

Market Square, Kildare Town

Planning Report to accompany a Part 8 Proposal

January 2024



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Document status					
Job Number: 2239					
Job Title: Kildare Town Market Square Part 8					
Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
0	Draft	SB	JB	JB	07/12/23
1	Final	SB	JB	JB	11/01/24

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Legislative Background

MacCabe Durney Barnes has prepared this planning report on behalf of Kildare County Council to accompany a part 8 submission in respect of public realm improvements to Market Square, Kildare Town, Co. Kildare.

1.2 Background to the Part 8 Application

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Kildare County Council put in place temporary works which allowed to provide increased space for outdoor socialising and community activities. This was an intervention that allowed the Council to trial measures to facilitate use of the public space by the local community and businesses. The Council is now proceeding with making permanent the interventions that were deemed successful during the period. This includes inter alia the use of 39 car parking spaces for other community and commercial uses, and the provision of civic social spaces through the introduction of a number of measures.

The proposed design of the Market Square redresses the balance from what was previously a vehicular dominated location to a civic space that puts people and pedestrians first, creating a flexible area capable of accommodating a range of community and commercial events and activities.

The proposed design will significantly improve the public realm of this historic town centre and will focus on pedestrian connectivity and enhanced experience within the Market Square.

The proposed Public Realm Improvement Works to Market Square, Kildare Town comprises an area of c. 6540m² and incorporates the public areas both North and South of Bride Street (R415), Church Lane (known as Firecastle Lane) extending Westward to Heffernan's Lane and the pedestrian laneway to Nugent Street carpark (rear of Top Nolans). The proposed works comprise the following:

- Adjustments to the road network and parking arrangements.
- Re-grading Market Square, North of Bride Street, Bride Street and the Eastern roadway whereby kerbs are removed to bring the surface of the public realm to top of existing kerb levels.
- Re-grading the entrance area to Market House to provide level access.
- Upgrading footpath surfaces throughout site area using high quality natural stone.
- Widening and revision of the footpath layouts along Dublin Street.
- Introduction of bollards to manage vehicular access at Church Lane (Firecastle Lane) and Market Square East.
- Repositioning of the Bus Shelter on the North side of Dublin Street to improve pedestrian movement and access around Market House.
- Consolidation of wayfinding and signage throughout the site area.
- Introduction of hard and soft landscaping (including 8no. additional street trees) throughout Market Square.
- Introduction of bespoke street furniture, seating, lighting and bicycle parking.
- Provision of 6no. Pedestrian crossings (1no. controlled and 5no. uncontrolled) and widening of existing 3no. controlled crossings.
- Removal of overhead cables and services and relocation underground.
- Upgrading of carriageways, signage, road markings and drainage works including implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

- Provision of all utilities, necessary services and associated site works.

1.3 Structure of the Planning Report

The application is accompanied by a full set of reports and documents, which are in accordance with the requirements of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and the relevant articles of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). The following documents are submitted with this planning report:

Table 1: Part 8 Documents

Report/Drawing	Consultants
Architectural drawings and Design Report	Metropolitan Workshop
Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report	MacCabe Durney Barnes
Appropriate Assessment Screening Report	NM Ecology
Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment	JCA Architects
Archaeological Impact Assessment Report	Courtney Deery
Arboricultural Drawings and Report	CMK Arborist
Traffic and Transport Assessment	AECOM
Civils drawings	AECOM
Drainage and Watermains Planning Report	AECOM
Landscape drawings	AECOM
Public lighting drawings and report	AECOM

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 Site Location

Market Square is centrally located in Kildare Town, Co. Kildare. It is crossed diagonally by Bride Street in an east / south-west manner and bound by the Dublin Road (R446) to the south. St Brigid's Cathedral is located immediately to the north-west of the site.

