

Abbey Quarter  
**Urban Design Code**

November 2017

**DRAFT**



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### 1.1. General

This urban design code is part of a suite of planning documents for the Abbey Quarter in Kilkenny City Centre. The Code is required as an objective of the City and Environs Development Plan (2014-2020) and it is prepared to complement the current Abbey Quarter Masterplan (2016). The Code provides important planning guidance and direction in areas such as land uses and mix of land uses, built form and the nature and use of new and refurbished public spaces in the Quarter.

The Code provides greater clarity for all stakeholders on the nature of planning and development outcomes in the Quarter. It provides greater certainty for investors, assuring them of the commitment of all stakeholders to realising the full potential of the Quarter “as a place”. The Code also provides a basis for setting priorities in terms of important projects in the public domain. The Code will be a material consideration when development proposals are being considered by the Planning Authority.

The code is not intended to be prescriptive or to slavishly follow but is there to put further detail on the framework and vision set out in the masterplan document. The masterplan together with this code and the overarching Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan will form the basis to planning decisions relating to the area.



Aerial view of Quarter

### 1.2. Abbey Quarter

The Abbey Quarter is an area of largely undeveloped or underdeveloped land immediately adjoining the core of the city centre occupying an extensive stretch of the west bank of the Nore. It comprises some 8.29 hectares and comprises three distinct areas; the Bateman’s Quay area (2.11 Ha), the former Smithwick’s Brewery lands (4.64 Ha) and an area known as Sweeney’s Orchard (1.21 Ha).

A catalyst for the regeneration of the Quarter was the decision by Diageo to centralise its operations in St. James’s Gate and to terminate brewing activities at St. Francis’s Abbey, and the decision by the County Council (Kilkenny Borough Council) to acquire these lands in 2012. This has provided perhaps one of the most significant opportunities for regeneration and consolidation in the long history of Kilkenny City Centre.

Significant consultation and planning work has been carried out around the lands in recent years, commencing with a public meeting and colloquium in 2012, an urban design review in 2013 and preparation of a Masterplan commencing in 2013. This was followed by a Brewery Vision workshop in 2015, revision and completion of the Masterplan and a Variation of the statutory development plan adopted in 2015.

