



Mungret Residential Development

Social Infrastructure Audit

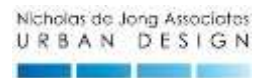
Proposed Development at Dromdarrig, Mungret, Co. Limerick

December 2023

Application prepared with



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chartered town planning consultants

Title:	Mungret Social Infrastructure Audit	
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Date:	December 2023	
Issue:	01	

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide an audit of the existing and proposed community facilities serving the Mungret area and to assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to service the proposed development.

The proposed development seeks the construction of 250 no. residential units, 2 no community facilities, a creche and a community facility with ancillary café, located south west of Limerick City in the southern environs. The 7.2 hectares site is located approximately 5km to the west of Limerick City Centre and 2km east of Mungret Village. The site benefits from good access to the strategic road network. The site is surrounded by several roads including:

- Quinn's Cross to Mungret regional road (R589) and by the N69 to the north;
- R510 road which extends from Quinn's Cross to the Raheen roundabout; and
- R526 Raheen – Patrickswell regional road and by the Caher Road to the south.

This report provides information on the key population changes occurring as a result of the proposed development and the potential demographic changes arising. The report contains an audit of the existing social infrastructure in the area relating to:

- Open space and recreation;
- Education;
- Health and social service facilities;
- Cultural facilities;
- Religious and community facilities and,
- Retail provision.

These facilities are assessed to ascertain if there are any shortfalls in service provision, particularly considering future demographic changes. Recommendations are then made for the future development of community services to overcome current deficits.

2.0 AREA CONTEXT

The southern environs of the city is a growing urban area to the south of Limerick City centre. Mungret is a priority area within the Limerick Metropolitan District and is a zoned urban extension of Limerick City under the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, as extended.

The general area is residential in character but is complimented with significant commercial, community and recreational facilities. The area is located in a suburban context close to rural amenities, established communities with schools and retail services. Public bus transport is provided to the city centre via Father Russell Road (R859) and the R526.

The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 provides an updated strategy inclusive of a masterplan with detailed objectives on how this area should be developed and managed, to meet the needs of all existing and future residents. The proposed development is part of an opportunity site identified in the Limerick Development Plan. The objective for the entire site is to guide, promote and facilitate, but not prescribe future development in the area. The designation seeks to establish parameters for

development proposals providing an overall design concept addressing open space, transport, and social infrastructure. The LDP states that the proposed development cannot be looked at in isolation from the communities that adjoin it and seeks to ensure that the developing area integrates successfully with the communities and character areas adjoining it. The National Planning Framework (NPF) echoes this vision, spotlighting Mungret as a crucial enabler for Limerick's future growth, particularly in developing new greenfield areas for housing alongside supportive public transport and infrastructure.

In 2013 Mungret village benefitted from a major upgrade of the village centre with new walkways, green areas, and traffic management installed. New cycleways and footpaths have also been provided linking the village with the wider residential area of Raheen. The area is subject to significant development interest with new homes constructed at The Grange, Mungret Woods and north of the R859 at Sli Na Manach. Construction is well advanced on a site for 203 no. homes (Mungret Gate and Baunacloka Heights) accessed off the R510 to the south of Quinn's Cross, north-east of the application site. This development also includes Phase I of the proposed Link Street, which ultimately provide access to the subject site.

3.0 APPROACH AND SCOPE OF REPORT

The Limerick Development Plan (LDP) boundary extends across a significant landbank and seeks to establish a framework for the planned, coordinated and sustainable development of the southern environs and for the conservation and enhancement of its natural and built environment over the next six years and beyond. The LDP provides guidance on how this development can be achieved, what new developments are needed, where public and private resource inputs are required, and guidance for development proposed in the LDP.

The proposed development has very specific and defined boundaries and notwithstanding its location within a wider 'planned' area, it is important to ensure that the future residents of this development have adequate social and community infrastructure within a reasonable walking distance of their homes. Accordingly, an audit of facilities within a 15 minute walk time of the subject site was undertaken with study intervals of 5 and 10 minute walk times also. An outer limit of 15 minutes was chosen for the study area, as urbanists have determined that this is the maximum distance that people are prepared to walk to utilise facilities within a neighbourhood.

