full-Time Enrolment: Primary and Second Level, 2021–2040* (DES, 2021), Table 4.

<sup>8</sup> Source: *Projections of Full-Time Enrolment: Primary and Second Level, 2021–2040* (DES, 2021), Table 7.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp3/censusofpopulation2022profile3-householdsfamiliesandchildcare/>

<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=E3003&PLanguage=0>

Age Group	Pre-School Children (0–4 years)	Primary School Children (5–12 years)	Post-Primary School Children (13–18 years)	All Children (0–18 years)
Fingal 2022 Population	21,017	42,248	29,301	92,566
% of Total Cohort	22.70%	45.64%	31.65%	100.00%

**Table 4.10: Breakdown of 0–18 Year Age Cohort for Fingal County Council**

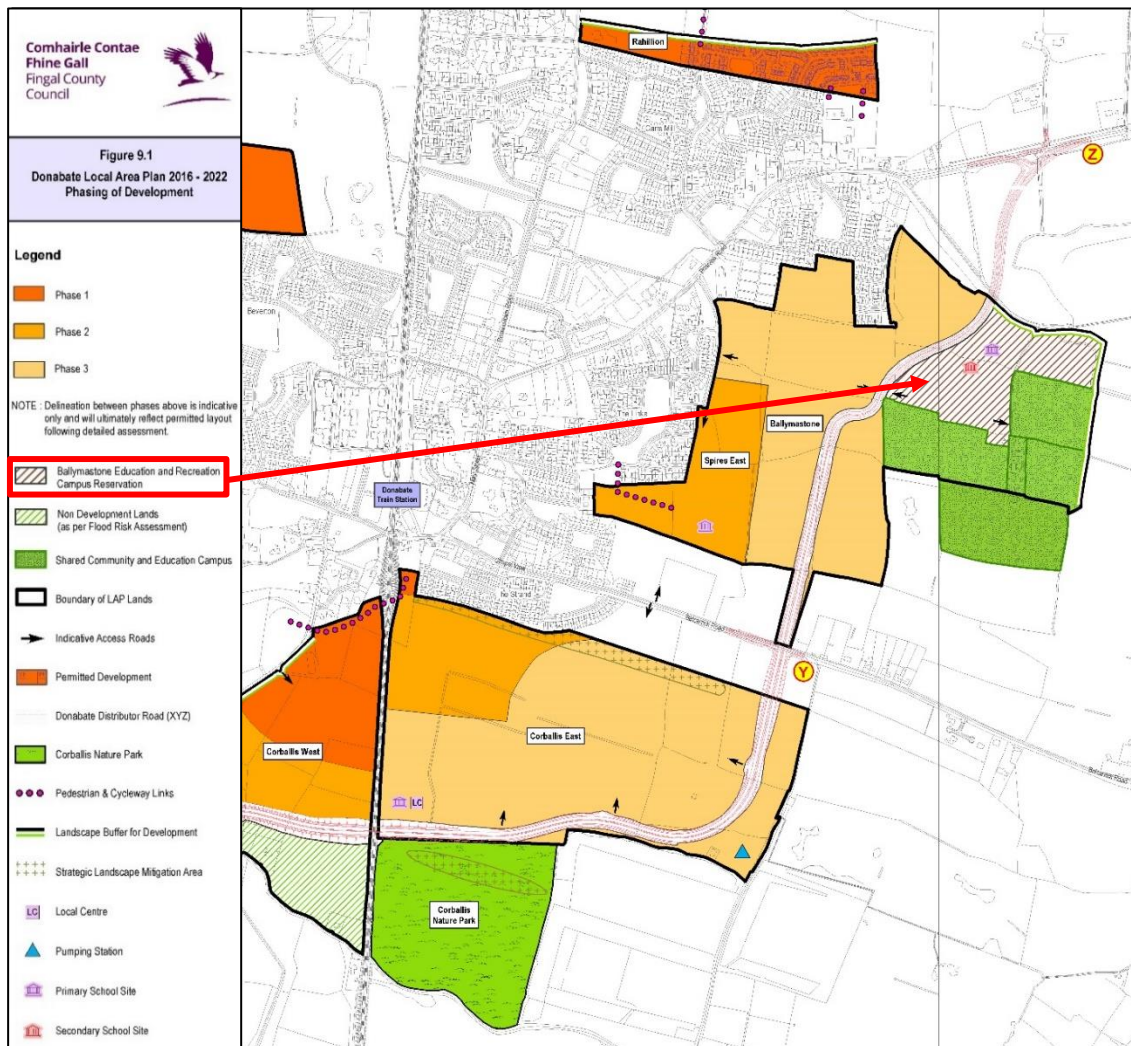
(Source: CSO, 2022)

Having regard to the foregoing, the development has the potential to generate an additional 459 No. persons within the area, including an estimated 159 No. school-going children (including 94 No. primary school children and 65 No. post-primary school children), when fully occupied.

#### 4.1.4 Completed and Planned Infrastructure

In respect of future provision, the DES made a commitment to deliver 40 No. new schools between 2019 and 2022, of which 1 No. primary school was proposed for Donabate. As noted above, Gaelscoil Na Mara (to comprise 16 No. additional classrooms) recently opened in September 2020, and in the last academic year (2023/2024) had 76 No. pupils enrolled. The *Donabate Local Area Plan 2016* ('LAP') notes that educational infrastructure will need to be improved in order to meet future population demand. The *LAP* notes that 3 No. primary school sites and 1 No. post-primary school site have been designated to meet the needs of future residents.

Figure 4.6 highlights the location of each of the proposed school sites. A primary school site is proposed adjacent the subject site in the Ballymastone area. A further site is designated within the Ballymastone area, with the school to the north designated as a part of the Recreation and Education Campus. This Campus is also suitable for the provision of a post-primary school. A third school is located near the subject site to the southwest in Corballis East – east of the railway line. Whilst information on the size and capacity of the future schools is not currently available, it is envisaged that these schools will contribute significantly to school provision for the future residents of the proposed development and the wider community of Donabate.



**Figure 4.6: Proposed School Site Locations in Donabate**

(Source: *Donabate Local Area Plan 2016*)

#### 4.1.5 Conclusion

There are 4 No. existing primary schools, 1 No. existing post-primary school and 1 No. existing special education school in the catchment area, to which the subject site belongs. These facilities cater to a student population of 1,180 No. primary school students and 810 No. post-primary school students and have demonstrated different levels of growth in the recent 5-year period, with primary school enrolments decreasing by 8.2% and post-primary school enrolments increasing by 6.3% over the same period.

With respect to future enrolments, it is noted that a c. 8.9% decrease in primary school enrolments and a c. 4.6% increase in post-primary school enrolments is anticipated between the academic years 2023/2024 and 2027/2028, but will fall gradually to a low point by 2039 (Figure 4.5), with respect to the most recent regional population projections published by the DES. **The visible decline in enrolments at primary school level is in line with government demographic projections, and is expected to continue to 2033. Post-primary school enrolments are projected to peak in 2024/2025, and it is thus likely that Fingal will see a significant reduction in the need for places into the remainder of the decade.**

The *Donabate Local Area Plan 2016* has identified sites for 3 No. primary schools and 1 No. post primary school to meet the needs of future residents. The additional capacity being provided by all of these projects is being considered in the context of the projected future requirements in the area. Moreover, the planned infrastructure for Fingal has already been specifically earmarked as a result of the demographic modelling carried out by the DES across various national, regional and local levels to cater for demand over the next 20 No. years.