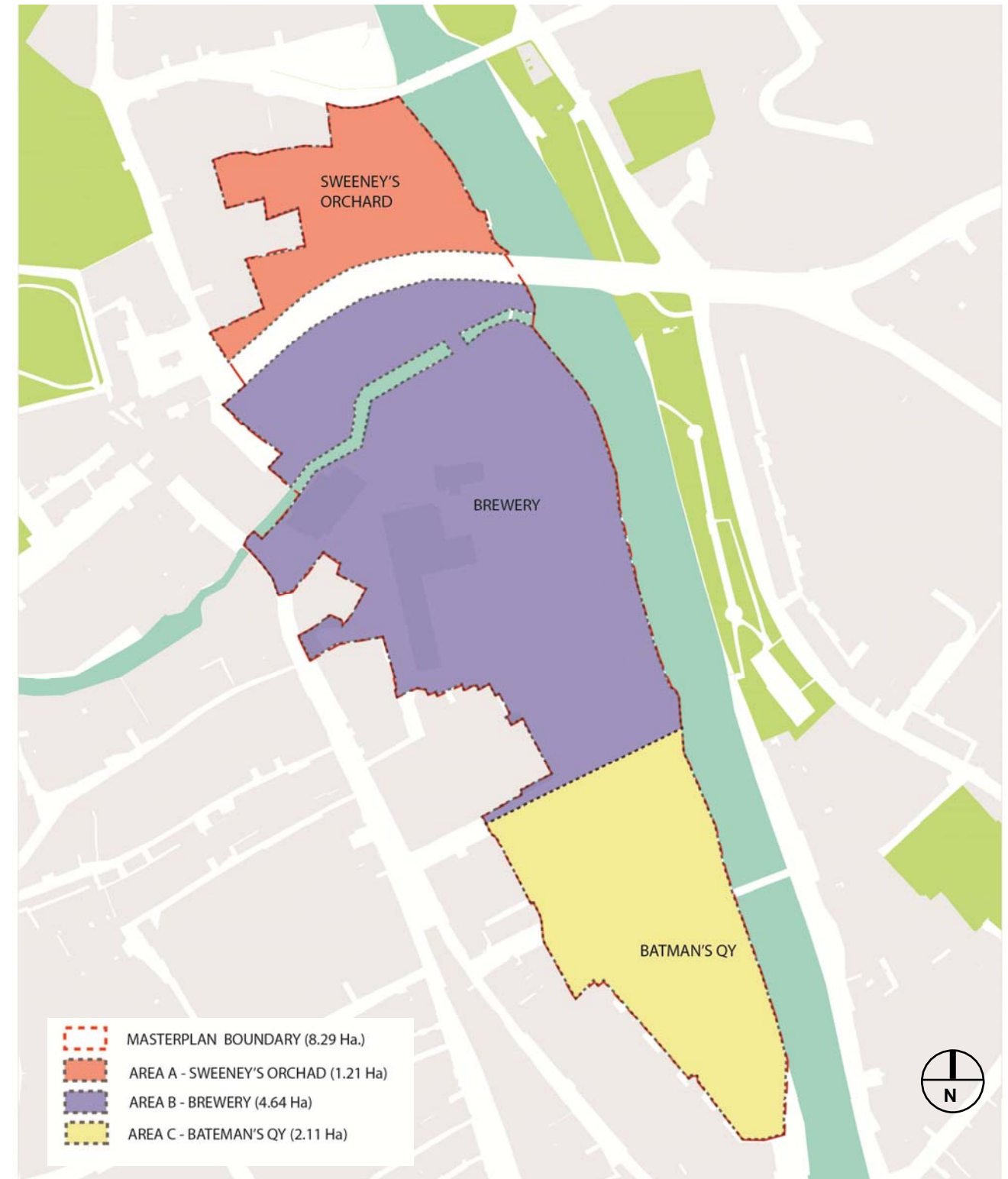


Figure 1: The three distinct areas in the Quarter

### 1.3. The Code

This Code is a bespoke planning document setting out objectives, guidance and direction for a key part of the Quarter. It is complementary and ancillary to the Abbey Quarter Masterplan. The Code provides additional detail for selected aspects of the Masterplan that are considered crucial to the successful planning and development of the area. Land use mix, quality of built form and the nature and use of public spaces are considered to be critical to the success of the Quarter and are, therefore, the focus of this Code.

Although the Code is, in itself, non-statutory, it is an objective of the Development Plan to “prepare urban design criteria and recommendations for the implementation of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan”. In that context, it is a document that must be used in the decision making process. The Code has a number of purposes, and in summary, these are to:

- Complement the Masterplan by providing additional and detailed objectives, guidance and direction for the development of the public and private domains;
- Focus on selected key aspects of development, in the interests of achieving quality outcomes;
- Provide the basis for formulation of development proposals for the area
- To assist in investment decisions by providing greater clarity and certainty on future development outcomes; and
- To ensure a consistency of approach, particularly over longer-term planning horizon.

### 1.4. Preparation and Consultation

The Code was commissioned in February 2017. It was prepared in a sequence of stages. The initial stages included set-up and preliminary analysis. This was augmented by the public consultation process, which included an open call for submissions and a workshop in April 2017. The workshop focussed on aspects of functions and land use and aspects of the physical form of the buildings and public spaces. The consultation proceedings and submissions were collated and considered in the preparation of the code. Previous consultation material associated with Masterplan and urban design studies was also reviewed and considered. The project also included working meetings with the Elected Members, engagement with other consultants and interaction with the KCC project team and steering groups.

Following the workshop and further consultations, a draft Code was prepared for public display. Following consideration of any submissions the Code will be completed. It will then be considered by the Elected Representatives.

