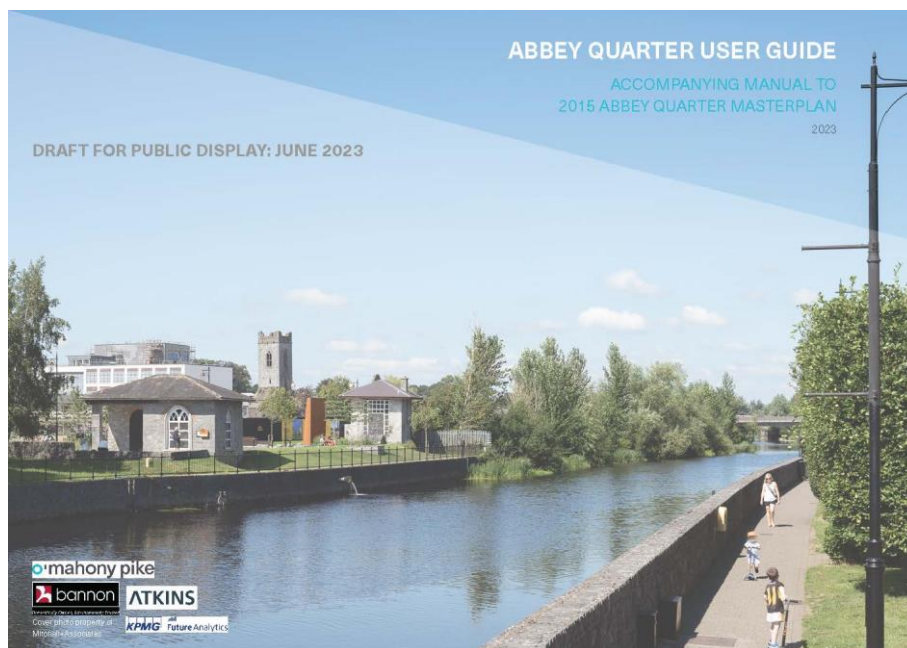




Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Submissions Received Regarding Draft Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide for Extended Area & Review



12th September 2023

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1. Introduction

This report forms part of the non-statutory procedure for the making of a Masterplan User Guide for the Kilkenny Abbey Quarter and addresses the submissions received during the public consultation period from Friday June 2nd to Friday June 30th June, 2023.

The purpose of the report is to:

- (a) Report on the submissions and observations received during the public consultation period and public display of the plan.
- (b) Set out the Interim Chief Executive's response to the issues raised in the submissions/observations received and;
- (c) Make recommendations to the Elected Members on the issues arising from the consultation process.

Although the Masterplan User Guide is not a statutory document, it is brought to the members for their consideration and approval. It is also recommended that the document be incorporated into the City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 by variation. There will be another statutory process for that incorporation.

2. Consultations

A. Public Engagement

In December 2022, an online questionnaire was advertised for the public to engage in. It was widely published through the various media platforms.

A total of 274 responses were received. 73.75% of participants did not engage previously with the public consultation for the Abbey Quarter Masterplan adopted in 2015.

Almost 60% of participants felt the 2015 vision was still relevant.

On the 18th January 2023 an online public consultation event was held outlining the process and results of the initial survey and background analysis. Approximately 52 people attended the session. The full session and the presentations on the night were posted on the Council's website at:

<https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/development-plans/abbey-quarter-brewery-site/review-of-Abbey-Quarter-Masterplan-2023/>

On the 20th and 21st of June 2023 offline and online public consultation sessions respectively were held for the review. The purpose of these sessions was to inform the public of the development process and high-level proposals under the updated plan. In the offline and online session, attendees were also invited to submit questions to the project team for clarification. The public were also invited to make submissions to the process as follows:

- online at <http://consult.kilkenny.ie/> or
- by e-mail to ourplan@kilkennycoco.ie or
- in writing to: The A./Senior Planner, Planning Department, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny

A total of 21 people attended the offline in person events. Some people attended more than one event.

Key concerns, remarks, queries raised and their responses are summarised below under the following categories:

- Mobility
- Parking
- Heritage, Culture, and Arts
- Third Level Institutions
- Housing
- Climate and sustainability
- Universal Design Principles.
- Kilkenny needs to be a 'living City'.

B. Consultation with Kilkenny County Council Elected Members Session – 20th June, 2023

As part of the review process the following engagements took place.

On the 20th June 2023, an online session was held with Elected Members of Kilkenny County Council.

The key queries raised are summarised below:

Mobility

- There was a query on the purpose of a 'mobility hub' and how this would be included in the Abbey Quarter?

Parking

- There was concern expressed by some members about the level of proposed car parking within the Abbey Quarter and whether this would compromise the ambition to develop the Abbey Quarter as a sustainable, low-carbon district. It was felt that the wider City centre has an adequate provision of car parking to meet the needs of the Abbey Quarter.
- There was concern expressed around the quantity of car and coach parking provided for the Brewhouse Building and the impact that this has had on the overall development of the Abbey Quarter.

Third Level Institution

- It was noted that attracting a third level institution to Kilkenny would be desirable. The Abbey Quarter would be an ideal location for a third level campus.

Heritage

- It was noted that there is a challenge in balancing new development in the Abbey Quarter with the City's medieval heritage and character. The level of consideration, planning and design that has gone into protecting the heritage of the Abbey Quarter was commended.



Members of the public attending the first in person event



Members of the public attending the second in person event

1.1 **Details of Public Display**

The Draft Guide document was placed on public display from Friday June 2nd to Friday June 30th June (*both dates inclusive*) and was available for inspection at the following locations:

- <http://consult.kilkenny.ie>
- Planning Office, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny
- Kilkenny City Library, John's Quay, Kilkenny

Submissions and/or observations could be made:

- online at <http://consult.kilkenny.ie/> or
- by e-mail to ourplan@kilkennycoco.ie or
- in writing to: The A./Senior Planner, Planning Department, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny

Submissions Received

Following the Elected Members session and public consultation sessions, 18 submissions were received for the Draft Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide, as set out below.

