COAKLEY O'NEILL
town planning

Social & Community Audit

Large-Scale Residential Development at

Ringwood, Blarney

Prepared in December 2025 on behalf of

Clockstrike Ltd.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 11.160 of the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* addresses the need for community infrastructure to support new development, and states the following:

> *Development proposals for 100 or more homes will be required to prepare and submit a Community Infrastructure Assessment (CIA) in support of the planning application. It should assess the impacts of the development proposals on community infrastructure and where there is a deficit in community infrastructure having regard to existing or committed capacity improvements within the City Neighbourhood or larger catchment as the case may be depending on the type of infrastructure, the development proposals will be encouraged to address the deficiency through on-site provision. Community facilities will be required to be provided in tandem with the development of large new residential areas.*

1.2 Accordingly, this Social and Community Audit (SCA) has been prepared by Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd., on behalf of our clients, Clockstrike Ltd., to accompany an application for a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) on lands at Ringwood, Blarney, Cork.

1.3 The purpose of this SCA is to examine and analyse the availability and capacity of existing social and community infrastructure provision in the vicinity of the proposed development site, and to determine future requirements based on anticipated population growth as a result of the proposed LRD.

1.4 Social and community infrastructure relates to the provision of services and facilities which are essential for supporting and sustaining the health, wellbeing, and social development of a place. Social and community infrastructure facilities include, for example, education, childcare, and healthcare services such as GP surgeries and hospitals, community specific services such as libraries, community centres, and various local support services, as well as spaces which can offer active sports and passive recreational activities.

1.5 Social and community infrastructure is not only functional but can also provide an invisible platform of community and social interaction that contributes towards quality of life, social cohesion and a strong sense of place. Provision of such infrastructure in the vicinity of the proposed development site is therefore vital to support the surrounding existing residential base and anticipated increase in population as a result of the proposed LRD, with regard to both physical facilities and aspects of local community life that foster social engagement.

1.6 This SCA has been considered in the context of the spatial development objectives for Cork City that are set out in statutory policy documents at national, regional and local level. This SCA was conducted using desktop research and multiple site visits during November 2025.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 The subject site is located immediately east of Blarney town centre inside the town's settlement boundary and is approximately 7km north-west of Cork city centre.

2.2 The site is approximately 19.35ha. in area, and forms part of larger landbank in agricultural use, and is located on sloping, undulating lands that comprise a series of agricultural fields immediately south of the residential developments of Aisling Geal and Ard na Gréine, and running though the eastern side of Ringwood to the R617 to the south.

2.3 The "Ringwood", a locally prominent circular woodland area lies to the south and west of the site. A part of what is known as the 'Wet Wood' is included within the site at its northern extent.

2.4 The subject site is bound to the west by agricultural land. To the east, the site is bound by the N20 roadway and to the north the site is bound by Aisling Geal and Ard na Gréine. To the south the site is bound by the R617 road and Castleview house.



Figure 1 - Location of subject site within Blarney Context

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 This section outlines the relevant planning policy at national and local level as it relates to social and community facilities.

The Provision of Schools and the Planning System – A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities (2008)

3.2 This Code of Practice sets out best practice approaches that should be followed by planning authorities in ensuring that the planning system plays its full part in facilitating the timely and cost-effective roll-out of school facilities by the Department of Education and Science and in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

3.3 Three core objectives are set out in the code of practice in relation to the future planning and delivery of schools:

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 Science; and*
3. *Local authorities, as planning authorities, will support and assist the Department in ensuring the timely provision of school sites.*

Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities - Best Practice Guidelines (2007)

3.4 The aim of these Guidelines is to identify principles and criteria that are important in the design of housing in order to deliver sustainable, inclusive communities.

3.5 The Guidelines define sustainable neighbourhoods as being:

> *..areas where an efficient use of land, high quality urban design and effective integration in the provision of physical and social infrastructure such as public transport, schools, amenities and other facilities combine to create places people want to live in.*

Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Growth Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)

3.6 These Guidelines (SRDCS) set out policy and guidance in relation to the planning and development of urban and rural settlements, with a focus on sustainable residential development and the creation of compact settlements. The Guidelines state that appropriate locations for higher density residential development that can deliver sustainable and inclusive communities are where there is good planning, good management and the necessary social infrastructure.

3.7 In line with the compact growth objectives set out in the NPF, the Guidelines set out densities for different settlement categories. The size of Dublin and Cork relative to the cities of Limerick, Galway and Waterford,

density ranges for the city and suburbs areas of Dublin and Cork are set out separately in table 3.1, where the density range for 'Suburban/Urban Extension Areas' is set out to be within the range of 40dph to 80dph (net) generally. It is also noted that densities of up to 150dph (net) shall generally be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban/urban extension locations.

3.8 Further, the Guidelines set out a number of Specific Planning Policy Requirement (SPPRs) to enable a graduated and flexible approach to the application of residential development standards across all housing types.

National Planning Framework First Revision (2025)

3.9 The National Planning Framework First Revision (NPF) was published in April 2025, making revisions and updates to take account of changes that have occurred since it was first published in 2018, and to build on the planning framework that was already in place.

3.10 **National Strategic Outcomes** *1. Compact Growth, 4. Sustainable Mobility, 7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage,* and *10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services*, are all aimed at increasing people's quality of life.

