



COAKLEY O'NEILL
town planning

Childcare Needs Assessment

Large-Scale Residential Development at **Pope's Hill, Cork**

Prepared in April 2026 on behalf of
Pontorac Limited

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd, NSC Campus, Mahon, Co. Cork, have been instructed by Pontorac Limited to prepare this Childcare Needs Assessment to accompany a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) planning application seeking permission for a residential development on a site at Pope's Hill, Pope's Road, Blackpool, Cork City.
- 1.2 The proposed development will consist of a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) on a site at Pope's Hill, Pope's Road, Blackpool, Cork which will include the demolition of a terrace of 4 no. existing dwellings, 3 no. of which are derelict, and ancillary sheds and their replacement with 1 no. single-storey 3-bed detached bungalow accessed via a modified private driveway; and the construction of 103 no. dwellings (18 no. 1-beds, 9 no. 2-beds, 68 no. 3-beds and 8 no. 4-beds) between 2-4 storeys in height, to include 50 no. townhouses (3 no. 2-beds, 39 no. 3-bed units, and 8 no. 4-bed units) and 53 no. duplex apartment (18 no. 1-bed apartments, 6 no. 2-bed apartments, and 29 no. 3-bed apartments).
- 1.3 This Childcare Needs Assessment examines the need to incorporate any onsite childcare facilities as part of the development proposal, with a specific focus on the relevant planning policy, demographic statistics, and an assessment of existing childcare facilities in the area.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The subject site is located in an elevation position to the east of Blackpool Village and to the north of Cork City centre while Collins' Barracks is located to the east and southeastern edge of the subject lands. The lands are c. 2.581ha and are part brownfield and part greenfield, orientated on an east to west axis with extensive slope from east to west. The lands currently comprise of an existing residential property, garage and storage shed, with 2no. further sheds located at the southern corner of the site.
- 2.2 The subject site has an existing vehicle access to its southwest corner from Popes Road, which travels west towards Assumption Road and onwards towards the North City Link Road. There is existing residential development on the western boundary of the subject site while the existing Military Cemetery, Glentrasna Crescent and Glentrasna Avenue bound the northern side of the subject lands. A large retaining wall defines the northern boundary of the subject site. Christian Brother's College sports grounds and the car park for Collins Barrack's bounds the site to the south.



Figure 1 – Subject site generally outlined in red

3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The requirement for the provision of a crèche for residential developments over 75no. dwellings is outlined in national guidance under the *Childcare Facilities Guidelines (2001)* published by the then Department of Environment and in local planning policy under the *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*.

Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001

- 3.2 The *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2001* provide a framework to guide both developers in formulating development proposals, and local authorities in assessing proposals.
- 3.3 The Guidelines list the following as being appropriate locations for childcare facilities:
- New communities/Larger new housing developments
 - The vicinity of concentrations of workplaces, such as industrial estates, business parks and any other locations where there are significant numbers working.
 - In the vicinity of schools.
 - Neighbourhood, District and Town Centres.
 - Adjacent to public transport corridors, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian routes and dedicated cycle ways.
- 3.4 Appendix 2 of the Guidelines states an indicative standard of 1 childcare facility per 75 dwellings in new housing areas. Appendix 2 further states that the threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profiles.
- 3.5 It must be noted that the Guidelines' indicative standard that 1 childcare facility be provided per 75 dwellings in new housing areas is no longer considered to be a practical benchmark and childcare

provision is, instead, routinely addressed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration existing facilities and capacity.

Planning Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2025

- 3.6 The *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2025)* requires that childcare facilities be provided in accordance with the demographic profile of the area, the existing capacity of childcare centres, and the scale and unit mix of the proposed development. These guidelines also specifically state:

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.

Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

- 3.7 **Objective 3.21 Childcare Facilities** of the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 relates to the provision of childcare facilities and is outlined as follows:

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;*
- c. Require employers with more than 500 members of staff to provide childcare facilities as part of planning applications for significant new and extended development.*

- 3.8 **Section 3.63** of the Development Plan outlines Cork City Council's consideration of the needs of children and young people and states that the provision of more childcare is necessary for the successful delivery of compact growth and the creation of a more liveable city.

- 3.9 **Section 3.67** of the Development Plan provides guidance on the provision of childcare facilities within Cork City as follows:

The provision of childcare should be addressed where, or within walking distance to where the need arises. In accordance with the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001), new residential developments of more than 75 homes will be expected to provide purpose-built as part of the development unless it can be demonstrated there is sufficient capacity in existing facilities. Large employment development, either new developments or expansion of existing developments, will be required to provide childcare facilities. In large scale retail, leisure or tourism developments,

the provision of a drop-in childcare facilities will also be encouraged. Chapter 11 Placemaking and Managing Development lists development management considerations and references the Government Guidelines: "We Like This Place - Guidelines for Best Practice in the Design of Childcare Facilities" (2005).

4.0 FUTURE DEMAND CREATED BY THE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 This report assesses the likely demand for childcare facilities created by the proposed development of 104 no. residential units comprising of 50 no. townhouses, 53 no. duplex apartments and 1 no. bungalow dwelling. The mix of dwellings is broken down as follows:

- 18 no. 1-bed dwellings;
- 9 no. 2-bed dwellings;
- 69 no. 3-bed dwellings
- 8 no. 4-bed dwellings

Total = 104 no. dwellings

4.2 18 no. of the proposed units are 1-bedroom dwellings. The Planning Design Standards for Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2025 note in relation to the provision of childcare facilities in new developments, *'One-bedroom or studio type units should not generally be considered to contribute to a requirement for any on-site childcare provision and subject to the factors above, this may also apply in part or whole, to units with two or more bedrooms'*.

4.3 Accordingly, this assessment was restricted to considering the likely demand arising from the proposed development in respect of the 2-bed, 3-bed, and 4-bed proposed units, which comprises a total of 86 no. units.

4.4 Using the most up to date CSO figures, based on the average national household size of 2.7 people per household¹, it can be estimated that the proposed development of 86no. units will result in a population equivalent of 232no. people residing in them.

4.5 According to the 2022 Census, the average family in the state contains 1.34 children (0-18 age bracket). Therefore, the relevant proposed 86no. units could theoretically accommodate c. 115no. children. However, the demographic composition particular to the local population must also be analysed to determine the number of children the proposed development could potentially accommodate.

4.6 The 2022 Census also notes that on average children under the age of 9 represent 10.6% of the population of Cork City. Using this rationale, it is estimated that the proposed development will potentially result in approximately 12no. children of the age where childcare facilities could be required.

4.7 In addition, it is of note that nationally, 19.5% of children aged 0-9 avail of Crèche/Montessori/Playgroup facilities. The Census indicates that in Cork City, 18% of children aged 0-9 avail of Crèche/Montessori/Playgroup facilities.

¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/householdsizeandmaritalstatus/>

- 4.8 Applying the Cork City percentage of pre-school children who are cared for in a Crèche / Montessori / Playgroup / After-school facility, only 2 no. childcare spaces would potentially be required to be accommodated at the proposed development.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 In order to establish the local need for a new childcare facility as part of the proposed development, a thorough examination was undertaken in line with current guidelines. In the first instance, a review of all available and registered facilities was carried out using the TUSLA website. In addition, each childcare provider operating within the defined catchment area of the proposed development was also contacted to enquire about the capacity they currently have to care for additional children.
- 5.2 An indicative 2km radius from the subject site was utilised in order to represent a reasonable commuting distance from the site. The full list of facilities is outlined in Table 2 below.
- 5.3 In accordance with the childcare guidelines, we subsequently established the following:
- The emerging demographic profile of the area.
 - The existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities in the area.
 - The capacity of 29no. childcare providers as captured in the defined catchment area.