REF.	NAME
KK-C221-1	Francis Hoyne
KK-C221-2	Peter Vaughan
KK-C223-3	Candida Frith-Macdonald
KK-C223-4	Kieran Kelly
KK-C223-5	Kilkenny Older People's Council
KK-C223-6	O'Neill Foley Accountants
KK-C223-7	An Taisce
KK-C223-8	Christopher O'Keeffe
KK-C223-9	Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce
KK-C223-10	Christopher O'Keeffe
KK-C223-11	Christopher O'Keeffe
KK-C223-12	Christopher O'Keeffe
KK-C223-13	Christopher O'Keeffe
KK-C223-14	Kieran Kelly
KK-C223-15	Cllr Maria Dollard
KK-C223-16	Tirlán
KK-C223-17	Enya Kennedy
KK-C223-18	Anonymous

3. Summary of Issues Raised, Interim Chief Executive’s Response and Recommendations

3.1 Submissions

Ref	Name
KK-C221-1	Francis Hoyne
<p>Summary: Requests a kayak area to be located at the skatepark. The car park is a waste area, and opening this up would allow access to the area.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Response: The suggested development of a kayak facility in the area to the north of the River Breaghagh would be consistent with the objectives of the Masterplan. However, plans are already well advanced for the development of a water sports activity hub in the grounds of County Hall, in conjunction with Failte Ireland and Irish Water Safety. Any proposal for a kayak area in the Abbey Quarter would need to take into consideration the current proposals for County Hall to ensure that such facilities are not being duplicated in the City.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Recommendation: No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-2	Peter Vaughan
<p>Summary: States that Kilkenny is undoubtedly the best suited urban area in Leinster, outside of Dublin, in which to locate a University, with its wealth of talent involved in the creative arts. A college could be either a standalone college of art and design or a link with a Dublin Art College or a college outside of Ireland. This could be located in a purpose-built unit or the former brewery engineering building.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Response: A goal of a 3rd level facility for Kilkenny is being actively pursued by the Council and the Masterplan and this User Guide ensures the site can accommodate such a use. It is an objective of the City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 to provide for third level facility in Kilkenny. Kilkenny County Council made a detailed submission under the public consultation process initiated by the new South-East Technological University (SETU) last year for the preparation of their first 5-year strategic plan. The Council sought that SETU commit to establishing, within the period of the strategic plan, a higher education campus in Kilkenny to be located in the Abbey Quarter. In response, SETU have committed in their strategic plan to establish a Working Group to engage with Kilkenny County Council and other stakeholders to explore how SETU can support specific activity based in Kilkenny.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Recommendation: No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-3	Candida Frith-MacDonald
<p>Summary:</p> <p>It raises a strong concern regarding ‘parking provisions’ in the Masterplan. There was strong sentiment during the Masterplan process (<i>during 2015</i>) against car parking and this sentiment should be upheld in this process.</p> <p>Major concerns under this submission are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parking provisions is excessive in the Masterplan. It was noted that parking figures presented in the plan are maximum and were decided before the SUMP process commenced. 2. The current parking space in the older part of the City works well for the residents as the City is moderately walkable. 3. There are many car parks within ten minutes’ walk of the quarter including car park at Wolf Tone Street which is never full. 4. It will be hard to remove the car park later if more car parks are added in the future. 5. The excessive amount of car parks is damaging the vibrancy of the City and is contributing to pollution. 	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Response:</p> <p>The Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 has a focus on active travel and public transport with modal shift targets set. It is also an objective of the Development Plan to prepare a Local Transport Plan. The Kilkenny Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) process has commenced and will deliver a Local Transport Plan.</p> <p>The Plan which will include the Abbey Quarter will set out the measures to be taken in order to achieve a modal shift towards sustainable mobility options for the City, including a public car parking management strategy that addresses the quantum and location of parking for City parking. This is referenced in the User Guide and will be applied within the plan area. In the last 5 years the net parking provision in public car parks has been reduced by the order of 55 spaces. Work currently underway at the Mayfair and works proposed at the Market yard will reduce parking by a further 37 spaces.</p> <p>The proposal to develop car parking as part of Sweeny’s Orchard is to facilitate a very reduced level of car parking for new developments while the SUMP is being developed and society transitions to more sustainable patterns of transport in the City. In the longer-term vision of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan area it is an objective of the Masterplan User Guide to remove existing surface car parking. A time line on that objective is difficult to estimate but is very likely to be beyond the current City & County Development Plan period to 2027.</p> <p>It should be noted that applying current Development Plan parking demand standards, a total 3,697 car parking spaces would be required to satisfy expected demand for up to 110,000 m² (GFA) of development. Such a level of car parking is neither desirable nor achievable in terms of land take, viability, cost, policy context and such a level of parking is not proposed in the Masterplan</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Recommendation:</p> <p>No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-4	Kieran Kelly
<p>Summary: Mr. Kelly states he was involved in the previous consultation on the Masterplan, but the views expressed in the consultation were not heeded. The consultation for this User Guide is not workable and does not take on the view of the people.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response: The Masterplan adopted in 2015 was the subject of comprehensive non statutory public consultation process and took into account of the views expressed through that process. A cursory examination of the draft document published at that time, the revised vision for the plan area and the final Masterplan document clearly shows how the public consultation influenced the final plan. The 2015 Masterplan remains a valid policy document and this accompanying User Guide is the outcome of a review process.</p> <p>As part of the pre-draft process an online questionnaire was completed by 274 participants. This was followed by a public engagement event which took place online in January 2023, which was very well attended. Following the publication of the Draft User Guide, there were 3 engagement events held offline and online on the 20th and 21st June, 2023. These events were designed to offer information on the process and encourage the making of submissions, which are now the subject of this report. The views expressed in both of those consultative formats and subsequent submissions during the display period were considered and were incorporated in the preparation of the Masterplan User Guide.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation: No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-5	Kilkenny Older People's Council
<p>Summary: This submission sets out the principles for housing for an ageing population. In relation to the Abbey Quarter, the submission seeks that any older people's housing is not located in the Sweeney's Orchard area due to it being divided from the main Abbey Quarter by a very busy road. The services that would be required by older people are not available locally. Submission notes that older people want to be a part of the Abbey Quarter mixed urban quarter over the coming years. They seek the provision of 20 residential units and set out the specifications for these, in addition to an adjacent communal facility. The primary services required by older people would be available adjacent to the primary Abbey Quarter location.</p> <p>The submission also quotes an example of the Clúid Great Northern Haven, Barrack St., Dundalk, Co. Louth scheme which was constructed with the concept of life-time adaptability at its core.</p>	