3.11 **National Policy Objective 12** aims to ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

3.12 **National Policy Objective 38** is as follows:

> *Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.*

3.13 **National Policy Objective 43** seeks to:

> *Prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location.*

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (2020)

3.14 The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region* (RSES) is the regional level strategic plan prepared by the Southern Regional Assembly and promotes and supports the strategic function of the Cork Metropolitan Area as a principle complimentary location to Dublin with a strong international role and as a primary driver of economic and population growth in the Southern Region.

3.15 The RSES states that compact urban settlements, enhanced and efficient public transport networks and the provision of physical and social infrastructure is essential and required in tandem with achieving projected growth in the Southern Region. **Regional Policy Objective 175** is aimed at improving quality

of life through infrastructure-led planning which includes social infrastructure. The RSES also acknowledges that Cork is projected to be one of the fastest growing areas in the state over the next 20 years.

3.16 The RSES and its constituent Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) both build on the policy contained in the 2001 *Cork Area Strategic Plan* (CASP) and 2008 CASP update, all of which emphasise Blarney as a strategic residential growth node on the Cork commuter rail network, where major population growth and development should be prioritised via an integrated land use and transportation strategy that is infrastructure-led.

3.17 Compact sustainable growth is one of the guiding principles of the Cork MASP. The MASP contains population growth targets for 2031 that are consistent with those in the NPF that are set for 2040. According to section 5 of the Cork MASP, Cork City and Suburbs are to grow by 75,000 by the year 2031, with a target population of 283,669 for that year.

3.18 The Cork MASP aims to ensure the provision of social infrastructure such as education, and health and community facilities, and, in particular, that opportunities for social as well as physical regeneration are realised. In the MASP, Blarney is specifically identified as being one of the Metropolitan Towns that requires consolidation, regeneration, and infrastructure-led growth and investment regarding housing.

3.19 There are a number of policy objectives within the Cork MASP which support the provision of and access to social and community infrastructure, including **Cork MASP Policy Objective 20** "Lifelong Learning and Skills", **Cork MASP Policy Objective 21** "Healthy Cities, Healthy Environment and Health Infrastructure", and **Cork MASP Policy Objective 22** "Social Inclusion" which is aimed at strengthening community infrastructure and promoting social inclusion for all.

Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

3.20 The *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* (the Plan) is the relevant statutory plan under which the regulation and development of the subject site is to be considered.

3.21 As per the Plan **Objective 10.63**, Ringwood/East Blarney is identified as one of seven strategic areas in Cork city identified for compact consolidation and expansion.

> *To support the compact growth and development of Blarney East / Ringwood Expansion Area as a strategic City consolidation and expansion area, as identified in the Core Strategy. All development shall be designed, planned and delivered in a co-ordinated and phased manner, using a layout and mix of uses that form part of an emerging neighbourhood integrated with the wider area.*

3.22 Under the Plan, the site is zoned **ZO 2 New Residential Neighbourhoods**, where the objective is:

> *To provide for new residential development in tandem with the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure.*

3.23 Accordingly, the following sections of the Plan apply to the development management of the subject site:

ZO 2.1 *Lands in this zone are designated as Tier 1 or Tier 2 zoned lands in the Core Strategy. Any development proposals must satisfy the requirements for developing on Tier 1 or Tier 2 lands set out in Chapter 2 Core Strategy.*

ZO 2.2 *This zone covers primarily greenfield, undeveloped lands for new sustainable residential areas. Development in this zone, while primarily residential, must provide an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures along with the amenity, social, community and physical infrastructure required to promote compact growth, balanced communities and sustainable, liveable communities.*

ZO 2.3 *Uses set out under ZO 1 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods are appropriate under this zone subject to such uses supporting the creation of sustainable communities and not conflicting with the primary objective of this zoning.*

3.24 According to Figure 2.21: "Growth Strategy Map 2022-2028" of the Plan, the subject site is considered to be Tier 2 lands. With regard to Tier 2 lands, **Section 2.51** of the Plan states the following:

Tier 2 sites are zoned land that are considered serviceable by physical infrastructure within the life of this Plan. While the NPF's tiered approach does not focus on community infrastructure, this is of central importance in the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods and is covered in detail in Chapter 3 Delivering Homes and Communities.

3.25 The primary appropriate land uses set out under Plan **Section ZO 1.3** (regarding ZO 1 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods) are as follows: residential uses; crèches; schools; home-based economic activity; open space, and; places of public worship.

3.26 **Objective 11.1** "Sustainable Residential Development" applies to the proposed development and is as follows:

Residential developments shall be sustainable and create high quality places which:
a. Contribute to placemaking and to the 15-minute city and walkable neighbourhood concepts by planning for vibrant communities, with active streets, urban greening, versatile and creative use of spaces avoiding "dead" spaces;
b. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
c. Deliver a quality of life which residents and visitors are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience;
d. Provide a good range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed and that are easily accessible;
e. Present an attractive, well-maintained appearance, with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm that is easily maintained;
f. Are easy to access for all and to find one's way around, with a focus on permeability within sites and integration and connectivity into the surrounding urban environment to enable short trips by walking and cycling;

g. Promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimise greenhouse gas emissions;
h. Provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand;
i. Promote social integration and provide accommodation for a diverse range of household types and age groups;
j. Enhance and protect green and blue infrastructure and biodiversity;
k. Enhance and protect the built and natural heritage.

