

ABBAY QUARTER MASTERPLAN AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATEGY

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

for

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL



By

COURTNEY DEERY HERITAGE CONSULTANCY LTD

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The Team

The team comprised Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy (CDHC) Ltd and Lisa Edden, Conservation Engineer. Steve Hickey of CDHC produced all the drawings within the report.

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We would also like to express our gratitude to David Sweetman, formerly Chief Archaeologist of the State, who responded to queries regarding the excavation and monitoring works carried out in the early 1970's at St Francis' Abbey and kindly allowed his site plan to be reproduced in this document. We also acknowledge the excavation work carried out by Marcus Ó hEochaidhe at St Francis' Abbey and the late John Bradley, medieval archaeologist and urban historian in relation to charting the development of Kilkenny and bringing to life the historic character of this great medieval city.

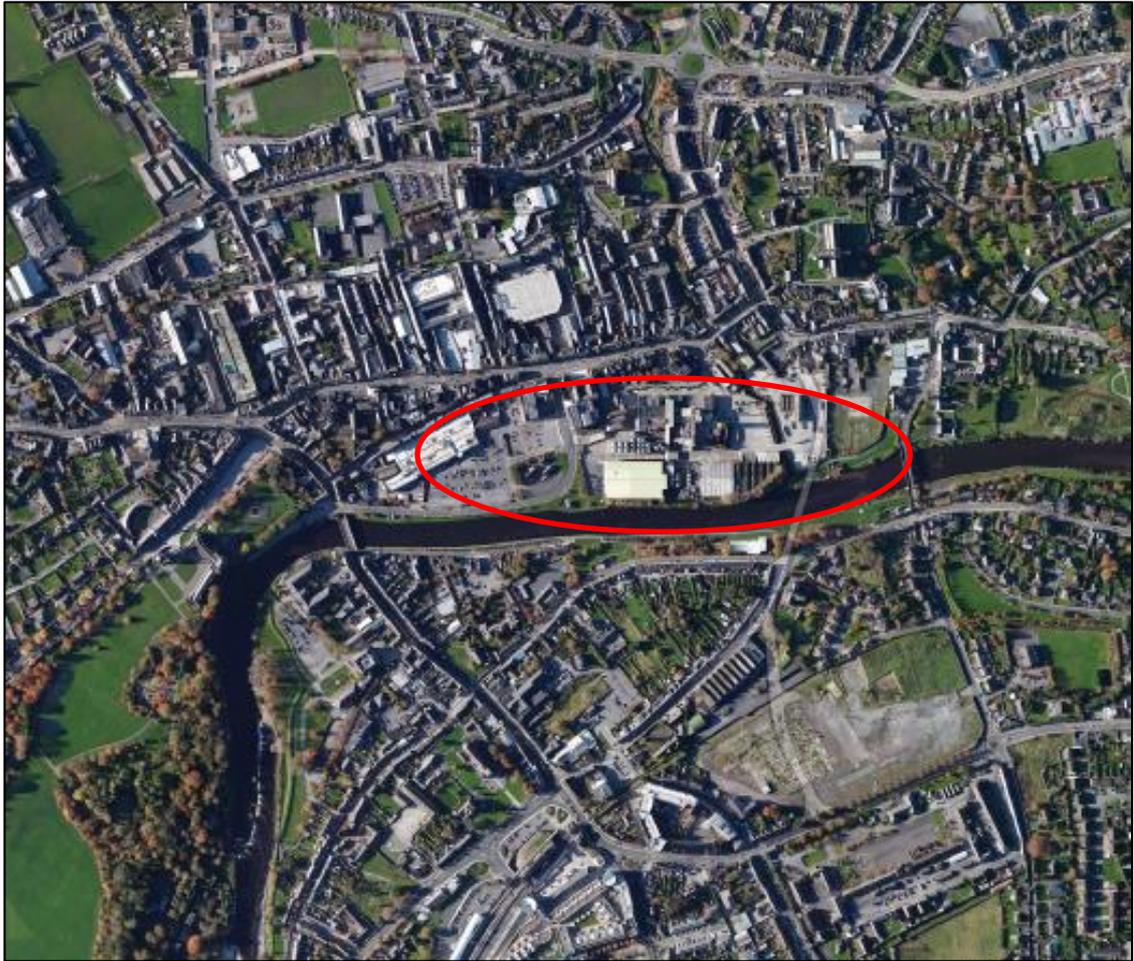


Figure 1 Aerial view of Kilkenny and the Masterplan Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kilkenny is an ancient city characterised by beautifully restored old buildings, winding laneways and nationally important landmark monuments such as Kilkenny Castle and St Canice's Cathedral. It is widely regarded as Ireland's most intact and easily legible medieval town.