Demographic Trends

- 5.4 Initially, the demographic profile of Cork City and Suburbs is examined, as the subject site is within the defined settlement area, as per the 2022 Census. It is noted that the population of Cork City and Suburbs increased from 208,669 people in 2016 to 224,004 in 2022. This represents an increase of 15,335 people, or a 6.8% increase in population over the same period.
- 5.5 However, it is noted that over the same period, the number of children in the 0-4 age bracket decreased from 12,652 in 2016 to 11,410 in 2022, representing a decrease of 1,242 children over the same period. Therefore, in contrast to the overall population which has increased by over 6% in the six-year inter-censal period, the number of children in the 0-4 age bracket decreased. This indicates that the number of pre-school aged children (i.e. 0-4 age bracket) is declining as a whole.
- 5.6 Having regard to the fact that the total population of the settlement grew by over 5% in the six-year period from 2016-2022, while the total number of children in the 0-4 age bracket actually decreased, this is a strong indicator that there is an aging population demographic in the settlement.

Catchment Area Settlement Capacity

- 5.7 The demographics of the northwestern suburbs of the City were examined using the CSO Census of Population Statistics for 2022. The population of the study area is defined for the purposes of this assessment as all of the Electoral Divisions located within a notional 2km radius of the subject site. In total, 40no. electoral divisions have been included for the purposes of this study area, as outlined in Table 1 below.

Electoral Division	Total Population 2016	Total Population 2022	% Change	0-4 Age Bracket 2016	0-4 Age Bracket 2022	Total Change
Blackpool A	690	760	70 (10.14%)	39	31	8 (-20.5%)
Blackpool B	2185	3564	1379 (63.1%)	97	74	23 (-23.7%)
Centre A	868	1260	392 (45.16%)	16	97	81 (506.25%)
Centre B	2117	2441	324 (15.30%)	96	104	8 (8.33%)
Churchfield	1577	1543	34 (-2.15%)	71	58	13 (-18.3%)
City Hall A	833	1184	351 (42.13%)	14	43	29 (207.14%)
City Hall B	1191	1244	53 (4.45%)	58	52	-6 (10.34%)
Commons	963	1111	148 (15.36%)	82	63	-19 (-23.17%)
Fair Hill A	714	716	-2 (0.28%)	40	31	-9 (-22.5%)
Fair Hill B	746	753	7 (0.93%)	17	28	11 (64.7%)
Fair Hill C	3610	3441	-169 (-4.68%)	186	130	-56 (-30.10%)
Farranferris	2418	2074	-344 (-14.22%)	56	103	47 (83.92%)
Farranferris B	928	895	-33 (-3.55%)	69	45	-24 (-34.78%)
Farranferris C	607	855	248 (40.85%)	34	71	37 (108.8%)
Gillabbey A	2418	2568	150 (6.2%)	56	52	-4 (-7.14%)
Gurranebraher A	769	726	-43 (-5.59%)	36	40	4 (11.1%)
Gurranebraher B	588	666	78 (13.26%)	28	36	8 (28.57%)
Gurranebraher C	1053	1101	48 (4.55%)	49	40	-9 (-18.36%)
Gurranebraher D	944	923	-21 (-2.22%)	68	32	-36 (-52.94%)
Gurranebraher E	1143	1086	-57 (-4.98%)	53	36	-17 (32.07%)
Knocknaheaney	4044	4049	5 (0.12%)	306	195	-111 (-36.27%)

