

Childcare Demand Assessment

Large-Scale Residential Development

Flemington and Bremore, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin



Prepared on behalf of
Lagan Homes Balbriggan Ltd
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CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Proposed Development	3
2.1 Proposed Childcare Facility	3
3.0 Childcare Facilities – Policy Context	7
3.1 Section 28 Guidelines	7
3.2 Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029	8
4.0 Childcare Facilities– Existing Provision	8
5.0 Projected Childcare Demand	9
6.0 Conclusion	10

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This assessment accompanies a planning application for a Large Residential Development (LRD) by Lagan Homes Balbriggan Ltd. A crèche is proposed as part of the LRD to serve the needs of future residents with full-time capacity for 80no. childcare places with outdoor play area (153.4sqm). The crèche is located in close proximity to all new dwellings proposed and accessible to existing residents along Flemington Lane.

The purpose of this report is to assess if the childcare facility will provide adequate childcare spaces for the proposed development using a predicted population based on occupancy as well as the benchmark set out by the *Childcare Facilities- Guidelines for Planning Authorities*.

2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed large scale residential development (LRD) consists of 146no. dwellings in the form of 120no. houses and 26no. apartments in the following mix – 13no. 1-bed, 29no. 2-bed, 91no. 3-bed and 13no. 4-bed. All housing will be one or two storey in height. Duplex apartment buildings will be three storey in height. The proposal also provides for public open space including the provision of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), communal open space associated with apartments, landscaping, boundary treatments, car parking, bicycle parking structures, bin storage structures, works to Flemington Lane itself, infrastructure services and all other associated site development works.

The development will provide the first section of the Active Travel Route that will form a central spine through the Flemington Local Area Plan (LAP) lands which commences at the active travel hub and announced by the landmark building where the childcare facility is proposed, fronting Flemington Lane. Three new vehicular access roads off Flemington Lane will serve the development. One of these accesses is to the car park which will provide 3no. staff car parking spaces for the crèche in addition to visitor car parking and residents parking for the apartments. A drop off area serving the childcare facility is provided on Flemington Lane.

Table 1 - Dwelling Mix

Unit Type	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	Total
Houses	-	16	91	13	120
Apartments	13	13	-	-	26
Total	13	29	91	13	146
	9%	20%	62%	9%	100%

2.1 PROPOSED CHILDCARE FACILITY

The proposed development includes a standalone childcare facility that has been designed to cater for 80no. full-time childcare spaces within 4no. group rooms. Outside play space extends to 153.4sq.m. space and will be secured. Three car parking spaces are provided in line with Table 14.19 of the Fingal County Development Plan, in addition to a drop-off area on Flemington Lane. 18no bicycle parking spaces and 15no scooter parking spaces are provided for the crèche, which itself fronts onto the Active Travel Hub which provides further options for bicycle use.

Table 2 - Crèche design capacity.

Room	Age Group	Places
1	0-1	9
2	1-2	15
3	2-3	24
4	3-6	32
Total		80



Figure 1 - Crèche Location

The crèche floor plans locate all care rooms on one level with a first floor pop up for office administration and food preparation. As illustrated in the floor plans below, a single corridor serving all care rooms will gain natural light through a glass façade that will provide an attractive outlook into the outdoor play area.

