

Abbey Quarter Masterplan Q & A

Online engagement event

18.1.2023

Topic: Changing places

- Requires supervision, in mind for Kilkenny city for the future
- Statutory Instrument has just been signed

Topic: Consultation process

- Liam's presentation has addressed this
- Important to engage with young people in this process – this will be looked at. Original plan included consultation with schools and Comhairle na nOg
- May approach schools, this can be inspirational
- How much of a chance is left to influence the plan? Survey held before Christmas, tonight's exercise, both feeding into drafting of the plan. Once draft is published, three other chances to engage. Plan will come back to Councillors for sign-off, with summary of engagement and submissions.

Topic: Consultation process cont.

- Consultants are looking for possible routes through various constraints.
- AQ plan will evolve over time, requires flexibility on mobility. Important to ensure mistakes are not made. Will welcome feedback at Draft plan stage again.
- Could we use Building Information modelling technology to allow people to have a virtual walk through the site? Visuals as presented by Denis are very helpful. Not using this level of technology yet. Could send through reference materials.
- This could be good project for new technologies to aid in understanding of project – digital construction. Drone footage could also be used. Opportunity to collaborate with SETU.

Topic: Mobility

- AQ has fitted well with mobility goals across the City
- Transport is an evolving strategy, need to keep planning ahead for the City
- Completion of ring road is key, opens up opportunities
- Show significant ambition for active travel
- Women and Wheels report – 26% is highest figure for women to cycle – women typically carry caring load.
- Need decent commitment for parking for carers, disabled, mobility issues etc – emphasis is on fit, capable people

Topic: Mobility cont.

- All public realm will be designed to universal access standard – dedicated spaces will be available
- At any point 70% of the public are not fully capable/mobile (e.g carrying shopping), therefore inclusion is driver in all elements of design
- How does Masterplan align with 15 minute city? Ten minute neighbourhood is City concept – services to be accessed within 10 minutes. 4 neighbourhoods, 5th is City Centre. No conflict with AQ Masterplan.
- Visual impairments also need to be considered – this covers the surfaces and signage – this is being examined; Braille Trail is proposed.

Mobility cont.

- Shift of mindset will not be easy
- Bus routes are being very well used, discussions around increasing frequency and coverage
- Park and ride for City – mobility consultants are examining this at present
- Greensbridge – link to riverside garden is being advanced through Planning stage – this summer

Topic: Recreation and amenity

- >60% of area to be retained by Council
- Need for significant level of street furniture
- Connection to the Nore is vital – increased use of the river – proposal to develop a water hub on grounds of County Hall
- Question re. Kilcreene area football pitch – more related to (Western Environs) Breagh Valley/Loughmacask masterplan areas. Facilities will be rolled out as housing is developed. Permission for approx. 400 in Breagh Valley, focus is now on providing facilities for those.

Topic: Security

- Needs addressing; seems to be becoming more of an issue.
- Public lighting retrofit project, changing all lights to LED; provides much better safety
- CCTV is covered by the Gardai – GDPR concerns
- Infrastructure will be there on the AQ as required
- Passive surveillance is important to mitigate against these issues

Topic: Housing

- Significant challenge to be addressed
- Important to bring housing back into city centre
- Accommodation for over 55s – live work units, particularly down near the hotel. This shows new thinking, whole of life development.
- Cross section of all demographics is to be encouraged
- Mixed use buildings – live work on ground floor, above can be multiple uses. This is very important – as set out in the original Urban Design Code.
- Possibility of roof gardens – this is being considered

Topic: Housing cont.

- There a huge opportunity to have social/affordable/cost rental on the main footprint of the site
- How housing is to be delivered in context of urban setting is challenging. Accessibility is the main issue. Expectation that car parking will be provided to own door. Funding is complicating factor – mix of state agencies. Is to be examined intently as part of this review.
- Considerations of locations are not limited to Sweeney's Orchard.
- Housing for creatives/professionals/over 55s with no step access – this may entice returning residents
- Vehicle (EVs) rental scheme could function here

Topic: Housing cont.

- This type of development may suit more than family type housing
- If people are to live here, they may have to consider not owning car – we need to show leadership on this. Don't just follow market trends. Local Authority does need to lead – Plan at present follows Climate Action principles. Any revised document will include for this. Best practice will be pushed.
- Sweeneys Orchard – formerly a proposal for social housing, but site constraints put paid to that proposal.

Topic: Retail

- Important to protect core, achieve right balance to support the town centre
- Retail element in AQ, combined with possible mart development, and vacant units; will this not tip the balance? AQ is not identified for significant retail, it is a mixed use development. It shouldn't negatively affect city centre, due to its proximity to core – 'seamless extension'. Sequentially, first place for retail is city centre. Mart site development is another question to be evaluated in detail, against retail policies in the Dev Plan.

Topic: Employment

- Glanbia (Tirlan) and O Neill Foley are two businesses already operating, have expanded to the AQ
- Security firm is other occupier of Brewhouse – min. 50 jobs
- Some jobs are relocations/consolidation of existing, some are expansions of existing
- Diverse businesses, in addition to corporates may make this area more viable
- Creativity can apply across businesses/concepts – eg. Cartoon Saloon
- Third level space? Could space be dual use e.g. Halo suite for teleconferencing for the City. If included at this stage, this is more cost effective.

Topic: Creative sector

- Important to have a space to showcase world class work of Kilkenny crafts
- This would attract visitors, huge opportunity

Topic: Vacant site levy

- Why are council fining local developers for not developing, and refusing to develop their own site for social housing?
- Purpose of VSL is to activate land for housing. Number of sites improved/activated is 20 to date.
- AQ is active site
- VSL is being replaced by Residential Zoned Land Tax from 2024

Topic: Communications

- Need state of the art bandwidth to encourage creative sector, also CCTV for security
- Site is connected to MANS cable
- Backhall arrangements on MAN needs to be examined

Topic: Heritage

- Possibility to re-form the City Walls Steering committee?
- Biodiversity in urban areas – important to have goals for biodiversity in the area
- Could archive centre be located here? Need an archivist also. No specific proposal for AQ, but is being examined. This needs to be state of the art building. Process to manage Kilkenny's archives should be progressed – looked at Offaly archives – built in Tullamore.