

Re: Large Scale Residential Development Proposal, 'The Farm' (Cork City Council Planning Ref. 25/44442) at Bessborough, Ballinure, Blackrock, Cork.

To whom it concerns;

As someone born in and adopted from Bessborough, I am deeply upset by the proposed development at the former Mother and Baby Institution.

I have long described myself as a survivor of Bessborough, not because I emerged completely unscathed, but because I was not among the hundreds of infants and children who died there. Those children were born into circumstances not of their mothers choosing and were failed repeatedly in their short lives and then discarded with little consideration or respect.

Their mothers and families have since endured decades of unanswered questions, unacknowledged grief, and the ongoing denial of the most basic human right: to know where their loved ones are buried.

To date, the burial locations of the majority of infants and children who died at Bessborough remain unknown. There has been no comprehensive forensic, archaeological, or historical investigation to establish the location and extent and condition of burial grounds across the site. In these circumstances, it is wholly inappropriate and deeply disrespectful to contemplate construction on land that may contain the remains of children who were never afforded proper burial rights or marked graves.

Development at this stage would represent a fundamental dismissal of the historical reality of what occurred at Bessborough. It would also constitute an irreversible intervention on a site of exceptional sensitivity, before the State has discharged its responsibility to identify, protect, and preserve those human remains. Such an outcome would not only compound the original harm done to those mothers and their children, but would also demonstrate a continued failure to treat their lives and deaths as matters of public concern and human dignity.

Planning authorities have a duty to consider not only housing need, but also heritage, human remains, and the public interest. This site cannot be assessed as ordinary land. It is a place intrinsically linked to well documented suffering, institutional neglect, and death. Any development prior to the completion of a full investigation into burial practices and locations, risks the destruction of evidence, the disturbance of remains and the permanent erasure of truth.

Ireland is a society that understands the significance of burial, remembrance and ritual in death. The fact that the remains of these infants and children continue to be denied respect is a profound national failure. At a minimum, the State owes them recognition, protection and respect in death-particularly when they were denied basic care and dignity in life.

For these reasons, I urge An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for this planning application. No building should take place at Bessborough until all burial locations have been fully identified and protected so the land can be preserved as a site of conscience.

I make this observation in full support of the position and concerns of the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home Support Group regarding this development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noelle Brown', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Cllr Noelle Brown

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