This report seeks to:

- Provide an analysis of the key recent demographic trends affecting the study area and an assessment of the likely future demographic trends as a result of the implementation of the proposed development;
- An audit of the local community, recreational and social infrastructure;
- Identification of the key weaknesses and deficiencies in local community and social infrastructure;
- Recommendation of key projects and initiatives that would address key deficiencies and would adequately provide for the population resulting from the proposed development.

4.0 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The general area has experienced significant population growth in recent times largely attributed to new residential development that has occurred across the developing area of the southern environs. The Electoral Divisions (ED) of Ballycummin the area in which the development is located recorded a population of 19,394 persons and 4,704 families in the last census (2022).

The ED of Ballycummin recorded a 5.4 per cent increase in population over the last inter censal period (2016-2022). The area has an evidently young population with 22 per cent of the overall population comprising of 25-39 year olds. The ED recorded 6,719 households in 2022 with the majority of households comprising two persons only. The average household size in the area is also decreasing with one child families the predominant size (56%) followed very closely by families with two children.

The proposed development comprises of 250 no. units incorporating 2, 3 and 4 bed units. Based on recent Census of Population data, the average household size has been determined at 2.7 persons per unit. The proposed development is therefore likely to generate an additional population of 675 no. persons. However, having regard to the provision of social and community infrastructure it is necessary to have regard to the wider population and their associated demands as well as the wider provision of existing facilities in the area. Accordingly, in the consideration of existing social and community infrastructure in the area it will be necessary to consider the existing wider population of the Limerick Development Plan in addition to the 675 no. persons arising from the proposed development.

5.0 GENERAL BENCHMARKING AND STANDARDS OF PROVISION

There are a number of statutory and non-statutory documents and guidelines which detail the level of community and social infrastructure provision that is suitable and appropriate to a given area. Of significant importance in this instance is the LDP and its vision for the future development of the area including the provision of critical supporting infrastructure.

1. The LDP has certain aspirations for sustainable development within various districts of Limerick City and Suburbs, including Mungret and Annacotty, to foster residential, educational, recreational, employment, and commercial growth. The overarching goal is to enhance urban consolidation, creating a compact city region with better integrated infrastructure, improved public transport linkages for local residential populations, and a high provision of community facilities and amenities.
2. The National Planning Framework (NPF) recognises that it is important that the requirements of a community are matched to the population in order to ensure that there is a sustainable level of provision. There is a hierarchy of access to social infrastructure, whereby specialist and high quality functions such as hospitals tend to develop in larger settlements whereas small communities need to sustain strong community infrastructure such as a multi-purpose hall, primary school, post office . local shop or pub.
3. The Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) state that no substantial residential development should take place without an assessment of existing school capacity. This view is echoed by the Department of Education who provide a code of practice on 'The Provision of Schools in the Planning System'.

4. The Urban Design Manual states that there should be an emphasis on the provision of good urban design, open space and public plaza's which can facilitate social interaction and provide opportunities that the provision of facilities alone may not.
5. The Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) support the provision of local retail units as they provide access to local facilities especially the elderly, persons with mobility impairments, families and those without access to private transport.
6. For new housing developments, Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) recommends an average of one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings. The guidelines also state that authorities could consider the provision of larger units catering for up to 30 / 40 children in major residential developments.
7. The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities; the Department of Education and Science (renamed Department of Education and Skills) and the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government (renamed Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government) (2008) advised that 12 per cent of the population are expected to present for primary education. Based on this, plus an estimate of future growth, plus an assessment of the capacity of the existing primary and post primary schools in the area, the Department of Education will supply estimates to the local authority for the need for new schools or the extension of existing schools based on the requirements arising from new developments.
8. The Code of Practice further advises that the planning authorities will anticipate the demand for new schools infrastructure that will arise from new development within the drafting process for development plans and local area plans using the Department of Education and Skills approach previously outlined and through these plans will facilitate the identification of suitable lands to meet the need for new schools or expansion of existing schools to serve new or expanding communities.