			140			-6
Knockree B	1047	1187	(13.37%)	56	50	(-10.71%)
			211			28
Mardyke	840	1051	(25.11%)	9	37	(311.11%)
			-86			-22
Mayfield	2932	2846	(-2.93%)	179	157	(-0.75%)
			44			3
Montenotte A	1676	1720	(2.62%)	86	89	(3.48%)
			-44			7
Montenotte B	2437	2393	(-1.80%)	86	93	(8.13%)
			133			-191
Rathcooney	8574	8707	(1.55%)	720	529	(-26.52%)
			387			-16
Shandon A	1743	2130	(22.20%)	89	73	(17.97%)
			8			-7
Shandon B	1401	1409	(0.57%)	43	36	(-0.16%)
			425			-15
South Gate A	2163	2588	(19.64%)	95	80	(-15.78%)
			128			-11
South Gate B	956	1084	(13.38%)	39	28	(-28.20%)
St. Mary's (East and West)			2199			21
	5538	7737	(39.7%)	381	402	(5.51%)
			344			30
St. Patrick's A	1611	1955	(21.35%)	49	79	(61.22%)
			241			10
St. Patrick's B	1162	1403	(20.74%)	25	35	(40%)
			64			3
St. Patrick's C	856	920	(7.47%)	41	44	(7.31%)
			62			10
Sundays Well A	699	761	(8.86%)	28	38	(35.71%)
			103			-19
Sundays Well B	892	995	(11.54%)	48	29	(-39.58%)
			38			-37
The Glen A	2466	2504	(1.54%)	134	97	(-27.61%)
			-84			-64
The Glen B	3699	3615	(2.27%)	212	148	(-30.1%)
			69			1
Tivoli A	1667	1736	(4.13%)	67	68	(1.29%)
Total	72,765	79,701	6,936 (9.53%)	3,858	3,473	-385 (-9.97%)

Table 1 - Electoral Divisions included within study area.

5.8 The population of the catchment area increased from 72,765no. people in 2016 to 79,701no. people in 2022, representing an increase of over 9.5% over the 6-year period. Of note, is that over the same period, the number of children in the 0-4 age bracket decreased by 385no. people, representing a decrease of nearly 10% over the intervening period.

- 5.9 This indicates that while the overall population is increasing, the number of pre-school children in the area is decreasing. This indicates that the demographic profile of the defined study is that of an ageing population.
- 5.10 In terms of commuting times within the study area, in 2022, for the first time in the census, questions on travel to school and college were expanded to include childcare. This allowed the analysis of commuting patterns for children aged 0 to 4 years.
- 5.11 For Cork City and County 14,851 children aged 0-4 out of a total 18,283 travelled to a childcare facility by car.
- 5.12 This suggests that just over 81% of the total population commute by car each day and owing to the proximity of the site to larger employment areas in the city, such as Blarney Business Park, Tivoli, Mahon, and Little Island, it is considered likely that a sizeable portion of the existing and future population of the catchment area will avail of childcare outside the immediate area.
- 5.13 Further to this, we note that the catchment of the area does not extend towards the southern side of the city centre to the southeast or towards Blarney to the northwest where further childcare facilities are provided. Given the employment available in these locations, it is also considered likely that a sizeable portion of the existing and future population of the catchment area will also avail itself of childcare facilities in, or close to, these areas, both comprising of existing and future proposed facilities.
- 5.14 There is significant demand for childcare spaces in Blackpool and the surrounding areas. Many childcare providers in the Blackpool area operate an internal waitlist, to meet the needs of families already within the childcare facility that often comprises of a two-year waitlist, which results in some services having to close their waiting list to the wider public as they are at capacity.

Distribution of Childcare Facilities in Catchment Area

- 5.15 In addition to the above analysis, it was deemed appropriate to audit existing childcare provision within the defined catchment area of the proposed development.
- 5.16 Data from TUSLA's website was used to ascertain the number of existing registered childcare facilities in the local area. The latest information (February 2026) available on the TUSLA website indicates that there are 29no. existing early years childcare services in the area.
- 5.17 In carrying out this assessment, each of these 29no. facilities were contacted by phone to determine whether they are currently operating at full capacity and, if not, how many additional children they can currently accommodate. Details of these childcare facilities, including maximum capacity, are presented in Table 2 below. On this basis, the assessment was progressed based on available information.
- 5.18 Cork City Childcare were also contacted to confirm the operational status of each of these childcare facilities and their current capacity.

