



Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2
20th April 2026

Planning Authority: Cork City Council

Appeal Case Number: 324153

Planning authority case reference number: 2544442

Location of proposed development: Bessborough, Ballinure, Blackrock, Co. Cork

To whom it may concern,

I would like to make the following observations in relation to the above appeal.

The planned development of a large-scale residential development on the site of a former Mother and Baby Home, which was operated by the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary from 1922 to 1998, is wholly inappropriate and should not proceed.

9,768 mothers and 8,938 children were admitted to the institution throughout its 76 years of operation. According to the findings of the Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation, 923 babies born in Bessborough died in infancy or early childhood. There are burial records for only 64.

The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation states that;

It is not known where the vast majority of the children who died in Bessborough are buried. There is a small burial ground in the grounds of Bessborough...It seems to have been assumed by former residents and advocacy groups that this is also where the children who died in Bessborough are buried...The vast majority of children who died in Bessborough are not buried there; it seems that only one child is buried there. More than 900 children died in Bessborough or in hospital after being transferred from Bessborough. Despite very extensive inquiries and searches, the Commission has been able to establish the burial place of only 64 children.¹

And;

The Commission considers that it is likely that some of the children are buried in the grounds but has been unable to find any physical or documentary evidence of this.²

¹ Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation (2019) *Fifth interim report*, p.8

² *Ibid*, pg.9.



Under the European Convention on Human Rights, the State is obliged to investigate the deaths of children and mothers, to ascertain the whereabouts of the disappeared, and return their remains to relatives. To date the State has not complied with its legal obligation in respect to the deaths and disappearances of children and women who were confined in Bessborough.

An Coimisiún Pleanála is obliged to uphold the State's legal obligations in regards to human rights, and cannot delegate this responsibility by way of conditions on a grant of planning permission to a private property developer.

While the Commission of Investigation states that no physical or documentary evidence of burial grounds on the site was found, it must be noted that there has never been an adequate investigation of Bessborough. No geophysical surveys, test excavations, soil chemistry or decomposition analysis appear to have been undertaken by the Commission of Investigation.

In recent months the State has unnecessarily compounded the suffering caused to survivors of Mother and Baby Homes. It is essential that the planning process responds to their concerns and halts this development from proceeding.

A full investigation of the grounds must be conducted to establish the location of the remains of these babies, followed by sensitive excavation work and the dignified exhumation of any remains found.

The site should be protected and memorialised in honour of all those who suffered and died in Bessborough.

Regards,

Holly Cairns TD
Party Leader, Social Democrats