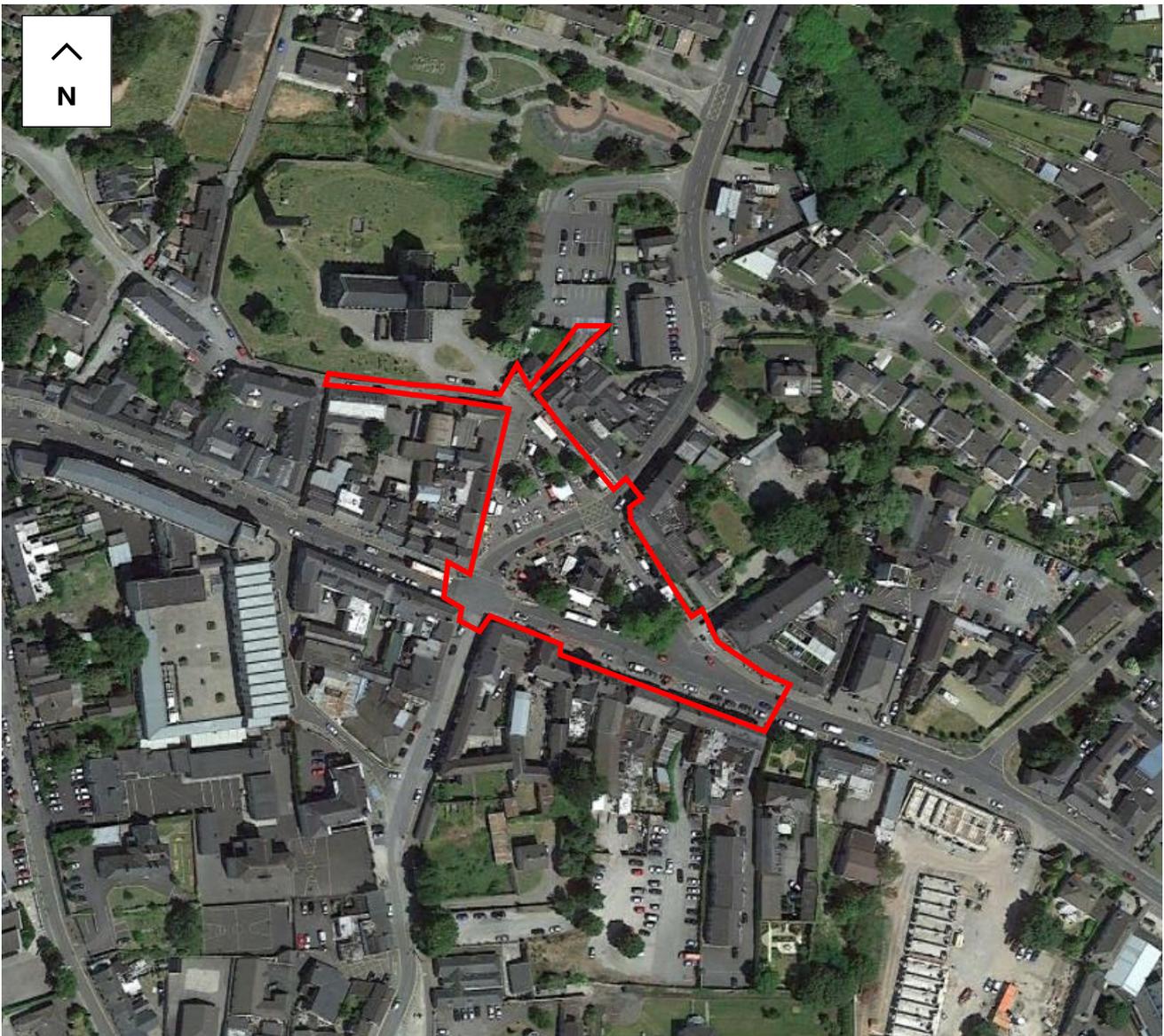


Figure 1: Location (Part 8 area in red)

2.2 Surrounding Area Description

The location of Market Square is central to the town and acts as the historic and present day focal point for a range of community and commercial activities and events. Surrounding uses are typical of town centres, with commercial services, the Heritage Centre and Tourist Office, comparison and convenience shops restaurants, cafés and pubs, takeaways. Some buildings have different upper floor uses with limited residential,

accommodation and professional services such as solicitors. The Kildare train station is located around 650 m north of the Square and Kildare Outlet Village is located around 1.5 km south.

The Dublin Road (R445) which bounds the Square to the south, links the town to Newbridge, the Curragh and the M7 to the east and to Monasterevin to the west. Prior to the opening of the M7, this road was a major axis between Dublin and Portlaoise.

Bride Street (R415) splits the Square into two parts. It links Kildare town to the Rathbride townland to the north and to Nurney village to the south.

