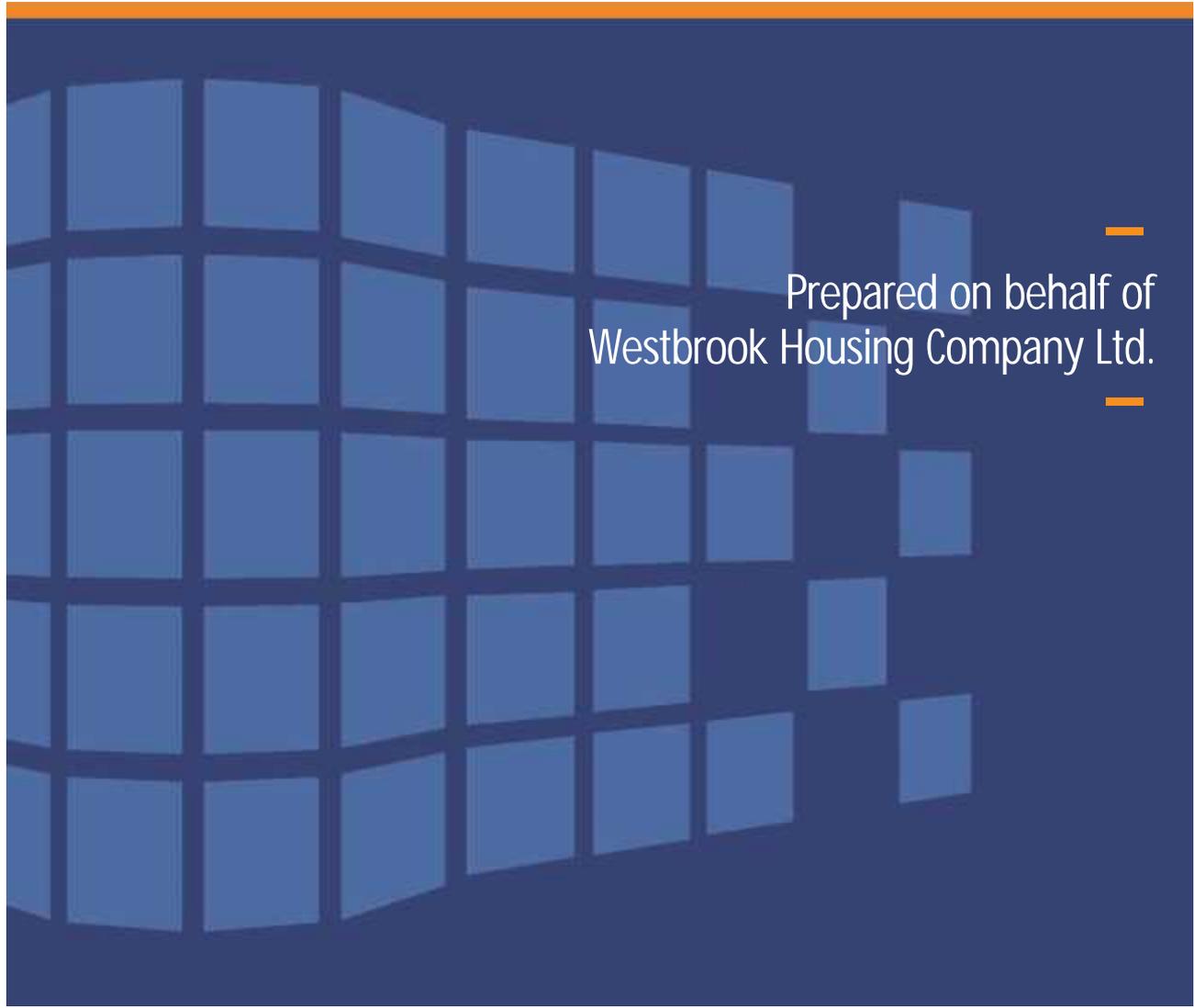


# Childcare Provision Assessment

Cooney's Lane, Graigue (townland), Grange, Co. Cork

October 2018



Prepared on behalf of  
Westbrook Housing Company Ltd.

McCutcheon Halley Planning were appointed by Westbrook Housing Company Ltd. to prepare a report on the existing childcare facilities in the Grange area in order to inform the development of 251 no. residential units at Cooney's Lane, Graigue (townland), Grange, Co. Cork. The following examines the need to incorporate any on-site crèche facilities as part of the development proposal, with specific focus on the relevant planning policy, demographic statistics and an assessment of existing childcare facilities in the area.



Fig. 1 Location of proposed site in context of Mahon, Douglas Village, Cork City Centre and Wilton.