Childcare Facility	Capacity of Facility	Available Spaces on Inspection Day	% Available Spaces
Little Miracles Childcare, Granary Court, Cork	44	0	0%
Little Miracles Montessori, Old Mill Business Centre, Cork	22	No Answer	0%
Muin Preschool, The Green Rooms, Cork	22	0	0%
Farranree Childhood Matters, 98 Knockpogue Avenue, Cork.	37	0	0%
Classes Childcare, Maryville, Friars Walk	40	No Answer	0%
Happy Days Montessori, St. Patricks Hill	30	No Answer	0%
Little Hands Childcare, Farranferris Education and Training Centre, Redemption Road, Cork	110	0	0%
Naíonra na mBachlóg/Little Buds Pre-School, North Monastery Road	40	0	0%
Glentrasna, Glen Avenue, The Glen, Cork.	22	0	0%
Hollyhill Knocknaheeny Family Centre, Hollyhill and Knocknaheeny Family Centre, Ltd, Harbour View Road	60	0	0%
Páistí @ No 3, 3 Churchfield Avenue	38	0	0%
Playland Creche, Saint Mary's on the Hill, Cork	12	0	0%
Mount Eden Montessori, 14A Mount Eden Terrace, Cork	11	0	0%
Cuddles Creche, Douglas Street	57	No Answer	0%
Lotamore FRC Pre-school, Lotamore Park Mayfield	14	0	0%
Mayfield Community Pre-school	22	No Answer	0%
Newbury House Family Centre CLG	15	0	0%
Newbury House Family Centre CLG	22	0	0%
Niche Health Project CLG	60	No Answer	0%
Nurture Childcare, Fairylawn	117	0	0%
Oakview Village, Cork City	41	No Answer	0%
St. Patricks Pre and Afterschool Care, Gardiners Hill	22	0	0%
Glen Community Creche, The Glen	37	0	0%
Wallaroo Playschool, Military Hill	42	No Answer	0%
Tír na Nóg Montessori, Glen Rovers GAA	44	12	27.27%
Magnet Community Group, Glen Resource Centre	20	0	0%
Bright Start ELC Ltd. North Monastery Primary School	42	0	0%
T.V.G Goras Community Childcare	31	No Answer	0%
St. Anne's Day Nursery CLG, Crawford Street	52	No Answer	0%
Total	1,126	12	1.06%

Table 2 - Capacity of childcare facilities in study area

- 5.19 It is noted that information was not available in relation to 10no. local childcare facilities. Given that this information was not available, a worst-case scenario has been adopted, and it is assumed that this facility is at full capacity.
- 5.20 Having regard to Table 2 above, it is noted that there are 12no. existing spaces available in the identified study area, representing 1.06% availability within existing facilities.

Permissions for Childcare Facilities in Cork City and Suburbs

5.21 There is an extensive planning history for additional childcare facilities in Cork City and its surrounding suburbs, which subject to their timely delivery, would have the capacity to cater towards any future demand which is derived from the proposed development. These include standalone facilities and facilities that form part of larger residential developments, of which include the following:

- **Application Reg. Ref. 21/40732:** Permission for the construction of 46 no. residential units (comprising 17 no. dwelling houses and 29 no. apartments/duplexes), a community centre/creche and all ancillary site development works, including access, car and bicycle parking, bin storage, landscaping and amenity areas at Fairfield Meadows, Upper Fairhill, Commons, Gurranabraher, Cork (to replace 40 no. residential units and child care facility/community centre permitted under Cork County Council Ref. No. 19/5010) granted on the 7th April 2022.
- **An Bord Pleanála Ref: 313994-22:** Strategic Housing Development permission granted at Kilbarry for demolition of disused hurley manufacturing factory and associated outbuildings, construction of 319 no. residential units (203 no. houses and 116 no. apartments), creche and associated site works.
- **Application Reg. Ref. 24/42796:** Permission granted to the Land Development Agency for Large-Scale Residential Development comprising amendments to a permitted Strategic Housing Development of 265 no. units (An Bord Pleanála Ref: 308923- 20) on the site of the Former St Kevin's Hospital and Grounds, Shanakiel, Cork. A 630sqm creche forms part of the permission granted on the 20th May 2024.
- **Application Reg. Ref. 23/42106:** Permission granted for an LRD at the Gouldings Site, Centre Park Road, and Monahan Road, Cork City. A standalone 2 storey creche of 665 sq.m with associated outdoor amenity space is also proposed, with permission granted on the 24th August 2023.
- **Application Reg. Ref. 22/40976 (ABP 314905-22):** Permission granted for development of 94 no. residential housing units comprising 7 no. 4-bed detached dwellings, 5 no. 3-bed detached dwellings, 19 no. 4-bed semi-detached dwellings, 41 no. 3-bed semi-detached dwellings, 12 no. 3-bed terraced dwellings and 10 no. 2-bed terraced dwellings with associated residential car parking at Coolymurraghue, Upper Leemount, Kerry Pike, Co. Cork. The permitted development also comprised of a creche (476sqm.).
- **Application Reg. Ref 92/291:** Permission granted at Coolymurraghue, Kerry Pike, known as Clonlara, for a residential Development - 64no. Dwelling houses & creche.

5.22 As noted above in section 5.12, the majority of children availing of creche/childcare/Montessori's commute to these facilities by car, putting an even greater emphasis on the ability to avail of childcare facilities outside the immediate catchment area.

6.0 CHILDCARE PROPOSAL

- 6.1 Appendix 2 of the Childcare Guidelines for Planning Authorities establishes a standard that where 75 no. dwellings are proposed, one childcare facility providing a minimum of 20no. childcare spaces is considered reasonable. On this basis, the need to provide 40no. childcare spaces would be triggered if a development meets a threshold of 150no. units. In this instance 104no. dwelling units are proposed.
- 6.2 The Guidelines note that the threshold for provision should be established having had regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding that there is capacity within existing childcare facilities in the local area to accommodate 12no. additional children, and that the proposed development is anticipated to generate the need for 12 no. additional childcare spaces locally, it is considered prudent to provide a new childcare facility on site to complement the level of existing local childcare facility provision.
- 6.4 Therefore, the proposal development provides for a 38no. place crèche, having regard to the existing capacity in the wider area. A ground floor crèche building (217.4 sqm) is proposed near the proposed site entrance off Pope's Road. A dedicated play area, exclusively for use by the crèche, will be provided to the rear of the facility.
- 6.5 It is intended that this will operate as a full day-care facility for babies (0–1 year) and toddlers (1–2 years). The design is informed by the Best Practice Guidelines for the Design of Childcare Facilities and Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001).
- 6.6 Based on a minimum requirement of 2.8 sq.m per child (exclusive of kitchen, bathroom, staff and ancillary spaces), the crèche can accommodate 38no. children. The facility provides two large dedicated classrooms, a sleep room for babies and toddlers, and a large children's garden accessed directly from the primary classroom via French doors. These core childcare spaces are supported by kitchen/staff facilities, offices, WC and changing rooms.
- 6.7 As part of the design refinement, the childcare facility has been revised to provide a safer, more functional and efficient internal layout. The stair core serving the residential units above, previously located within the crèche footprint, has been removed and relocated externally, allowing the crèche to operate independently with clear and uninterrupted internal circulation.
- 6.8 In addition, provision has been made for a dedicated drop-off area for the crèche, as well as dedicated parking in order to prevent any informal car parking associated with the crèche to take place near the entrance to the development. These parking facilities are in accordance with the childcare guidelines.
- 6.9 The Cork City Childcare Committee have welcomed the proposed 38no. place creche and have confirmed that the demand from parents for Full Day Care Childcare for under 3s is enormous. The proposed creche would significantly improve the existing offering of full day childcare in the area.