The Masterplan area is located at the heart of the medieval core of Kilkenny on lands comprising of some 7.5 hectares. Part of the lands (approximately 5.3 hectares) were previously occupied by Smithwicks/DIAGEO as part of an active brewery, known locally as 'St Francis' Abbey Brewery' (SFAB). The local authority has entered into an agreement to purchase these lands. Within the brewery site, large scale clearance including the demolition of existing modern structures to the ground slab level is planned prior to Kilkenny County Council taking ownership of the site.

The lands align the western bank of the River Nore in the townlands of Gardens (Kilkenny City By., St Canice Par.) and St Mary's Parish and form part of the Zone of Archaeological Potential of the Historic Town (KK019-026---) as well as St Canice's and the City Centre architectural conservation areas (ACAs). The site is divided by the River Breaghagh in an east-west fashion, historically the south of the river was defined as Englishtown or Hightown while north of the river was part of Irishtown.

The site is bordered to the south by Bateman Quay and the Market Yard. To the north lie some residential properties and industrial units which are accessed from Green Street, this northern area is less developed and was primarily used by the brewery for vehicular parking, truck washing and storage. Parliament Street, along with Horse Barrack Lane and Vicar Street bound the site on the west.

The acquisition of the site by Kilkenny County Council and the rejuvenation of these lands provides a unique opportunity to preserve, enhance and present key upstanding medieval structures such as St Francis' Abbey, Evan's turret (or tower) and wall walk and the city wall as well as the brewery buildings and protected structures such as the Tea Houses and integrate them within the historic character and newly visioned streetscape of Kilkenny and within the existing urban context of a living and vibrant city.