## Planning Policy Context

Both the “Childcare Facilities Guideline” (2001) published by the Department of Environment and the Cork County Development Plan 2015 require the provision of a crèche where in excess of 75 dwellings is proposed.

### Cork County Development Plan 2015

Objective 3.1: Childcare Facilities of the Cork County Development Plan 2014 (CDP) relates to the provision of childcare facilities. It states that the Council will:

*“Support and facilitate the sustainable provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations and seek their provision concurrent with development, having regard to the population targets for the area and in accordance with the Guidelines on Childcare Facilities and the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006.”*

### Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001

Appendix 2 of the ‘Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas (Paragraphs 2.4 and 3.3.1 refer). One facility providing a minimum of 20 childcare places is considered to be a reasonable starting point in this regard. The Guidance acknowledges that other case-specific assumptions may lead to an increase or decrease in this requirement.

The results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a county childcare strategy should also be considered.

Appendix 2 also states that the threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas.

## Future Demand Generated by the Proposed Development

The total number of units within the proposed development is 251 no. units. Excluding the 1 bed units (9 no.) there are a total of 232 no. units appropriate for families. Based on the average family size of 2.73 it can be considered that the proposed development will result in 633 no. persons. According to Census 2016 the average family in the State contains 1.38 children (0-18 years old) and so the proposed development would theoretically accommodate 320 no. children.

The CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Childcare, Quarter 3 2016 is the most current available published date on childcare statistics. It reports that nationally:

- 13% of children aged 0-12 years are cared for in a creche / Montessori / playgroup / after-school, with parent/relative care accounting for 86%.
- 19% of pre-school children are cared for in a creche / Montessori / playgroup / after school facility in the state, with 17% in the South East and 16% in the South West.

Data extracted from Census 2016 identified that 3,160 no. (7.6%) of children in the Grange ED are aged between 0-4 years. The proposed development would therefore generate 24 no. children in the 0-4 age category. Applying the south west and east uptake percentage of 33% to the development, then theoretically, only 7 no. childcare spaces would be needed.

However, this assessment is based on the worst case scenario i.e. that all children aged 0-4 years would be cared for in a creche. The assessment therefore proceeds on the basis of a requirement for 24 no. children.

Childcare provision for primary school going children is also considered in this assessment. Census 2016 data demonstrates that 8.4% of the population are aged between 5 and 12 years old. The proposed development would generate 26 no. Children in the 5-12 category.

The quarterly National Household Survey, Childcare, Quarter 3 2016 reports that:

- Nationally 8% of primary school children are cared for in a creche / Montessori / playgroup / after-school, with parent/relative care accounting for 90%.
- 14% of pre-school children are cared for in a creche / Montessori / playgroup / after school facility in the South East and South West combined.

Applying the South east and west rate of 14% to the development, 3 no. childcare spaces would be required. This assessment is based on the worst-case scenario i.e. that all children aged 5-12 years would be cared for in a childcare facility. The assessment therefore proceeds on the basis of a requirement for 26 no. children.

Therefore, the proposed development will generate a childcare requirement of 50 no. childcare spaces.

## Assessment

The local need for a new crèche facility at Cooney's Lane was examined in detail in accordance with current guidelines. In the first instance, we researched the TUSLA Pre-School Inspection Reports for different facilities in the locality and examined them in detail. However, these are not an accurate/up to date reflection of provision in the area. Therefore, we engaged with the different childcare facilities in the area seeking numbers of current Pre-School goers registered for the academic 2017/2018 school year and the current capacity each facility has.

In accordance with the childcare guidelines, we subsequently established the following:

- The emerging demographic profile of the area;

- The existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities in the area.

## Demographic Profile of the Area

The demographic profile of Grange was examined from the CSO Census of Population Statistics 2016 in the Grange Electoral Division (ED), which include a comparative analysis with National and County averages across a number of datasets

Given the size of the region and location of the site, Grange is separated into 7 divisions illustrated Lehenagh, Douglas, Tramore C, Turners Cross D, Ballyphehane B, Mahon B and Browningstown. For the purpose of this exercise we have compiled the information for Grange as a whole.

The population of the Grange ED increased from 40,419 in 2011 to 41,588 in 2016 which represents an increase of 2.9%. In 2016, nearly 7.6% of the total population of the Grange ED were of pre-school going age (i.e. 0-4 years), which represents a slight increase of 0.5% from 7.1% in 2011. This is higher than the recorded City-wide average of 5% for persons in this age category in 2016.