3.27 Regarding phasing, **Section 11.116** of the Plan advises that development proposals for more than 100 residential units must:

> *….demonstrate that adequate provisions for specified physical and social infrastructural requirements, including roads, sewers, water mains, community, recreational and sporting facilities (indoor and outdoor), public transport, first and second level schools and shops are available at completion to support the development.*

3.28 As stated above in the introduction to this SCA, **Section 11.160** of the Plan requires that development proposals for 100 or more homes will be required to prepare and submit a Community Infrastructure Assessment.

3.29 The following are some of the key objectives of the Plan which are aimed at supporting the provision of social and community infrastructure in Cork City:

Objective 2.10 ***Mix of Uses***	*Support the delivery of a diverse mix of suitable uses that enhance Cork City's network of neighbourhoods, towns and communities as places to live, work, provide, care, learn and enjoy.*
Objective 2.12 ***Walkable Neighbourhoods***	*New development shall be designed to make positive additions to their neighbourhoods, towns and communities by:* *a. Delivering the right mix of uses at a scale and design that creates high quality buildings and spaces.* *b. Creating attractive, safe and vibrant places designed at a human scale (i.e. places that relate to people, streetscapes and local character) with active streets and avoiding the creation of "dead" spaces.* *c. Ensuring a child friendly and age friendly environment applying Universal Design principles with a mix of household types.* *d. Designing a safe place that enables access for all.* *e. Creating a healthy neighbourhood with increased urban greening and direct access to high quality parks and public spaces, schools, shops and local services.* *f. Being well-connected with easy access to public transport and active travel.* *g. Providing enhanced permeability for walking and cycling.*
Objective 2.14 ***Neighbourhood Mix***	*Promote high quality neighbourhoods by increasing the range of community, recreational, local enterprise, cultural and leisure related facilities.*
Objective 2.23 ***Quality of Life***	*In planning for future population growth, Cork City Council will assess and monitor quality of life factors including improvements in the urban environment, community infrastructure, education and learning, reducing average commute/journey distance and cultural experiences*

	that can increase the numbers of people seeking to live, work, study, visit and experience the city.
Objective 3.1 ***Planning for Sustainable Neighbourhoods***	*Cork City Council will seek to:* *a. Utilise the Urban Towns, Hinterland Villages and City Neighbourhoods as spatial units to develop sustainable neighbourhoods, employing the 15-Minute City concept;* *b. Require development proposals to put placemaking at the heart of their design concept and clearly demonstrate how neighbourhood integration, health and wellbeing and enhancement is central to this;* *c. Plan for communities in accordance with the aims, objectives and principles of 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the accompanying 'Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide', Universal Design Principles and any updates.* *d. Ensure that an appropriate level of supporting neighbourhood infrastructure is provided in conjunction with, and as an integral component of, residential development in New Sustainable Neighbourhoods.* [and] *f. Create healthy and attractive places to live consistent with NPO 4 of the NPF and Goal 3 Sustainable Place Framework of the RSES.*
Objective 3.14 ***Community Infrastructure and Services***	*To work with our communities and infrastructure providers in facilitating the development and provision of a range of accessible, socially inclusive, multi-functional and diverse community facilities throughout the City.*
Objective 3.17 ***Community Hubs***	*To promote the co-location and sharing of community, enterprise, recreation and open space infrastructure to create community hubs of scale at locations that can be accessed by walking, cycling and public transport and subject to there being no significant adverse impacts on local amenity.*
Objective 3.21 ***Childcare Facilities***	*To support the provision and expansion of high quality childcare facilities throughout the city. The Council will:* *a. Require purpose built childcare facilities as part of proposals for new residential developments of more than 75 dwelling units. However, where it can be clearly established that existing facilities are sufficient, alternative arrangements will be considered.* *b. Consult with the Cork City Childcare Company and the HSE on planning applications where childcare facilities are proposed.*
Objective 3.28 ***Neighbourhood Recreation and Amenity***	*b. To support and facilitate the development of outdoor and indoor recreational facilities, play facilities and services to cater for all age-groups and people of all abilities on suitable sites.* *e. To support the provision of formal and informal play areas with appropriate equipment and where possible, incorporating nature-based play equipment and layouts. These, where practical, should seek to appeal to a range of age cohorts through their layout and equipment.*
Objective 6.18 ***Public Open Space***	*a. To protect, retain, improve and provide for areas of public open space for recreation and amenity purposes. There will be a presumption against development of land zoned Public Open Space for alternative purposes.*