6.0 EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

An audit was carried out of the existing social and community infrastructure within a 15 minute walk time of the site and within the wider Limerick Development Plan area under the following headings:

- Open space, sport and recreation;
- Education;
- Childcare facilities;
- Health facilities and social services;
- Cultural facilities; and
- Retail and Entertainment

The audit consisted of a combination of desktop analysis and on the ground analysis. Each of the above six points are addressed in the subsequent paragraphs

6.1 Open Space, Sport & Recreation

Recreation and open space are an important part of every community's life. They require pro-active encouragement and enhancement to ensure participation by all within the local community. The area of the application site and the immediate environs include a significant amount of open spaces.

The former institutional grounds of Mungret College and its surrounds are located immediately to the north and adjoining the subject site. The grounds accommodate a significant regional park inclusive of active and passive recreational space. It includes the development of 'Mungret Inclusion Park and Playground' on an 11 hectare site comprising of 3,000 square metres of play equipment. A 2km walk and cycle path has also been provided. The scale of this parkland not only serves the immediate residential developments of the southern environs but will also provide significant recreational facilities to the wider Limerick City area. The proposed development is within 400m of this parkland.

The grounds of Mungret St. Pauls GAA Club are located within 15 minutes of the subject site. Although forming part of a club, these grounds provide important sports facilities to the area. In addition to clubs there are a number of gyms located in the wider area including Womens Fitness Limerick, Motion Fitness and Dooradoyle Gym which also hosts a swimming pool that is easily accessible and open to the general public.

6.2 Education

There are three primary schools located within a 10-minute walking distance of the subject site. The total enrolment of these schools is currently 1,416 pupils. Enrolment figures were secured from the Department of Education and Science. The enrolment numbers for St. Nessian's School appear to be falling. Both Limerick City East Educate Together and Gaelscoil an Riathin have new school buildings and campuses located north west of the application site.

School	Enrolment Figure 2020/2021	Enrolment Figure 2021/2022	Enrolment Figure 2022/2023
Limerick City East Educate Together	400 pupils	393 pupils	408 pupils
St. Nessian's National School	708 pupils	690 pupils	678 pupils
Gaelscoil an Raithin	358 pupils	357 pupils	387 pupils

Table 1.0 Primary School

At present Mungret Community College operates from the building of the former Mungret College protected structure. However, planning permission for a new school premises with capacity to accommodate 1,000 pupils was secured and this new school is currently under construction. Crescent College Comprehensive is located within close proximity to catchment area with a student enrolment figure of 950 pupils for 2022/2023 academic year.

6.3 Childcare Facilities

The proposal includes the development of a 480sqm childcare facility, with capacity to accommodate up to 70 no. children. The area is well serviced with existing childcare facilities, both sessional and full time.

There are 9 no. different registered TUSLA (The Child and Family Agency) childcare facilities within a 15 minute walk of the subject site. Within this catchment, all childcare facilities were contacted directly by phone, providing an opportunity to secure up to date capacity and demand statistics from each individual facility. It was difficult to secure such information due to commercial sensitivities and accordingly where the childcare facility did not respond, statistics for each facility were secured from TUSLA and the inspection reports detailed on the website. TUSLA provides independent data on childcare facilities generated from their inspections of childcare facilities. These inspections are undertaken by TUSLA to ensure that the childcare facilities are compliant with legislative requirements. From a planning perspective, this information provides standardised and comparative data inclusive of; childcare capacity, number of children registered, and childcare take up (on day of inspection).

From consideration of the capacity and take-up of each facility, as illustrated in the table below, it is evident that there is a total of 289 no. childcare spaces available within a 15 minute walk of the site.

