



Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Riverside Gardens Landscape Part VIII Design Statement

2015.11.19

Rev.D



LANDSCAPE DESIGN STATEMENT

SITE LOCATION

The site is located along the western bank of the River Nore within the Kilkenny City Centre boundaries. The proposed Riverside Gardens will consist of, on average, a 15m wide band of open space. A large extent of the proposed scheme is located within the Diageo Brewery site and is proposed to form part of the larger masterplan of the Diageo site known as the Abbey Quarter Masterplan.

KILKENNY CITY & ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014-2020

Currently there are a number of amenity walking trails from Kilkenny city centre. The Noreside walking trails include the Nore Valley Walk from the city centre to Bennetts bridge stretching south for 11km, and the Bishops Meadows Walk to the North of the city stretching north for 2.6km. These walks are both on the western bank of the River Nore. Currently there is a fracture in this trail as the Diageo Brewery site does not allow public access along the river bank.

As part of the Kilkenny City & Environs Development Plan 2014-2020 one of the objectives (Objective 6B) identified is; 'To complete the development of the River Nore Linear Park within the lifetime of the Plan'.

Provision has been made in the Masterplan for the development of riverside gardens and this application details the riverside garden proposals along the western bank for the section of the River Nore between Bateman Quay and Green's Bridge. The riverside gardens will complete the missing link within the Nore Valley Walk.

The Nore Valley Walk is a significant recreational asset to the city and by developing proposals for this section of the linear park which are accessible to all users, including cyclists, people with disabilities and people using buggies the park will be an all-inclusive park within the city centre.

VISION

Mitchell + Associates strategy for the development of the Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Riverside Gardens is to develop a scheme with a strong 'genus loci', that enhances Kilkenny's existing urban public realm and structure. The scheme takes its inspiration from the site's unique natural setting, besides the River Nore, and responds to the expected archaeological features present on site with newly revealed features to be appropriately displayed within the riverside garden design. The scheme both addresses and extends the public realm of Kilkenny's urban core northwards, and draws the greenness of the existing River Nore Linear Park southwards into the City.

A key opportunity of the gardens is the provision of access to a number of very significant National Monuments on the site that have previously been out of bounds to the general public. It will provide a loop within what is now known as 'Ireland's Medieval Mile', notably increasing the number of National Monuments accessible to the public.

The aim is to introduce a high quality public realm that provides a series of spaces and opportunities that both complement and enhance Kilkenny City.

The scheme has been designed so as to have no impact on the SAC / SPA (Natura 2000)

DESIGN

ENTRANCE ARRIVAL SPACE

The proposals for the development of the riverside gardens commences at the existing Tea House at Bateman's Quay. The positioning of the space at the Tea Houses is at a pivot point drawing people from the existing Parliament Street, across from Lady Desart Bridge and the Canal Square as well as the proposed development of the creative quarter in the longer term making this location a natural focal point which can be maximized.

An intimate square is proposed adjacent to the Tea Houses with a combination of seating spaces within ornamental planting. The seating provides users with the opportunity to enjoy views along the river and also engage with the water in a restful restorative manner. This space acts as a focal point encouraging people to gather and engage with the landscape and welcome both locals and visitors into the riverside gardens which extends northwards from here.

It is the intention to retain and position Brewery Objects from the Diageo site as sculptural elements throughout the park to animate the spaces and tell the story of how this specific site has evolved over time. One such feature element is proposed to be placed at the Tea House square to indicate the entrance to the Abbey Quarter Riverside Gardens.

The existing wall orientated on an east west alignment adjacent to the Tea Houses is proposed to be retained with ornamental planting in front reminiscent of traditional walled garden planting in a newly interpreted way. From this wall a metal gateway arch is proposed as a contemporary interpretation of the typical archway found across Kilkenny city. Feature natural stone paving and LED lighting strip cross this threshold encouraging users to enter into the space and explore beyond.



14 The steel arbor in the wetland is composed of recycled steel panels from the site, which provides shade, shelter, frames views, and shapes spaces.

The above image reflects the form of structure proposed as the feature Gateway element to the Abbey Quarter Riverside Gardens

SEQUENCE OF INTERCONNECTED SPACES

Passing through this gateway the riverside park will incorporate a 3m wide meandering circulation route along the riverbank creating a strong and legible sequences of spaces, accommodating both pedestrians and cyclists. The sinuous alignment of the pathway means that spaces are concealed and revealed creating an exciting series of spaces. The intention is that this pathway will be an amenity for users to spend time, socialise and relax and enjoy the city and its unique setting. The meandering pathway passes through a sequence of spaces of both naturalistic and ornamental planting, grass lawns, seating spaces which will all act as orientation points and focal landmarks along the way to create an exciting lively experience as one moves through the gardens. The variety of spaces will create a natural wayfinding strategy enabling users to easily navigate through the riverside gardens and its amenities creating unique sense of place and inviting people to further explore the garden.

