

KILKENNY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY


Submission to Kilkenny County Council's notice of a proposed Part 8 re-development of the Mayfair Building in the Abbey Quarter.

Kilkenny Archaeological Society (KAS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the proposed redevelopment. This submission was prepared by the Conservation Committee of KAS and the content discussed and agreed by the KAS Council.

We acknowledge the level of professional skills that has gone into the proposal, and are impressed by its thoroughness and integrity. We concur with the description of the present building (4.3) as 'of little architectural significance ...what merit the building has lies in its social heritage'.

The outstanding feature of the Abbey Quarter is the ruin of the 13c. St. Francis Abbey. It is a National Monument and lies approximately 40 m. due east of the Mayfair Building. The proposed redevelopment of the Mayfair removes a number of disfiguring extensions and features, and converts it into a coherent, functional and attractive building. However we disagree with the proposed 'colourful ...vertical ceramic baguettes' on the south-east façade facing the Abbey ruin. The rationale given for these intrusions is to convey to the observer 'a kinetic impression created by the rhythm of the louvres...and embody the movement and evolution from the Irishtown entrance into the heart of the Abbey Quarter'. We question the need to create a competing disjointed feature so close to the Abbey. The proposed new Mayfair will be relatively simple and coherent in design, and harmonious to its surroundings. That is a significant design success and obviates the need for a new distracting and irrelevant feature.

The remaining portion of the 13th c. town wall on the southern bank of the River Breagh is also a National Monument. We recognize that the gap between the north façade of the Mayfair and the Town Wall is very narrow. Nevertheless it would admit one person (at least) to walk through it unimpeded. We suggest that it be made accessible for access by relevant persons (e.g. archaeologist, engineer). The surface could be graveled and have a small gate or barrier at each end for security.


Declan Murphy. (Chair, Conservation Committee, KAS).
23 June 2019.