Most the buildings around the square itself date from the second half of the 18th century and the 19th century, meaning Market Square has retained much of its character.



Figure 2: Site Context (Source : Google Maps)

2.3 Site Description

Market Square hosts the weekly town market. The streetscape remains traditional broadly around Market Square. Buildings around the Square are usually of traditional design and generally well maintained. The square is broadly split into two parts. Overall St Brigid's Cathedral and Round Tower is located at the highest point, the lowest being located at the intersection of the Dublin Road and Bride Street. There is a slight dip in level at the point where Bride Street crosses the Square.

Generally building height around the square is two-storey with some exceptions, notably the Bank of Ireland building, located on the Dublin Road and the Silken Thomas Restaurant, located at the corner of Market Square and the Dublin Road are both three-storey high.

There are two formal pedestrian crossings in and around the Square, both of which are located close to each other at the junction between the Dublin Road and Bride Street. This junction is signalised, whereas the others two (Bride Street / Market Square and Market Square / Dublin Road) are marked with stop lines.

2.3.1 Northern Square

The northern part, which is bound on two sides by shops, restaurants, pubs and other businesses, has a direct access to the St Brigid's Cathedral which is located north of the square. This access is the only vehicular access left to the northern part of the Square. The west side is closed off at its southern point, where it meets with Bride Street. The southern part of the square is closed by a series of bollards, clearly delineating the pedestrian realm from the carriageway.

The Cathedral is located higher than the Square, with a broadly continuous change of level from the cathedral all the way to the Dublin Road. This part of the square has been tarmacked. There are mature lime trees of moderate to high quality on that part of the square.

A number of structures are on the NIAH, all of which have a regional rating. These include:

- The railings outside of Millies (Reg.no. 11817015) - artistic and social interest.
- The house occupied by Harte's of Kildare (Reg.no.11817016) - architectural, historical and social interest.
- The house which was occupied by Southwells (Reg.no. 11817017) - architectural, artistic, historical and social interest.
- The house occupied by Nolans' Pub (Reg.no. 11817005) - architectural, artistic, historical and social interest.
- Verger's House (Reg.no. 11817006), a residence - architectural, historical and social interest.
- Four freestanding cast-iron lamp standards, dating from the 1950s, which have a regional rating and classified as being of artistic and social interest (Reg.no. 11817004).

A number of the aforementioned structures are also in the County Record of Protected Structures (RPS). These are Verger's House (RPS.no.B22-30), the four lamp standards (RPS.no.B22-42), Nolan's Pub (RPS.no.B22-44), Harte's of Kildare, although it is recorded under its former name The Vatican (RPS.no.B22-47) and Southwells (RPS.no.B22-48).

2.3.2 Southern Square

The southern part of the square, which is bound by the Dublin Road to its south and Bride Street to the north west currently acts as a large traffic island with no solid continuous fabric on either of its three sides. The Kildare Town Tourism office and Heritage Centre is located broadly centrally to that part of the square.

No sides of the square at this location are closed to vehicular access. Currently there is car parking on both sides of Market Square at the location. This part of the square also includes a variety of urban furniture, some

of which may be viewed as redundant. It includes, at least, an old Eircom public phonebooth, a parking meter, a variety of bollards of different height, material, and kind. This part of the square is paved.

Good to moderate quality lime trees are located on that part of the Square as well. Smaller trees have been planted between the car parking spaces as well. A bust of Lord Edward Fitzgerald is located to the east. There is also an ornamental lamppost to the front of the Heritage Centre and the statue of William 'Squires' Gannon which was unveiled in 2022. A number of structures are on the NIAH, all of which have a regional rating. These include:

- The 1798 Monument known as Gibbet Rath (Reg. No. 11817002) - artistic, historical and social interest. This is located to the southwest corner of the Square.
- Kildare Market House (now used as the Heritage Office) (Reg. No. 11817003) - architectural, historical and social interest.
- A limestone Celtic high-cross style monument (Reg. no. 11817001) - artistic, historical and social interest.
- Virginia Lodge (Reg. no. 11817100) - architectural, historical and social interest.
- Silken Thomas, which was the Tower Cinema and is now a pub/restaurant (Reg. no. 11817101) - architectural, cultural and social interest.