Interim Chief Executive's Response:

Housing on the site will comply with the Council Housing Strategy, which embraces universal design principles and access for all. This also applies to all public realm works carried out by the Local Authority. Elements of housing will be provided in Sweeney's Orchard as well as centrally proximate to the Brewhouse. Housing for all ability groups, including older people should be provided at appropriate locations throughout the City generally and will be a significant consideration in housing provision and for the development of this site in particular.

Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:

To include text in relation to the provision of residential units for older people in Section 2.8 Housing Typologies as follows:

"The provision of appropriate housing units for all levels of ability, including older people, would be examined in the design and layout of housing proposals".

Ref	Name
KK-C221-6	O'Neill Foley Chartered Accountants
Summary:	
The submission states the firm is currently operating within the Abbey Quarter and maintains that car parking will continue to be a necessity until such time as alternative sustainable transport is developed.	
Interim Chief Executive's Response:	
See response to KK-C221-3 above. As set out in the User Guide, the SUMP process will develop a public car parking management strategy that addresses the quantum and location of parking for the City.	
Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:	
No change recommended.	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-7	An Taisce
Summary:	
The submission believes the Masterplan should prioritise developments relating to the three national emergencies: Housing, Biodiversity loss, Climate Change. Specifically, the Masterplan has concerns as follows:	
<p>(i) The gable wall of 22 Vicar Street, retained as part of the St. Francis Bridge has had no modification to mitigate its appearance, or to explain its significance and location, and is located as a standalone incongruous two-storey, ruin-like structure, supported by extensive steel scaffolding and beams. There is now an outstanding opportunity to redeem the situation. We strongly advocate that the Masterplan takes responsibility for planning its future.</p>	

- (ii) There are safety issues relating to St. Francis Bridge; the bicycle lanes are segregated only by a painted white line separating vehicular traffic from cyclists. The hazard could be mitigated by designating the pavement as a shared pedestrian and cycle lane. The street lighting on the bridge is distracting. Thirdly, the bridge pavements are constructed with aluminium surface which is extraordinarily noisy in certain situations and could be reduced by having an alternative surface or covering on the pavements.
- (iii) The protection of wildlife on the R. Nore bank and in the river could be compromised as the Abbey Quarter site becomes busier and noisier. A routine ecologist survey at intervals could compare current species and numbers with a baseline survey to track biodiversity status.
- (iv) The predominant emphasis appears to be on commercial activity, as only 30-35% of developed area will be used for residential building. Residents on the site will be critical to keeping it alive at night.
- (v) Future buildings, especially housing, should be designed to passive solar principles in orientation, design and materials.
- (vi) Section 2.9 states that 'the delivery of a new street linking St. Francis Bridge and New Street is an objective of the plan'. Kilkenny does not need another road inside a medieval walled City.

Interim Chief Executive's Response:

The responses to specific points raised are as follows:

- (i) The Gable should be addressed by inclusion of an objective relating to incorporation of this into development. Specifically plans for the development of a new building on the Abbey Quarter site in the area of the current temporary coach park will be required consider the retention / integration of the retained gable end. Kilkenny County Council will consider an interim solution to improve the aesthetic presentation of the braced structure and explain its significance.
- (ii) St. Francis Bridge was subjected to a rigorous Road Safety Audit process as part of its design and construction as is normal for any scheme of this nature. However, purported traffic safety issues associated with St. Francis Bridge are outside the scope of the Masterplan review and have been referred to the relevant sections in the Council for their consideration.
- (iii) Various ecological assessments and surveys have been undertaken to inform development proposals to date on the site. These surveys were undertaken in advance of development works on the site. The details of these surveys are in the public domain through the planning process. The Variation process to incorporate the User Guide into the Development Plan will consider the potential for impacts on the river Nore and other Natura 2000 sites which are located within the zone of potential impact.

- (iv) Circa 60% of the overall site comprises public realm including open spaces, parks, streetscape and community uses. The commercial elements on the site are being developed by the Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Limited. The submission states that "...eight potential or actual office block sites have been identified..." The development blocks identified are for a mixed-use development, with the overall mix of uses to align with the targets identified in the Masterplan. The proposed overall 30-35% minimum target for residential use throughout the area is considered to be appropriate in the context of a mixed-use development, especially to keep it vibrant during out of office hours.
- (v) The current Building Code that require NZEB standards are applicable. This is however a separate code to the Masterplan and User Guide. Any materials proposed for the new buildings will need to consider the lifespan of such materials and their suitability for use in the Irish climate. Future buildings will be developed to comply with the requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations and NZEB. It should be noted that the two buildings developed on the site to date have been developed to LEED standard (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design), with the Brewhouse building achieving LEED Gold standard. The new Library is also being developed to LEED Gold Standard. The Council is also developing a Green Procurement Policy as part of its actions under its Climate Action Plan which will be applied to development works by the Council on the site in the future.
- (vi) The draft Masterplan User Guide is proposing the development of a new Local Access street to connect from St Francis bridge to Green Street. The provision of such a street needs to be viewed in the context of how this proposal will facilitate better walking and cycling facilities in the area through the changing of some streets that are currently two way to one way in the immediate area thereby allocating more road space for pedestrians and cyclists within the existing streets. It will allow better permeability for all including and in the longer term provide for a reduction in car usage.

Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:

- (i) Include an objective to incorporate the gable end into any development proposal for the immediate area and to consider measures to improve the aesthetic presentation of the braced wall and its significance in the interim.
- (ii) No change recommended.
- (iii) No change recommended.
- (iv) No change recommended.
- (v) No change recommended.
- (vi) No change recommended.

Ref	Name
KK-C221-8	Christopher O'Keeffe
<p>Reference is made to the draft Masterplan for an extended Abbey Quarter area. The submission points out following:</p> <p>It states that the document has not been provided. It should have been a part of the consultation.</p> <p>Please note: The submission states to review the previous submissions made by author on the Masterplan, however link to the previous submissions is not working.</p> <p>Link to prev. submission: https://consult.kilkenny.ie/en/search/node</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response:</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the public notice referred to a Masterplan review and that the document itself is named as the Abbey Quarter User Guide. The brief for the project sets out the term Masterplan review. As the project review evolved it became clear the output required was not a completely overarching document but a review which focused on topics which, over time had overtaken the original Masterplan and needed dating. The form of the output considered most suitable for that was the User Guide as produced. It is accepted that a consistent titling should have been used for all materials and documents. This will be done from now on in all documentation.</p> <p>It is noted that the link to the 2015 Abbey Quarter Masterplan Design Code works on Consult.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:</p> <p>No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-9	Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce
<p>The submission was prepared by Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber supports the need for conducting a review of the 2015 Abbey Quarter Masterplan. The following was welcomed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The original plan was drafted in 2015, the ways and means in which people visit and use the City have changed. Hence it is desirable and essential to review the Masterplan. (ii) Kilkenny Chamber support the climate action recommendations within the review. (iii) The Chamber supports the recommendations as outlined in the review addressing 'Town Centre First' and 'Housing for All' initiatives with regards to the housing crisis. (iv) The Chamber suggests that Masterplan should incorporate the findings and decisions emanating from the SUMP process including the number and types of car parking spaces, their locations within the Masterplan area and the rates applicable. Emphasis should also be on EV charging and cycle parking. 	

In summary, Kilkenny Chamber state that they are supportive of the recommendations contained in the current review documents.

Interim Chief Executive's Response:

Noted. The Abbey Quarter Masterplan area forms part of the SUMP and the Parking Strategy in the SUMP will also comprise the long-term parking strategy for the Abbey Quarter as a whole.

Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:

No change recommended.