Walking distance approx (min.)	Name of Childcare	Total Capacity
Childcare within a 15 minute walk of the site	Eleanor's Montessori	10
	Naionra an Raithin	11
	Little Treasures Creche	60
Childcare in the area close to the site	Tír na Nóg	18
	Munroe Kids Club	44
	Whitethorns Montessori School	22
	Dooradoyle Montessori School AMI	40
	Tiny Friends Creche	64
	St. Anthony's Montessori	20
	Total	289

As on the day of TUSLA Inspection Report 2022 Where number of spaces occupied could not be confirmed it was presumed at maximum to ensure worst case scenario is portrayed.

Table 2.0 Childcare Facilities

6.4 Health Facilities and Social Service

There are two medical centres operational within a 15 minute walking distance of the subject site, namely St. Patricks Walk and Raheen Medical Centre operated by GP's. Dooradoyle Health Centre operated by the HSE is also within the 15 minute catchment area. These health centres are complimented by the services on offer from the Limerick Regional Hospital.

There are two dental practices operational within the 15 minute walking distance including Raheen Dental Surgery and Racefield Dental Surgery located east of the site. In addition, one dental practice is located outside the 15 minute walking distance.

6.5 Cultural Facilities

The county library headquarters is located in Lissanalta House in Dooradoyle, with the closest library located beside the Council buildings and the Crescent Shopping Centre in Dooradoyle.

There are two churches within a 15-minute walk time of the site, St. Nessan's Church and Mungret Church. St. Pauls Church is located slightly beyond the 15 minute walking boundary. Limerick Christian Centre Mungret is within a 5 minute walking distance of the site.

The closest cinema is located within the Crescent Shopping Centre some 3.5km to the north east of the subject site. Other entertainment facilities are largely located in the city centre and surrounding suburbs.

6.6 Retail & Entertainment

Mungret Village is located north-west of the site containing a number of local shops and services including a post office, credit union, takeaway, barbers, dog grooming and the Westward Ho Bar & Grill. Connectivity between the lands surrounding Mungret College and Mungret Village has been enhanced through public realm improvements along the R859 and in Mungret Village centre, including the provision of cycle-paths and footpaths.

The Crescent Shopping Centre, a large retail centre is located approximately 3.5km, north-east of the site with significant facilities and services. Although not within the 15 minute walking distance this centre is accessible from the site by public transport via the No. 314 bus.

In addition to the Crescent Shopping Centre there are 2 no. neighbourhood centres providing local services to the surrounding area. One centre is located on Fr. Russell Road, north east of the site and within a 5 minute walk. The other centre is located at the South Court Hotel, south east of the site off the R526. These neighbourhood centres provide significant local retail facilities including a café, bank, convenience supermarket, restaurants and a gym.

Raheen Business Park is located a short distance from the subject site along with other commercial units and car showrooms and is currently accessible from the R510. This is an important existing employment zone and is an opportunity for the area for future local employment.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF ADEQUACY

As detailed in Section 4.0 of this report the ED area of Ballycummin, in which the subject site is located, had a population of 19,394 in 2022. The Ballycummin ED encompasses much of the southern environs Area as defined in the LDP. It has been estimated, based on average household sizes, that the proposed development will lead to an increase of 675 no. persons in the area.

Whilst the audit undertaken for the purpose of this report has had particular regard to facilities within a 15 minute walking distance of the site, it must be acknowledged that there are additional facilities also located within the wider LDP area. Accordingly, it is difficult to assess the adequacy of facilities in a given area based on electoral division boundaries. The study area is located within the Mungret Framework Opportunity Site, as part of the master plan. A masterplan has been provided for this site allowing for a plan led approach to be taken for the provision of community facilities to serve proposed and existing residential development in the area. It should be noted that land comprising the western extremity of the site adjoins land zoned for local centre use, which is intended to be developed to facilitate facilities and services capable of serving the proposed development and the surrounding area.

This section of the report identifies the adequacy of the community and social infrastructure in the area having regard to the projected increase in population arising from the proposed development as calculated in Section 4.0.