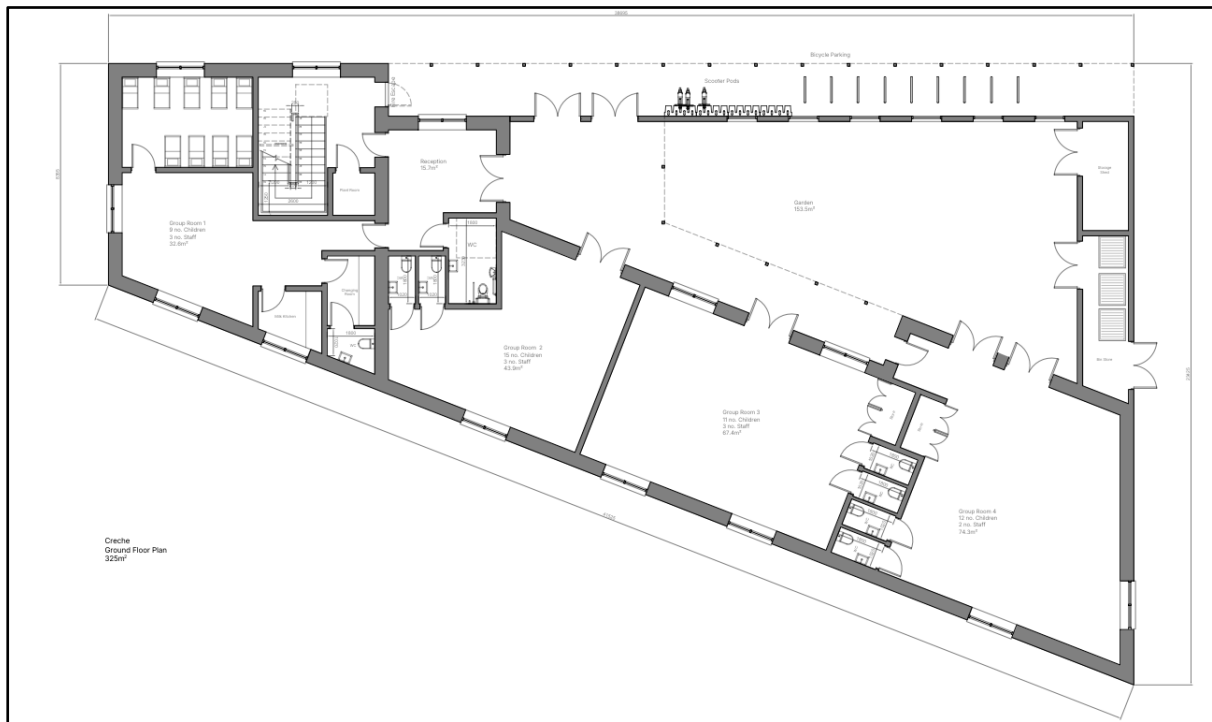


Figure 2 - Ground Floor plan (JFOC Drawing 5001)

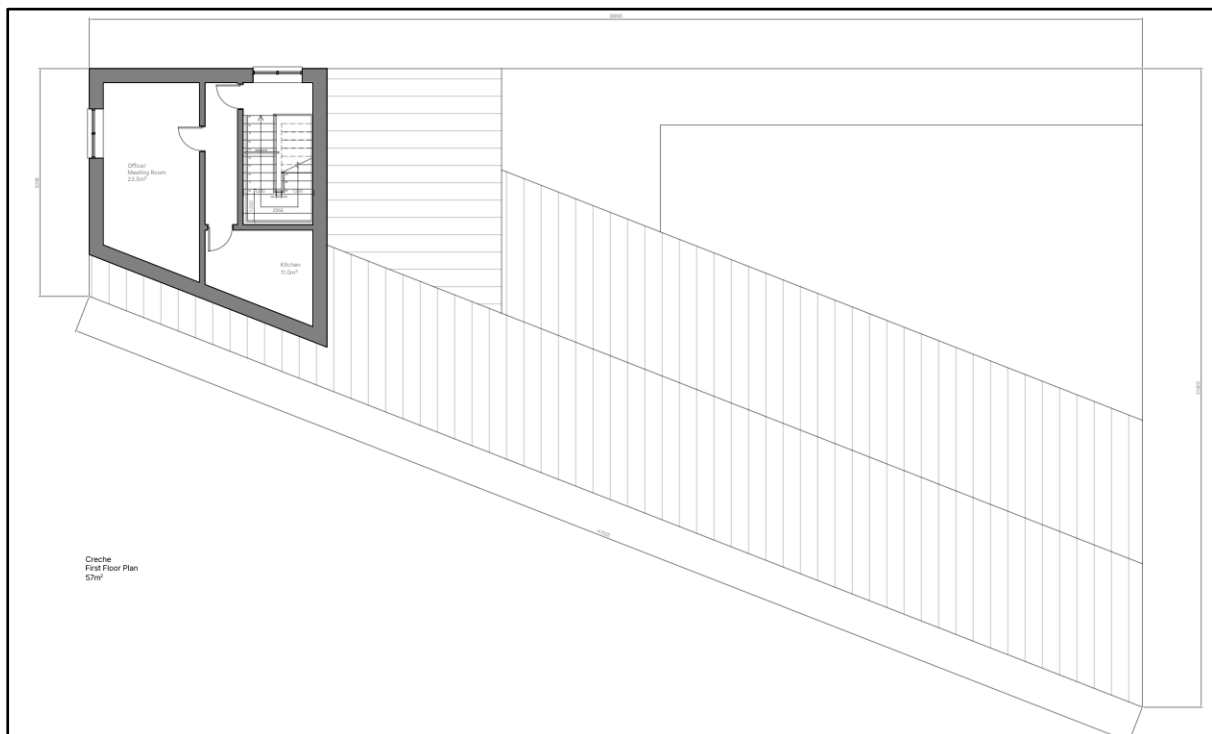


Figure 3 - First Floor pop up Plan (JFOC Drawing 5002)



