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**Kilkenny Local Authorities announce significant compromise on proposed dismantling houses at Vicar Street Houses**

The Kilkenny local authorities today announced a significant compromise on plans to demolish houses at Vicar Street to make way for an important new road development.

The houses at 21 and 22 Vicar Street are due to be dismantled to make way for the **Central Access Scheme,** which will support the functioning of the city centre and enable further central development, rather than on the edge of the city.

The €10.7 million project involves the construction of 700 metres of a new road across the former cattle mart and the Smithwicks brewery lands, with a new River Nore bridge. It was approved by [An Bord Pleanála](http://www.irishtimes.com/search/search-7.1213540?tag_organisation=An%20Bord%20Pleanála&article=true) in 2011.

On April 17th the Kilkenny local authorities published two reports into the buildings at 21 and 22 Vicar Street commissioned following concerns that they contained a late medieval gable, or at least the remnants of one.

The surveys and investigations - carried out by consultant archaeologists **Valerie J Keeley Ltd,** and architectural and historical buildings specialist **Rob Goodbody of Historic Building Consultants,** under licence and supervision of the **Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht -** revealed that the houses do not date back to medieval times.

Today Kilkenny City and County Manager wrote to councillors to say that notwithstanding the findings of these reports that neither the houses in question nor the gable wall at No. 22 are medieval, that the gable wall WILL now be retained.

The letter said the decision was made taking into consideration the “strong views that continue to be expressed by a number of parties including An Taisce, the Heritage Council and others in relation to the value of the gable wall of no. 22.”

It adds: “It appears now to be common cause among all parties that the houses at 21 and 22 are in themselves of no archaeological value. In order to avoid further disagreement and further costs of investigation and in the possible interest of the building heritage of Kilkenny, the Council has decided to retain the gable wall of No. 22 and has notified the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht accordingly. “

The manager said that house No. 20 will also be retained.

The decision to retain the gable wall will not affect the planned alignment of the road and there will be no significant cost implications.

The Rob Goodbody report concluded that the front and rear walls of 21 and 22 Vicar St, and their internal walls date mostly from 1881 and 1908 respectively with no evidence that they date to medieval times.  The report says there are small remnants from the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Prior to these investigations there was no clear understanding of the date of the gable wall that forms the southern end of 22 Vicar Street. Mr Goodbody says this has now been shown to date “in all likelihood” to the eighteenth century, but with significant alterations and additions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See illustrations attached.

Meanwhile the report from Valerie J Keeley Ltd shows that earliest archaeology found dated from the late 17th/early 18th century, and not further back to medieval times.

The works carried out included archaeological monitoring of all ground works, and were part of the conditions of An Bord Pleanála permission.

12 test trenches were excavated within the interior and gardens of No 21-22 Vicar St, and in the pavement in front of the houses as well as in the Diageo Ltd carpark to the south of No 22 Vicar St.

According to the report archaeology was identified in each of the 12 test trenches but none of the test trenches have revealed evidence of archaeology earlier than the late 17th/early 18th century.

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