

Planning Observation – Environmental Considerations for Development at Bessborough, Cork

CO Chairperson Michelle Buckley

Mahon Tidy Towns,

Mahon Community Centre,

Mahon,

Cork.

mahontidytowns@gmail.com

0879763253

Mahon Tidy Towns welcomes the opportunity to make an observation regarding the proposed development at the Bessborough site in Cork.

Bessborough represents one of the most significant green and natural landscapes in the Mahon / Blackrock area. The site contains mature woodland, important tree cover, wildlife habitats, and open green space that contributes greatly to local biodiversity, climate resilience, and community wellbeing.

From an environmental perspective, Mahon Tidy Towns would ask that the following matters be carefully considered within the planning process:

1. Protection of Existing Trees and Woodland

The mature trees and woodland on the Bessborough lands are of significant ecological and landscape value. Every effort should be made to retain these features and ensure that development avoids unnecessary tree removal. A detailed arboricultural assessment and tree protection plan should be implemented.

2. Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat

The site supports birds, insects, and small mammals that rely on this green corridor. Development proposals should incorporate biodiversity protection measures including habitat retention, pollinator-friendly planting, and wildlife corridors.

3. Green Infrastructure and Climate Resilience

As urban areas expand, preserving large green spaces is increasingly important for carbon sequestration, air quality, and climate adaptation. Any development should prioritise sustainable drainage systems, green spaces, and nature-based solutions.

4. Public Amenity and Community Green Space

Given the scale and environmental importance of the Bessborough lands,

consideration should be given to preserving significant areas as publicly accessible green space for walking, recreation, and nature appreciation.

5. **Sustainable Development Principles**

Development should align with Cork City's climate action goals by incorporating energy-efficient design, reduced car dependency, and protection of the natural landscape character of the area.

Mahon Tidy Towns has specific concerns regarding the following,

- While the maria has been turned into a public park, it is still a wetland by nature. It forms a lung for the Mahon Peninsula. A second lung is needed- a pastoral habitat. Bessborough, in its current form, is the only site that can provide this for parkland creatures, migratory birds, and the many permanent residents.
- There has been no comprehensive ecological study of the area. Several part surveys have been conducted. Our concern about any development on this site is that habitats for rare or endangered species would be destroyed without knowledge of their existence. This is the last remaining pastoral land on the Mahon peninsula, thus rendering those species extinct in the locality.
- The "Mahon Family Resource Centre Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2018" (Center, 2024) outlines this in much greater detail and should be viewed as part of this submission.
- While we note the developer has proposed to have a park on the south side of the site nearest the south ring road, this land serves as a right-of-way for council services, and it is likely to be disturbed for future services. This will lead to the destruction of habitat.
- Sewage and wastewater, local sewage is pumped at least twice weekly by truck, as the system is below standard. Even with this, it regularly overflows onto the street – photos can be provided. Any further residential development will exacerbate this problem.
- Due to the historical nature of the site, many in the local community would not support any development of the site in its current form.
- We support Cork city council's unanimous motion to CPO this site for public use. We support this appeal to allow time for this to be managed to the satisfaction of all parties.

Mahon Tidy Towns supports responsible development that respects the environmental value of the Bessborough site and protects this important green asset for current and future generations.

Thank you for considering these observations as part of the planning process.

Yours sincerely,

Mahon Tidy Towns Committee