Figure 4 - Front (northern) Elevation (JFOC 3D Architectural Visualisations)

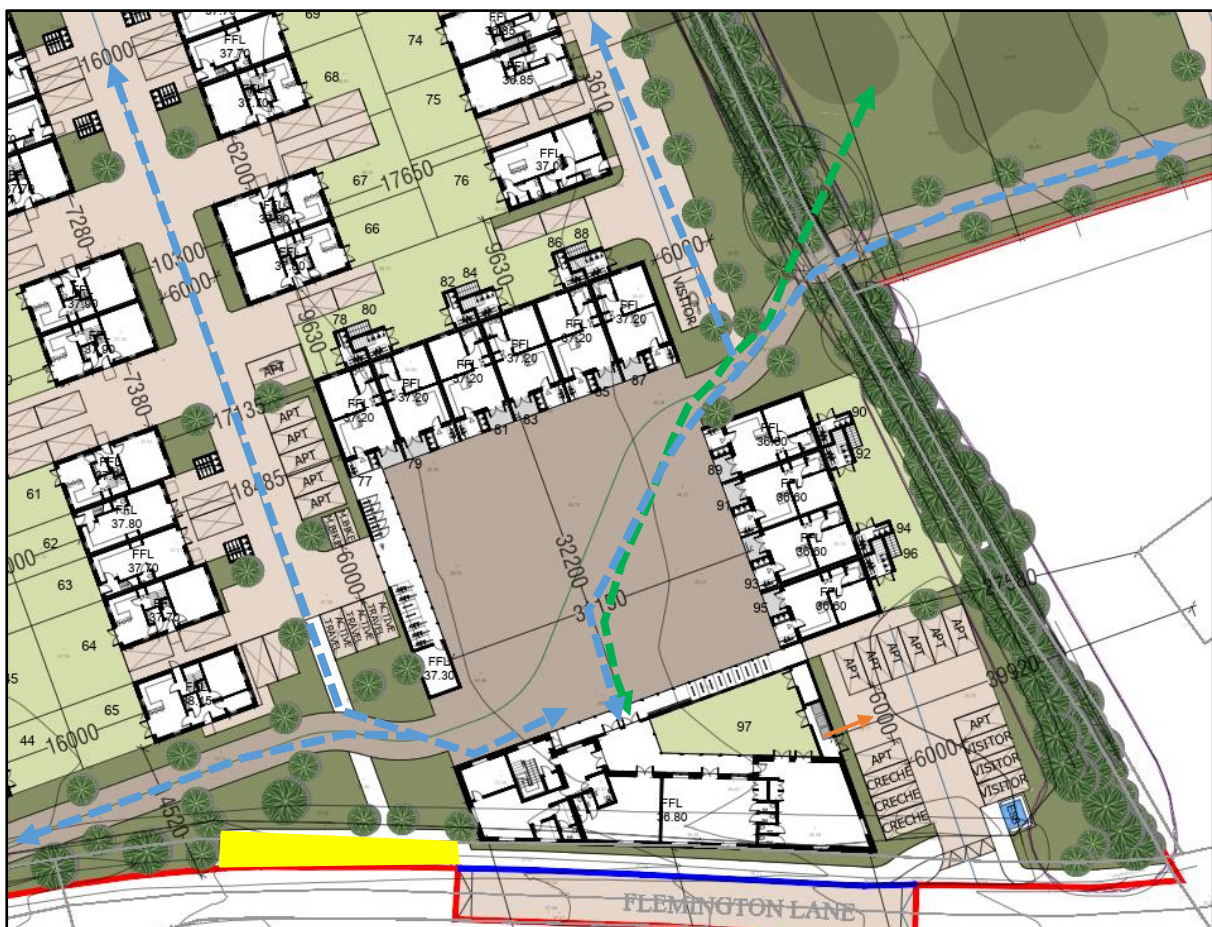


Figure 5 - Context

The position of the childcare facility will facilitate access by sustainable modes of transport while keeping traffic outside and avoiding through traffic during peak hours. Children can walk or scoot from their homes along safe pedestrian friendly homezones and across the public plaza with a traffic-free route to nearby public open space. The adjoining car park serves the childcare facility with staff car parking and bin collection. The drop off area along Flemington Lane provides easy access without navigating the internal streets.