7.1 Open Space Sport & Recreation

The provision of well-managed and maintained open spaces can facilitate the interaction of all sections of the community. Public open spaces can promote a sense of place, provide opportunities for sport and recreation and can open up opportunities for environmental education, for local groups, schools and individuals. Well-designed spaces should reduce the opportunity for crime by use of passive surveillance through overlooking.

The National Playing Fields Association is a UK organisation which has a core aim to protect playing fields and additional responsibility for ensuring that people have play, sport and recreational space close to where they live. The organisation recommends a 'six acre standard' in the provision of open space for recreational purposes. This six acre standard (2.4 hectares) should apply for every 1,000 people comprising of 1.6 hectares (4 acres) for outdoor sport and 0.8 hectares (2 acres) for children's play. Adjoining the site, a new parkland has recently been provided, comprising 11 hectares. In theory this park alone has the capacity of serving a population of 4,500 people. The range of facilities provided within this park ensures the needs of all age groups are served in terms of both fitness and leisure needs.

If one was to apply the UK's National Playing Fields Association Standard to the current population within the ED of Ballycummin and include the population arising from the proposed development, there would be a requirement for 43 hectares of public open space within the environs. Accordingly, notwithstanding the isolated areas of open space which are intended to serve individual residential developments, it could be concluded that there is a deficiency in the provision of public open space in the wider southern environs. However, in the context of the proposed development and the plan-led approach to development in Mungret, it can be concluded that the adjoining Mungret Park is adequate to serve the needs of the proposed development and the immediate adjoining community and that an additional public park of similar size to Mungret is required in an alternative location to serve existing residential development.

Some 16% (1.16 hectares) of the total site area within the proposed development has been allocated as open space. The audit of open space excludes such areas and accordingly these localised areas of open space are in addition to the more significant planned public parks and which also services the existing and future population.

In terms of sports facilities, the need is largely met by private clubs and organisations including GAA Clubs and Sports and Leisure Clubs. Approximately 20 hectares of lands in the southern environs are private pitches and approximately 5 hectares of Council lands in the area is leased to similar bodies for sport. The closest sports facility to the proposed development is St. Pauls GAA Club.

Having regard to the existing and proposed provision of open space and recreational facilities it is considered that there are adequate facilities to serve the proposed development and the immediate surrounding area. The proposed development will contribute to the local provision of such facilities through the provision of localised open space.

7.2 Education

The proposed development will give rise to an increase in the number of required school places in the medium to long term.

The Department of Education and Science uses the assumption that 11.3 per cent of the population are of primary school-going age. The proposed development of 250 no. units includes 55 no. units for older persons. These will not generate an educational requirement. Accordingly, the proposed development comprising 195 no. units will generate an educational need for 59 no. primary school places. Working with a PTR (pupil teacher ratio) of 25:1, this would result in a need for just over two additional classrooms in the area. There are three primary schools located within just 15 minute walking distance of the subject site with a total enrolment of 1,473 pupils.

Of significance is that the enrolment figures of St. Nessian's has decreased in recent academic years. Further 2 no. new school campuses have been developed in proximity to the site and these new school buildings were planned to accommodate increasing population growth in the area. Accordingly, it is considered that the area is well services with primary school facilities.

In terms of post primary requirements and using the assumption that 8.5 per cent of the population are of post primary school going age, an increased population of 527 no. persons would create a need for an additional 45 no. post primary places. The proposed new Mungret Community College with capacity for 1,000 pupils will likely absorb this demand.

7.3 Childcare Facilities

The *'Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001, (DEHLG)* recommends that planning authorities should require the provision of at least one childcare facility for new housing areas unless there are significant reasons to the contrary for example, development consisting of single bed apartments or where there are adequate childcare facilities in adjoining developments. The Guidelines recommend that for new housing areas, an average of one childcare facility for each seventy-five dwellings would be appropriate although it does state 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.

Excluding consideration of those units provided specifically for the elderly, the proposed development will generate a childcare requirement from 195 no. units. For the purposes of this assessment, the provisions of the Childcare Guidelines are adopted and effectively form the worst-case scenario. They indicate that 20 spaces are required for every 75 dwelling units, or a rate of 0.26 per unit. This would equate to 51 no. childcare spaces.