On the Dublin Road, across from the Square:

- The house, formerly known as Daniel Boland's Pub (Reg. no.11817045) - architectural, historical and social interest.
- Boyle's Pub (Reg. no. 11817046) - architectural, historical, social interest.
- The Bank of Ireland building (Reg. no.11817047) - architectural and artistic interest.
- Barrett House, which is now occupied by Agapé (Reg. no. 11817048) - architectural, historical and social interest.

A number of the aforementioned structures are also in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029. These are Virginia Lodge (RPS. no. B22-19), Market House (RPS. no. B22-42) and Barrett House (RPS. no.B22-63).

A number of archaeological findings are on the Sites and Monuments Record and are located in and around the Square, including

- KD022-029001- : Historic town: KD022-029001- : Historic town : GREYABBEY,KILDARE,TULLY EAST,TULLY WEST
- KD022-029009- : Town defences: KILDARE. This record appears twice.
- KD022-029070- : Tomb - effigial: KILDARE

2.4 Transport and Traffic

2.4.1 Transport

To the south along the Dublin Road, an important bus stop is located adjacent to the tourism office. This busy stop (no.104001) is served by a bus layby used by a range of lines going to Dublin City, Dublin Airport,

Newbridge, Naas and Rathangan. Its companion stop is located directly across the road and is served by two lines linking Kildare to Portlaoise. All buses travel along the Dublin Road. There is no bus link from the Square to the train station which is located around 650m north of the Square. There is a complimentary shuttle which travels from Kildare Outlet Village to the Train Station or the National Stud and Gardens, which are located to the south of the M7.

2.4.2 Traffic

As a result of the temporary works (Accelerated Measures in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic), the majority of car parking spaces have been transformed for other public uses, including outdoor dining areas and seating areas on the north part of the Square. The existing vehicular access to Market Square (the section that runs from the Square to Heffernan's lane) has been maintained. In particular, it is used to access the servicing area of Firecastle and Hartes and the units on the north side of the Dublin Road.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Project Description

The development is described as follows on the public notices:

In accordance with Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Kildare County Council hereby gives notice to carry out the following development:

Nature and extent of the proposed development:

The proposed Public Realm Improvement Works to Market Square, Kildare Town comprises an area of c. 6540m² and incorporates the public areas both North and South of Bride Street (R415), Church Lane (known as Firecastle Lane) extending Westward to Heffernan's Lane and the pedestrian laneway to Nugent Street carpark (rear of Top Nolans). The proposed works will affect/enhance the character of the Kildare Town Architectural Conservation Area and the Protected Structures located within the project area.

The proposed works comprise the following:

- Adjustments to the road network and parking arrangements.
- Re-grading Market Square, North of Bride Street, Bride Street and the Eastern roadway whereby kerbs are removed to bring the surface of the public realm to top of existing kerb levels.
- Re-grading the entrance area to Market House (RPS B22-42) to provide level access.
- Upgrading footpath surfaces throughout site area using high quality natural stone.
- Widening and revision of the footpath layouts along Dublin Street.
- Introduction of bollards to manage vehicular access at Church Lane (Firecastle Lane) and Market Square East.
- Repositioning of the Bus Shelter on the North side of Dublin Street to improve pedestrian movement and access around Market House.
- Consolidation of wayfinding and signage throughout the site area.
- Introduction of hard and soft landscaping (including 8no. additional street trees) throughout Market Square.
- Introduction of bespoke street furniture, seating, lighting and bicycle parking.
- Provision of 6no. Pedestrian crossings (1no. controlled and 5no. uncontrolled) and widening of existing 3no. controlled crossings.
- Removal of overhead cables and services and relocation underground.
- Upgrading of carriageways, signage, road markings and drainage works including implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- Provision of all utilities, necessary services and associated site works.