Ref	Name
KK-C221-10	Christopher O'Keeffe
<p>The submission refers to traffic and car parking.</p> <p>Reference is made to the car parking figures in the Masterplan document. It is stated that <i>“there is already significant public and private car parking (4,419 spaces) and that a potential development described in the document would result in a maximum of approximately 3,697 car parking spaces in demand”</i>.</p> <p>Author has the following concerns pertaining to above mentioned remark: These figures were never assessed.</p> <p>The Council says this level of car parking is not achievable, but additional off-site car parking facilities will be considered, such as the Mart site. Author seeks a clarity upon this.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response:</p> <p>A public car parking management strategy that addresses the quantum and location of parking and pricing structure for City parking, including the Abbey Quarter site is currently underway and will be fully developed in accordance with the SUMP process. The former Kilkenny Mart Site has been sold and its development will be the subject of a separate planning and Masterplan process to be agreed with the developer.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:</p> <p>No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-11	Christopher O'Keeffe
<p>The submission raises concerns regarding Sweeney's Orchard. Concerns are outlined below:</p> <p>(i) Sweeney's Orchard should be utilised for housing and not car parking. It should not be a through way for cars.</p> <p>(ii) Author's opinions conflict with the submission made by O'Neill Foley Chartered Accountants & Auditors in favour of relocating the existing temporary car parking to Sweeney's Orchard. He states that "If this has been privately agreed, I would be disappointed, and this would be contrary to the plan".</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response:</p> <p>(i) Sweeny's Orchard is owned by Kilkenny County council and the Council consider that this site is ideal for housing development. It is a specific objective of the Guide that Sweeney's Orchard will be developed for housing. The Council are in the process of preparing a brief to deliver housing on the site. To facilitate access to and through the lands and improve permeability it is also an objective to link Greens Bridge St and St Francis Abbey Bridge with a new street. This will also allow for additional parking in the short term to facilitate access to housing and any other uses within Sweeny's Orchard. In the longer-term existing surface car parks will be removed beyond the current plan period (<i>See KK-C221-3 above</i>).</p> <p>(ii) Agreements between the Abbey Quarter Development Limited (KAQDL) and its commercial customers are a matter for the KAQDL and beyond the scope of the Masterplan review. Sweeny's Orchard is owned by the Council and no agreement has been made with third party's for its future use.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation: No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-12	Christopher O'Keeffe
<p>The submission raises a concern towards hotels being categorised under 'Other uses' in the Masterplan.</p> <p>Author states that hotels are "Commercial", or "Retail, Food and Beverage" and other uses are " Civic, Social, Education, and the Environment".</p> <p>Hence, other uses should not include hotels.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response: Hotels attract both day and night time activity and are varied in function. The hotels are commercial , they are also food and beverage (<i>Restaurant and Bars</i>) hence were included in the "other" category which allows for an amalgam of many uses. It should also be borne in mind that the area is intended to be a mixed use development.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation: No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-13	Christopher O'Keeffe
<p>The submission points out that Kilkenny Local Transport Plan's must be unveiled first before the review of Masterplan proceeds.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response: It is a statutory requirement for the local authority to produce a Local Transport Plan. The process was commenced as part of the City & County Development Plan process. Survey work was hampered during Covid and so the production of a Local Transport Plan could not be completed as part of the City & County Development Plan. A shortened document /study was completed. However, with advent of smarter modelling techniques and with the fast-changing pace of transport modes and the significant allocation of Government monies towards the various sustainable transport modes the view was formed that a wider and extensive ground up process (<i>i.e. the SUMP</i>) should be developed as the Kilkenny Local Transport Plan. Extensive public engagement was undertaken and is still ongoing as part of that process. The Kilkenny Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) will refine and expand any findings all in the context of the public consultation and the more advanced modelling now being carried out. The Study will be published as part of the SUMP process at a later stage in the process when further consultation takes place on the SUMP.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation: No change recommended</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-14	Kieran Kelly
<p>The submission raises concern about parking in Sweeney's Orchard. Main remarks and questions are enclosed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Unsatisfactory details about the file attached in O'Neill Foley Chartered Accountants & Auditors and Tírlán's submissions about parking in Sweeney's Orchard. (ii) Need for further clarification if parking is going to be made available to the people working in the brewery site. (iii) Parking proposed in Sweeney's Orchard notwithstanding the opposition to parking on-site. <p>Author's opinion contradicts the Council and Abbey Quarter company decision of providing parking for Tirlán and O'Neill Foley Chartered Accountants & Auditors in Sweeney's Orchard.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response: Parking on blocks 12 & 13 are a transitional arrangement and temporary uses are allowed for under the Masterplan. The long-term objective is for a modal shift away from the private car and its parking requirements. The decision handed down by An Bord Pleanála prohibits public use of the parking on the temporary car park. This is a matter for the Abbey Quarter Development Limited as it is the owner of these lands.</p> <p>Sweeney's Orchard remains in Council's Ownership and has not been sold.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation: No change recommended</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-15	Cllr Maria Dollard
<p>The submission refers to a set of challenges which needs to be addressed in the Masterplan. The question and concerns regarding the key points raised in the submission are outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Office provision that simply relocates existing business add no new value to the City. (ii) All proposals must contribute to climate action and restoring nature. Everything in the plan must address these twin challenges. (iii) Every opportunity must be grasped to create housing in the Abbey Quarter at percentages higher than those proposed. (iv) Housing should prioritise people who wish to live in a City centre location without the expense of a car. (v) From previous consultations that there are constraints in place from a health and safety perspective. Provision of play areas at ground level in the AQ due to its industrial history. How will these be overcome? (vi) If car parking is required, yearly rental spaces could be provided in the existing car parks. (vii) How are the play areas going to be provided at ground level due to its industrial history? Are elevated outdoor areas in housing blocks a possibility? (viii) Can consideration be given to the provision of space for public use at Dunnes store car park. This would provide linkage from the Canal walk to the Linear Park at AQ. At the moment a very unsatisfactory exit from the pedestrian bridge lands at a railing making it difficult for cyclists/scooters? (ix) No mention of active travel in the document. (x) Section 2.6 of the document is utterly car focused and is extremely vague & contradictory. (xi) Excessive car parking is not in line with Ireland’s Climate Action Plan. There is no ambition to make Kilkenny car free. (xii) Are AQ partnership/Ltd. company in any way committed to provision of free parking for tenants of the AQ offices or is it a condition required by tenants to ensure their occupancy of the office space? (xiii) Is there any plan to address the dereliction on Vicar Street in conjunction with the Part 8 works to bring the existing derelict houses back into uses as homes? (xiv) Buildings between the Castle and Cathedral should be kept to a minimum. The height of the current Dunnes Store building would be a good benchmark. It is suggested that when planning permission is sought for future blocks, they should be presented in 3D digital or scale model form, so people can visualise what they would look like and make a reasonable comment. 	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) In addition to providing for new business locating within Kilkenny City, the provision of high-quality office accommodation of scale and to LEED standard allows some existing businesses to expand within the City area. (ii) Noted and agreed 	

- (iii) The percentage of housing in the Abbey Quarter has been agreed at a minimum of 30-35% of the overall uses. This is considered reasonable and sustainable given the City centre location and the imperative to also facilitate City centre employment and vibrancy in Ireland's 8th largest employment centre.
- (iv) It is policy to review all forms of Mobility for the City in the SUMP process and the Abbey Quarter's proximity to public transport and opportunity for Active Travel will provide opportunity for its residents not to be dependent on the private car. The SUMP parking strategy will inform the extent to which parking standards are imposed.
- (v) These concerns relate to a very localised area and is only a risk if someone were to come into direct contact with the soils in this localised area. This has been considered and addressed in the design process.
- (vi) Noted and agreed. It is an option for tenant's in the Abbey Quarter to lease private car spaces. The Council's policy in relation to public car parks is that such parking is available to the general public and cannot be leased. Some level of parking is required for the development of the Abbey Quarter, but it is acknowledged that this demand will change over time with modal shift to cycling, public transport etc. This is currently being reviewed through the preparation of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) and details on parking demand measures are to be considered in the parking strategy
- (vii) Play areas are subject to detailed design, which may include artificial surfaces.
- (viii) The Dunnes Stores Car Park is currently under consideration and will be part of the car parking strategy being prepared for the SUMP (*Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan*).
- (ix) Active Travel is an overall priority for the Council and the SUMP's will address Active Travel throughout the City, including in the Abbey Quarter. A further statement in support of Active Travel is included in Section 2.6 (*Mobility Approach*) of the Guide to demonstrate the Council's commitment for same in the Abbey Quarter.
- (x) Section 2.6 is written in support of the SUMP and with the 10-minute City and active travel as its focus. The Abbey Quarter is considered part of the City Centre Travel Hub and it is expected that the SUMP and accompanying Parking Strategy will set the parameters for Active Travel and parking within the Abbey Quarter in this regard and therefore the section cannot be more specific.
- (xi) See 10 above.
- (xii) Parking on blocks 12 & 13 are a transitional arrangement and temporary uses allowed for under the Masterplan documents. The long-term objective is for a modal shift away from the private car and its parking requirements. The decision handed down by An Bord Pleanála prohibits public use of the parking on blocks 12 & 13. The commercial arrangements between the Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Limited and its tenants is a matter for the KAQDL as it is the owner of these lands. It is beyond the scope of this report.
- (xiii) The dereliction referred to along Vicar Street is on private lands. The Council will address dereliction under the Derelict Sites Act, and the recently announced Call 3 of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) specifically aimed at tackling vacancy and dereliction in the City. The Abbey Quarter Masterplan and Guide will set the framework for bringing those properties back into use in a coordinated fashion.