3.0 CHILDCARE FACILITIES – POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 SECTION 28 GUIDELINES

Section 2.4 of the 2001 *Childcare Facilities- Guidelines for Planning Authorities* recommend that in new housing areas at least one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings would be appropriate. According to the Guidelines, appropriate locations for childcare facilities are as follows-

- (i) In new communities/larger new housing estates.
- (ii) The vicinity of concentrations of work places, such as industrial estates, business parks and any other locations where there are significant numbers working.
- (iii) In the vicinity of schools.
- (iv) Neighbourhood and town centres.
- (v) Adjacent to public transport corridors, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways.

By reference to Circular Letter PL 3-2016 issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government dated 31st of March 2016, it is noted the Department is considering revising the 2001 Childcare Guidelines. The content of the Circular is reflected in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2025) which states at section 4.7;

“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.” (emphasis added)

The proposed development of 146no. dwellings includes 13no. one-bedroom apartments. The calculation of childcare demand excluding one-bedroom apartments and using the benchmark of 20no. child places for every 75no. dwellings, results in a requirement for 35no. childcare places.

The design of the proposed childcare facility provides 80no. child to allow for Character Area 3 of the Local Area Plan which will be subject to a separate planning application. Character Area 3 is estimated to provide c.109-140 no units under the Flemington Local Area Plan. As the mix of units is not known, no discount can be made for 1-bedroom apartments. Based on the upper estimate of 140no. dwellings and applying the benchmark of 20no. child places for every 75no. dwellings results in a requirement for 37no. childcare spaces. Together this amounts to 72no. childcare spaces. In order to make efficient use of the care rooms having regard to child to staff ratios, the crèche has been designed for 80no. childcare spaces.

3.2 FINGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

Objective CIO5028 – Childcare Facilities and New Development

Require the provision of appropriate childcare facilities as an essential part of new residential and mixed-use developments in accordance with the provisions of the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 or any superseding Guidelines, or as required by the Planning Authority. Such facilities should be provided in a timely manner and be an integral part of the development proposal.

The provision of a childcare facility within the proposed development is in keeping with the above Development Plan objective.

4.0 CHILDCARE FACILITIES– EXISTING PROVISION

An audit of existing childcare facilities has been undertaken within the area illustrated by Figure 6. Information was obtained from the Pobal website and Tusla Inspection Reports.

There are four existing childcare facilities within a 1km radius of the application site. These facilities have a combined capacity of 189no childcare spaces based on information from Tulsa Regulatory Inspection Reports. This number increases to 280no childcare spaces when a 2km radius is applied.