While the consultation process was rich and included a wide range of issues and details, the following main themes could be discerned:

- Character and senses of place – particularly the need to develop the Quarter as an intrinsic part or extension of the city centre;
- Heritage – in particular the need to protect the natural and built heritage including archaeology;
- The overall function – in particular the need to ensure that the functions of the Quarter are compatible and complementary to the functions of the city centre and Kilkenny generally;

- Mix of uses – in particular the need to facilitate potential third level uses and to focus on small and medium scale retail floor plates that are compatible with the High Street;
- Employment – the need to secure quality long term employment, without dependence on a large, single provider;
- Urban scale and grain – in particular the need to manage building height and size and diversity of buildings;
- Movement – in particular the need to optimise pedestrian access, control vehicular access and provide appropriate car parking;
- Public spaces – in particular the need to provide well connected, accessible routes connecting the main attractions and riverfront; and
- The potential for creative and cultural Quarter with a mix of supporting functions and land uses.

Many other detailed observations and recommendations relating to particular locations, buildings or features, were included in the consultation and these have been considered and incorporated in the framing this Code, where appropriate.



Consultation event, April 2017

### 1.5. Planning and Development Context

The Code is derived from and within a framework of higher-level plans and policy. The vision and strategies of the Abbey Creative Quarter Masterplan (ACQM) provide the spatial framework and the urban design basis for the Code. The policies and objectives set out in the Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan (KCEDP) 2014-2020, as varied, provide the statutory basis for both the Code and the Masterplan.

#### 1.5.1. Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan, 2014-2020

KCEDP required the preparation of a masterplan and urban design framework for the former Smithwick's Brewery and Bateman's Quay (Objective 3C) to consolidate the city centre and contribute towards its vitality and viability and to maximise the benefit accruing from current funding and resource opportunities. The Quarter is zoned for General Business in the KCEDP, with a linear area zoned for Recreation, Amenity and Open Space to provide for a linear park.

Following the preparation of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan, Variation No. 1 of the KCEDP was adopted by the Kilkenny County Council in 2016. It endorses the Masterplan and includes nine, key local objectives as follows:

1. To provide for a linear park along the western bank of the River Nore connecting to the existing River Nore linear park north of Green's Bridge and the existing River Nore linear park south of the Masterplan area (Canal Walk) (as indicated on Fig 3) subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives and the provisions of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan.

2. To provide for an urban park in the vicinity of St. Francis Abbey (National Monument) incorporating Evan's Turret and St. Francis' Well taking into account the recommendations of the archaeological strategy developed in the preparation of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan (as indicated on fig 3) and subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives and the provisions of the Abbey Creative Quarter Masterplan,
3. To prepare a Heritage Conservation Plan for St. Francis Abbey, Evans' Turret and St. Francis' Well in the context of the existing City Wall conservation plan in conjunction with the Heritage Council, the Office of Public Works, the National Monuments Service, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and other relevant stakeholders.
4. To prepare urban design criteria and recommendations and archaeological recommendations for the implementation of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan.
5. To finalise and adopt the Abbey Quarter Masterplan and to incorporate it into the Kilkenny City & Environs Development Plan 2014-2020.
6. To develop a low carbon energy strategy for the masterplan area and advance the provision of near zero energy buildings on site.
7. To provide for park and walk facilities for car and bus/coach parking at a site or sites in close proximity to the Abbey Quarter Masterplan area to service both the masterplan area and the city centre generally.
8. To provide for housing within the masterplan in the area north of the Central Access Scheme as identified on fig 2.