- (xiv) The proposal to increase the building heights within the Abbey Quarter is consistent with national Policy and any such proposal must take into consideration the specific location and site characteristics of the development location. The proposed use of the Dunnes Stores building as a benchmark height would result in under development of this City centre site and would not be consistent with national policy. For the developments to date in the Abbey Quarter, Computer Generated Images have been prepared and used in the planning process to give members of the public a realistic view of what the completed buildings will look like.

Interim Chief Executive’s Recommendation:

No change recommended.

Ref	Name
KK-C221-16	Tirlán
<p>The submission remarks on the potential relocation of the existing temporary car parking to Sweeney’s Orchard.</p> <p>The following was welcomed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The facility benefits from access to secure surface car parking within the Abbey Quarter development area, specifically in a permitted temporary car park. With a current weekly footfall of over 650 employees, parking is an essential component for ensuring convenient access for both employees and visitors. (ii) Tirlán would welcome the opportunity of working in conjunction with the Council towards ensuring that the construction of an alternative carpark in Sweeney’s Orchard, to meet both its short-term and long-term parking needs, while also allowing for ease of conversion to alternative uses in the future. (iii) Tirlán, as a key business tenant in the Abbey Quarter, intends to develop its own mobility management plan for workers and visitors to its facility. This plan will explore various matters, including alternative transport options for individual employees, car-sharing initiatives, and incentives to encourage employees who currently rely on car transport to switch to electric vehicles, support by additional EV charging points. (iv) While Tirlán is fully committed to sustainable transport, in the short to medium term, they will continue to rely on car parking until alternative sustainable modes of transport are developed and implemented. 	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Response:</p> <p>Tirlán’s commitment to sustainable transport is noted. The Council will work with the Abbey Quarter Development Company to implement alternative arrangements over time in line with the provisions of the Kilkenny SUMP.</p>	
<p>Interim Chief Executive’s Recommendation:</p> <p>No change recommended.</p>	

Ref	Name
KK-C221-17	Enya Kennedy
<p>The submission was prepared by Enya Kennedy. The submission received was put together in the form of a poem. Key concerns stated in the poem are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The expansion of Masterplan area does not serve the City. (ii) Addressing the temporary car park issue is crucial. (iii) Sustainable transport shall be embraced. (iv) High quality social homes should be promoted. (v) Nurture retail and restore vibrancy. (vi) Provision of cultural and sports facilities should be included in the plan. (vii) The heritage and biodiversity of Kilkenny must be protected at all costs. (viii) ISIF funding should be utilised to do so. (ix) There is a need to resist increased car travel. 	
<p>Interim Chief Executive's Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Masterplan area is expanded to include essential areas, including Council lands which are ancillary to the original site, thus enabling improved and better coordinated structuring of a bigger site area, including the provision of largescale housing. (ii) The temporary car & coach park is a temporary facility only and will be removed in the future to facilitate the new building blocks on that site as provided for in the Masterplan. The street through the Abbey Quarter is planned as a pedestrian and cyclist priority street. Extensive bicycle parking facilities have been and will be provided throughout the Abbey Quarter, with shower facilities incorporated into the buildings to encourage people to cycle to work. The use of sustainable transport will be further established through the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), which is currently being prepared. (iii) See KK-C221-15 (10) above. Section 2.6 is written in support of the SUMP and with the 10-minute City and active travel as its focus. The Abbey Quarter is considered part of the City Centre Travel Hub and it is expected that the SUMP and accompanying Parking Strategy will set the parameters for Active Travel and parking within the Abbey Quarter in this regard. (iv) High Quality, Accessible Dwellings: Universal Design and NZEB (Near Zero Emissions) design standards would be used in the design of all Residential Units, providing comfort and access for all. The Abbey Quarter Masterplan provides for a minimum of between 30-35% overall residential use on the site. It is expected that this will be a mix of social and private housing. (v) The overall concept of the Abbey Quarter is to protect and enhance the future of the City centre. With the development of the Abbey Quarter, people are being brought into the City centre to work and live. These people will bring increased vibrancy and vitality to the City centre, will do their shopping and they will socialise in the City centre, thus helping to protect the long-term future of the City centre. There is no ambition for the Abbey Quarter to compete with the current retail offering in the City centre but rather to support the existing retail offering in the City centre. (vi) Currently there are a number of cultural facilities proposed for the Abbey Quarter - the new City Library in the Mayfair will provide Kilkenny with a modern state of the art library. Plans are also being advanced for the renovation 	

of the squash court building in the former Brewery site as a rehearsal space for theatrical performers. Further cultural facilities could be accommodated on the site subject to funding. Sports facilities could be considered subject to funding and an assessment of their suitability for location within a City centre site. There are no current plans for a multipurpose sports facility within the Abbey Quarter – such a facility is already in place at the Watershed.