By way of comparison, 10.4% of the population of the Grange ED were over the age of 65 in 2016. Approximately 17.3% (i.e. 7,179) of the population were aged between 30-39, however at a cumulative 21% of the population, the number of 'One Person' households and 'Couples without Children' was 8,564 in 2016, just 1% below the comparable State average of 22% for the same period.

Demographic travel trends indicated that considerable numbers of people commute to Cork City and Environs, and other employment centres in the area such as Mahon, Douglas Village, Wilton and the City Centre on a daily basis for work purposes.

A total of 18,191 of the total population aged 5 years and over travel a distance of between 15mins and 45mins each day to work, school or college each day. This equates to 44%, with a further 4.7% travelling for a longer period. This suggests that a considerable amount of commuting and owing to its proximity of these larger employment areas, it is considered very likely that a sizeable proportion of both the existing and future populations of the Grange area will avail of childcare facilities outside the area. This view was confirmed anecdotally among childcare providers during the course of the research.

## Distribution of Childcare Facilities in Grange.

A total number of 55 crèches were identified within a ten-minute drive time of the site, hence the study area was reduced to a five-six-minute drive time which yielded a total of 11 crèches within this area. The location of these facilities are outlined in Figure 2 below, with the list of the crèches given in Table 1. This table identifies the distance of each crèche from the site and the relevant recorded drive times.

Name	Distance	Drive Time
Paisti	2.2 km	5 mins
Little Paradise Creche	1.6 km	4 mins
Little Stars Montessori	1.7 km	5 mins
Sunny Days Montessori	950 m	3 mins
Mighty Oaks	650 m	2 mins
Canterbury Montessori School	3.2 km	5 mins
Springbrook Montessori Creche	4.0 km	6 mins
Little Fingers Playgroup	2.4 km	6 mins
St. Columba's Montessori School	2.4 km	6 mins
Douglas Community Pre School	2.3 km	6 mins
The Tree House Playgroup	6.0 km	6 mins

Table 1: List of childcare facilities with distance and subsequent drivetime from site

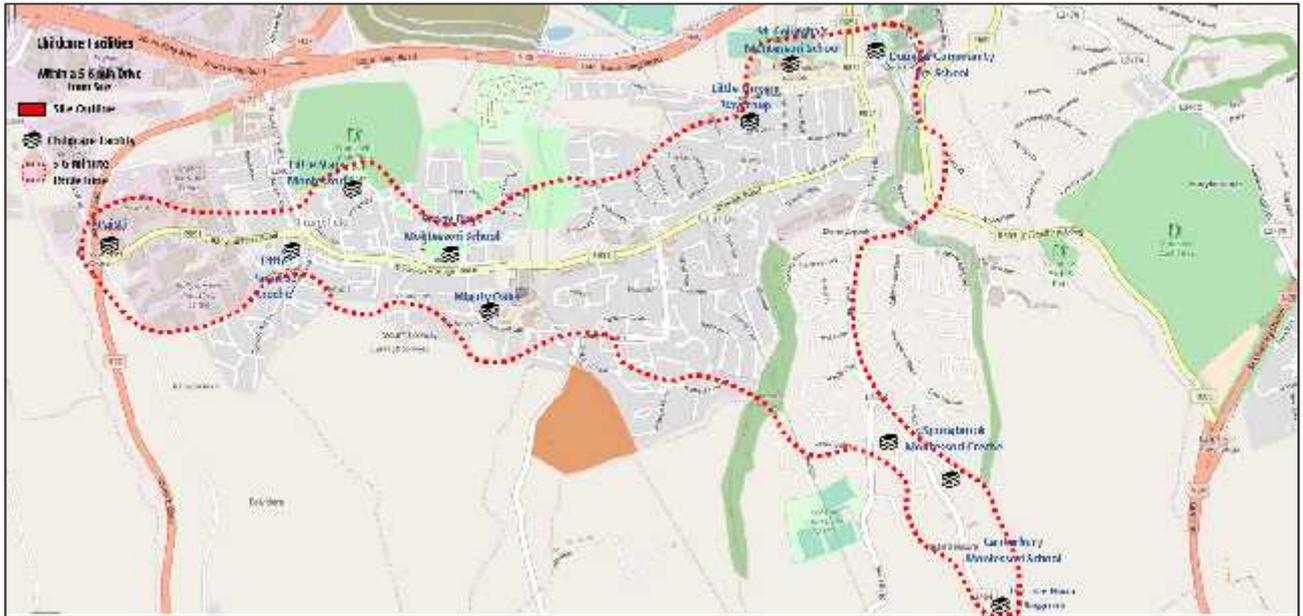


Fig. 2 Location of childcare facilities within 5-6 minute drivetime.