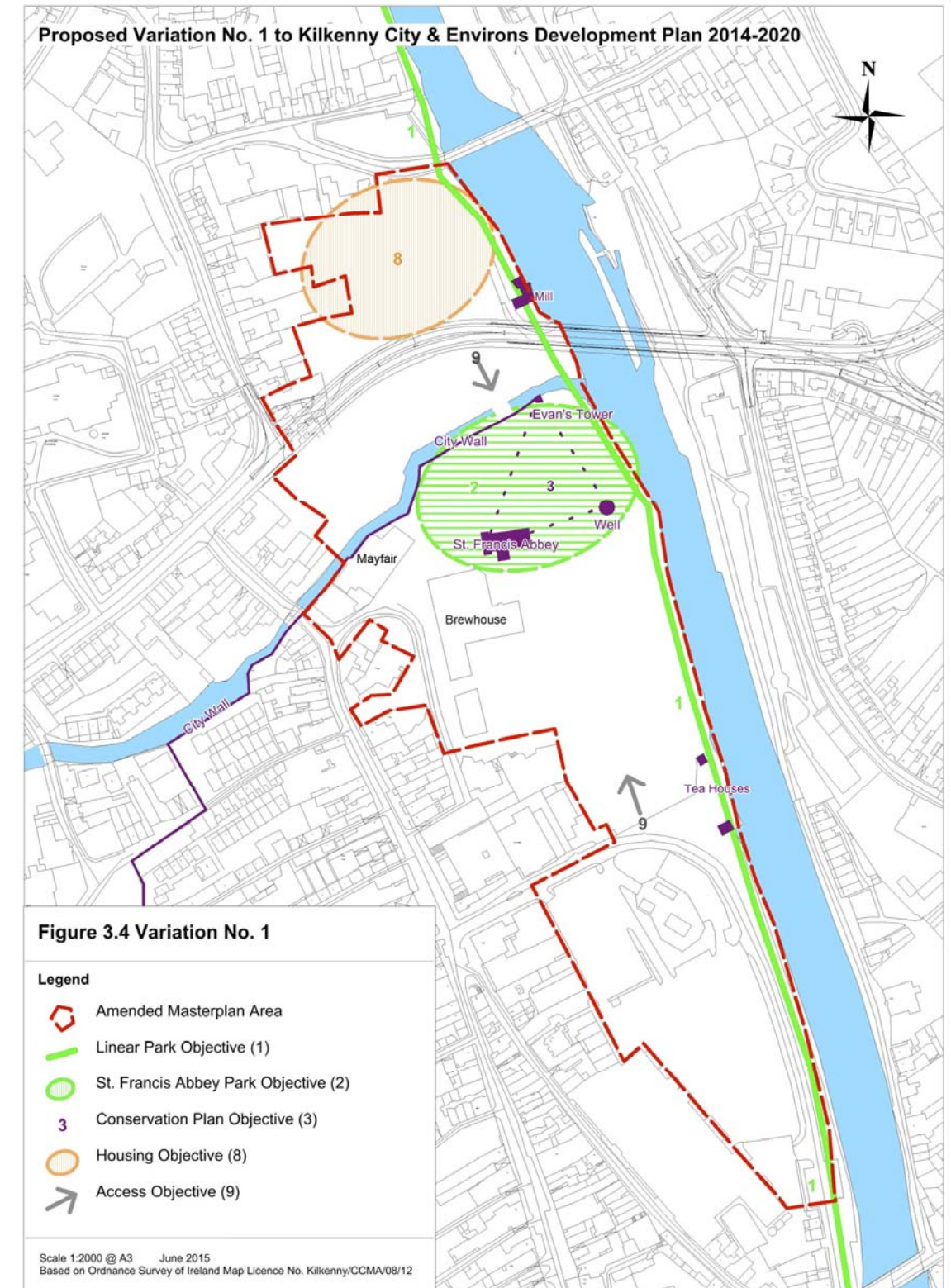


Figure 2: Variation to Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan, 2014-2020

9. To provide for an urban street of pedestrian and cyclist priority between the Central Access Scheme and Bateman Quay crossing the River Breagagh at the existing bridge crossing. To provide for traffic management measures on the street such as to inhibit the flow of through traffic and heavy goods vehicles.

The KCEDP includes extensive general requirements for development in the City, which also apply to the Abbey Quarter. Important development management objectives address zoning, universal design, urban design, open space, apartments, scale of development (density, plot ratio, site coverage), building height, building lines and infill development. These are development management objectives which must be reflected in the Code.

### 1.5.2. Abbey Quarter Masterplan, 2015

The overall vision for the Abbey Creative Quarter as set out in the Masterplan is:

“To plan the area as a seamless complement to the medieval city as an inclusive place for an inter-generational community to work, live, visit and play with St. Francis Abbey at its core. The regeneration of the area will focus on embracing the sites’ natural, cultural and built heritage, whilst maximising the benefits of the rivers Nore and Breagagh, providing for a broad range of uses, sustaining growth in employment, 3rd and 4th level education and advancing economic activity in a sustainable and energy efficient fashion where innovation can flourish. The area will be a permeable expansion of the city for pedestrians and cyclists where smarter travel principles will apply throughout.”

