

Planning Observation – Environmental Considerations for Development at Bessborough,
Cork

Mahon Library Pressure Group

27 Dunlocha Cottages

Blackrock

Cork

T12F9CN

Re: Planning Objection – Proposed Development at Bessborough

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to lodge a formal objection to the proposed development at Bessborough on the grounds that it materially contravenes the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and is inconsistent with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Cork City Development Plan 2022–2028, and relevant national planning guidelines.

Prematurity and Conflict with Strategic Policy

The Bessborough lands are of significant strategic importance. It is a matter of public record that Cork City Council has voted to pursue acquisition of this site.

Under NPF National Policy Objective 72a, there is a requirement for planning authorities to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of large-scale and strategic development areas. Granting permission in this instance would be premature and would undermine the ability to deliver a comprehensive, plan-led scheme for the site in the public interest.

Failure to Respect Historical and Cultural Significance

The site is a former Bessborough Mother and Baby Home of profound historical and societal importance.

The NPF (including NPO 11 – heritage-led regeneration and NPO 27 – sustainable communities) emphasises the need to integrate cultural heritage and social context into development. The proposal fails to provide:

- Appropriate commemoration
- Cultural or reflective space
- Evidence of meaningful engagement with the site's legacy

This omission is unacceptable and contrary to national policy.

Traffic Impact – Non-Compliance with National Policy

The proposal conflicts with NPF NPO 64 (sustainable mobility) and NPO 65 (reducing car dependency), as well as the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.

The development:

- Will significantly increase traffic congestion
- Fails to demonstrate a credible modal shift to public or active transport
- Places additional strain on an already constrained road network

This is inconsistent with the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (2009), which require alignment between development scale and transport capacity.

Inadequate Social and Affordable Housing Provision

The proposal fails to meet the intent of NPF NPO 4 (social inclusion) and NPO 32 (housing supply and affordability), as well as statutory obligations under Part V of the Planning and Development Act.

Given the scale and importance of the site, the level of social and affordable housing is inadequate and does not contribute meaningfully to addressing housing need.

Clustering of Social Housing – Contrary to National Guidance

The concentration of social housing within a single section of the development is contrary to best practice and national policy promoting tenure integration.

This conflicts with:

- NPF NPO 27 (sustainable, inclusive communities)
- The Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines

Such clustering risks segregation and undermines the creation of a balanced community.

Lack of Community and Social Infrastructure

The proposal fails to comply with NPF NPO 9 (compact growth supported by infrastructure) and guidance within the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines.

There is no provision for:

- A public playground
- Youth or community services
- A library or cultural facility

This represents a serious deficiency. A development of this scale must provide the necessary infrastructure to support a sustainable and liveable community. Its absence will place unsustainable pressure on existing local services.

Material Contravention of the Cork City Development Plan

The proposal conflicts with key objectives of the Cork City Development Plan 2022–2028, including:

- Delivery of sustainable neighbourhoods supported by social infrastructure
- Promotion of integrated and tenure-blind communities
- Alignment of development with transport capacity and sustainable mobility

The proposal represents overdevelopment of a sensitive and strategically important site and fails to meet these core objectives.

Conclusion

In light of the above, the proposed development:

- Is premature and risks prejudicing strategic public use of the site
- Fails to respect the historical significance of the lands
- Does not comply with national planning policy or guidelines
- Lacks adequate infrastructure and community provision
- Does not deliver a balanced or integrated community

I therefore respectfully request that Cork City Council refuse planning permission.

As a local group of concerned residents who came together to advocate for a local library promised to the community over 20 years ago, having lived in the community for a combined total of over 100 years and having engaged with over 5000 residents, gaining petition signatures.

We feel duty-bound to resist this development, as it does not meet national and local guidelines; the site is a possible burial ground to the great shame of the state, which should not be allowed to bury this history.

We implore you to allow Cork City Council time to purchase the lands, as they have requested.

On behalf of the Mahon Library pressure group,

Committee Members

James MacBarron

Kieran Crean

Lar O Tuama

Ian Power