Admissions Notices from schools within the catchment indicate a healthy combined total of **349 No. spaces available** for incoming Junior Infants/First Years, of which 193 No. spaces are available in primary schools and 156 No. spaces are available in post-primary schools.

The development has the potential to generate an additional 459 No. persons within the area, including an estimated **159 No. school-going children (including 94 No. primary school children and 65 No. post-primary school children)**, when fully occupied. It is our professional opinion that the potential school demand generated by the proposed development can be absorbed by the available capacity, alongside the significant planned capacity.



## 4.2 Childcare

This Assessment identifies 11 No. TUSLA registered childcare facilities within a 1 – 1.5 km radius of the subject site, and illustrates their maximum potential capacities based on the latest TUSLA inspection data, and their levels of accessibility with respect to walkable distances from the subject site. These facilities were reported as having a combined total capacity of 307 No. childcare places at the time of the survey (March 2024). The demographic profile of this area provided in Section 3.0 also provides a baseline for understanding the pre-school age population and the emerging demand for childcare facilities in the area.

As part of the data discovery process, each of the relevant TUSLA childcare facilities were contacted via email to gather information on enrolment and vacancy in March 2024. We also note that the Fingal Childcare Committee was consulted in the course of this Assessment but was not able to provide any recent childcare capacity analysis for the Study Area at the time of the consultation. As a result, an independent audit of services has been conducted.

As stated previously in Section 2.0, the *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)* recommend that a crèche or childcare facility with capacity for 20 No. children should generally be provided for every 75 No. dwellings within new residential developments. However, both the Guidelines and Fingal County Council further advise that regard should be had to existing childcare provision when considering the delivery of new facilities as part of residential development in order to avoid overprovision.

This Assessment aims to determine what the nature of local supply and demand is within the catchment, in parallel with the estimation of 0–6-year-old residents that may reside in the proposed development. The total number of units in the development which are included in this estimation amounts to 149 No. In order to calculate the number of 0–6-year-old residents in the proposed development, the study utilises 3 No. key number of indicators:

1. The proposed unit mix of the development;
2. Persons per unit proposed (this is calculated by using the average household size within the Study Area, established as 3.08 No. persons per unit<sup>11</sup> using the Census 2022); and
3. Proportion of the Study Area's population within the 0–6 years age cohort (determined as 11.08% using Census 2022 data).

Analysis of these factors allows for a determination of the total number of 0–6-year-old residents in the proposed development. As highlighted in Table 4.11, it is estimated that 51 No. children aged 0–6 years may reside in the proposed development (rounded from 50.8).

Description	No.	Value	Method
Units in Proposed Development <sup>12</sup>	a	149	a
Average Household Size	b	3.08	b
Potential Residents (Number)	c	459	a * b = c
0–6 Years (% of Total Population)	d	11.08%	d
Potential 0–6 Years (Number)	e	50.8	d * c = e

**Table 4.11: Estimation of Children Aged 0–6 Years in the Proposed Development**

(Source: Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

<sup>11</sup> CSO statistics record a total of 9,718 No. residents in 3,157 No. households within the catchment in 2022.

<sup>12</sup> In line with Policy, a figure of 149 No. units was used in the calculations, discounting those units with only 1-bedroom.

#### 4.2.1 Estimated Childcare Demand Generated

In 2023, the Central Statistics Office, as part of the latest Census release, provided a detailed statistical module<sup>13</sup> on the rates of take-up for childcare at a national and county level for 2022. This analysis highlighted that almost one-third (331,783) of children under the age of 15 in the State were in some form of formal childcare. This release is relevant for this Assessment as it indicates the extent to which childcare facilities are utilised by the general population. An adaption of a table found within this module (Table 4.12) shows the range of methods parents use for the purposes of childcare for their pre-school attending children in the State and at county level.

Type of Childcare	Parent/ Partner	Unpaid Relative/Friend	Paid Relative/ Friend	Childminder/ Au-Pair/Nanny	Childcare Facility	Other
Fingal	59%	9%	2%	7%	22%	1%
State	55%	10%	2%	10%	22%	1%

**Table 4.12: Type of Childcare Utilised By Parents of Pre-School Children**

(Source: CSO, 2023)

The Study indicates that the vast majority of pre-school children across Ireland are cared for by their parents or partners of their parents, while 22% of pre-school children attend a childcare facility nationally, and also 22% in Fingal. This module from the CSO is not an approximation or a random sample survey, but a direct representation of the population in 2022. Since the previous analysis carried out in 2016, the level of pre-school children attending a childcare facility has not materially increased (increased in raw numbers, decreased in proportion). Table 4.14 applies the CSO's 22% figure to the estimated number of residents aged 0–6 years old<sup>14</sup> in the proposed development, as determined under the quantitative demographic analysis above. The results indicate a potential need for c. 12 No. childcare places to be available to support the additional local need (value rounded from 11.2).

Description	Ref.	Value	Method
Units in Proposed Development <sup>15</sup>	a	149.0	A
0–6 Years (Number)	b	50.8	B
0–6 Years Total at 22%	c	11.2	b * 22% = c

**Table 4.13: Number of Pre-School Children Requiring Access to Childcare Facilities**

(Source: Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

<sup>13</sup> CSO Census of Population, 2022. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp3/censusofpopulation2022profile3-householdsfamiliesandchildcare/childcare/>

<sup>14</sup> This analysis adopts the rate of formal childcare utilisation for children aged 0–8 years old for County Fingal. While a like-for-like analysis of those aged 0–6 would be ideal, the CSO only provides outputs for specific cohorts (specifically, 0–2, 3–4, 5–8, 9–14, and under age 15 cohorts). In order to capture the key demographic of formal childcare take-up for those children aged 5–6, the percentage rate of take-up for all children aged 0–8 was selected and applied to the study.

<sup>15</sup> In line with Policy, a figure of 149 No. units was used in the calculations, discounting those units with only 1-bedroom.

#### 4.2.2 Existing Childcare Facilities

Table 4.14 below provides facility-level detail for each of the existing childcare facilities identified in the study alongside indicative capacity. Figure 4.7 identifies each of these facilities on a map as they relate to the subject site. This assessment identifies 11 No. TUSLA registered childcare facilities within a 1–1.5 km radius of the subject site, it illustrates their maximum potential capacities based on the latest TUSLA inspection data, and their levels of accessibility with respect to walkable distances from the subject site. These facilities were reported as having a combined total capacity of 307 No. childcare places at the time of the survey (March 2024).