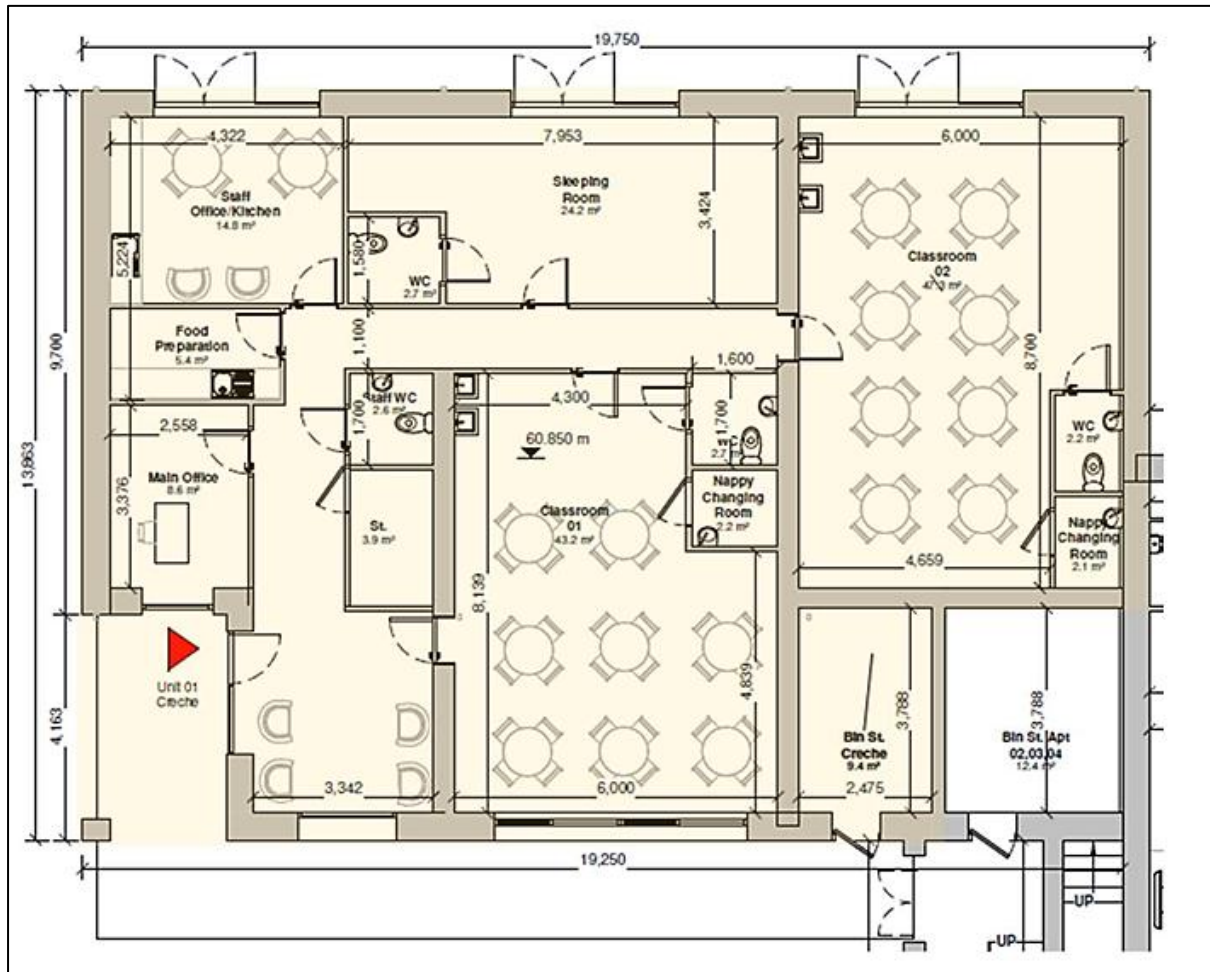


Figure 2 – Proposed Creche Floor Area