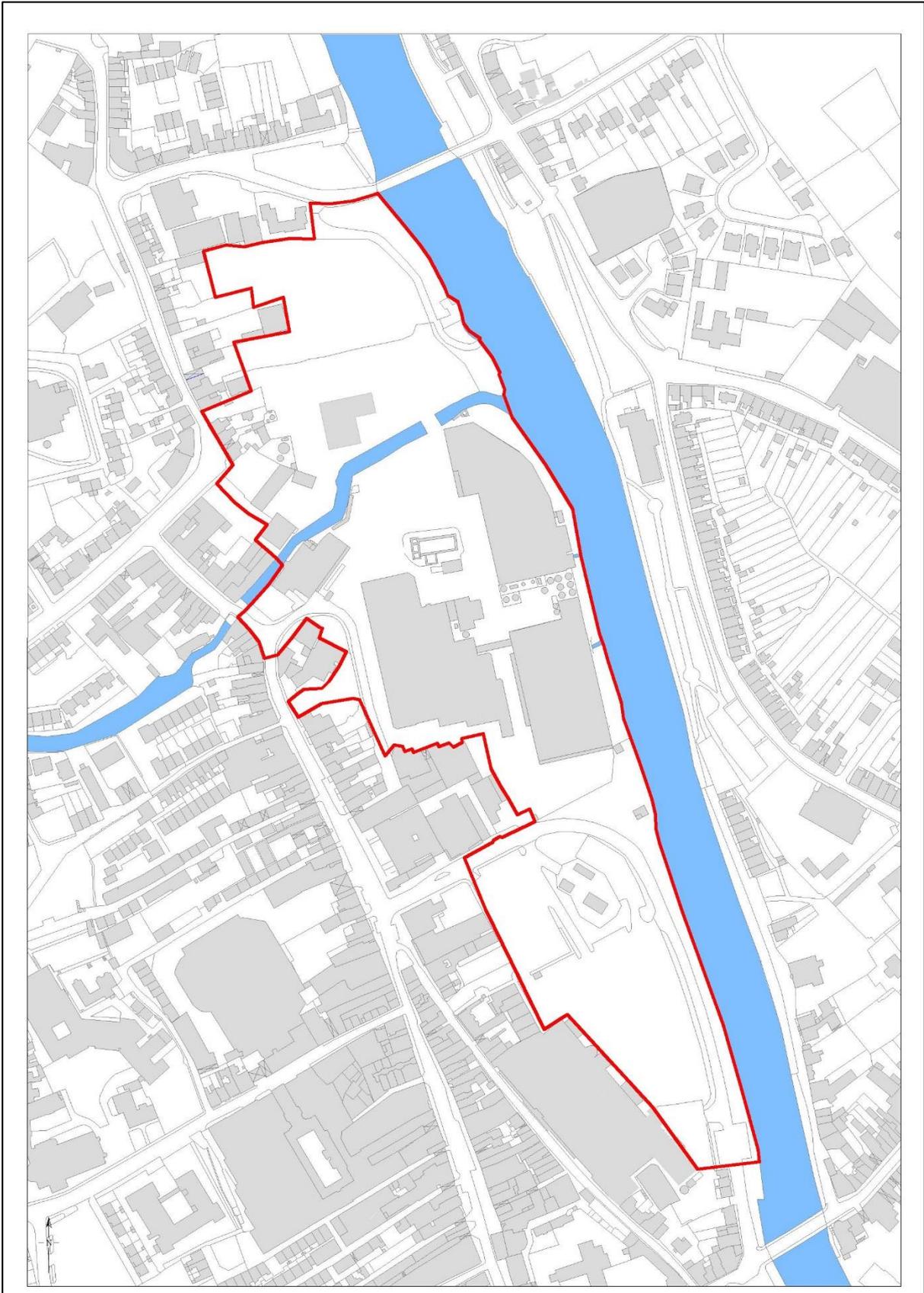


Figure 2 Map of Master Plan Area based on Ordnance Survey of Ireland Map Licence No. Kilkenny/CCMA/08/12

BACKGROUND

This document further develops the archaeological strategy that was devised by Margaret Gowen and presented to Kilkenny County Council in March 2014¹. It sets out to implement a framework that considers the retention and enhancement of the cultural heritage structures and areas of heritage potential and significance within the Masterplan area while securing an approach for the appropriate design and development of the site.

This report was commissioned by Kilkenny County Council in order to:

- Enhance the understanding of the historic development of the site.
- Create a record of the existing knowledge base.
- Inform the Masterplan process so future decisions can be based on all available archaeological and historical information.

The context for commissioning this strategy has been the desire by the local authority to inform the design process and to ensure that a confident archaeological risk assessment framework is developed based on a full understanding of the upstanding monuments and below ground archaeological remains.



Plate 1 Presentation of the City Wall at Watergate

¹ Archaeological and Heritage Strategy for the proposed development of the Abbey Creative Quarter, St Francis Abbey Brewery, Kilkenny. Prepared by Margaret Gowen for Kilkenny County Council. March 2014.

DELIVERABLES

The deliverables of the framework are to: -

- Prepare a baseline historical and cartographical study.
- Engage with relevant stakeholders.
- Produce a scaled drawing of previous site investigations.
- Undertake a review of all standing buildings and their fabric to include a preliminary conservation assessment of the historic structures.
- Compile geo-technical and deposit information from previous archaeological investigations and monitoring reports and prepare where possible an archaeological deposit model.
- Review OPW excavation archive.
- Identify the scope, position and nature of further archaeological investigations required and indicate at what stage in the development process that these would take place.
- Make recommendations as to all necessary mitigation measures for inclusion in the Masterplan.

To achieve these deliverables it is necessary first to: -

- Understand the history and development of the site.
- Understand the nature and significance of the visible structures and the underlying archaeology.
- Understand the vulnerabilities that may give rise to damage or degradation of the conservation value of the monuments and protected structures on site.

Only then is it possible to make recommendations for the safeguarding of above ground structures and the below ground potential that provide for:

- The development of our knowledge and understanding of the site.
- The appropriate terms of reference for the protection and management of the heritage structures now and in the future.
- A plan for repairs and conservation works.
- The future uses and management of the site.

OPPORTUNITY

The site sits at the heart of the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Kilkenny City, and, any ground breaking works within it has the potential to uncover archaeological remains. Through a detailed study of existing cartography, extant archaeological monuments and features, and an examination of the findings from literally hundreds of test trenches, bore holes, window samples, dredged river areas, and archaeological assessments, it is possible to generate an understanding of where there is a potential to reveal significant below ground archaeological remains.