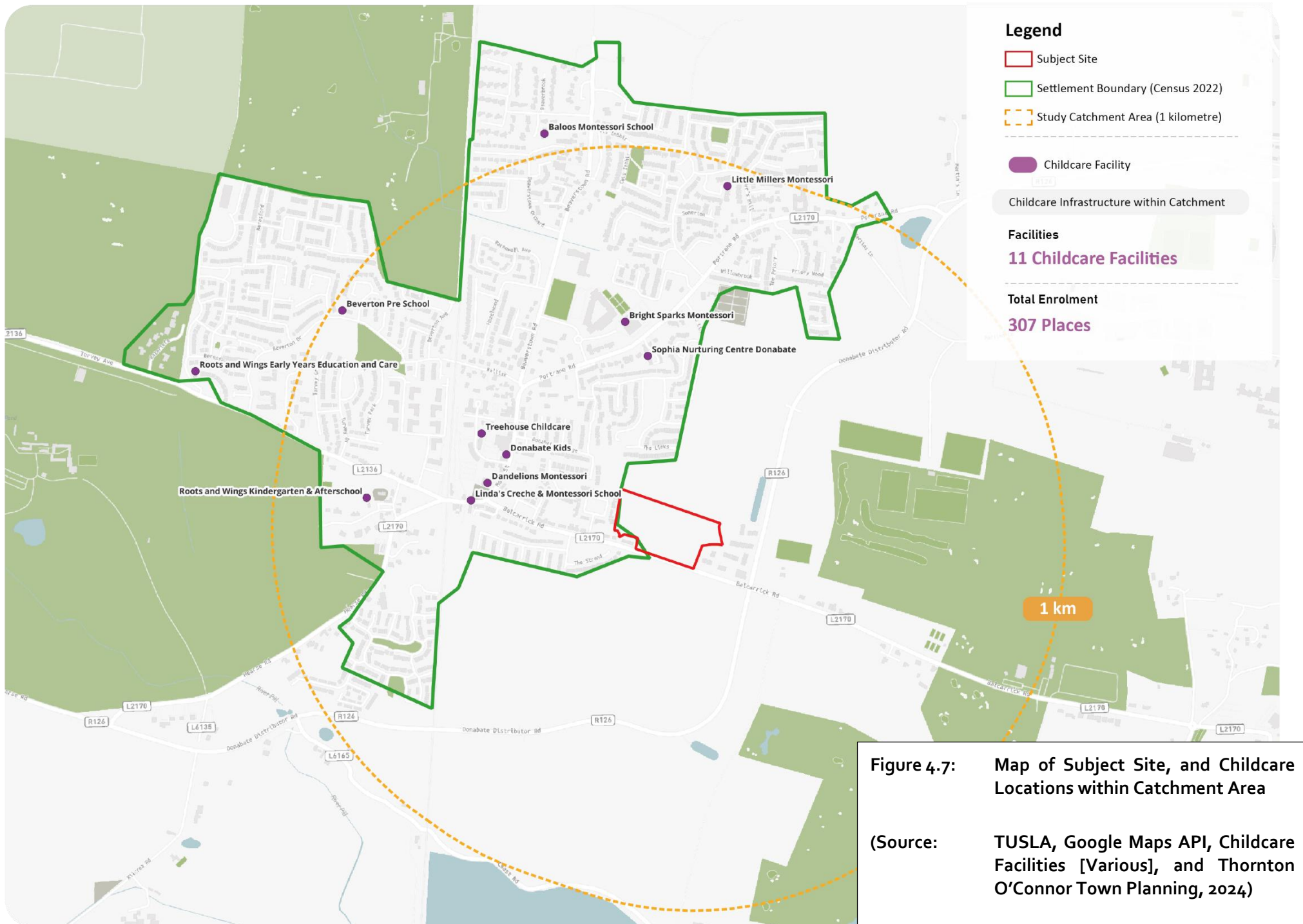
TUSLA ID	Childcare Facility	Distance (km)	Service Type	Current Enrolment	Spare Capacity
TU2015FL020	Baloos Montessori School	1.31	Sessional	20	No Data
TU2015FL026	Beverton Pre-School	1.00	Sessional	26	0
TU2015FL041	Bright Sparks Montessori	0.57	Part Time / Sessional	30	0
TU2017FL503	Dandelions Montessori	0.40	Sessional	22	0
TU2016FL015	Donabate Kids	0.37	Sessional	18	0
TU2015FL144	Linda's Creche & Montessori School	0.44	Full Day	25	0
TU2015FL175	Little Millers Montessori	1.00	Sessional	15	No Data
TU2016FL500	Roots and Wings Early Years Education and Care	1.31	Full Time / Part Time / Sessional	65	0
TU2020FL003	Roots and Wings Kindergarten & Afterschool	0.74	Part Time / Sessional	22	0
TU2015FL112	Sophia Nurturing Centre Donabate	0.47	Part Time / Sessional	20	0
TU2015FL333	Treehouse Childcare	0.46	Full Time / Part Time / Sessional	44	0
			<b>Total (Within Catchment)</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>0</b>

\* Source: Combination of: TUSLA Inspections (Based on AM) and TUSLA Listing (March 2024) Provided By Fingal County Council.

**Table 4.14: Current Capacity of Existing Childcare Facilities in a 1–1.5 km Study Area**

**(Source: TUSLA Inspections (Based on AM) and TUSLA Listing (March 2024) Provided By Fingal County Council, Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)**

Consultation with each of the childcare facilities in the catchment area indicated no notable spare capacity for new enrolments as of March 2024. While there are constraints in relation to staffing of facilities, most of the facilities that were contacted have also reached floorspace limits and would need additional floorspace to expand services. Moreover, certain childcare facilities have waitlists indicating a pent up demand for childcare that is not currently being met by existing services in the town. Consultation with the Fingal Childcare Committee further reinforced this position of capacity constraint and the demand for increased provision within Donabate. Taken together, the analysis of existing capacity indicates a robust demand for additional childcare places.



### 4.2.3 Planned Facilities Network (Donabate)

An examination of Fingal County Council's Online Planning Register showed the childcare planning and development pipeline consisting of granted permissions for 5 No. Planning Applications in the Study Area (Table 4.15) as of March 2024. If all of the developments currently within the planning and development pipeline are delivered, they will create a considerable additional childcare capacity of 618 No. childcare spaces in the Study Area, and in particular within a 1 km radius of the subject site.

As illustrated in Table 4.15 below, the proposed childcare facilities largely relate to new facilities in large residential developments. Whilst it is acknowledged that many of these spaces will be occupied by residents of planned and existing developments, it is not unreasonable to assume that there will be sufficient capacity in both the existing and planned network to accommodate the minor uplift in demand generated by the proposed development.

Plan Ref.	Status	Location	Final Grant Date	Description	Residential Units	Operator Estimated Capacity
F22A/0527	Granted	Corballis East	20/07/2023	1 No. Childcare Facility (595 sq m)	96	78
LRD0008/S3	Granted	Ballymastone, Donabate, Dublin	28/03/2023	1 No. Childcare Facility (909 sq m)	432	182
F17A/0373	Granted	New Road, Ballisk, Donabate, Co. Dublin.	17/04/2019	1 No. Childcare Facility (123 sq m)	151	60
F17A/0113/E1	Granted	Prospect Hill	02/12/2022	1 No. Childcare Facility (322 sq m)	258	61
LRD0017/S3	Granted	Corballis East	22/12/2023	2 No. Childcare Facilities (1,243 sq m)	1,020	237

**Table 4.15: Childcare Planning and Development Pipeline – March 2024 in the Study Area**

(Source: Fingal County Council – March 2024)

Details related to the aforementioned childcare facilities in the locality are set out below:

- F22A/0527*: Glenveagh Homes Limited applied for a 7 No. year permission for development at a 3.5 Ha site located to the immediate south of the subject site. The permitted development comprises the construction of 96 No. residential units, comprising 61 No. two-storey houses, 7 No. three-storey houses, and 2 No. three-storey duplex buildings with a total of 28 No. duplex units. Additionally, there is a two-storey crèche (595 sq m) with an associated rooftop to atrium, along with drainage infrastructure works on a portion of the lands to the east of the Donabate Distributor Road. Fingal County Council issued the Final Grant of Permission on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023. The crèche incorporates an outdoor play area of 137 sq m and has a capacity for 78 No. children, which was sized to accommodate the childcare demand generated by both the permitted development, as well as any future development of the wider landholding in the ownership of Glenveagh Homes Limited, including that of the proposed development.
- FCC Reg. Ref. LRD0008/S3*: On 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023, a 10 No. year permission for a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) at Ballymastone, Donabate was granted. The development comprises 432 No. residential dwellings, including apartments, duplexes,



and houses, a crèche, and public open space, representing Phase 1 of the development of the Ballymastone Lands. The permitted crèche, with a Gross Floor Area of 909 sq m and an external play area of 430 sq m, will cater for 182 No. children.