The proposed development provides a creche facility with capacity for 70 no. children, which is more than adequate to accommodate the development proposal. Furthermore, the childcare audit undertaken confirms that there are nine childcare facilities within a 15 minute walk of the subject site with total capacity for 289 no. children.

7.4 Health Facilities & Social Services

A number of doctor's surgeries and dentists are located within and surrounding the local area and the HSE operated Dooradoyle Heath Centre provides a health service to the immediate area.

There are no published standards to facilitate assessment or adequacy of need. However, the Primary Care Strategy, issued by the Department of Health and Children in 2001, provides some form of guidance on the matter as it set out a new framework for the planning and development of primary care between 2001 and 2011. This strategy promoted a local team based approach to service provision with a primary care team operating in an area serving approximately 10,000 people. This would suggest the critical threshold population required to sustain the provision of such health services.

The proposed development will represent a modest increase in population relative to the 10,000 catchment population recommended and accordingly it is considered that the proposed development will not adversely impact on existing services in the area.

Whilst the HSE Dooradoyle Health Centre is located in proximity to the subject site, medical and GP practices are not robustly available within a 15 minute walk of the site. However, Limerick Regional Hospital and Ambulance Centre are sited within the 15 minute catchment area providing acute hospital services.

7.5 Cultural Facilities

The area would appear to be well served with two churches within a 15 minute walk of the site. Limerick Christian Centre also provides additional services to the wider community. The proposed development will also accommodate a community facility.

Mungret Community Centre, located on the grounds of St. Pauls GAA Club also appears to provide and support wider community services which operate from the community hall. Aside from the existing facilities there would appear to be little other cultural or community facilities within the area. However, the future development of Mungret College and its grounds and the proximity of the area and the subject site to the wider cultural facilities on offer within the city centre and immediate surrounding area cannot be understated and is likely to meet the demand and needs of the area on a wider basis.

7.6 Retail & Entertainment

The immediate area is well supplied in terms of retail services and facilities. The proposed development provides for a number of community facilities with a small café ancillary to the main use of the main community building. These facilities will complement existing retail provision in the area and will provide opportunities for local community groups and organisations to avail of space, operate services and provide facilities.

Retail services within the 15 minute walking distance are adequate providing both comparison and convenience shopping to meet the needs of the population. The existing entertainment possibilities within a 15 minute walk of the site are limited. The proximity of the area to The Crescent Shopping Centre must be acknowledged which hosts a 13 screen Omniplex Cinema along with a wide range of dining facilities providing an important entertainment outlet within the general vicinity of the subject site.

The provision of retail and entertainment uses is very much dependent on external economic factors and the demand arising for such services. Should the demand exist and economic factors justify the provision of such services, the important consideration is that there is adequate land zoned to provide a neighbourhood centre inclusive of retail/commercial units as set out in the masterplan.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed development will give rise to demand for existing services and facilities but the demand will be minimal. The audit has confirmed that there is adequate public open space and recreational facilities available and proposed in the area to serve existing and future population growth. There is also adequate educational capacity with two new primary schools already constructed and planning permission sought for a new post primary school.

The development proposes local open space to serve the immediate needs of the development in accordance with the benchmark set out in the LDP. The proposal also includes a childcare facility to cater for 70 no. children and a community facility. The inclusion of this facility and the existing facilities within a 15 minute walking distance of the site the demand for childcare would be adequately catered for based on the sizes of family units within the ED of Ballycummin in the 2022 Census.

The proposed development is part of an identified zoned opportunity site, in an area identified for significant growth in the LDP. Significantly this area of the city has benefited from extensive infrastructure provision in advance of houses being constructed, including schools, parks and amenities and road infrastructure. The LDP seeks to coordinate the future development of the area and in this regard the proposed development represents a plan led approach to development, conforming with the overall requirements of the LDP.