The site as it exists today exerts a strong industrial presence over the Kilkenny skyline and as a result of this and the private ownership of the lands, the earlier medieval structures lack a legibility within the streetscape of Kilkenny and are difficult to access having largely gone unrecognised. There is a significant opportunity to reconnect these historic landmark sites and the River Nore and to

provide a strong, distinct visual and physical presence to the existing streetscape of Kilkenny.

The phased and planned removal of some of the modern structures within the site as well as the sensitive redevelopment of industrial buildings from the 1930's to the 1960's has the potential to enhance and redefine the space surrounding the historic monuments. By providing a diverse building template, as well as revitalising and reusing modern buildings, a balance can be achieved between old and the new thereby creating an interesting sense of place adapted for a new range of uses meeting the needs of the local population and visitors alike.

SUMMARY OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- The collection of upstanding monuments is a testament to an unusually complete survival of a nationally significant complex of medieval buildings and structures within an urban environment. The abbey is the only example of a Franciscan monastery in a city scape set within an open space albeit altered throughout the years.
- St Francis' Abbey is regarded as an elegant construction that demonstrates the wealth of the order while showcasing the engineering ingenuity and masonry skills of the craftsmen during the medieval period.
- The Abbey is also known to have been the final resting place for several citizens of high standing within Kilkenny and was associated with the renowned scholar Friar John Clyn who provided valuable insights into medieval society and documented the spread of the Black Death in 1348 before it is thought that he succumbed to the plague himself and died in Kilkenny.
- As a centre of learning and enlightenment the Abbey was celebrated throughout the Franciscan community and obtained the status of a *studium* for both philosophy and theology the only house to achieve this double status².
- Marcus ÓhEochaidhe's excavations in 1963 combined with monitoring through the 1970s by David Sweetman of St. Francis' Abbey has indicated the possible extent of significant medieval ecclesiastical remains, revealing that the standing tower and unroofed choir were once flanked by a transept,

²At the provincial chapter of 1647, Kilkenny was designated as a studium for philosophy and theology, Benignus Millett, *The Irish Franciscans 1651-1665* (Rome 1964), pg 357 in Joseph Mac Mahon 'The Franciscans in Kilkenny', OKR, 64 (2012). The double status of the *studium* relates only to the Irish Franciscans in Ireland. Each province of the Order (Ireland was a province) was obliged to have at least one *studium* or study house where all Franciscan students would be taught either philosophy or theology. In the years in question, St Francis Abbey was allowed to teach both disciplines which demonstrates that it was considered to be a significant foundation which is not surprising considering that Kilkenny was a politically important location at the time.

nave, sacristy, cloister, and cloister walk. There is a strong likelihood that further important remains of the Franciscan abbey (including a chapter house, and living quarters) are present below ground.

- The uncovering of a series of inhumations within the abbey points to its regular and continued use as a burial ground as well as the potential that further human remains are present in the environs.
- The location of these medieval structures within what was once a traditional brewery site in single ownership has helped protect them over the years but has also kept them separate from the rest of the historic building stock of the city. The former brewery that dominated the western banks of the river Nore, is important in its own right for the economic, social, industrial and technological contributions that it made to Kilkenny city.
- Monitoring and testing within the Masterplan site has created an understanding of how the general area developed along with how it was dictated by flooding events of the Rivers Nore and Breagagh. This development stems from the gradual reclamation of land, to the setting out of medieval burgage plots (appearing as shallow, long ditches orientated both north-south and east-west) as shown in Rocque's Map of 1758, and the adaption in the use of the river with the development of mills, and the strong association with brewing.
- A wide range of archaeological remains, artefacts, and features are seen within the Masterplan area. Finds of possible plague victims from the medieval period, Franciscan abbey remains, ruined towers, city walls and defences, and medieval deposits, burgage plots, industrial mill houses, riverside pleasure houses with stone jettys, along with burials of felons from a 19th century gaol house, indicate an extremely rich and varied archaeological record.
- The archaeology and history of the site represents at least seven hundred years of development, redesign, alteration, re-use and adaptation, reflecting the changing fortunes of the monastery and later developments on the site such as the Horse Barracks and St Francis' Abbey Brewery. It is a unique urban historic area.