### Key objectives

The Masterplan sets out the following objectives, which are fundamental to achieving the vision:

- Integration of former Smithwick’s Brewery site and riverside into the medieval city;
- Redevelop and regenerate the former Smithwick’s Brewery site as a modern, vibrant and permeable complement to the medieval core of Kilkenny City which will consolidate the city’s role as a regional hub;
- Creation of a quayside quarter which addresses the River Nore;
- Establishment of a mixed use Creative Quarter which enhances the Life of the City in Economic, Commercial and Social Terms;
- Development of Kilkenny as a location for Creative Industries, Research and Development, Incubation Clusters, University Faculties & Cultural Institutions;
- Establishment of ‘Green City’ Kilkenny as a model for Irish and European cities and communities; and
- Allow for the Government ‘Smarter Travel’ initiative published in 2009 and the ‘Mobility Management Plan’ adopted for Kilkenny City.



Figure 3: Abbey Creative Quarter Masterplan, 2016

### Masterplan Strategies

The Masterplan contains a set of strategies. The connectivity and movement strategy sets out the primary role of pedestrians and cyclists in the plan area. High levels of access and permeability will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists. Vehicular traffic will be largely restricted to local access, servicing and emergency. In terms of car parking the Masterplan states that (p.41) 'Limited new car parking will be provided within the Masterplan area, primarily for loading/unloading and for mobility impaired drivers. Options for the provision of additional off site car parking facilities, within a short walking distance of the Masterplan Area will be considered.'

The conservation and heritage strategy sets out key objectives from the KCEDP and includes archaeology, building conservation and repair, heritage structures, existing structures strategy (including the Brewhouse and Mayfair Buildings). The strategy sets out an approach for archaeology based on reduced impact on known areas of archaeology and a mitigation strategy (preservation in situ, construction type and methods, recording and incorporation of archaeology) for all other areas. The Strategy identifies the key heritage structures and sets out a general approach to their conservation. The strategy identifies the Brewhouse and the Mayfair building as building resources worthy of adaptation and reuse.

The urban design strategy in the masterplan (ref. 4.3.1.) comprises a wide range of components. The strategy divides the area into four distinct character areas; Sweeney's Orchard (The Gardens), Breagh North (The Mills and Industry), The Brewery and The Market Yard. Other key urban design components include:

- The environment, which includes the Nore cSAC and SPA;
- The linear park of the riverfront;
- Archaeological sensitivity and potential at the Abbey;
- The public park/garden in the area incorporating St. Francis Abbey, Evans Turret, St Francis' Well and the City Walls;

- The public realm strategy with new civic spaces and walkways at St. Francis Abbey, Evan's Turret, Old City Wall, Old Mill buildings and the Tea House Mayfair and the Brewhouse;
- The movement strategy including pedestrian and cyclist new north south links;
- Pedestrian streets and lanes including new links to existing streets
- A new building strategy including appropriately scaled and designed buildings to frontages;
- An urban grain strategy including the subdivision of the blocks into smaller parcels with appropriate height and façade design; and
- Areas for further masterplan development.

The sustainability strategy addresses a range of dimensions of the masterplan including density and mixed use, transport, environmental quality, energy, waste and water conservation. The strategy refers to case examples of urban sustainability.

### Other elements of the Masterplan

The final Urban Design Framework is presented along with a proposed nine phases of development over the time horizon of the plan. In section 5 under establishing a new Quarter the Masterplan emphasises some key objectives:

- New role for the Quarter based on education, innovation, culture, residential and employment;
- The integration of the site into the existing Medieval fabric;
- Links to the Historic Spine / Medieval Mile; and
- New Public Open Spaces.



Figure 4: Masterplan detail

### 1.5.3. Ongoing development

There are a number of significant projects currently under way, and at different stages in the planning and development process in the Quarter. Most of these are located in the Brewery sector.

#### The Brewhouse

As recommended in the Masterplan, and as initially suggested following a building survey on the former brewery lands in 2013, two significant building complexes have been earmarked for retention and redevelopment. The Brewhouse building complex has been advanced to the development stage, with approval secured in 2016 for its redevelopment under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2000 to 2017. The proposal entails the retention of this significant building complex, which was developed in different stages from the 1950s. Various annexes and extensions of lesser value and utility have been removed. The Part 8 consent provides for the development of ground floor area of 6,400sqm of commercial/office space and this predates the preparation of this Code.

