

Re: Observation - Case Reference LH28.324153
Bessborough, Ballinure, Blackrock, Cork

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to register my objection to the proposed Large-Scale Residential Development at Bessborough, Ballinure, Blackrock, Cork - the site of the former Bessborough Mother and Baby Home. My husband and his mother were among those confined at Bessborough. It is from that position - as a family member of survivors - that I make this observation.

This is not an ordinary planning matter. Bessborough is a site of profound and unresolved historical trauma. Over 900 infants and children died at Bessborough or in hospitals after being transferred from it, yet burial places have been identified for fewer than 70. Nineteen of the women who died there also remain unaccounted for. Their burial places are unknown, and the question of what lies in the grounds of Bessborough has never been resolved through proper investigation. The findings of the Commission of Investigation - that burials in the grounds are highly likely - remain the clearest statement of what may yet be discovered there, and those findings have not been acted upon.

The conditions attached to Cork City Council's grant of planning permission (requiring only that works pause if remains are encountered) seem deeply inadequate to the gravity of what this ground may contain. I would ask that An Coimisiún Pleanála give careful consideration to whether proceeding with development, before any proper investigation of the site has taken place, is consistent with the respect owed to those who died and disappeared there, and to their families. I note that An Coimisiún Pleanála has itself declined to grant planning permission for this site on multiple occasions since 2021, and that the underlying questions about what the grounds may contain have not materially changed.

I respectfully ask that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse this permission. The site should be properly investigated, and any future use of the land determined only after the full truth of what occurred there has been established, and those who were lost have been found and honoured. Bessborough should become a place of remembrance - one that bears witness to the suffering of the women and children who were confined there, and that ensures future generations understand what happened and are resolved that it must never happen again. A residential development serves none of these purposes. To permit it would be to bury, a second time, those who were already abandoned, and to forgo the chance to transform a place of deep sorrow into one of truth, dignity, and enduring memory.

Yours faithfully,

Jennifer Williams
Gortbrack, Goleen Co.Cork 0831544406, email: jwilliamsny@pm.me