	c. *The development of open spaces should "aim to enhance and protect natural features and views and be set in safe and secure environments with the emphasis on active open spaces accessible to and enjoyed by all sectors of the community.* d. *To follow an approach of qualitative as well as quantitative standards for open spaces providing high quality open spaces with high levels of access to recreation for local communities, including good practices of inclusive design.* e. *Specific design outcomes should be framed in relation to the nature of spaces being created or enhanced (e.g. in relation to maintenance, nature exposure and connectivity, strategic landscape and social role).* f. *Support measures to green the city, including re-grassing of appropriate hard-surfaced areas in locations throughout the City.*
Objective 6.20 ***Active Recreational Infrastructure***	a. *To ensure that all residents have access to neighbourhood scale outdoor and indoor active sports recreational and play infrastructure within their neighbourhood or in accessible locations.* [and] f. *To require new residential developments over 10 units and other major developments to meet those active recreation needs generated by the development with the provision of appropriate active recreation infrastructure.*
Objective 11.1 ***Sustainable Residential Development***	*Residential developments shall be sustainable and create high quality places which:* *a. Contribute to placemaking and to the 15-minute city and walkable neighbourhood concepts by planning for vibrant communities, with active streets, urban greening, versatile and creative use of spaces avoiding "dead" spaces.* *b. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars.* *c. Deliver a quality of life which residents and visitors are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience.* *d. Provide a good range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed and that are easily accessible.* *e. Present an attractive, well-maintained appearance, with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm that is easily maintained.* *f. Are easy to access for all and to find one's way around, with a focus on permeability within sites and integration and connectivity into the surrounding urban environment to enable short trips by walking and cycling.* *g. Promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimise greenhouse gas emissions.* *h. Provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand.* *i. Promote social integration and provide accommodation for a diverse range of household types and age groups.* *j. Enhance and protect green and blue infrastructure and biodiversity.* *k. Enhance and protect the built and natural heritage.*

3.30 **Objective 3.21** of the Plan states that, in the case of residential development proposals in excess of 75 dwellings, the development of purpose-built childcare facilities will generally be required.

4.0 CATCHMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE

4.1 The site is located to the east of Blarney town centre and to the northwest of Cork City. It forms part of the Cork Metropolitan Area. For the purposes of this SCA, it is prudent to consider the existing population within the vicinity of the site and the various social and community facilities which support that population.

4.2 Presented in Figure 2 below is the catchment of the development site assessed for the purposes of this SCA. The defined catchment area encompasses locations within a 2km radius of the site. A distance of 2km is typically accepted as the realistic distance from home that people will travel to access day-to-day community facilities and services, especially when travelling by sustainable modes such and public transport. A 2km radius therefore represents the strongest zone of influence for the development.

4.3 However, the site and Blarney's close proximity to both Cork City Centre and Blackpool is significant with regard to social and community infrastructure. The subject site is currently a 30-minute journey time from Cork City Centre via the 215 bus route. The District Centre of Blackpool is a 20-minute journey from the subject site via the same bus route. These journey times include the time to walk from the site to the relevant bus stop on the R617.

4.4 It is very likely that people currently living in Blarney travel to Cork City Centre and Blackpool to access a range of services and facilities including, for example, largescale convenience retail stores, the cinema and arts theatres, to attend hospital and other primary health care services, and to attend third level education. In terms of accessing employment opportunities, it is also very likely that members of the current population of Blarney travel each day for this purpose.



Figure 2 - SCA Catchment, outlined in yellow, as defined by a 2km radius from the site. Location of the site of the proposed development outlined in red. (Base map source: Google Maps; Annotated by Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd., 2025).

4.5 CSO interactive mapping for the Census 2022 also provides a town boundary for Blarney. This is shown below in Figure 3. The majority of the subject site lies outside the Census 2022 town boundary for Blarney.



Figure 3 - Site location outlined in red, SCA catchment area outlined in yellow, Census 2022 Blarney Town Boundary outlined in white. (Base map source: Google Maps and CSO Interactive Mapping; Annotated by Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd., 2025).

4.6 The population of Blarney town, according to Census 2022 figures, was 2,779 people in 2022.

4.7 Outside of the town boundary but within 2km of the site, it is estimated that there are approximately 193 one-off houses.

4.8 Section 2.41 of the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* acknowledges that average household size will continue to decrease over the lifetime of the Plan, and states that the Joint Cork Housing Strategy and Housing Need Demand Assessment strategy (HNDA), "*sets out a city-wide average household size target of 2.49 for the Plan period based on a changing average household size from 2022-2028.*" However, notwithstanding this, Census 2022 figures indicate that the average household size in Blarney has actually increased since Census 2016, from 2.72 to 2.77.

4.9 Given the local average household size is 2.77, the c. 193 houses in the catchment area which lie outside the boundary of Blarney town can be reasonably assumed to support a population of c. 535 people[1]. Therefore, the total population of the catchment area for this audit can be assumed to be c. 3,314.

[1] 193 households x 2.77 = 534.61. Rounded up to 535.

4.10 Table 1 below presents the age profile of the population of Blarney town according to the 2022 Census. A review of the age profile of Blarney reveals that the town has a relatively balanced, slightly ageing profile, with 27.4% of the population of the town being aged 55 years or older, and with 25.5% of the population of Blarney between the ages of 0-19. It is assumed that the surrounding 193 households in the catchment area have a similar age profile.

Age Bracket	Population 2022	% of Population
0-4	**176**	6.3%
5-9	**199**	7.2%
10-14	**193**	6.9%
15-19	**141**	5.1%
20-24	**158**	5.7%
25-34	**315**	11.3%
35-44	**447**	16.1%
45-54	**388**	14%
55-64	**277**	9.9%
65+	**485**	17.5%

Table 1 - Age profile of Blarney town, as per the 2022 Census.