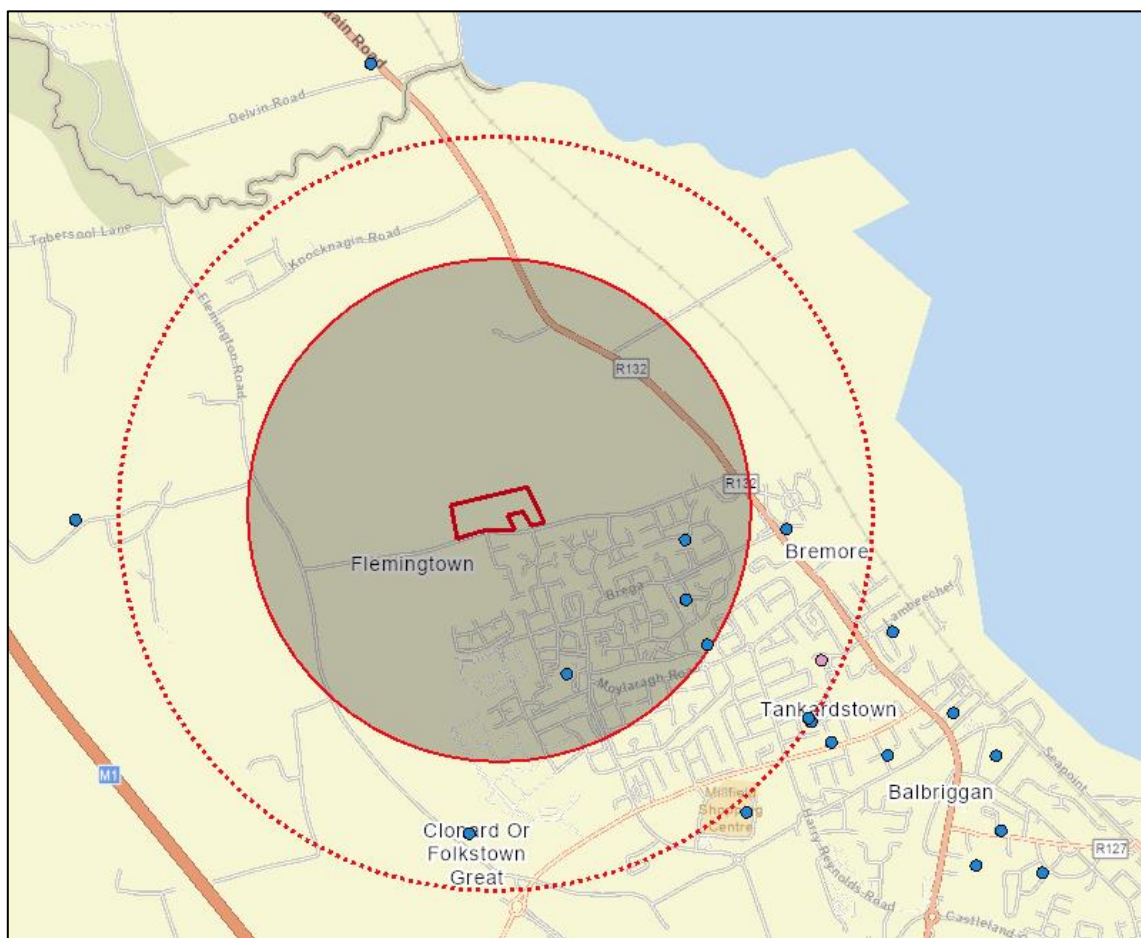


Figure 6 - Childcare in Balbriggam

Table 3 - Childcare Facilities within a 1KM and 2KM radius of the application site.

1km radius	2km
Snowdrops crèche	Cocoon Childcare
Bremore Castle Montessori	Balbriggan Community Childcare
The Children's Village	Circle of Friends Montessori
Really Cool Afterschool & Montessori School Ltd	

Table 4 - Details of Childcare Services

Service Name	Age Profile	Service Type	Childcare Spaces
Snowdrops crèche	0-6 years	Full Day	35
Bremore Castle Montessori	2-6 years	Sessional	19
The Children's Village	1-6 years	Full Day	95
Really Cool Afterschool & Montessori School Ltd	2-6 years	Part Time	40
Cocoon Childcare	0-6 years	Full Day	15
Balbriggan Community Childcare	1-6 years	Full Day, Part-time, Sessional	54
Circle of Friends Montessori	2-6 years	Sessional	22
Total			280

The above table shows an overall combined capacity of 280no childcare places within 2-kilometres of the application site.

5.0 PROJECTED CHILDCARE DEMAND

This section considers the potential demand for childcare from new residents within the proposed development using demographic data from Census 2022.

Applying the same demographic to the proposed development as that recorded for Balbriggan in the 2022 Census, it would equate to 30no children aged 0-4 (7%) and 81no Aged 5-14 (19%) in the new development. This results in 111no children aged between 0 and 14.

The 2022 Census recorded the number of children in childcare. The results for Balbriggan are detailed in Table 6 below.

Table 5 - Census 2022 Results for Balbriggan

Balbriggan - Children in Childcare		Total Children	% of Children in Childcare
Ages 0-4	652	1,605	41%
Ages 5-14	843	4,576	15%

Applying the same use of childcare services in Balbriggan recorded above to the new population in the proposed development would assume 12no. children (41%) aged 0-4 will use some type of childcare and 12no. children (15%) aged 5-14 will use some type of childcare. **This is a total of 24no children that would avail of childcare.**

According to Census 2022 results for Fingal County Council, a crèche/Montessori/playground/afterschool service is the most popular form of childcare for children aged under 15 years, at 45%. However, it is most important for children under 8 years. 47% of children aged 9-14 years use an unpaid relative or family member and only 17% use a form of childcare like a crèche.

Based on the demographic profile of the new community and assuming all the children in the proposed development that use childcare use a crèche, this would require **24no. childcare places** to support the potential demand generated.

The proposed childcare facility has been sized to accommodate the proposed development and the adjacent Character Area 3 as identified in the Flemington Local Area Plan. Character Area 3 is estimated provide an additional 140no. dwellings. Applying the benchmark of 20no. child places for every 75no. dwellings results in a requirement for 37no. childcare spaces for Character Area 3.

The predicted demand from the proposed development (24no. child places) in addition to the estimated demand from Character Area 3 (37no. places) would equate to 61no. child places. The crèche has been designed to cater for 80no. full-time childcare spaces. With sessional services, this capacity could be greater.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed development comprises 146no residential units in a mix of houses and apartments. The proposed crèche is designed to cater for 80no children in full-time services, accounting for the projected demand from Character Areas 3 and 4 as identified in the Flemington Local Area Plan.

The childcare facility proposed provides adequate capacity based on the benchmark recommended by the Childcare Guidelines and taking account of Census 2022 results for Balbriggan.



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