

**Planning Observation to The Farm Strategic Housing Development, Bessborough, Ballinure, Cork, and the Meadows SHD, Bessborough, Ballinure, Cork**

Ref 313206

Ref 313216

A chara

Please find as follows our submission regarding the application named above.

The purpose of my submission is to urge that every possible caution be applied regarding the potential for the burial of human remains on this site.

As you will be aware, there is a significant amount of sensitivity in connection to this site,

In general, I readily recognise the need for additional housing and apartments in our City, including in the South East Ward.

However the issues in question here go far beyond housing matters and relate to the history of the greater Bessborough site, and it's meaning for those who lived and spent time here, is enormous, and profoundly sensitive.

As you will know this proposed development, takes place on the site of the former Bessboro Mother & Baby Home, which operated for many decades, until the 1990s.

Interim reports to the Commission of investigation suggested that the location of the remains of hundreds of children who died at Bessboro are not known.

From the Examiner - <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-30918325.html>

"The long-running inquiry found that some 900 children died in Bessborough or in hospital after being transferred from Bessborough. However, it could only establish the burial place of some 64 children who died between 1922 and 1928 despite "very extensive inquiries and searches".

Of these, 53 are buried in St Joseph's Cemetery, two are buried in St Finbarr's Cemetery.

Five of the remaining children died after being transferred to Cork District Hospital and are "likely" to have been buried at Cork District Cemetery, Carr's Hill. However, the Commission has no documentary evidence of this.

The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary who owned and ran Bessborough do not know where the other children are buried."

It seems entirely possible that the bodies of many of the children, and women who died on this site are around the greater Bessborough site. In my view there is a responsibility on the local authority and the state to ensure that any site of such significance is properly investigated.

I am aware that this is a different application to the previous SHD application for Bessborough, and that it relates to a different part of the larger Bessborough campus. The previous site was very much believed to have been potentially the 'Childrens' Burial Ground', and that therefore there are different considerations. I believe an Bord Pleanála took the right decision in rejecting that application.

It remains my view that no development should happen that interferes with the potential childrens burial site.

I understand the developer has had some engagements with survivors and relatives groups, and sought to reassure them.

I welcome that the developer has committed to archaeological supervision and monitoring of all groundworks should be undertaken by a suitably qualified forensic archaeologist as part of a precautionary approach, and that said forensic monitoring of the development would be independent and beyond reproach.

While such sentiments are welcome, and the issues surrounding this site are not the same as previous applications, nonetheless An Bord Pleanála must itself take a robust approach and be confident that the safeguards are adequate, and that there is no risk to burial sites.

It must hear all evidence put to it and must be satisfied that the site of development does not contain a burial site.

Therefore it is vitally important that an Bord Pleanála seek details of such safeguards, the independence of the monitoring, and the mechanism to halt works if an Bord Pleanála is not satisfied that these conditions are being adhered to.

I would also put on record once again my strong view that the Department of Children must find a mechanism for the investigation of all Mother and Baby Home sites, these survivors and relatives deserve to find the truth.

While I appreciate that these are not normally the kind of considerations planners have to measure and consider, in this instance it is undoubtedly warranted.

An Bord Pleanála must be absolutely satisfied that there is no risk of disturbing the burial site if it is to permit planning permission

I hope that you can take these observations in to account

Regards

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