5.0 COMMUNITY PROFILE – EXISTING SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

5.1 This SCA assesses the existing community and social infrastructure within the defined catchment area of the site of the proposed development, as outlined and discussed in Section 4 above, under the following headings:

1. Education/Training
2. Childcare
3. Health
4. Sports/Recreation and Open Space
5. Social/Community Services
6. Arts and Culture
7. Faith
8. Other Features

Education/Training

5.2 There are 2no. existing primary schools and 1no. existing secondary school within the catchment area.

Existing Primary Schools			
Name and Location	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
1. Scoil Chroi Iosa, St. Anne's Road, Blarney	137	150	287
2. Gaelscoil Mhuscraí, Shean Lower, Blarney	91	95	186

Table 2 - Existing primary schools located within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.3 In terms of primary schools, enrolment in Scoil Chroi Iosa over the past 5 years dropped from a high of 327no. in 2020/21 to 287no. this year, indicating a capacity of at least of 40no. places and at Gaelscoil Mhuscraí it has increased from 179no. in 2021/22 to 186no. this year, indicating an overall capacity of at least 33no. spaces.

Existing Post-Primary Schools			
Name and Location	Boys	Girls	Total
1. Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal, Blarney*	579	503	1,082

Table 3 - Existing post-primary schools located within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.4 It is also of note that the expansion of the Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal (permitted Application Ref. PL04.247742 (16/6473)), to provide for 1,200no. pupils has been recently completed.

5.5 In addition to the existing schools located within the catchment of the proposed development, there are several other primary and post-primary schools immediately adjacent and/or in the vicinity of the catchment area, in particular in Cloghroe, as well as in Ballincollig and the north-west of Cork City.

5.6 The Department of Education calculates enrolment projections for primary and post primary level on a regular basis. The most recent national projections were published in March 2024 and includes projections for 2023 to 2042. The most recent regional figures are from 2021 and estimates regional enrolment for the 2021 – 2036 period. Under the scenarios presented enrolment levels at both primary and post primary levels are expected to fall over the coming years. In each scenario, peak enrolment has already been reached, and it is therefore expected that the school enrolment levels in Blarney will decrease and there will be a downward trajectory experienced over the next 10 years.

5.7 The provision of primary and post-primary school facilities in Ireland is determined on an area specific basis by the Department of Education, having regard to available school capacity, demographic projections, analysis of child benefit records, and local GIS travel pattern modelling.

5.8 As per the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*, the Department of Education has prepared preliminary projections of requirements for school places in Cork City up to 2031. The projections suggest a potential need of up to 11no. new or expanded primary schools and up to 3no. new or expanded post-primary schools in the vicinity of the catchment area of the proposed development over the next decade, as per Table 4 below.

Department of Education Preliminary Assessment of Additional Education Capacity		
School Planning Area	Number of new or expanded Primary Schools (baseline figure)	Number of new or expanded Secondary Schools (baseline figure)
Ballincollig	2	1
Blarney	1-2	1
Gurranabraher	5-7	1

Table 4 - Department of Education Preliminary Assessment of Additional Education Capacity. (Source: Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028).

5.9 It is expected that the Stoneview Framework Masterplan currently being prepared by the Planning Authority will identify appropriate locations for new educational facilities in accordance with this Development Plan need.

5.10 There are no third level education facilities in located within the catchment area. However, immediately adjacent the catchment area and throughout the city there are a number of third level education facilities

and institutions. These are listed in Table 5 below. There is good access to these facilities from the site and catchment area due to the availability of public transport serving the area.

Existing Third-Level Educational Facilities
Name and Location
1. Cork Academy of Music, Technical Building, North Monastery Campus, North Monastery Road, Cork
2. Northside Community Enterprises (NCE)Education & Training Campus, Redemption Rd, Farranferris
3. Griffith College Cork Wellington Rd, Cork
4. CEC - Cork English College Saint Patricks Bridge, Cork
5. City North College of Further Education Harbour View Rd, Gurranabraher, Hollyhill, Co. Cork
6. Cork College of Commerce, Morrison's Quay.
7. The Cork College of Beauty Therapy, 85 South Main Street.
8. Joan Cashman Colour & Image Academy, 19 Academy Street.
9. IPICS Education, Unit 1dNorth Valley Business Park, Old Mallow Road, Cork
10. Irish College of Osteopathic Medicine, Unit 42A/B North Point Business Park, New Mallow Road, Cork
11. University College Cork
12. Munster Technological University
13. St Johns Central College, Sawmill Street
14. Cork Centre for Architectural Education, Douglas Street
15. Cork English Academy, Drinan Street

Table 5 - Existing third-level education facilities located adjacent the catchment area (Sources: Websites of the various institutions).

Childcare

5.11 Based upon the Census 2022 data for Blarney town, it is assumed that there are c. 209no. children aged 0-4 living within the catchment area of the proposed development.

5.12 A Childcare Needs Assessment has been prepared to accompany the planning application under a separate cover as well as to assess the potential childcare needs arising from the development. This childcare needs assessment identifies the following the Childcare Facilities and their capacities. This is illustrated in Table 6 below.