#### The Mayfair

The Mayfair Building has also been advanced to the development stage, with approval secured in 2016 for its redevelopment under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2000 to 2017. A detailed study of the building was carried out and the approved plans will see the retention and refurbishment of most of the original building. Later annexes of lesser value and utility will be removed as part of the redevelopment of the building, internal spaces will be reorganised. The Mayfair Building will be renovated to provide a total of 1,500sqm of commercial/office floorspace.

#### Horse Barrack Lane

Permission was granted in 2016 with the Planning and Development Regulations, 2000 to 2017, for improvement of Horse Barrack Lane as part of the Brewhouse redevelopment proposal. The proposal will include the creation of a new and extended urban space, with new floorplane, landscape and street furniture to complement the Brewhouse redevelopment.



Existing – The Brewhouse



Proposed – The Brewhouse



Existing – The Mayfair



Proposed – The Mayfair



### Riverside Garden

Planning for the Riverside Garden is at an advanced stage with approval secured for key elements in 2016 under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2000 to 2017. The linear park will ultimately provide a continuous riverside amenity stretching along the west bank of the Nore from John Street bridge to beyond Green Street Bridge. The linear park will provide an attractive, safe and comfortable multi-purpose public space with high levels of connectivity and accessibility for all (Fig 5).

### Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Partnership

Given the scale and complexity of development in the Brewery lands of the Quarter, Kilkenny County Council decided in 2015 to enter a partnership with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) with funding secured from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to secure the development of key elements of the Brewery lands. The partnership is in the form of a joint venture, The Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Partnership, and it is constituted as a limited liability company with equal ownership between the County Council and the NTMA. Sixty percent (60%) of the area will remain in public ownership. For the development partnership, Kilkenny County Council will provide equity in the form of development land from the remaining 40% of the area and this will be augmented by NTMA funding and other external funding sources. Responsibility for the development of the public streets and spaces will rest with the Council. This method provides the capacity to successfully deliver appropriate development on the site.

### 1.5.4. Studies

As set out in the Masterplan and as required by the KCEDP, as varied, a number of required studies and investigation are underway or due to be commissioned. These include:

- An archaeological study and strategy, which was commissioned for the Masterplan and is being implemented as the Masterplan developments are progressed;
- A heritage conservation plan incorporating St. Francis's Abbey, St. Francis's Well and Evan's Turret due to be commissioned;
- A low carbon energy management strategy, which is ongoing;
- A car parking strategy for the Quarter, which is also ongoing;
- Mobility management plan for the city; and
- Service utility plan.