VULNERABILITIES

Nestled within the former brewery site, the medieval structures, have not enjoyed the widespread public appreciation and interaction that other medieval monuments in Kilkenny have had due to restricted access issues. As a result they have become lost and forgotten locally, regionally and nationally. The Masterplan has the potential to breathe new life into these historic gems.

Whilst part of St Francis' Abbey has been excavated in the 1960's unearthing the nave and transept, and further excavations on adjacent sites have taken place such as those at Grace's Castle/ Kilkenny Courthouse and the Vicar's Choral there are no

published accounts of any of these excavations. Without the full archive available for review, inconsistencies in the existing record and knowledge gaps can develop causing difficulty in understanding the development and the fabric of the site. This can lead to an inadvertent loss of material and an improper use of modern structures, uses and material.

The ownership and long term management of the site has ramifications as to how the area is developed, and how control measures are implemented to ensure that no inadvertent damage/loss occurs to below ground remains and for ensuring that the developer is fully aware of the archaeological significance and potential of the site.

The responsibility for the maintenance, conservation and future use of the national monuments onsite held by the, Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, Kilkenny County Council and the OPW may be subject to differing priorities and conflicting management styles. However views from different organisations can contribute positively to the discussion of the monuments and enhance the overall interpretation and presentation of these features.

Funding for archaeological assessment work and the maintenance and servicing of monuments is now limited and this is a further significant challenge to ensure plans for the area are appropriate and sustainable.