Childcare Facility	Capacity of Facility	Available Spaces
McShortall Childcare Ltd	65	Not Known
Shournagh Childcare	77	0
Shournagh Childcare (Ballyneety)	55	0
Árd na Laoí Montessori School	11	Not Known
Blarney Community Playschool CLG	48	<2
Ar Aghaidh Linn	22	Not Known
Blarney Montessori School	33	0

Table 6 - Existing TUSLA Registered Early Years Childcare Facilities within catchment.

5.13 It is noted that information was not available in relation to 3no. local childcare facilities. Given that this information was not available, a worst-case scenario has been adopted, and it is assumed that these facilities are at full capacity.

5.14 While there are several other early years childcare services within the wider catchment area outside of the settlements of Blarney and Tower themselves, we note the report from Cork City Childcare to the S32B submission in respect of the proposed development which was received on the 30th May 2025. In their submission, Cork City Childcare sets out that there is currently a shortage of childcare spaces in the area.

5.15 It is evident, therefore, that there is a deficit in childcare spaces in the catchment area. A creche facility is incorporated into Phase 1 of the Ringwood Development which is designed to cater for 137no. children. As detailed in the Childcare Needs Assessment prepared under a separate cover, this granted facility provides for sufficient capacity to cater for the childcare needs arising from the proposed development.

Health

5.16 Desktop research and site visits in April and November 2025 were employed to ascertain the number of health facilities and services located within the catchment area of the proposed development. The results of this research are presented in Table 7 below.

5.17 There are no national, regional or local standards for health provision in Ireland relating to the provision of primary care centres or the number of doctors in an area.

Health Facility	Name and Location
1no. Health Centre	1. Blarney Community Health Centre
2no. GP Surgeries	1. The Medical Centre, Monacnapa, Blarney 2. Dr. Úna O'Halloran, Ashdale House, Shean Lower, Blarney, Co. Cork.
2no. Dental Surgeries	1. Blarney Dental, The Square, Monacnapa, Blarney, Co. Cork 2. Niall Coonan Dental, Unit 2A, Blarney Shopping Centre, Co. Cork
2no. Pharmacies	1. McElligott's Pharmacy Blarney, Ashdale House, Shean Lower, Blarney 2. Walsh's All Car Pharmacy, Unit 4, Monacnapa, Blarney Shopping Centre
1no. Physiotherapist	1. Next Level Physiotherapy, Ashdale Shopping Centre
1no. Optician	1. Anne O'Donovan Opticians, Unit 7 Blarney Shopping Centre, Blarney

Table 7 - List of health services and facilities in the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.18 The catchment area appears to currently be somewhat underserved in relation to primary health care facilities.

5.19 With regard to primary health care provision, the HSE has confirmed that a typical primary care centre can serve a population of between 10,000-20,000 people, subject to appropriate resourcing. It is noted, from a review of the planning history of the area, that a planning application was made in 2020, under Application Register Reference 20/39502, for the construction of a 3-storey primary care centre with 5no. ground floor retail units and café at St. Ann's Road, Monacnapa, Blarney. Cork City Council decided to refuse permission for this development and their decision was subsequently appealed by the applicant under Case Reference: ABP-308670-20.

5.20 An Bord Pleanála granted permission for the proposal on 23rd December 2021, stating that the proposed quantum, mix and scale of development was acceptable given the accessible and central urban village location of the site, that the proposal would not seriously injure the character of the nearby Architectural Conservation Area, and that the scale and design were such that they would not seriously injure the residential amenity of the area. However, a judicial review of the decision was made to the High Court. On 5th December 2022, however, the High Court issued an order quashing the Board's decision.

5.21 The HSE are now actively progressing the development of a primary care centre in Blarney with initial tender submissions sought this year. A pre-requisite of the tender was that new GP services be provided for. The subject planning application proposes a new primary care centre on a fully serviced zoned site at Ringwood. This facility is 2,100sqm in size and includes for a retail pharmacy and GP services.

Sports/Recreation and Open Space

5.22 Sports and recreation infrastructure refers to parks and playgrounds, dedicated public open space and amenity areas, sports centres and formal club facilities. Desktop research and multiple site visits during April and November 2025 were employed to ascertain the number and nature of sports/recreation facilities and open spaces located within the catchment area of the proposed development. The results of this research are presented in Table 8.

Description	Name and Details
3no. Playing Pitches	1. Blarney GAA Club – 3no. playing pitches on 2no. sites and 1no. astroturf pitch
1no. Sports Club	1. Blarney GAA Club, Shean Lower, Blarney
4no. Amenity Walks/ Parks/ Playgrounds	1. Children's Woodland Park, MUGA, and Outdoor Exercise Zone, Blarney 2. Clogheenmilcon Sanctuary Walk 3. Blarney Castle and Gardens 4. Waterloo Walk, Waterloo Rd, Shean Upper, Blarney

Table 8 - Existing recreational and sports facilities and clubs in the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.23 There are a number of sports, recreation and open space facilities within the defined catchment which cater to all cohorts.

5.24 In addition to the parks outlined in Table 8 below, there are multiple other existing sports and recreational open spaces in the vicinity of the catchment area, including Blarney United football club in Bawnafinny, which has 2no. soccer pitches, as well as Blarney Golf Club, Muskerry Golf Club, Rocklodge Pitch & Putt Club. In addition, Ballincollig Regional Park is located just over 5km southwest of the subject site.