- (vii) The heritage of the Abbey Quarter site has been central to the plans for the development. A Conservation Plan has been prepared for the heritage structures on the site, with the proposed Park to be centred around St Francis Abbey, the City Walls and St Francis' Well. The heritage and archaeology of the site will continue to be a central focus of the development.
- (viii) The development of the site to date has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. The development has provided opportunities to add to the green open spaces in the City with the development of the Riverside Garden and the development of the planned Urban Park centred around St Francis Abbey. These developments have/will change the landscape of these areas of the site from an industrial site to green spaces with new trees and other planting, thereby enhancing the biodiversity of the site.
- (ix) Significant financial resources are required to advance the development of a site of this scale and to deliver on the ambitions of the Masterplan. Kilkenny County Council will continue to work with funding partners in the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to advance the new buildings on the site, with other sources of funding such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to be used for the development of the public realm areas.
- (x) Also see 3 above.

Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:

No change recommended.

Ref	Name:
KK-C221-18	Anonymous
<p>It notes a set concerns and remarks regarding the public consultation and Masterplan provisions.</p> <p>The following is included in the submission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Abbey Quarter project has been an abject failure, there are now commercial entities working there, but these businesses were already native to the City environs, no new excess jobs having been created because they chose to move their offices to this site. (ii) The KAQDL has essentially set itself up as a landlord and is now competing with existing office rental in the City, this is specifically prohibited under the terms of the ISIF agreement. Author demands that the Council answer to this charge. (iii) Can the council confirm if Tirlán ever stated that they intended to move their offices from Kilkenny in the event of office space in the Brewhouse or on the site was not made available to them? 	

- (iv) What is the purpose of the consultation? From a planning perspective, it is not a requirement at this point, so state the reason to conduct it. Author notes that in the 2015 consultation public's views and recommendations were disregarded in the Masterplan.
- (v) In the evening consultation session, no facility was provided where participants could give written feedback, no questionnaires were handed out and collected; the presentation was not recorded, nor minuted.
- (vi) Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Partnership refuse to answer requests made under both the Freedom of Information Act, 2014 and the Access to Information on the Environment Regulations, 2014. They also refused to release requested information to the public as they state they 'are not public bodies' in relation to the Act and regulations.
- (vii) The level of dissatisfaction by many people in Kilkenny extends to a feeling that the generational opportunity feels squandered.
- (viii) Councillors are voting in the blind to provide money the purpose for which is not disclosed. Author seeks a further clarification on this. As per this plan and the Council potentially engaging with DIAGEO to buy other previously unsold parts of the old brewery complex, author would urge a note of caution.
- (ix) Author has concerns regarding moving parking to Sweeny's Orchard under high density housing. The proposed parking will result in very significant hydrocarbon runoff which would be harmful for River Breagh and River Nore SAC.
- (x) Author's opinion contradicts O'Neill Foley Chartered Accountants and Auditor's submission. The author's view is that requests noted in their submission goes against every modern European SUMP idea.
- (xi) Zoning on this site adamantly refrains from providing for large retail; it would undermine the vision for the site at the 2015 consultations.
- (xii) What has been delivered to date underwhelms- being very generous with that description

In conclusion, author's is that this plan fails frankly by its short-term outlook, the incessant commercialization of this site is not what the public wanted during consultations in 2015.

Interim Chief Executive's Response:

- (i) The Brewhouse development is fully let, with three tenants - Tirlan, O'Neill Foley Accountants and Security Risk Advisors. Both Tirlan and O'Neill Foley Accountants previously had office space in the City and County. Their relocation to the Abbey Quarter has provided them with capacity to expand their businesses in the City, taking on new staff to add to their existing workforce.

In the case of Tirlan, their development of a Collaboration Hub in the Abbey Quarter, is very different to any other facility they have in Kilkenny. As noted by the CEO of Tirlan at the event to mark the opening of their new facility "*The hub has a footfall of over 650 employees a week, as the state-of-the-art facilities and meeting rooms are available for collaboration by those working across the 11 Tirlán high-tech processing facilities and 52 agri-branches throughout Ireland. The new offices are designed as a blended workplace in line with Government aims on flexible working and the regeneration of towns and cities.*" The decision of Tirlan to locate their Collaboration Hub in the Abbey Quarter ensures that the long-term centre of activity for Tirlan will be located in the heart of Kilkenny.

The third tenant, Security Risk Advisors,(SRA) are a US multinational and IDA Ireland client company. SRA moved to Kilkenny specifically to set up in the Abbey Quarter.

- (ii) The relocation of existing businesses to the Abbey Quarter is not in contravention of any funding agreement for the Abbey Quarter as suggested in the submission. There is no restriction in any funding agreement that would prohibit existing businesses in Kilkenny from locating in the Abbey Quarter.
- (iii) Tirlan did not discuss with Kilkenny County Council the details of other sites that were under consideration by Tirlan for the location of this Collaboration Hub.
- (iv) Public consultation for non-statutory documents are important as they set the context for later statutory arrangements, the process for which there are statutory obligations to consult. To obtain the public's views early on ensures that they are involved from the start and that all relevant issues are considered in the making of any plans. This process involves such a non-statutory public consultation, which involves a review of the Masterplan that was approved in 2015. The review is required to ensure that the Masterplan is still current and relevant. There have been many policy changes at various levels (*EU, National, Regional & Local*) and the review of the Masterplan is required to ensure that it is consistent with these policy changes or is amended in response to the policy changes. It is also an opportunity to review what has been undertaken to date in the Abbey Quarter and to see if changes are required to the Masterplan in response to the experience to date. It is incorrect to say the public's views and recommendations were disregarded during the making of the 2015 plan, in which the public had a very significant input, resulting in very significant changes to the original draft Masterplan which was presented in 2013. All views expressed by any individual or organisation in a public consultation process need to be considered on balance in the context of views expressed by others. In response to the public consultations held in 2015, detailed responses were provided to each of the submissions received, with the Chief Executives report on the consultations outlining the reasons for a particular response to the submissions received. All of these submissions / responses are taken into consideration when deciding to approve or amend a proposal.
- (v) At all the meetings feedback notes were taken, participants were encouraged/invited to give feedback on the nights/evenings in question. A lively discourse took place at the in-person events and also at all the online events. Stakeholders including the public were invited to make submissions in three different formats namely by email, in writing by post or on the Consult. Kilkenny website. (see Section 2 of this report for further details) .
- (vi) The details of all projects undertaken in the Abbey Quarter by Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Partnership acting by its General Partner Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Limited are publicly available. The issue of whether Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Ltd is a Public Body for the purposes of the FOI Act is currently the subject of an appeal to the Office of the Information Commissioner.