Figure 3: Proposed Site Layout (Source: Metropolitan Workshop)

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 Site History

The following site planning history is of relevance to the subject proposal:

- PA.Reg.Ref.2360388: Permission was sought for the installation of a new external ATM with new signage. Decision is due on the 19th January 2024.
- PA.Reg.Ref.22970: Permission was granted for the change of use of the existing night club/late bar to a proposed new bedroom accommodation at the Silken Thomas. Permission was granted on the 21st January 2023.
- PA.Reg.Ref.22123: Permission was granted for the construction of a 3-story apartment building with entrance from Market Square at Barrett House. Permission was granted on the 13th February 2023.
- PA.Reg.Ref.21981: Permission was sought inter alia for the change of use to part-of property which faces onto Claregate Street, from residential accommodation to commercial office use, changes to internal layout and alteration, renovation and repairs, including ground floor access / main entrance onto Market Square. Permission was granted on the 2nd November 2021. The building is currently occupied at ground floor by Boyle Sports.
- PA.Reg.Ref.201083: Permission was refused in November 2020 for the change of use of a rear section of the existing ground floor from a retail unit with associated storage to use as a bookmaker while maintaining the retail use to Market Square. Reason for refusal includes the introduction of low-grade retail uses in the core retail area.
- PA Reg. Ref.20670: Permission was refused in August 2020 for the change of use of the ground floor unit from a retail unit to a bookmaker at the Southwell Building. This would have resulted in the expansion of the Boyle Sports bookmaker which is located in the adjacent facilities. Reasons for refusal include the introduction of low-grade retail uses in the core retail area and impacts to the architectural conservation area.
- P.A Reg. Ref:191151: Permission was granted in February 2020 for alteration to Virginia Lodge, including the change of use from residential to guest house.
- PA.Reg.Ref.181577: Permission was granted in February 2019 for the retention of an existing telecommunication installation at the Silken Thomas.
- PA.Reg.Ref.181119: Permission was granted for the change of use of the first floor of the Vatican from abandoned dwelling to guesthouse in November 2018.

4.2 Surrounding Area

A number of new housing developments are at various stages of completion around the town. Kildare Outlet Village was granted planning permission to expand in 2020. It is not considered that these developments are of specific relevance to the subject proposal.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 National Policy

5.1.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It sets out the vision for the spatial development of the country using ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO), which in turn, are supported by Strategic Investment Priorities. Several NSOs are particularly important for this Renewal Plan, including:

NSO 5 - Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

This objective considers that places that can foster enterprise and innovation will attract investment and talent. To achieve this objective, regional economic drivers will support opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy. To that effect, it is expected that growth and place-making will be coordinated to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.

NSO 7 - Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

This objective promotes good quality of life and attractive towns and cities. It specifically focuses on well-designed public realm, networking public spaces, parks and streets with recreational infrastructure. Activity-based tourism also form part of this objective. The objective also places at its core, the character of urban and rural areas as a means to increase their attractiveness and sense of place.

The NSO are supported by a series of National Policy Objectives (NPO), some of which are of relevance. These include:

NPO 4: Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

NPO 6: Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area

NPO 27: Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments, and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

NPO 28: Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.

NPO 60: Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their significance.

The proposed development which consists in public realm works and environmental improvements will contribute to the achievement of the NPOs listed above. The Covid 19 Pandemic works allowed Kildare County Council to reclaim the square for public uses other than car parking and returned the Square to its status as a focal point of the town. This proposal will significantly enhance the rich heritage of the Square.

5.1.2 Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2023 sets out the roadmap for delivering Ireland's climate ambition. It aligns the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by the Government in 2022.

Under the transport section, the CAP considers that Public Authorities should work toward reducing on-street parking spaces where it improves the public realm. It also recognises the importance of road space reallocation as a vector of wide scale improvement in urban environments.

The proposal will positively contribute to the improvement of the public realm in Kildare. By allowing the square to be used for purposes other than car parking, it will improve the public realm, make better use of space at the heart of Kildare and stimulate the local economy.

5.1.3 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2020 is the roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate ambition. It takes account of the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed in 2022. The plan reiterates the targets set out under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 which seeks a reduction of 51% on GHG emissions by 2030 compared to 2018 levels and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

The CAP 2024 recognises the role of local authorities in delivering climate action. It discusses Town Centre First and how local authorities can promote sustainable settlement patterns, through the use of sustainable car parking policies and the delivery of public realm improvements and reallocation of road space.

In this regard, the proposed development is fully in line with the provisions on the CAP 2024.

5.1.4 Town Centre First – A policy Approach to Irish Towns

Town Centre First was published in February 2023. The aim of the policy is

“to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community”.