Grange is located in the commuter belt of Cork City as well as the major employment centres of Mahon, Douglas Village and Wilton. It is considered reasonable that a sizeable proportion of those commuting to these employment centres may also avail of childcare facilities in these areas. This has been illustrated in the above demographic research and therefore, for the purpose of this preliminary assessment, such facilities have been omitted from the research undertaken. As such, the identified capacity in the area should be viewed as a minimum.

Preschool inspection reports from TUSLA are available for 9 out of the 11 identified facilities. However, only 1 of these reports are up to date for the current year, thus, not all the relevant data necessary to carry out the assessment was available within these reports. In the absence of this information, information in relation to the facilities was gathered by speaking directly with their proprietors who advised on the total capacity of the relevant facility and the corresponding number of available places.

The overall findings are summarised as follows:

Childcare Facility	Capacity of Facility in Places	Available Places (2018/2019)	% Available Places
Paisti (Direct Provision Centre Creche)	15	7	54%
Little Paradise Creche	38	0	0%
Little Stars Montessori	33	5	15%
Sunny Days Montessori	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mighty Oaks	N/A	N/A	N/A
Canterbury Montessori School	17	3	18%
Springbrook Montessori Creche	44	0	0%
Little Fingers Playgroup	N/A	N/A	N/A
St. Columba's Montessori School	44	37 (in afternoon session only)	84% (in afternoon session only)
Douglas Community Pre School	37	21	44%
The Tree House Playgroup	30	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>28%</b>

TABLE 2: CAPACITY OF CHILDCARE FACILITIES IN MAHON AREA

**\*REPRESENTATION FROM TUSLA REPORTS AS SERVICE PROVIDER WAS UNREACHABLE.**

It was highlighted that of the 11 identified childcare facilities, 3 of the facilities engaged with are operating at full capacity for the current academic year. 3 facilities were unreachable after several attempts. The TUSLA site also did not have any form of TUSLA Report or correspondence available to the public for Sunny Days Montessori, Mighty Oaks and Little Fingers Playgroup. Given that minimal information was unavailable, we concluded that for the sake of accuracy, we would obtain that these creches were working at full capacity. The 11 crèches have a total of 73 no. places available between them for the 2018/2019 academic year. This represents a total of 28% availability of places within the identified 5-6-minute drive time. The findings on these facilities in the Grange region are generally representative of the trend for previous years, with no significant increase in demand for childcare places.

## Conclusion

The above assessment has been prepared in accordance with Council policy and national childcare guidelines, Evidence from the CSO Census confirms that a large proportion of the population (i.e. 44%) travel between 15mins and 45mins for work each day suggesting that a considerable amount of commuting. Owing to its proximity to the larger employment centres in Cork City and its environs, it is considered very likely that a sizable proportion of both the existing and future populations will use childcare services outside of the immediate area.

Notwithstanding this, the research undertaken identifies a capacity of 73 childcare places available within a 5-6-minute drive time of the site, with the furthest away being Douglas Community Pre-School (6 minutes). This excludes the 45-no. additional childcare facilities located within a 10-minute drive time of the site as well as available capacity in wider areas, including the Cork City environs and other employment centres, where it can be reasonably inferred that residents may avail of childcare services.

While Appendix 2 of the 'Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities' establishes an indicative standard of one childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas, meeting this standard in full is not considered appropriate for the proposed development. This area is well established and as the previous assessment has shown, so are its relevant childcare facilities. With an identified capacity of 28%, the overprovision of childcare facilities as part of the subject development would only act to undermine existing facilities in the area, creating a further vacuum in the market which could be detrimental to the viability of existing facilities in the area.

On this basis the proposed development does make provision for a crèche, however it is to be provided within phase 4 of development. This provision is deemed appropriate given:

- ) the number of childcare facilities identified in the area;
- ) the availability of childcare places for the current year 2018/2019; and
- ) the established demographic trend towards commuting.

Flexibility in terms of the timing of the delivery of the crèche on site is also important given the above. Currently, there is no identified demand for childcare places in the area and until a critical mass of population is reached, (i.e. through the construction and habitation of early phases of the proposed development) this situation is unlikely to change.

Given the existing provision in the area, it is considered that there is good childcare provision to meet the short to medium term childcare requirements of the area. It is important therefore that the Board allows flexibility in relation to the delivery of the crèche so that it is provided at a stage where there is sufficient demand to ensure its viability and that of existing services in the area and is not rigidly tied to the earlier phases of development.