- (vii) The response to the development to date in the Abbey Quarter has been overwhelmingly positive. (Survey and other public events including almost 500 people who attended the Open Day in May last year) The office space that has been leased to date has been leased on commercial terms and there is no provision of free public parking. Commercial arrangements between the Kilkenny abbey quarter Development Limited (KAQDL) and tenants are beyond the scope of this document and a matter for the KAQDL.
- (viii) The reasons for the investment by Kilkenny County Council of additional equity in the Abbey Quarter Development were clearly outlined to the Elected Members of Kilkenny County Council at a Council meeting held on Monday 19th June 2023. The meeting was a public meeting and the details of the meeting are on the public record.
- (ix) The former brewery on the site operated under an Integrated Pollution Control License from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). With the closure of the Brewery, Diageo were required to surrender their IPC License. In recommending that the surrender by Diageo of the IPC License be accepted, the EPA inspector noted that "...the site of the activity is not causing or likely to cause environmental pollution and the site of the activity is in a satisfactory state" Both Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Ltd are fully cognisant of the brownfield nature of the site and this has been taken into consideration in developments undertaken to date on the site and will continue to be taken into consideration for future projects.
- (x) The future transport needs of Kilkenny are currently under review through the preparation of the SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan). The submission from O'Neil Foley highlights the transport challenges that a rural City like Kilkenny faces, with employees travelling from outside the City to work in the City - these challenges will be considered in the preparation of the SUMP. The ONF submission also acknowledges that the SUMP when completed, will result in changes to transport arrangements in the City centre.
- (xi) The Masterplan does not specifically provide for large scale retail on the site nor does it preclude it. It is a mixed use zoned which must follow the design principles set out in the Masterplan 2015, the Urban Design Guide 2018 and the User Guide 2023.
- (xii) Two buildings have been developed on the site to date - the Brewhouse, which is a commercial office building, and the Mayfair Library, a modern state of the art public library facility. The site has also delivered a Riverside Walk and Skate Park, (which won an Excellence in Placemaking Award in 2021), together with the development of Horse Barrack Lane and the Brewhouse Square. With 60% of the former brewery site to be redeveloped as public realm along with the development of the new public library in the Mayfair building, the statement in the submissions which refers to the "...incessant commercialisation..." of the site is not a fair or accurate reflection of the development that has taken place to date or the planned future development of the site. The mix of uses proposed in the Masterplan ensures that the development will be a mixed-use development. In the next 18 months the new street and the Urban Park will be complete opening up the St. Francis Abbey to the public for the first time in 300 years.

Interim Chief Executive's Recommendation:

No change recommended

4. Next Steps

The Elected Members are requested to consider the Interim Chief Executive's Report and recommendations contained therein and approve both the Draft Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide as well as the initiation of a variation of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 to include the User Guide.

Following a review of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan 2015 and the Urban Design Code 2018, an Abbey Quarter User Guide has been developed. For planning policy and development management purposes (i.e. the assessment of development proposals) within the extended Masterplan area the following documents will be used:

- The Abbey Quarter Masterplan 2015
- The Urban Design Code 2018
- Abbey Quarter Users Guide 2023,

All within the overarching policy context of the City & County Development Plan 2021 -2017 or any subsequent City & County Development Plan.

If a conflict arises between the Abbey Quarter Masterplan, the Urban Design Code and User Guide, the User Guide will take precedence.

The following high-level objectives are to be inserted into the City and County Development Plan 2021 -2027 by way of variation:

- a) Development of housing on Sweeney's Orchard.
- b) Resolution of and redevelopment of the corner of Vicar Street and Green Bridge Street
- c) Resolution of and redevelopment of the corner of Vicar Street and St. Francis Abbey Bridge
- d) A street linking Green Street and St. Francis Bridge subject to detailed design (*Part X to ABP if required subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment*)
- e) Car parking on the Sweeney's Orchard Site subject to detailed design (*Part X to ABP if required subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment*)
- f) Extend the Masterplan boundary in accordance with the User Guide 2023.

The Variation will incorporate the User Guide as part of the Suite of Documents setting the detailed policy for the assessment of applications and development proposals relating to the Abbey Quarter Masterplan area, as extended.

A full environmental assessment in terms of SEA and AA will be carried out as part of the variation process.

ABBEY QUARTER MASTERPLAN - DRAFT USER GUIDE 2023

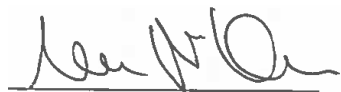
Proposed objectives for Variation to the City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.



- a) Development of housing on Sweeney's Orchard
- b) Resolution of and redevelopment of the corner of Vicar Street and Green Bridge Street
- c) Resolution of and redevelopment of the corner of Vicar Street and St. Francis Bridge
- d) A street linking Green Street and St. Francis Bridge subject to detailed design (Part X to ABP if required subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment)
- e) Car parking on the Sweeney's Orchard site subject to detailed design (Part X to ABP if required subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment)
- f) Extend the Masterplan boundary in accordance with the User Guide (2023)

5. Summary of Recommendations of the Interim Chief Executive

I recommend that the Draft Abbey Quarter Masterplan User Guide for the extended area and review be approved and that the Council proceed to initiate a variation to the City and County Development Plan 2021- 2027 as proposed.



**Sean McKeown,
Interim Chief Executive**