- *FCC Reg. Ref. F17A/0373*: On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019, permission was granted for the development of 151 No. residential units, a two-storey childcare facility, and all associated site and development works on lands at New Road, Donabate. The permitted childcare facility has a stated capacity of 60 No. children.
- *FCC Reg. Ref. F17A/0113/E1*: On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, Fingal County Council granted an extension of duration of planning for the construction of 196 No. houses, 62 No. apartments and a crèche (c. 322 sq m), with 2 No. vehicular access points from Hearse Road, and access to 2 No. houses from Prospect Hill. The permitted crèche has a stated capacity of 61 No. children.
- *FCC Reg. Ref. LRD0017/S3*: As of March 2024, planning permission was granted for the provision of 2 No. childcare facilities (with a Total Gross Floor Area of c. 1,243 sqm) in stand-alone, two-storey buildings, as part of the Planning Application for the construction of 1,020 No. residential dwellings on lands in Corballis East, in close proximity to the subject site, with capacity for in the order of 237 No. children.

#### 4.2.4 Justification for Proposed Crèche

As outlined in Section 4.2.1, based on the proposed development consisting of 175 No. residential units, it is estimated that the unit mix would create a derived potential demand of c. 12 No. places once the development is fully occupied.

The survey identified a shortfall in available childcare places to meet the existing demands of the town in March 2024. Despite the overall capacity, the population of Donabate has grown significantly over the past 5 No. years and childcare facilities have been struggling to meet all the needs of local residents. The Audit also identified 5 No. Planning Applications for 6 No. childcare facilities which would be expected to add significant further capacity to the 1 km catchment (618 No. childcare places) if completed.

Considering the findings above, there could potentially be sufficient capacity to cater for childcare related to the proposed development given the extent of planned future childcare facilities. However, the consultation with Fingal Childcare Committee identified a strong pent-up demand for additional childcare facilities in the town, especially in the context of forthcoming increase in residential population. Therefore, it was considered appropriate to include the provision of a large childcare facility within the proposed development to meet and support a very clear community need.

The scale of provision was estimated using the methodology outlined within the Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities (2001) which recommend the delivery of one child-care facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units. Using this standard, an estimate of providing **c. 47 No. childcare places** was proposed for the 175 No. residential unit scheme. While this figure of c. 47 No. childcare places was significantly above the projected demand from the proposed development (c. 12 No. childcare places), it is judged that any overflow capacity could be utilised to supplement existing childcare provision in the area with a modern, well-equipped, purpose-built childcare facility with secure outdoor play spaces.

#### 4.2.4.1 Estimating the Size Requirements of Proposed Crèche

Schedule 7 of the *Childcare Regulations (2016)* establishes the minimum 'clear floor space'<sup>16</sup> requirements for childcare facilities based on the age group; see Table 4.16. To accommodate the potential childcare demand generated by the proposed development, alongside future childcare demands related to the town and its future occupants (c. 47 No. children), it is estimated that c. 126.7 sq m of clear floor space would be required. In total, 4 No. childcare classrooms are proposed across the various age groups (although these classrooms may be adapted at a later date to meet the specific childcare needs of the town in the future).

Therefore, it is proposed that a single-storey crèche of 365 sq m (with outdoor play area and external stores) will be developed as part of the scheme. This facility will provide 4 No. classrooms with adequate space to meet the needs of the development, as displayed in Figure 4.8 overleaf.

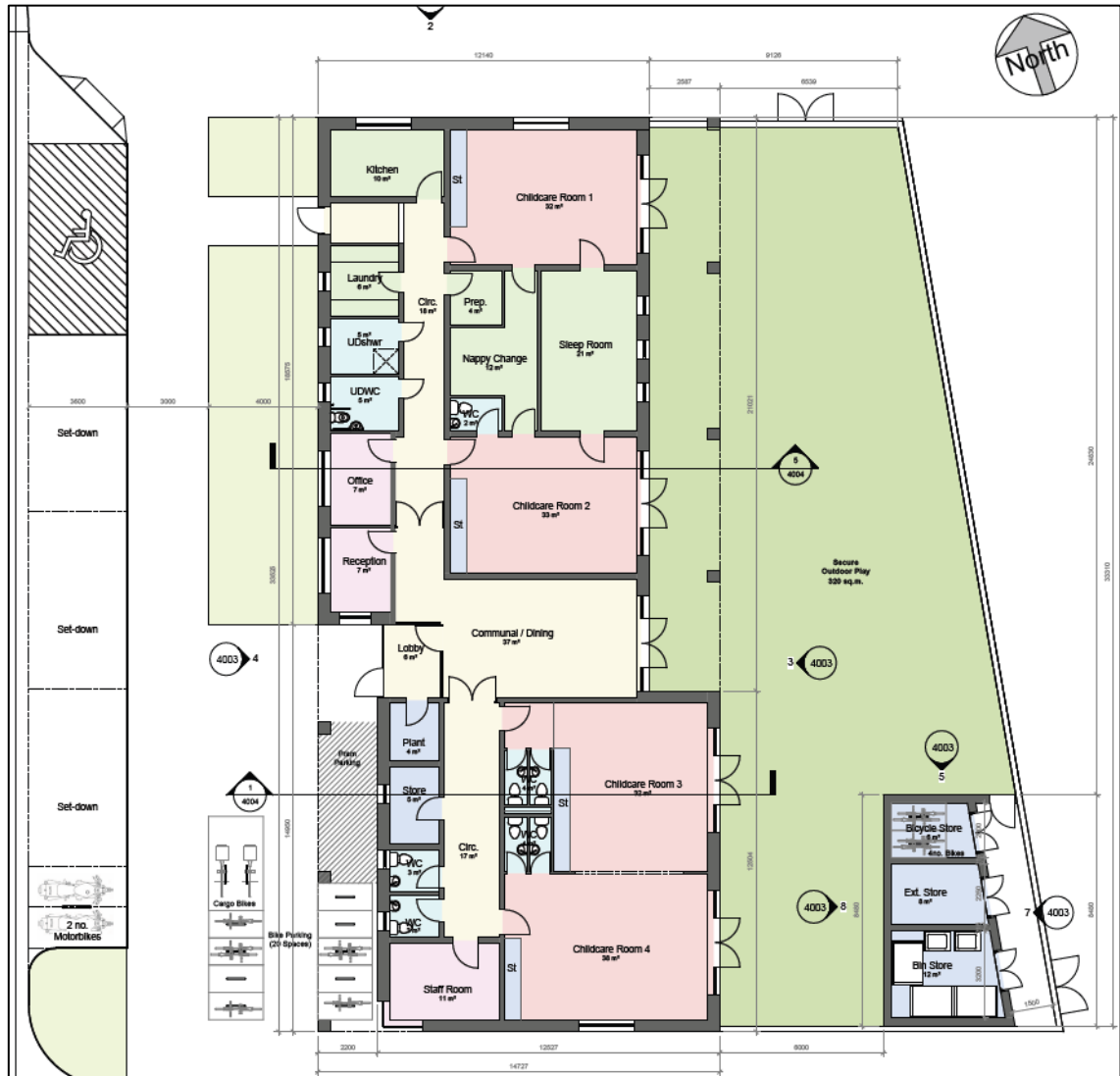
Age Range	Clear Floor Space (sq m)	Proportion of Attendees (Pro Rata)	Number of Places	Clear Floor Space Required (sq m)
0-1	3.50	17%	7.8	27.4
1-2	2.80	17%	7.8	21.9
2-3	2.35	17%	7.8	18.4
3-6	2.50	50%	23.5	58.8
<b>Total</b>			47	126.5

**Table 4.16: Estimated Childcare Floor Space Requirement from the Proposed Development**

(Source: Schedule 7 of *Child Care Act 1991 Early Years Services Regulations 2016*, and Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)

Therefore, based on the size of the proposed childcare facility, which has been designed to be consistent with the requirements of *S.I. No. 632/2016 - Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016*, there is ample space to cater for the needs of the established and emerging community in the wider catchment area.