5.25 The *Sustainable and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2024) state that a benchmark of 2.5ha of open space per 1,000 head of population (taking protected zones, landscape character and statutory obligations to protect certain habitats and biodiversity into account) has been used internationally as a benchmark for open space provision in settlements.

5.26 The Guidelines further recommend that all residents within a settlement should have access to a Class 2 multifunctional public open space within walking distance of their home. The Guidelines define Class 2 open space as local parks, squares or plazas generally provided as part of individual development

proposals and offered for taking in charge by the local authority following the completion of the development.

5.27 Blarney's population is currently 2,779 and is targeted to grow to 3,688 persons by 2028 under the City Development Plan's Core Strategy (Table 2.2). On this basis, there should be a total of 3no. playing pitches in the area to accommodate the targeted population.

5.28 The *Active Recreational Infrastructure (ARI) Needs Study* carried out in 2022 during the preparation of the Cork City Development Plan, 2022, noted that Blarney had the following ARI provision.

ARI - Sport Type	ARI - Facility Name	ARI - Type
Basketball	Scoil Mhuire gan Smál	Outdoor Asphalt
Basketball	Scoil Mhuire gan Smál	Outdoor Asphalt
GAA	Blarney Gaelic Athletic Association	Outdoor Grass
GAA	Blarney Gaelic Athletic Association	Outdoor Astro Turf / Synthetic
GAA	Blarney Gaelic Athletic Association	Outdoor Grass
Multi-Purpose	Scoil Mhuire gan Smál	Outdoor Grass
Skating	Supernova Activity Centre	Indoor

Table 9 - Existing sports facilities and services located within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.29 It is considered that the catchment area is well catered for in terms of open and recreational outdoor spaces. In addition, it is noted that c. 10ha of land located immediately south of the subject site, including the Ringwood, are zoned for Open Space uses under the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*.

Social/Community Facilities

5.30 Social and community facilities are broad categories and can include general civic services as well as services targeted to specific sectors of the community. Desktop research during April and Novewmber 2025 was employed to ascertain the number and nature of social/community services located within the catchment area. The result of this research is presented in Table 10 below.

Description	Name and Location
1no. Civic Facilities and Services	1. Blarney Library, The Square, Monacnapa, Blarney
4no. Social/Community Organisations	1. Bikecraft Motorcycle Training 2. Blarney Scouts Hall 3. Blarney Community Council, Old Convent Hall, Convent Road 4. Blarney community centre, The Mills, Blarney

Table 10 - Existing social/community facilities and services located within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.31 There are no national, regional, or local standards regarding the provision of social and community facilities and services. A simplistic standardisation which has been employed elsewhere in neighbourhood planning is: 0.3 community facilities per 1,000 head of population[2]. However, this approach is somewhat crude, being based on the number of buildings/facilities provided and does not account for the size or

[2] See: Barton, H., Grant, M., and Guise, R. (2021). *Shaping Neighbourhoods: For Local Health & Global Sustainability*, *3rd edition*. London:

quality of individual facilities. Consequently, the use of this standard is applied with caution and as a benchmark only. It can be assumed, based on the information presented in Table 10 above, that the area is reasonably well served in terms of social and community facilities.

5.32 In addition, it must be noted that there is a Citizens Information Centre in nearby Blackpool, as well as other services and facilities within Cork City.

Arts and Culture

5.33 Desktop research during April and November 2025 was employed to ascertain the number and nature of arts and culture facilities located within the catchment area of the proposed development. The result of this research is presented in Table 11 below.

Description	Name and Location
2no. General/ Culture/ Music Facilities	1. YAA Art, 1A Millstream Row, Shean Lower, Blarney 2. Blarney Castle and Gardens

Table 11 - Existing arts and culture facilities located within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.34 While the overall number of Arts/Cultural and Music facilities within the catchment area is low, this is considered to be generally in keeping with the provision of such services in a settlement of the subject scale. The subject site is however in close proximity to Cork City which has a long-established reputation as being a thriving centre for the arts and culture, with multiple festivals and initiatives at every scale in the city.

Faith

5.35 There are 3no. centres of religious worship located within the catchment area. They are listed below in Table 12.

Details of Centres of Worship
1. Church of the Immaculate Conception, Monacnapa, Blarney
2. Church of the Resurrection, The Square, Monacnapa, Blarney
3. Convent Of The Missionaries Of Charity, Blarney, Shean Lower

Table 12 - Existing centres of religious worship located within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.

5.36 There are no known national or other benchmarking standards for the provision of religious faith and worship social infrastructure. According to Census 2022, 76.7% of the population of Blarney town identify as Catholic, 4.4% as having another religion, 14.5% as having no religious faith, and 4.4% of the town's population did not state any answer regarding their religion or otherwise.

5.37 The subject area appears to be well-served by centres of worship, predominantly in respect of the Roman Catholic faith, which aligns with the majority of Blarney town's population identifying as being Roman Catholic. As noted previously, Blarney is well connected to Cork City which has a wider base of centres of worship ensuring access to wider facilities if required.

