

DES-CU-02084-2024

FAO: Ms. Sharon Conroy

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PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Our Ref: DES-CU-02084-2024

Dear Ms. Conroy,

I refer to your correspondence to the Minister for Education, Ms. Norma Foley TD, in relation to a secondary school for Newcastle, Dublin.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, the Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, including CSO Census data, Child Benefit and school enrolment data, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise and where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments have the potential to alter the demand for school places at a local level. In that regard, as part of the demographic demand analysis, the Department monitors planning and construction activity in the residential sector. This involves the analysis of data sources from Local Authorities and the CSO along with the engagement with local authorities and the construction sector.

In this way, up-to-date information on significant new residential developments is obtained and factored into the demographic analysis exercise. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes, at a local level, where there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, be provided through:

Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,

Extending the capacity of a school or schools,

Provision of a new school or schools.

If additional accommodation is required, the aim to try and facilitate this, as much as possible, by way of expansion of existing schools rather than establishing new schools. The expansion of existing schools is consistent with wider Government objectives under Project Ireland 2040 for an increased emphasis on compact growth.

In respect of post primary schools, new post primary schools must have a student enrolment capacity of 600-1,000 students and must be co-educational. A lower threshold of 400 students may apply to Gaelcholáiste, having regard to the alternative of establishing an Irish-medium unit (Aonad) in an English-medium school.

New schools are only established in areas of demographic growth as the resources available for school infrastructure have to be prioritised to meet the needs of areas of significant population increase so as to ensure that every child has a school place.

Newcastle is in the Newcastle/Rathcoole School Planning Area. A new Post Primary school, Coláiste Phobail Fála, was announced in April 2018 to serve as a regional solution for Tallaght, Newcastle and Rathcoole School Planning Area's and will deliver a 1,000 pupil post-primary school. The project is at Stage 3 - is the instruction for the project to proceed to tender.

There is a large-scale capital project, Holy Family Community School, Rathcoole which will provide accommodation for 1,000 pupil school. The project is at an advanced stage of Architectural Planning Stage 3 Tender Action Award, the tender process was undertaken, and a contractor identified. The next steps for the project will be the completion of the tender process and progression to Stage 4 Construction.

Details of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on the Department's website at www.gov.ie and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Department will continue to liaise with Local Authorities in respect of their County Development Plan and any associated Local Area Plans with a view to identifying any potential long-term school accommodation requirements across school planning areas.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen O'Brien

Private Secretary