<sup>16</sup> Per the Regulations, excludes storage, furniture, permanent fixtures and "areas ancillary to the provision of the pre-school service" (i.e. kitchens, staff rooms, etc.).



**Figure 4.8: Proposed Crèche Layout**  
 (Source: Fingal County Council, 2024)

**4.2.5 Conclusion**

This Section provides an estimation of the potential number of 0–6-year-old children that may reside in the proposed development and may require a space in a childcare facility. Over the past 6 No. years (between 2016–2022), the population of the Study Area increased by 29.9% to 9,669 No. In 2022, the proportion of the population aged between 0–6-years old was estimated to be 11.08%. The Study uses this proportion to estimate the number of 0–6-year-olds that could potentially reside in the proposed development. Using the average household size (3.08 No. persons per household) and the percentage of 0–6-year-olds (11.08%) in the Study Area, a calculation was made to estimate that the proposed development could generate 51 No. 0–6-year-old children. Notably, while the population of the catchment area increased by 2,226 No. persons between 2016 and 2022, the number of children aged between 0- and 6-years only increased by 113 No.

Further analysis released by the CSO, based on Census 2022, indicated that 22% of children in Fingal attend a childcare facility. This would mean that from the potential 51 No. 0–6-year-olds residing at the proposed development, only **12 No. children would attend a childcare facility.**

The childcare audit, alongside the consultation with Fingal Childcare Committee, identified a shortfall in available childcare places to meet the existing demands of the town. This was further validated in light of expected future residential development in this area in the coming years. While the Audit also identified 5 No. Planning Applications for 6 No. childcare facilities which would be expected to add significant further capacity to the 1 km catchment (618 No. childcare places) if completed, it was considered appropriate to include the provision of a large childcare facility within the proposed development to meet and support a very clear community need.

While it is anticipated that 12 No. childcare spaces could be expected from the proposed development, the sizing of the proposed childcare facility has been determined based on the wider childcare deficit/requirements and the need to deliver a viably-sized operational space.

The proposed development incorporates a c. 365 sq m childcare facility consistent with the requirements of S.I. No. 632/2016 - Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. It is judged that given the level of existing childcare provision in the local area and the need to deliver new, modern, purpose-built premises, that the inclusion of this space to cater for **47 No. children is suitable**.

In conclusion, the subject development comprises 175 No. units, of which only 149 No. units are 2-bedrooms or more and can reasonably accommodate families. The potential childcare demand of the proposal is likely to only be 12 No. places, and the local childcare network has a total enrolment of 307 No. spaces in 11 No. existing facilities. The Audit identified 5 No. Planning Applications for 6 No. childcare facilities which would be expected to add significant further capacity to the 1 km catchment (618 No. childcare places) if completed. Given the wider demand for childcare in the local community and expected population growth in the area, the proposed development includes a childcare facility with a capacity to support 47 No. children.

### 4.3 Introduction – SIA

The Study Area for this assessment is defined by a 1 km radius of the subject site, equivalent to a c. 12- to 14-minute walking distance, which is considered accessible to future residents of the proposed development. Given the proximity of the subject site to the settlement of Donabate, an additional indicative catchment of 2 km has been included in the study to capture, survey and include relevant infrastructure that lies tangent to, or immediately outside of this Study Area.

The survey identified a large range of community facilities within the Study Area. Some 42 No. social infrastructure facilities were identified as part of this Audit within a radius of 1 km of the subject site (33 No. excluding schools and childcare), with that figure increasing to 70 No. social infrastructure facilities located within 2 km of the subject site (53 No. excluding schools and childcare). These facilities (excluding schools and childcare), are mapped in Figure 4.8 overleaf.

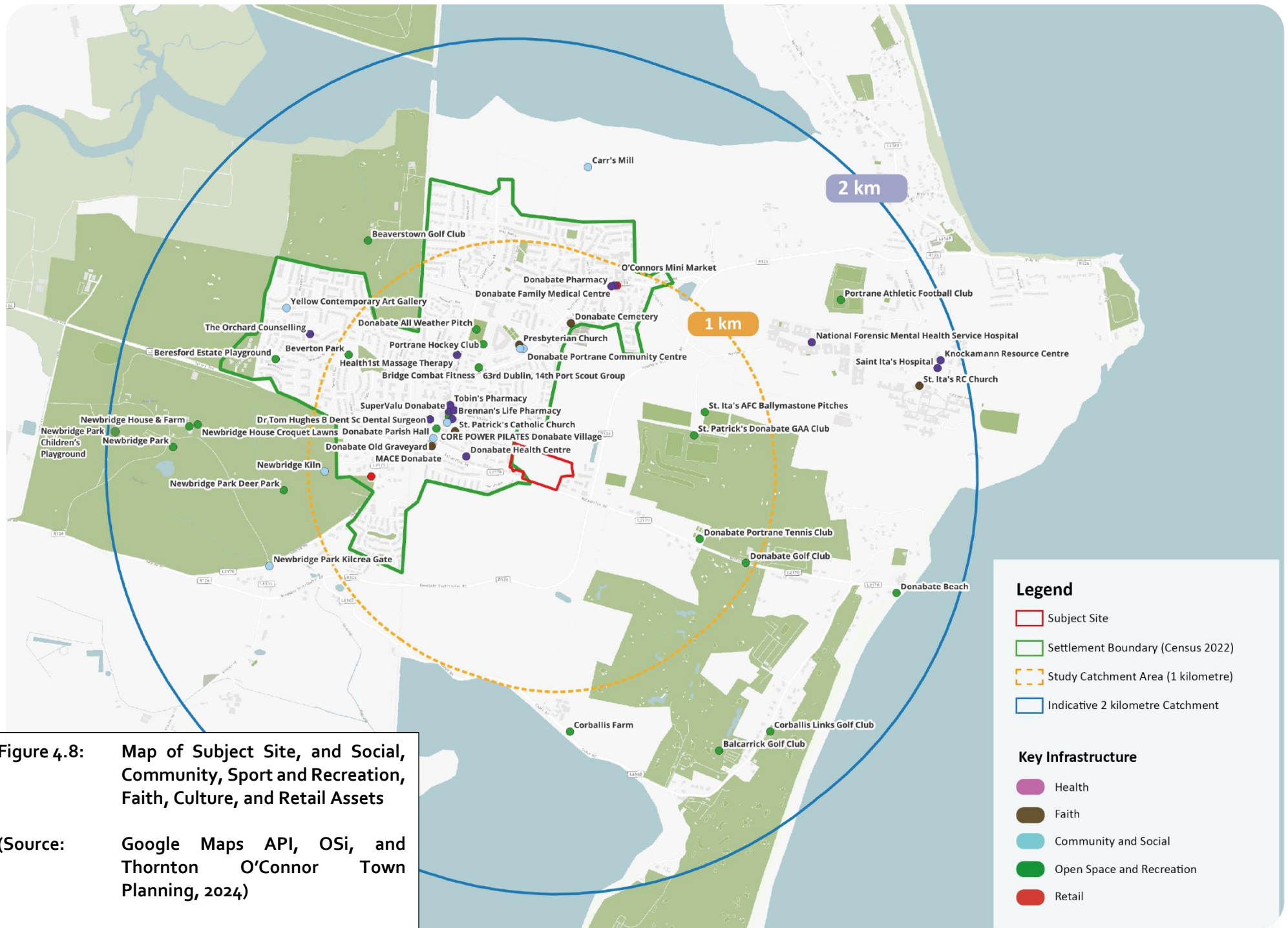
No.	Name of Asset	Facility Type
1	Donabate Parish Hall	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
2	Donabate Portrane Community Centre	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
3	Donabate Post Office	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
4	Yellow Contemporary Art Gallery	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
5	Newbridge Kiln	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
6	Newbridge Park Kilcrea Gate	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
7	Carr's Mill	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
8	Donabate/Portrane Public Library	Social, Community and Culture Facilities
9	Donabate Cemetery	Faith
10	St Patrick's Church of Ireland	Faith
11	St. Patrick's Catholic Church	Faith
12	Donabate Old Graveyard	Faith
13	Presbyterian Church	Faith
14	St. Ita's RC Church	Faith
15	Donabate Clinic	Healthcare and Emergency Services
16	Donabate Family Medical Centre	Healthcare and Emergency Services
17	National Forensic Mental Health Service Hospital	Healthcare and Emergency Services
18	Denture Clinic in Donabate	Healthcare and Emergency Services
19	Dr Tom Hughes B Dent Sc Dental Surgeon	Healthcare and Emergency Services
20	Brennan's Life Pharmacy	Healthcare and Emergency Services
21	Tobin's Pharmacy	Healthcare and Emergency Services
22	Donabate Pharmacy	Healthcare and Emergency Services
23	Donabate Health Centre	Healthcare and Emergency Services
24	The Orchard Counselling	Healthcare and Emergency Services
25	Saint Ita's Hospital	Healthcare and Emergency Services
26	Knockamann Resource Centre	Healthcare and Emergency Services
27	Health 1st Massage Therapy	Healthcare and Emergency Services
28	Newbridge House & Farm	Open Space and Recreation
29	Newbridge Park	Open Space and Recreation
30	Beverton Park	Open Space and Recreation
31	Newbridge Park Deer Park	Open Space and Recreation
32	Beresford Estate Playground	Open Space and Recreation
33	Newbridge House Croquet Lawns	Open Space and Recreation