The proposed works will make significant contributions toward achieving the aim of the policy. The temporary Covid 19 Pandemic works have shown how beneficial the reuse of the Square for uses other than car parking and have allowed for a number of vacant units to be brought back into use.

5.2 Guidelines

5.2.1 Design Manual for Urban Roads and Street

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) promotes better street design as a means to create connected physical, social and transport networks that promote real alternatives to car journey, namely walking, cycling and public transports. It seeks to prioritise *'sustainable modes of transport, safeguard vulnerable users and promote sense of place'*. It recognises that the expansion of the pedestrian domain help enhance sense of place.

DMURS suggests options to re-establish the balance between pedestrians, cyclists and cars, including pedestrianised and shared surface and one-way streets. It recognises the principal elements contributing to sense of place and a pleasant pedestrian experience, such as:

- Connectivity
- Enclosure
- Active edge
- Pedestrian activity / facilities

These characteristics represents what DMURS considers to be the *'basic measures that should be established in order to create pedestrian friendly streets that facilitate more sustainable neighbourhoods.'*

The proposal will meet the four characteristics. The Square will remain walkable and can be easily navigated. It will provide a better sense of enclosure by removing car parking spaces allowing for the Square to better connect with buildings facing it. This will provide a sense of security and safety to users who will feel less overwhelmed by cars. As observed during the Covid temporary works, the use of the Square as a meeting and gathering space had beneficial impacts on businesses located on it. As a result, the number of units vacant at ground floor has been reduced, with an uptake in economic activity. This means the use of the Square as a meeting space allows for the reactivation and strengthening of the edge. As the proposal includes seating area, the erection of bollards allowing to open or close the Square, the scope of pedestrian activities is widened allowing for the safe and comfortable use of the Square.

5.3 Regional Policy

5.3.1 Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region has the vision

'to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment for all.'

It is articulated around three principles, the first one being the most relevant:

'Healthy Placemaking: to promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.'

Similar to the NPF, it is supported by Regional Strategic Objectives (RSO). RSO 4 Healthy Communities which seeks to protect and enhance the

'quality of the built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking, cycling, ensuring clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human health.'

RSO 5 Creative Places should also be considered as it seeks to

'Enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration'

The RSOs are supported by a number of Regional Policy Objectives. Of particular relevance are considered under the header of 'Healthy Placemaking' and include:

'RPO 9.10 In planning for the creation of healthy and attractive places, there is a need to provide alternatives to the car and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces. Local authorities shall have regard to the Guiding Principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' and 'Integration of Land Use and Transport' as set out in the RSES and to national policy as set out in 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)'

'RPO 9.12: In Planning policy formulation and implementation local authorities and other stakeholders shall be informed by the need to cater for all levels of disability, through the appropriate mitigation of the built environment, and in particular for the needs of an ageing population.'

Under 'Recreation and Open Space', RPO 9.14 is noted:

'RPO 9.14: Local authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.'

5.3.2 Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042

The Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Transport Strategy 2022-2042 provides the framework for planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the GDA. It was prepared on foot of the making of the aforementioned RSES and other policies as they relate to climate action and low carbon. The strategy comprises four no. objectives:

'An enhanced natural and built environment: To create a better environment and meet our environmental obligations by transitioning to a clean, low emission transport system, reducing car dependency, and increasing walking, cycling, public transport use and reducing car dependency.'

A strong sustainable economy: To support sustainable economic activity and growth by improving the opportunity for people to travel for work or business where and when they need to and facilitating the efficient movement of goods.'

Connected communities and better quality of life: To enhance the health and quality of life of our society by improving connectivity between people and places, delivering safe and integrated transport options, and increasing opportunities for walking and cycling.'

An inclusive transport system: To deliver a high quality, equitable and accessible transport system, which caters for the needs of all members of society.'

A number of measures are proposed under the Strategy, as follows:

'Measure PLAN15 – Urban Design in Walking and Cycling Projects: In the design, planning and prioritisation of walking and cycling schemes, the NTA and the local authorities will ensure the incorporation of urban design and placemaking considerations, taking into account architectural heritage, and will consider how greater biodiversity could be fostered.'