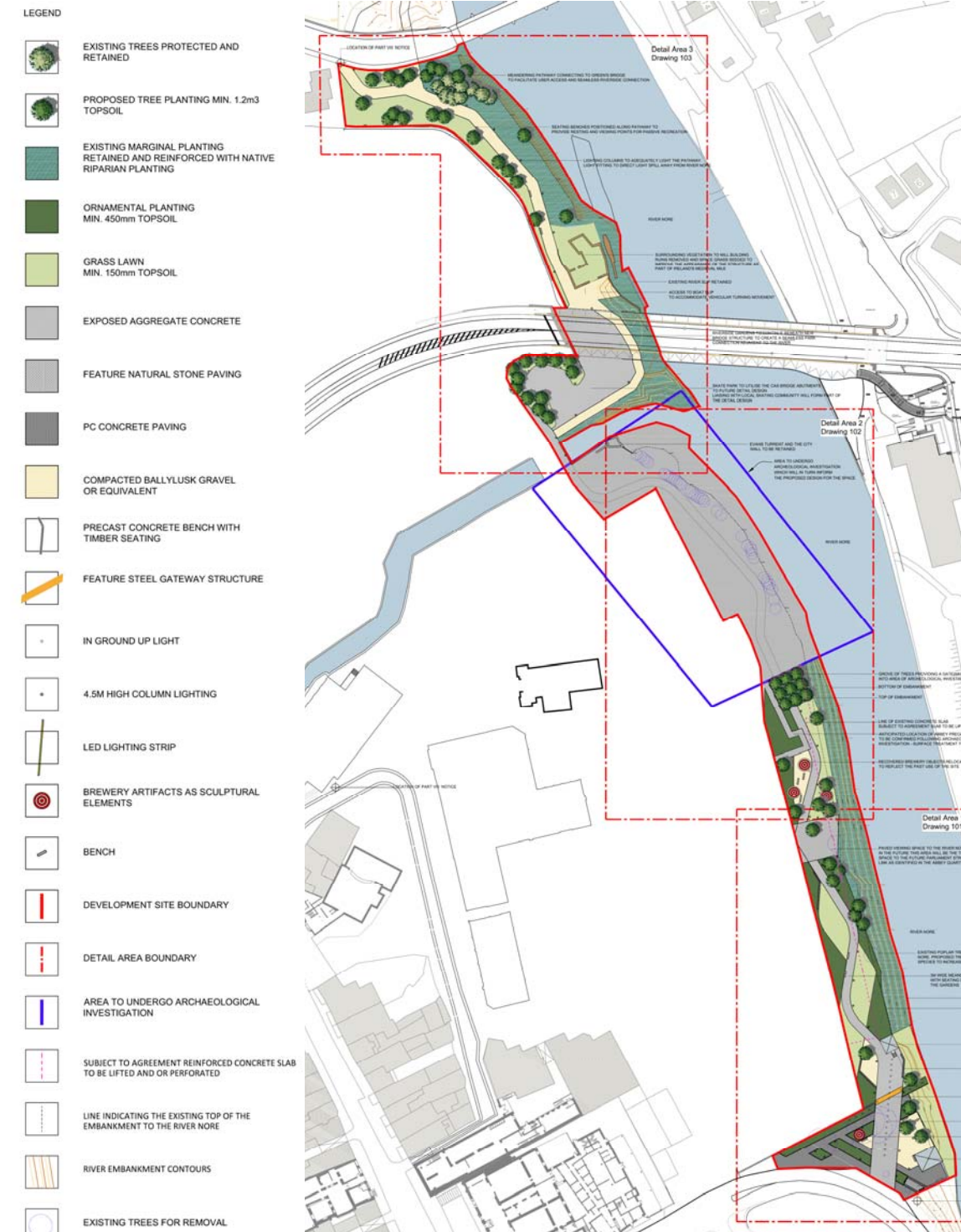


Figure 5: Riverfront Park – detailed proposal (Masterplan, 2015)

### 1.6. Areas and Priorities

As outlined in Section 1.2, there are three distinct areas of the Quarter that present different opportunities within different timeframes. It is considered that the Sweeney's Orchard Area and the Bateman's Quay Area have medium to longer-term potential, given current ownership, development and planning contexts. In contrast, the Brewery Area has apparent short, medium and long-term potential. For this reason, this Code focuses on the Brewery Area within the context of more general guidelines set out in the Masterplan for the Quarter. The objectives included in the Masterplan are considered adequate at this stage to guide the future planning and development of the Bateman's Quay and Sweeney's Orchard Areas.

The section between St. Francis Bridge and Bateman Quay in the area of the masterplan which is the subject of the joint venture partnership and has secured development consents through three Part 8s for (a) Brewhouse, (b) Mayfair, and (c) the Linear Park. For this reason it is considered reasonable to focus this Code on this area alone. The quantum of development possible within the Brewery area is sufficient to absorb development proposals without the necessity to consider Bateman Quay or Sweeney Orchard in the short term.

Considering the potential buildout timeframe for the masterplan area, the use of the area for temporary and meanwhile uses is an opportunity that should be utilised.

### 1.7. Temporary Uses

As indicated in Section 1.6, there is an extensive area for development which will take in the region of 10 years or more to complete. In this context, it is considered appropriate and beneficial for the City to allow for temporary and meanwhile uses within the Masterplan area which can fulfil short term needs, while longer-term solutions are being formalised.

The Potential uses can include, but are not limited to fairs, concerts, markets, festival events, temporary car parking, pop up shops etc.



Figure 6: Areas and priorities