No.	Name of Asset	Facility Type
34	Donabate Golf Club	Open Space and Recreation
35	Beaverstown Golf Club	Open Space and Recreation
36	Corballis Links Golf Club	Open Space and Recreation
37	Balcarrick Golf Club	Open Space and Recreation
38	Portrane Hockey Club	Open Space and Recreation
39	St. Ita's AFC Ballymastone Pitches	Open Space and Recreation
40	St. Patrick's Donabate GAA Club	Open Space and Recreation
41	Donabate All Weather Pitch	Open Space and Recreation
42	Portrane Athletic Football Club	Open Space and Recreation
43	Corballis Farm	Open Space and Recreation
44	Donabate Portrane Tennis Club	Open Space and Recreation
45	Donabate Beach	Open Space and Recreation
46	63rd Dublin, 14th Port Scout Group	Open Space and Recreation
47	Bridge Combat Fitness	Open Space and Recreation
48	Vibe Yoga Studio Donabate	Open Space and Recreation
49	CORE POWER PILATES Donabate Village	Open Space and Recreation
50	Newbridge Park Children's Playground	Open Space and Recreation
51	SuperValu Donabate	Retail Centres and Services
52	MACE Donabate	Retail Centres and Services
53	O'Connors Mini Market	Retail Centres and Services

**Table 4.17: Social and Community Infrastructure within c. 1–2 km Radius of the Subject Site**

(Source: Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)



**Figure 4.8: Map of Subject Site, and Social, Community, Sport and Recreation, Faith, Culture, and Retail Assets**

**(Source: Google Maps API, OSi, and Thornton O'Connor Town Planning, 2024)**

#### 4.4 Social, Community and Culture Facilities

Access to quality community services and facilities can have a significant bearing on the quality of life and health and well-being of a community, by encouraging social interaction, promoting learning and providing support services for those living, working and visiting an area. An urban neighbourhood should be big enough to support a range of services and small enough to foster a sense of belonging and community; it should be sufficiently dense to enable all of its essential facilities to be within easy walking distance of the urban centre.

The baseline study undertaken identified 9 No. community and social services and facilities in the Study Area, including a community centre, parish hall, and public library.

The Donabate Portrane Community and Leisure Centre provides for a range of community activities including arts and culture. Many of these services can expand to accommodate future demand from the proposed developments. Moreover, the changing cultural profile of Ireland and Donabate means that Local Authorities may need to facilitate the development of additional places to accommodate the diversity of ethnic backgrounds in the town. The Leisure Centre is a multi-purpose facility catering for a wide range of community needs, including:

- Kids and community activities including – Baby and Toddler, Gymnastics, Taekwondo, Ballet, Mother and Baby Pilates, Project Fashion, Headline Stage School, Basketball, Hockey and Irish Dancing.
- Community meeting hub – The hub encourages new groups to use the centre to hold small meetings free of charge during their set-up phase.
- Meeting Rooms – Rooms are suitable for arts and crafts, training, meetings and activities for all ages.
- Donabate Public Library – which includes a quiet room with assistive technology and smartboard, photocopying and printing services and is wheelchair accessible.
- Adult Spaces for a range of local clubs offering; Active Age for All – provides the opportunity for people over 55 from the local area to engage in social, cultural, educational and recreational activities and events in an open and friendly atmosphere. Lambay Cinema Club – is a cinema group that hosts events where enthusiasts can gather, relax, and immerse themselves in the world of captivating stories. Evening Book Club – every Monday. Weekly Bingo – every Thursday night.

In addition to key community facilities, sustainable communities require a range of ancillary facilities and services such as state or local authority provided services e.g. credit unions, retail centres, recycling facilities, post offices and general community facilities. Donabate Town has a post office, bring bank and recycling facility.

The catchment area offers a number of community spaces catering for local populations and also acts as attractions to those from outside the locality to explore it as an amenity. Although a range of community assets were identified as part of this Audit, there is need to emphasise the ongoing and continued demand for new and improved community infrastructure in the area. Participation in community activities contributes to social cohesion, reduces isolation and enriches the lives of residents. As such, community infrastructure is a key social asset, and Audits such as this provide visibility on current assets, as well as potential gaps for the local area.

#### 4.5 Healthcare and Emergency Services

Supported and facilitated by Local Authorities, access to quality health services and facilities is a key element to creating sustainable neighbourhoods. A total of 12 No. health services and facilities, comprising 2 No. hospitals, 3 No. General Practitioners and Health Centres, 2 No. Counselling and Resource Centres, 3 No. Pharmacies, and 2 No. Dental Care Practices, were identified within and bordering the Study Area during the baseline survey.