Other Social and Community Infrastructure

5.38 Blarney town centre contains a solicitor, a filling station with Centra, several retail services, restaurants, 3no. 3-star hotels, a post office, and a credit union.

5.39 Blackpool Shopping Centre and the surrounding retail parks, the City Centre Retail Area and City Centre Commercial Core are all located in the vicinity of the defined catchment area of the proposed development, and all major and minor retail, financial, legal, hospitality and other services, supports and organisations are available.

5.40 In addition to serving the population of Cork City, people travel from across the county of Cork as well as from other parts of Munster to avail of the high quality service provision in Cork City Centre.

5.41 In this regard, as stated above in section 4.4 of this audit, there should be an expectation that people within the defined catchment would be willing to travel to Blackpool and the wider city including the city centre and also Ballincollig to meet their needs in relation to retail, legal, financial and hospitality services.

6.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 There are 2no. existing primary schools and 1no. existing secondary school within the defined catchment area of the proposed development and provisional plans on the part of the Department of Education to provide up to 11no. new or expanded primary schools and 3no. new or expanded post-primary schools in the vicinity of the catchment area over the next decade.

6.2 With the projected new school provision, in conjunction with the recent expansion of the existing post-primary school Scoil Mhuire gan Smál to provide for up to 1,200 pupils, it is considered that there will be satisfactory levels of access to primary and post-primary places for future residents of the area if the proposed development is granted permission and developed.

6.3 Similarly, with multiple further and third level education facilities located within proximity to the site, it is considered that the area is very well served by an abundance of further and third level educational opportunities which can undoubtedly cater for an increase in the population of the area.

6.4 However, it is the finding of this SCA that there is currently insufficient availability of early years childcare spaces. It is of note that the permitted Ringwood Phase 1 proposal has incorporated a childcare facility with a capacity to cater for 137no. children, which will meet the childcare needs of both Phase 1 (permitted), and Phase 2 (current LRD proposal) of development.

6.5 With regard to access to health services, it is considered that the area is currently underserved in relation to primary health care facilities.

6.6 According to the appropriate uses listed for the various zoning objectives in the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*, areas zoned ZO 1 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods, ZO 2 New Residential Neighbourhoods, ZO 3 Long-term Strategic Regeneration, ZO 4 Mixed Use Development, ZO 7 District

Centres and ZO 8 Neighbourhood and Local Centres are all appropriate locations, in principle, for the development of health care facilities such as primary care centres.

6.7 In response, this development proposal includes a Primary Care Centre which is 1,724sqm in area and includes GP services.

6.8 In terms of sports/recreation and open space, it is the finding of this audit that there is sufficient provision of sports grounds, parks, amenity walks and equipped play areas/ playgrounds in the catchment area. In addition, it is noted that c. 10ha of land immediately south of the subject site are zoned for Open Space uses.

6.9 The area in which the site of the proposed development is located has reasonable access to social and community services and places to practice faith and worship. According to Census 2022, the percentage of the national population who identified as Roman Catholic fell by 10% between 2016 and 2022, and the figure for people with no religion increased by 14% over the same period. Therefore, at this stage it is not considered that the proposed development will necessitate the development of additional faith services.

6.10 It is notable that, in terms of arts and culture, Blarney currently lacks facilities such as a theatre. It is considered that the existing town centre of Blarney is the preferred location, from a planning and sustainable development perspective, to locate any such use for the town.

6.11 The area is served by existing small scale convenience retail and retail services, with the nearest convenience retail store being located a 6 minute walk south of the subject site.

6.12 The Urban Town Centre zoning in Blarney is extensive and it is important that existing and proposed development is maximised there so as to provide the necessary services for future population growth in Blarney and the proposed development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Social and community infrastructure is essential to achieving a balanced approach to sustainable local communities. It is also of critical importance to the economic as well as social development of a city/town/place.

7.2 This Social and Community Audit examined the current context with respect to social and community infrastructure provision within the defined catchment area of the site of the proposed Large-Scale Residential Development at Ringwood of 323no. residential units.

7.3 The SCA findings highlight the presence of some excellent social infrastructure facilities in the area, as well as key challenges and opportunities regarding provision of, in particular, early years childcare facilities.

7.4 While the area in which the site of the proposed development is located has access to services, it is noted that there are shortcomings in some areas within the defined catchment. Yet, the Urban Local Centre zoning in Blarney is extensive and it is important that existing and proposed development is maximised there so as to provide the necessary services for future population growth in Blarney and the proposed development.

7.5 The role of social and community infrastructure in integrating new and existing communities is critical. A mix of land uses can provide opportunities for community activity and places for people to meet and connect, which can thus reinforce a sense of community identity and strengthen social solidarity. Local facilities within easy walking distance of where people live can also help to reduce transport requirements and thus reduce carbon emissions.

7.6 Phase 1 of the Ringwood development incorporates a creche which can cater for 137no. children. This Phase 2 proposal includes a Primary Care Centre which included GP services.

7.7 It is therefore considered that the population increase in the area brought about by the proposed development be adequately supported by existing social and community infrastructure in the area and will also enhance the offering of such, benefitting not just the future residents of the proposed development but those of the wider catchment area also.

7.8 The proposed development therefore has the potential to positively contribute towards the local sense of community.

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