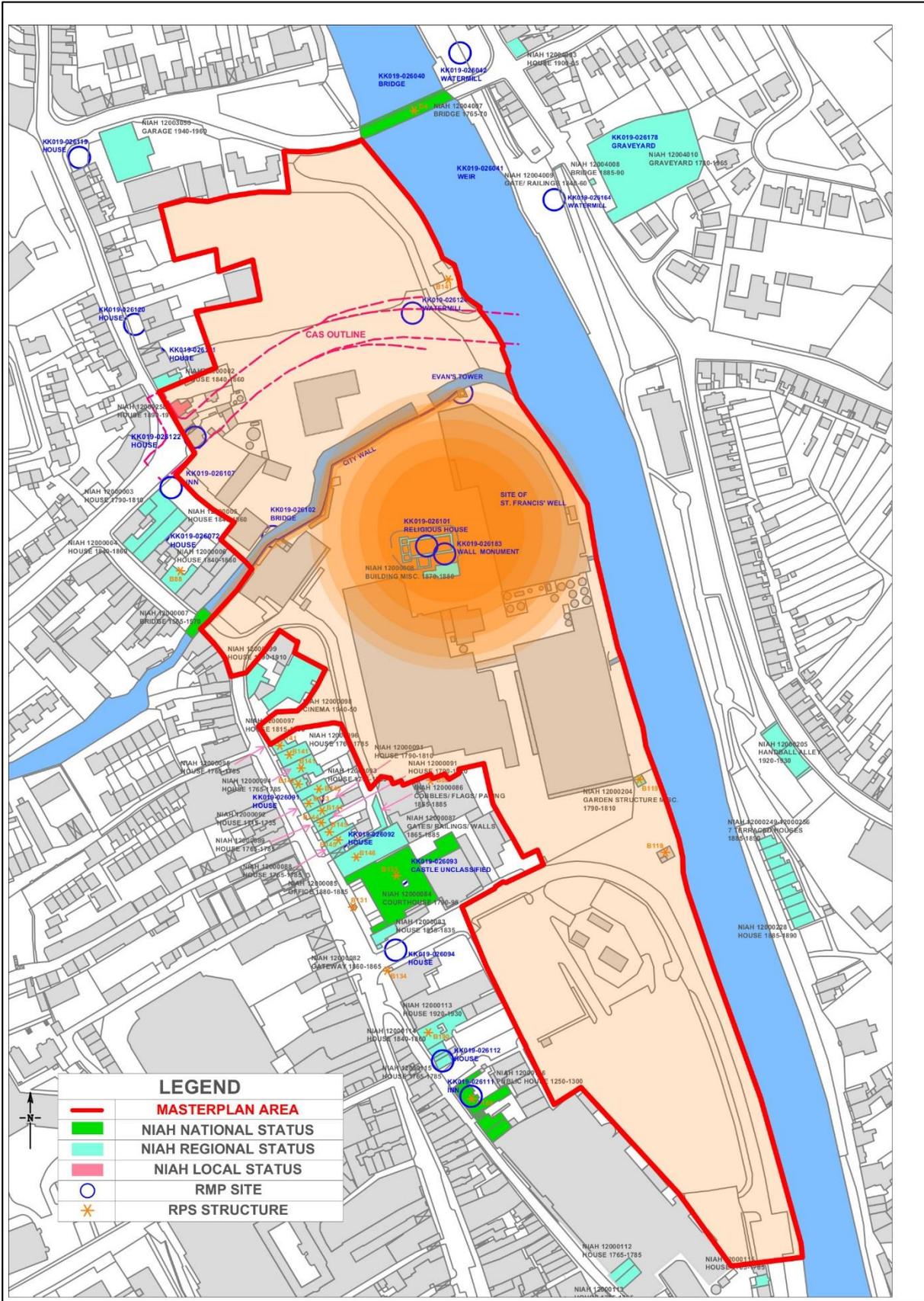


Figure 3 Archaeological Sensitivity Mapping

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Approach and Collaborative Design Process

With a development of this nature and scale at the heart of the historic city of Kilkenny there is the potential for conflicting values to be placed on different aspects of the site and for competing visions. It is the purpose of this document to provide an understanding of the cultural heritage value so it may be considered along with other values and be part of a collaborative decision making and design process.

1. The successful implementation of a collaborative and balanced approach depends on a wide acceptance and active support from all interested stakeholders/ parties.
2. The objective is to retain and celebrate the historic quality of the plan area and to promote its significance through interpretation and appropriate presentation while developing a site that is an example of high quality urban planning and design that is fit for purpose and meets the needs of modern Kilkenny.
3. Understanding and respecting the historic monuments and open spaces that occupy the Masterplan area is central to the design process. The protection of the historical character must seek to strengthen visual and physical links with other historical and archaeological sites within Kilkenny.
4. The job at hand is to manage the change appropriately and to place the Abbey precinct at the centre of the development. Evidence has shown that successful integration of historic environments and contemporary developments help create vibrant and distinctive places that encourage sustainable growth and social interaction (and ultimately the protection of the cultural heritage resource)³.

Information and Research

5. Significant archaeological excavation work has taken place on and adjacent to the plan area but the results have never been assembled or assessed, nor do they form part of the public record and cannot be brought forward as part of the 'cultural artefact' for the site. While this report has sought to provide an understanding and overview of this work it should be a priority to gain access to the original archives so they can inform the future development of the Masterplan area.
6. Develop a centralised digital archive so all information is maintained and accessible. All future archaeological work associated with the plan area can in turn be informed by this archive and add to it.
7. Develop a research framework and partnership with academic institutions, heritage networks and the Discovery Programme for future archaeological, architectural and historical research and targeted investigation to increase the understanding of the monument complex and purposely contribute to the discussion regarding the use and chronology of the site.

³ New life for historic cities – The historic urban landscape approach explained UNESCO 2013

Archaeological Strategy - Investigation

In order to provide an understanding of the extent and type of below ground archaeological potential, archaeological test excavation and excavation is required.

Within the former Diageo site, the stratigraphy demonstrated in archaeological investigations throughout the site commonly shows a sequence of modern concrete, sitting above made ground, over evidence of post medieval walls or structural foundations, overlaying (an often sterile) organic dark silty clay with occasional finds dating it to the medieval period, along with river silts and gravels, and a yellow boulder clay.

It is suggested that the following guiding principles are adopted to facilitate an understanding of the below ground archaeological remains and to minimise disturbance of the remains where possible, the strategy involves a combination of full excavation and preservation *in situ*:

8. Excavation is to take place in the environs of St Francis' Abbey with investigations extending to Evan's Tower and St Francis' Well site at the waterfront and to the extant buildings to the south and the River Breagagh to the north. The concrete slab in and around the National Monument of St Francis' Abbey is to be lifted and the area investigated and excavated (Figures 52 and 53).
9. The purpose of this excavation is to confirm the limited knowledge that exists today through cartographic and documentary research and also to confirm the findings of Marcus ÓhEochaidhe's excavation in the 1960's as shown on a map belonging to that time (Figure 6). It is hoped that this will answer key questions such as the location and extent of burials, the survival and ground plan/layout of the transept, nave and cloister, whether the Abbey Precinct was walled and if this can be defined and any additional features that may have influenced life in a medieval Franciscan friary or finds that can further inform the significance of the monument.
10. There is merit and precedence to link research excavation work with volunteer programs and open the experience to the general public and interested parties as a structured learning programme. This also has the advantage of uniquely identifying St Francis' Abbey within the medieval city of Kilkenny and act as a live attraction and educational experience⁴.
11. The extent of these excavations is to be informed and guided by a comprehensive and targeted testing programme (Figure 3; archaeological sensitivity map) (detailed in Section VI).
12. The findings from these excavations are to be included in the proposed framework for the area in an imaginative and creative way lending themselves to an educational experience.

⁴ Several submissions including Kilkenny Archaeological Society (RV51) and Liam Mannix (RV13) have suggested that excavations are undertaken by professionals, volunteers and students and open to the public, lending themselves to an educational and learning experience.

13. Depending on the nature of the remains, consideration is to be given to leaving below ground masonry remains in-situ so they can be explored as part of the St Francis' Abbey experience and exhibited.
14. Archaeological investigation in the form of test trenching and strategically placed boreholes will assist the development of the southern and northern portion of the plan area. Initially it is proposed to place a series of boreholes at regular intervals in order to build a cross-section, below ground profile of the site. This will be supplemented by testing where necessary and areas of interest will be excavated.
15. Where there is an existing concrete slab (300-400mm thick) within the Diageo site (immediately north of the River Breaghagh and to the south of the Abbey), it is proposed that this remains in-situ (subject to verification from an engineering perspective that it is suitable to build upon) and that no basements or lower ground levels are permitted onsite. This approach will minimise disturbance to the below ground archaeological deposits.
16. A proposed sub-structure will consist of a series of piles set out to a 7.5m grid with a ground beam located above the existing slab level. All excavation work and the proposed piling strategy within the complex will be preceded and informed by an appropriate programme of archaeological evaluation (Section VI).
17. It is also proposed that new services, where possible, are to be located in a 500-1500mm band of made ground (detailed Section VI, 6.8 New Structures), raised up from the existing slab and in the case of drainage that it will be linked with existing services on the site.
18. To the north and south of the plan area, post medieval, medieval linear garden plots extending east-west have been recorded in excavations and from cartographic references. In the design of this area elements must be introduced (hard landscaping, plots, open space etc) that will reflect the medieval garden plot layout.
19. The River Breaghagh and Nore are integral to the setting and history of the site and substantial deposits as well as features were revealed along the waterfront during previous investigations and are detailed in Section III of the report. Works associated with the rivers in previously unexplored areas will be appropriately archaeologically investigated where necessary.

Conservation and Repair

The conservation priorities documented in this report established the need for:

1. Immediate stabilisation works
2. Archaeological investigation works in order to inform conservation practices
3. Conservation works fit for purpose

20. Future proposals associated with St Francis' Abbey will have to be agreed in advance with the relevant authorities. Previous interventions and additions to fabric such as the concrete superstructure and iron pillars now examples of historic conservation should be retained where appropriate and where these do not diminish the integrity of the structure.
21. The conservation of Evan's Tower and wall walk and the city defences central to the plan area as well as the tea houses at the southern end and the Bull Inn wall located to the northwest and the mill buildings to the north is largely dependent on the proposed future function of these historic features and the role that they will have in the overall development proposal. A range of conservation measures are proposed in Section IV and Appendix F of the report.

Implementation, Delivery and Finance

Governance and the management of property within the Masterplan area has to be placed within a robust framework to ensure the delivery of a design approach that takes cognisance of the historic character and the buried archaeological potential of the site. This may be achieved through Kilkenny County Council retaining an interest or appropriate partnerships being forged, local management frameworks created and mandatory archaeologically-led guidelines informing the design process contributing to the sensitive redevelopment of the site. This is an opportunity to set a model of urban design for the regeneration of a historic town.

22. In order to ensure that these proposals are carried out, mandatory procedures or specific design contracts detailing the archaeological conditions will be required in order to confirm compliance and will have to be adopted by potential developers on the site.
23. It is recommended that potential avenues for funding from the EU, government, development-led and private sources is actively investigated as a priority in order to support the archaeological investigation of the site.



Plate 2 East Window of St Francis' Abbey