A significant concentration of health facilities and infrastructure is located closer to the centre of the town, much of which is within walking distance to the subject site. These centres provide for an extensive range of services, including general medical, surgery and physiotherapy. For specific specialist services, individuals may be willing to travel farther. The proposed development is located in close proximity to Dublin's wide range of health facilities (30 No. minute drive to the city centre) and is close to the national motorway network and public transport provision either by bus or by rail. This provides access to national public hospitals, private hospitals, high-tech hospitals, accident and emergency services, psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation centres, orthopaedic hospitals and hospices.

Some 16 No. General Practitioners (GPs) are located in the various GP Practices and Medical Centre serving a population of 9,669 No. residents in 2022. This provides a healthy GP to resident population ratio of 1 GP for every 604 No. residents. The Oireachtas Health Committee recommendations that an area should have between 1.02–1.1 GPs per 1,000 of resident population. Thus, general practice medical provision is considered very high and likely also caters for resident populations from the surrounding area.

St. Ita's Hospital houses Crannóg Nua Special Care Centre which is located in Portrane. Here young people are detained under a High Court order for a short-term period of stabilisation when their behaviour poses a real and substantial risk of harm to their life, health, safety, development or welfare. Crannóg Nua Special Care Centre caters for both male and female, aged between 11 and 17 years and the group living units are mixed gender. Knockamann Resource Centre houses St Joseph's Intellectual Disability Service. The centre provides a service for adults who have an intellectual disability and a mental health diagnosis, and it consists of 14 No. houses and units, with a capacity for 82 No. patients.

Local Fire Station and Garda Station were identified outside the Study Area in the nearby settlement of Swords during the baseline survey. Both of these facilities are located within 6 km of the subject site and would provide necessary emergency provisions as needed and are sufficient to support the needs of current and future residents.

As the demographic profile of the Study Area continues to change, it will be critical to ensure that the provision of health services and facilities takes into consideration not only the needs of the existing population but future demand for such services and facilities. As illustrated above, a range of health services and facilities are available within the Study Area. Irrespective of demographic change, the population increase that would occur as a result of the proposed development is unlikely to place any undue stress on the extensive range of health services and facilities available within and bordering the Study Area.

## 4.6 Open Space and Recreation

The town of Donabate has a range of open space areas suitable for cycling, running and walking. For the purposes of this Study, open space and recreation facilities are considered to include parks, playgrounds, multi-use games areas, gyms, and sports pitches. There are also a significant number of walks and beaches along the Donabate–Portrane Peninsula.

The availability of, and access to, affordable sports and recreation facilities that are within easy reach by walking, cycling and public transport is of considerable importance. In total, 22 No. sports and recreation facilities were identified in and around the Study Area during the baseline survey which include a wide range of sports clubs, a playground, a gym, golf courses, and a recreation centre. Given the population and age profile of the Study Area there will be a continued requirement to provide a variety of sports and recreation facilities to cater for the needs of children, adults and the elderly. All of the facilities identified in the Audit seem to be of good quality and there are no known capacity issues at present. The range of facilities identified in the Audit are outlined below:

### Sports Clubs:

- Balcarrick Golf Club is a newly redesigned golf course with c. 700 No. members.
- Donabate Golf Club is a 27 No. hole golf course which allows for year round play.
- Beaverstown Golf Club is a 140-acre course built to USGA standard with the sand-based greens allowing for play all year round.
- Corballis Links Golf Club is a high-quality Links Golf Course which is also a regular training ground for some of Europe's top player.
- Portrane Athletic Football Club – a community-based club that facilitates competitive football for senior, underage and over-35s players.
- St Patricks Donabate GAA Club – the biggest sporting organisation in the area, with 1,200 No. members, 3 No. full sized playing pitches and facilities.
- St. Itas AFC – a football team with both boys and girls underage teams and senior men and ladies teams.
- Donabate Portrane Tennis Club – established 2016 with six all-weather floodlight courts.
- Portrane Hockey Club – has senior teams and a junior section with girls and boys teams ranging from 6–16 years of age. There are c. 250 No. club members under 18 years of age.

### Gyms, Open Space and Recreation:

- Donabate Beach – a long sandy beach with an extensive sandy dune area and rock pools.
- Bridge Combat Fitness provides top class martial arts training and self-defence classes for all levels.
- Vibe Yoga Studio provides both in studio and on the beach yoga classes every day of the week.
- Core Power Pilates provide both private and group pilates classes with a certified balance body trainer.
- Donabate Portrane Community Centre hosts multiple sports teams, with a full-size basketball court, gym and leisure facilities.
- Newbridge Park is an important feature of Donabate and is one of a number of regional parks serving the wider population managed by Fingal County Council.
- Newbridge House and Farm, a Georgian villa, is surrounded by 150 hectares of parklands.
- Newbridge Park Playground – popular and accessible playground with inclusive facilities.



- Donabate All Weather Pitch – state of the art pitch that is rented out to groups and teams.
- Newbridge Park Deer Park – farm and farm discovery trail with a farm shop and café.

In addition to existing facilities, Fingal County Council granted permission on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021 for the **Ballymastone Recreational Hub** which will provide sporting and recreational facilities including: 1 No. 8 Lane 400m Athletics Track (all weather surface), 1 No. Grass Sports Pitch; 1 No. All-Weather Pitch; a Combined Public Skatepark and Playground Facility along with flood lights, bike, coach and car parking spaces to serve the growing population of Donabate (Fingal County Council Reg. Ref. PARTXI/004/21).

#### 4.7 Faith Institutions

The predominant religion in the Republic of Ireland is Christianity, with the largest denomination being Catholicism. The second largest Christian denomination, the Church of Ireland (Anglican) has more recently experienced an increase, as have other small Christian denominations.

Within the Study Area 73.5% of the population identify as religious, and 63.5% within the Catholic faith. The timely provision of faith facilities is of considerable importance to ensuring the religious needs of the existing and future population is met. A total of 4 No. places of worship were identified within the Study Area during the baseline survey. Specifically;

- St. Patrick’s Church of Ireland is located on The Square, Church Road, Donabate, just 200 metres, or a 3-minute walk, from the centre of Donabate Town.
- Donabate Presbyterian Church is located at the Donabate Community Centre.
- St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Donabate is located on the Main Street.
- St. Ita’s Catholic Church Portrane is located on St Ita’s Hospital Campus.

All of these faith facilities appear to be in good condition and there are no reported capacity issues and no specified unmet needs of note at present. However, the changing cultural profile of Ireland means that Local Authorities may need to facilitate the development of additional places of worship to accommodate different religions in the future.

