



THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST CANICE, KILKENNY

From the Cathedral Administrator: Elizabeth Keyes

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Re: Abbey quarter Temporary Car Park-Planning Submission
26th June 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Kilkenny Union of Parishes Select Vestry, including St Canice's Cathedral and Round Tower, welcome the opportunity to make a submission regarding coach parking near the Cathedral.

The infrastructure of coach parking is very important to connecting different aspects of Kilkenny's heritage while a visitor is in Kilkenny. It also impacts on businesses and historical properties continuing to sustain and support the cultural and tourism industries in Kilkenny city.

As you will be aware, the earliest sustained settlement in Kilkenny can be traced back to the church of Canice which grew in influence in the north of the settlement to become the principal ecclesiastical power in Leinster outside Dublin. This influence resulted in the development of a substantial monastic town later to become Irishtown. Four years after the 1169 Anglo-Norman invasion, the focus of the settlement shifted to the south - later to become Hightown- where, on a hill overlooking the river Nore, an earth and-timber structure was to mark the beginning of the development of Kilkenny Castle. Ireland's Medieval Mile, which was launched by National Tourism Authority (Failte Ireland) and Kilkenny Borough Council in March 2014, stretches between these two hugely significant sites- St Canice's Cathedral, where the story began, and Kilkenny Castle- the purchase of which in 1301 by James Butler was to have a profound impact on the fortunes of the town.

The Medieval Mile in terms of all the attractions and associations along and off its route aims to "unlock the past" and position the historic city as a "must see" destination for domestic and overseas visitors. The 'Medieval Mile' brand has been designed .to influence visitor movement through the city, improve visitor engagement with the city's rich history and encourage overseas trade to promote the region using the brand. A key requirement of the ,development and promotion of St Canice's Cathedral as key feature of the Medieval Mile is the availability of sufficient parking for visitors, especially those who arrive in coaches. Currently, visitor numbers to the Cathedral are relatively modest when compared with the number of tourists who; come to Kilkenny each year. Kilkenny Castle draws much higher visitor volumes largely on account of its being able to attract the coach tour market. At present St. Canice's Cathedral cannot promote its offer of value to this market owing largely to the lack of a suitable coach park in immediate proximity to the Cathedral. Last year 2017, end of year figures for Kilkenny Castle showed over 400,000 visitors to the site while St Canice's Cathedral's end of year figures showed 61,000. St Canice's Cathedral is primarily a place of worship, however to sustain the fabric of the Cathedral long term, we are appreciative and dependant of the revenue generated by tourism. Research into the performance of the Medieval Mile is showing the effects that the imbalance of coach parking - which is currently concentrated at the Castle end of the city with no provision at all at the Cathedral end- is having on visitor dwell time and visitor flow.

The imbalance of coach parking is having a dramatic effect on how the city is being presented to visitors when they arrive into Kilkenny City. St. Canice's is the birthplace of Kilkenny and should in effect be the starting point for any visit to the city. In 2013, with support from Failte Ireland, we engaged Louise Browne Associates to create an interpretive framework for the Cathedral Close and we would like to submit this work for the local authorities and citizens of Kilkenny to have a deeper understanding of the founding site of

Kilkenny city. The interpretive framework for the Cathedral Close builds directly on the previous work undertaken for Failte Ireland and the Kilkenny Councils -A Strategic Tourism Development and Implementation Plan for the City- which has set the agenda for the development of the destination. We also note, as was indicated at the meeting, that the vista of the Cathedral and Round Tower from the Brewery site should not be further compromised and that a sensitive approach should be taken to the planning and massing of any proposed buildings. In summary there is an absolute need for coach parking in the general area of Irishtown to accommodate not only St Canice's Cathedral, but also the other heritage attractions within Irishtown.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Keyes

Cathedral Administrator

On behalf of the Kilkenny Union of Parishes Select Vestry, including St Canice's Cathedral and Round Tower.