A number of intimate grass lawns area proposed edged with ornamental planting beds and naturalised planting to provide the necessary enclosure to retain the reflective nature of this space. Pocket Paved areas act as resting points to invite people to stop and interact with the River Nore, take in the long distance views towards Kilkenny Castle, across to the library and northwards to the land beyond. These hard paved areas area also created cognisant of the future roll out of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan. For example the main paved area towards the centre of the riverside gardens will be the termination point of a pedestrian link from Parliament Street through the Abbey Quarter Masterplan development onto the gardens. This permeability will increase activity and connection with the existing urban fabric.

Seating edges formed around pocket spaces along the central meandering pathway maximises the extent of informal seating opportunities. The seating edges are all inward facing to encourage social interaction. The space provides the opportunity for social gathering, lounging and resting points to users of the park.



SITE ARCHAEOLOGY

As one moves further north a formal grove of trees, reminiscent of an orchard are proposed as the transition within the riverside gardens before an area of potentially high archaeological interest south of St. Evan's Tower. This grove of trees act as a secondary gateway revealing the area of archaeological investigation. Based upon historic mapping it is anticipated that a number of archaeological features are located in this area, including St. Evan's Tower, Walled Walk and St. Francis's Well (below ground). It is proposed to provide a temporary path across this area to complete the connection of the linear park. This pathway would be aligned to enable archaeological investigation and will be realigned as investigation works progress.

These excavations are required to answer key questions about the history and development of the site and to gather information to appropriately conserve the upstanding monuments and understand their setting and how the site developed over time. Preservation in-situ is considered the preferred option when developing and constructing within such an archaeological sensitive area.

Visual connection with the archaeological investigation will provide the public with a unique live experience of discovery, forming a strong connection and understanding with the evolution of the site. Following the completion of the archaeological investigation this will in turn inform a proposed design for the space with newly revealed features appropriately displayed with the detailed design subject to consultation and agreement with the relevant statutory bodies.

In addition to the space south of the River Breaghagh there are two additional areas identified for archaeological investigation. These include possible masonry structures (walls) shown on historic maps and possible mill race. For further information regarding the archaeological strategy please refer to Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy 'Archaeological Impact Assessment'.

ACTIVE RECREATION

A skate park is proposed, north of the River Breaghagh, utilizing the embankments associated with the Kilkenny Central Access Scheme. The skatepark is proposed to be integrated seamlessly into the park with the main circulation pathway running adjacent to this space providing passive surveillance. The development of a detail design for this skate park will be carried out in conjunction with Kilkenny Skateboarding Community and specialist design consultants.



The circulation pathway will continue beneath the CAS Bridge retaining a strong connection with the River Nore. The existing boat slip will be incorporated into the park design providing continued access for the Canoes, Kayaks and other boats to the river. Its close proximity to the skate park creates a lively destination for young people to gather and engage with one another forming community spirit within the external environment.

CONNECTION TO THE WIDER NORE VALLEY WALK

Continuing north of the River Breagagh the strong urban form of the riverside gardens begins to dissolve into the landscape at the Mill ruins, beginning the transition and integration of the riverside gardens into the wider River Nore Linear Park. The treatment of the park will soften and become more naturalistic utilising compacted gravel paths to reinforce the association of the riverside park. The shared pedestrian / cycle path way will be developed as far as the base of Green's Bridge to facilitate connection at the River Nore level to the wider River Nore Linear Park. The path shall, for the most part, consist of a 3m wide route, however this shall increase to 4m from the existing canoe slip to Green's Bridge further north. The increased width to the path is to allow occasional vehicular access to the canoe slip to accommodate the transfer of vessels down to the shoreline. In addition a connection is proposed to draw users into the park from the road level of Green's Bridge increasing permeability and usability of the park.

Up until the commencement of the CAS works the Mill ruins were accessible to the public. This area is currently hoarded off as part of the CAS construction works. As a result vegetation has overgrown the area. It is the intention as part of the riverside gardens works that this overgrown vegetation will be removed.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the archaeological significance of the site, the location of the riverside park, adjoining the River Nore, and the designation of the river as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), has influenced the design proposals for the scheme.

As previously mentioned the scheme has been designed so as to have no impact on the SAC / SPA (Natura 2000)

PLANTING

The existing Poplar trees located on site are proposed to be removed and new tree planting introduced specifying native planting to increase biodiversity and develop an appropriate planting for the park into the future. With the reintroduction of native planting along the riverside gardens arranged in a more appropriate informal groupings the character of a riverside park is developed.

The existing riparian planting along the river bank will be retained and reinforced with additional native riparian planting. It is intended to retain the riverside bank as existing with no excavation beyond the top of the bank level in order to protect the river edge, the riverside garden's ecological setting and its importance to both Kilkenny City and nationally as an SAC and SPA.