#### 4.8 Retail Centres and Services

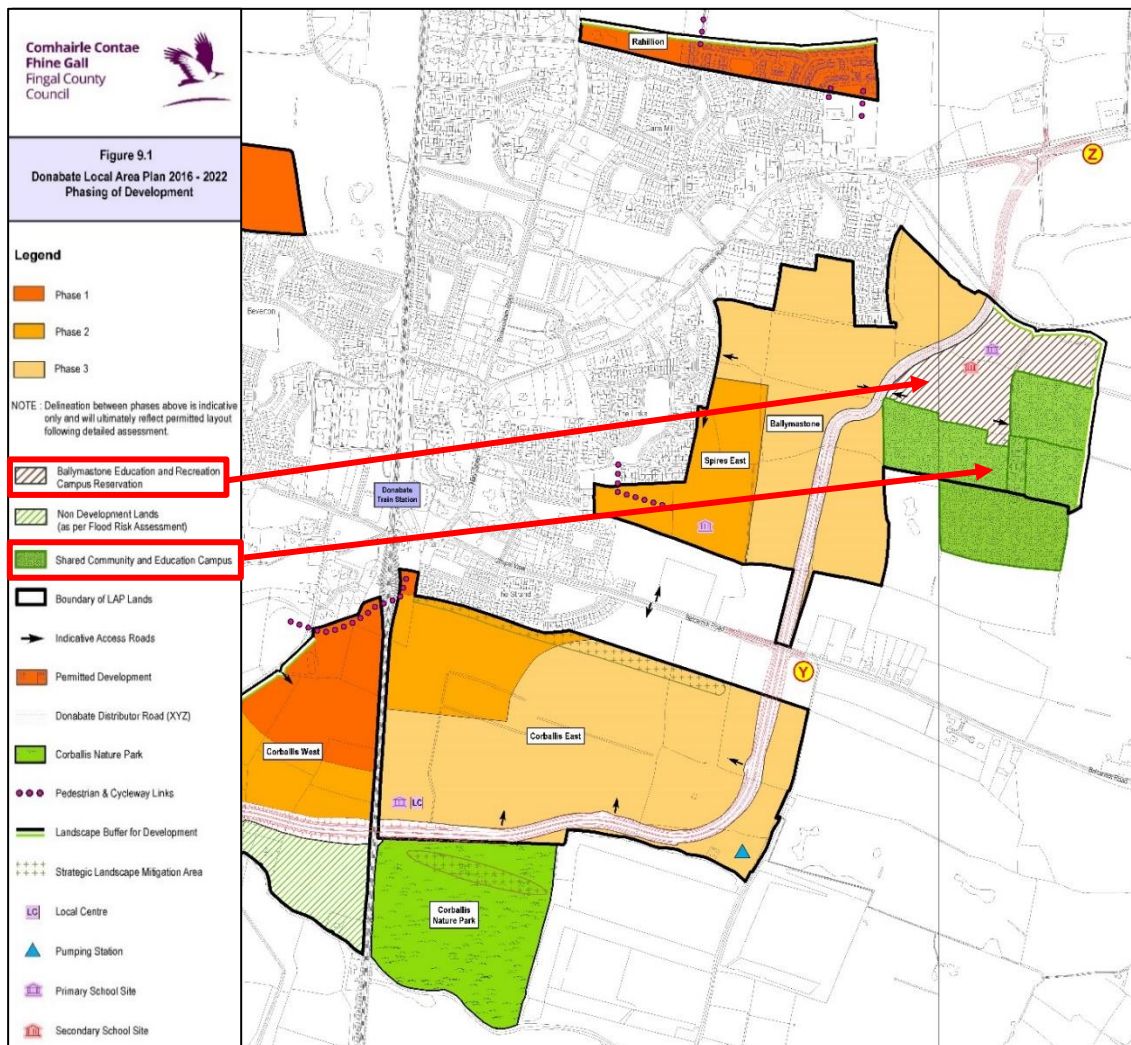
Analysis of convenience retailing indicates that there is adequate provision within the Study Area. The offering within 1 km is largely classified as smaller top-up shopping, restaurants, take-aways, a butcher, chemists and personal services like hairdressers and post offices serving a localised catchment population (within walking distance of the site), but also includes a large SuperValu for a full convenience retail experience. The nearby town of Swords increases retail choice and has a significant number of supermarkets with Lidl, Aldi, and Tesco stores all located within a short drivetime of the site. There was very little retail vacancy identified and there is no deficit of retail facilities in the area.

It is also noted that permission was granted by An Bord Pleanála on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 for a retail supermarket (including an ancillary off-licence), with a Gross Floor Area of 1,835 sq m at Turvey Avenue, Donabate (FCC Reg. Ref. F21A/0708, ABP Ref. PL06F.313836).

Moreover, it is considered that increasing the level of residential development in the area would contribute to the sustainability and viability of local businesses in the area.

#### 4.9 Future Opportunities for Social Infrastructure Provision

Notwithstanding the above conclusions of there being adequate social infrastructure provision to serve the proposed development, we are mindful of the Council’s zoning of land and intention to deliver/facilitate additional such infrastructure in Donabate. Ample land has been zoned on the eastern edge of the town in the Development Plan and Local Area Plan, with the latter specifically identifying 2 No. abutting parcels as the ‘Ballymastone Education and Recreation Campus Reservation’ (with objectives for primary and post-primary schools) and the ‘Shared Community and Education Campus’ (Figure 4.9).



**Figure 4.9: Lands identified for education, recreational and community use**

(Source: *Donabate Local Area Plan 2016*)

The siting and co-location of educational, recreational and community uses is a pragmatic and practical approach that also creates synergies. Furthermore, their connectivity to the town of Donabate and new residential areas via pedestrian and cycle network will promote active travel.

The risk of undermining the successful delivery and operation of these uses at these 2 No. dedicated sites is a vital consideration that must be taken account of if they are also proposed in an *ad hoc* and uncoordinated manner elsewhere in the town. These distinct zoning and site-specific objectives provide an opportunity to deliver a coherent concentration of facilities that

can expand and improve as the population of Donabate and the wider area expands.

Positively, development is already coming forward on the above lands, with the Part 8 'Ballymastone Recreational Hub' granted in 2021. This development features a host of amenities, including: athletics track, pitches, skatepark and playground, etc. Additional lands remain available for further educational, recreational and community uses.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In our opinion, there is a sufficient existing provision of social infrastructure in the vicinity of the subject site (i.e., within a c. 2 km radius) to support the proposed development. As the above survey demonstrates, there is an adequate supply of education, healthcare, and community facilities within reasonable walking distance of the subject site, as well as a number of parks and amenity areas, playing pitches and sporting facilities available to local residents. The area benefits from bus and rail links to quickly connect the subject site directly to a wider range of facilities located in nearby Swords and Dublin City Centre. The proposed infill development will stitch into an already established neighbourhood with adequate local facilities.

The survey identified a large range of community facilities within the Study Area. Some 42 No. social infrastructure facilities were identified as part of this Audit within a radius of 1 km of the subject site (33 No. excluding schools and childcare), with that figure increasing to 70 No. social infrastructure facilities located within 2 km of the subject site (53 No. excluding schools and childcare). These facilities (excluding schools and childcare), are mapped in Figure 4.8 overleaf. The Study Area is particularly well served in terms of healthcare provision, faith infrastructure, and retailing amenities.

Overall, healthcare, sports and recreation, community, education, and other facilities are all well-represented within the area and cater for the existing and proposed new residential community. The childcare audit identified a shortfall in available childcare places to meet the existing demands of the town. This was further validated in light of expected future residential development in this area in the coming years. While the Audit also identified 5 No. Planning Applications for 6 No. childcare facilities which would be expected to add significant further capacity to the 1 km catchment (618 No. childcare places) if completed, it was considered appropriate to include the provision of a childcare facility within the proposed development to meet and support a very clear community need. Having regard to the above, we submit that the Donabate area provides a wide range of existing social and community infrastructure to support the development, and this is an ideal location for the proposed residential development.

This Social Infrastructure Audit has been completed with regard to national, regional and local policy relating to the provision of suitable community facilities. Consideration has also been made to the policies on social and community infrastructure in the *Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029*. The recommended types of facilities have been examined and the result of this Social Infrastructure Audit has identified that there is adequate existing capacity of these services and facilities within a reasonable catchment of the subject site. It is 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 school and childcare provision.

Despite this, it is important to continually ensure good accessibility to quality services and facilities, inclusive of but not limited to health services and facilities, education facilities, community facilities and sports and recreation facilities. **The size of the proposed development is unlikely to impact on the quality of services and facilities currently available in the locality.**