PLANTING DESIGN

The palette of plant species used shall be based on a range of largely native species. Hardy species will reduce, maintenance over-time, and contributes to the early and rapid development of the planted installation. Seasonal interest will be a consideration in the plant mixes through the site.

The planting mixes shall consist of a combination of evergreen structural planting, herbaceous perennials, bulbs and selected tree species.

Native Tree Species Proposed:

Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Bird Cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>
Crab Apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Wild Cherry	<i>Prunus avius</i>
Willow	<i>Salix spp.</i>

Native Ornamental Planting Species Proposed:

Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>

Ornamental Planting Species Proposed

Japanese Anemone	<i>Anemone 'Honorine Jobert'</i>
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia 'Lucifer'</i>
Rock Rose	<i>Cistus cobariensis</i>
Coral Bells	<i>Heuchera Palace Purple</i>
Lilyturf	<i>Liriope muscari</i>
Rose	<i>Rosa 'White Flowering Carpet'</i>
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>
Christmas Box	<i>Sarcococca hookeriana var Digyna</i>
Japanese Spirea	<i>Spirea japonica 'Anthony Waterer'</i>
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpus alba</i>
Allium	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>
Fuschia	<i>Fuschia 'Genii'</i>
Lavender	<i>Lavandula hidcote</i>
Fountain Grass	<i>Pennisetum orientale</i>
Shield Fern	<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>
Cherry Laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus Zabeliana,</i>
Black Eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum',</i>
Hybrid Sage	<i>Salvia x sylvestris 'Mainacht'</i>
Lambs Ears	<i>Stachys Byzantina</i>
Feather Grass	<i>Stipa tenuisima 'Pony Tails'</i>

Thyme
Tall Verbena

Thymus vulgaris
Verbena bonariensis

Riparian Planting

Riparian planting schedule to be agreed with a qualified ecologist in order to ensure that the selection of species has no adverse impact on the SAC or SPA and the existing flora and fauna.



SITE LEVELS

The development of the riverside gardens will be in advance of the construction of any proposed new buildings associated with the Abbey Quarter Masterplan. The current proposed levels for the building blocks is proposed to satisfy a 1:1,000 year flood event. The riverside gardens will also be constructed to these levels also which results in the gardens rising by up to 1.2m above existing ground level. The park has been designed to satisfy this requirement while also retaining a universal access route throughout to ensure it is inclusive for all users across a wide range of abilities.

MATERIALS PALLETTE

LIGHTING

All lighting proposed for the walkway will be as per the recommendations outline in the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) as prepared by Moore Group Environmental Services.

Lighting will be low lux emitting lights and the street lighting design will include measures to direct the light away from both the River Breaghagh and River Nore to be cognisant of the commuting bats along the river corridor. The proposed lighting scheme has been developed in line with IS EN 12464 Part 2 achieving a 10 lux level adhering to the relevant building regulations and to promote the safe and secure passage through and use of all external spaces. There will be low light spillage onto the River Nore (< 1 lux).

As part of the Ecological Impact Assessment it was noted that the existing street lighting in the Peace Park on the opposite bank and the street lighting in the Nore Valley Walk near Riverside Drive do not appear to have an impact on commuting bats along the river corridor.

PAVING PALLETTE

Current paving materials seen throughout Kilkenny City will be continued where appropriate to ensure a continuity of appearance and character. The pavements shall be clutter free and unobstructed to ensure clear and free movement.

Hardworks materials and site furniture have been carefully selected to sensitively integrating the park within its receiving environment. The paving palette for the gardens is a coherent, robust, long lasting and multifunctional design solution.

Proposed materials are as follows:

- Exposed aggregate concrete to the shared pedestrian and cycle path
- Granite Flag paving and blocks to areas of importance including areas adjacent to the Tea Houses and Pocket space to the Parliament Street connection
- PC paving to entrance arrival space at Tea Houses
- Compacted gravel to the temporary pathway through the area archaeological investigation and as a transition paving material integrating the proposed riverside gardens with the existing River Nore Linear Park.

WAYFINDING

The use of materials will be thoughtful and cohesive, to create a simple calming clutter free network of interconnected spaces from which areas of interest, heritage or otherwise can be highlighted without conflict or confusion. This will create an attractive and innovative riverscape and network of spaces.

Using simple methods of orientation the gardens has been designed to allow visitors and locals to enjoy the space confidently, fostering an experience of comfort, security and familiarity within visitors and residents who have varying needs. This can be achieved by helping users create mental 'connections' so that they find their way around quickly and easily.

Throughout the linear length of the riverside gardens existing heritage found on the site presents a unique opportunity to create exciting orientation points and also encourages visitors to Kilkenny to explore and utilize this area of the city and perhaps continue along the River Nore Linear Park to the wider hinterland of the city.