Measure PLAN16 – Reallocation of Road Space: The NTA, in conjunction with the local authorities, will seek the reallocation of road space in appropriate locations in Dublin City Centre, Metropolitan towns and villages, and towns and villages across the GDA in accordance with the road user hierarchy, in order to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport use and prioritise the placemaking functions of the urban street network.'

Measure WALK2 – Improved Footpaths: The NTA, in conjunction with local authorities, will implement footpath improvement schemes across the GDA where required throughout the period of the Transport Strategy in order to ensure that they are of sufficient width, adequately lit, serve both sides of the road in urban areas (in most cases), are of good quality surfacing, provide for seating at appropriate locations, and are free of unnecessary clutter.

Footpaths will also be maintained and improved in a manner which contributes positively to the public realm.

Measure WALK3 – Decluttering Footpaths: Local authorities in the GDA will rationalise street furniture, poles and signs, and remove redundant poles, signs or other clutter in Dublin city centre and other town centres and their approaches, to allow for easier people movement.

Measure WALK4 – Improved Junctions: The NTA, in conjunction with local authorities, will implement junction improvements across the GDA as follows:

- To enhance safety at junctions, a programme of “narrowing” junctions by reducing kerb-line radii will be undertaken as a means of managing vehicular speeds;*
- To enhance movement by pedestrians and cyclists, a programme of removal of slip lanes will be undertaken at appropriate locations, together with consideration of junction signalling changes to better balance the use of the junction between motorised and vulnerable modes; and In urban areas, junctions will be designed so as footpaths on side roads will be carried through at-grade, where practicable and safe to do so.*

Measure WALK5 - Crossing Times: The NTA, with the cooperation of the local authorities, will address identified deficiencies in pedestrian crossing times at signalised junctions, in particular at locations where demand for pedestrian movements is likely to be high.

Measure WALK6 – Crossing Points: The NTA, with the cooperation of the local authorities, will install additional pedestrian crossing points where requirements are identified.'

'Measure WALK8 – Traffic-Free Streets and Pedestrianisation: The NTA will support local authorities in the provision of traffic-free streets and pedestrianised streets in town centres where there are benefits to transport and/or the local environment and/or the local economy.'

'Measure ROAD13 – Roadspace Reallocation: The local authorities and the NTA will implement a programme of roadspace reallocation from use by general traffic or as parking to exclusive use by sustainable modes as appropriate, as a means of achieving the following:

- Providing sufficient capacity for sustainable modes;*
- Improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists; and y Encouraging mode shift from the private car and reducing emissions.'*

'Measure TM2 – Management of Urban Centres: The NTA and relevant local authorities, in collaboration, will deliver the public transport, cycling and walking networks, and public realm that are required to serve local centres, and to facilitate a post-Covid recovery based on sustainable transport. The NTA and local authorities will also ensure that the delivery of goods to urban centre businesses and the operation of taxis are managed to the benefit of all users of these areas.'

The proposal meets many of the objectives and measures considered under the Strategy. It will allow for road-space reallocation which will provide a safe public realm. As evidenced through the Covid-19 Pandemic works, the reuse of the square for uses other than car parking and through traffic has been hugely beneficial to the vitality of the town centre. The square has seen an uptake of economic activity with a reduction in the number of vacant units are ground floor.

5.4 Local Policy

5.5 Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

5.5.1 Strategic Objectives

The Core Strategy of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 designates Kildare Town as a Self-Sustaining Growth Towns. Such towns are described as towns with moderate levels of jobs and services.

5.5.2 Resilient Economy & Job Creation

In accordance with RE O5, the Councils seeks to

Ensure a high-quality living environment in Kildare which will help to retain the county's indigenous skilled population and to attract additional high skilled labour into the county, and seek to address any deficit in social infrastructure, which would act as an impediment to a high-quality living environment.

This chapter recognises the tourism potential of Kildare Town and includes RE O132 which seeks to 'facilitate and promote Kildare's town development as a National Tourism Hub, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and INTO Kildare.'

5.5.3 Sustainable Mobility and Transport

Under the sustainable mobility and transport chapter, the Council promotes 'sustainable development through facilitating movement to, from, through and within the County that is accessible to all and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.'

It has also for objective 'pedestrianisation, pedestrian priority and/or improved pedestrian / cycling facilities in particular, increasing the number of safe crossings' (TM O8).

The proposed development supports the achievement of the policy and the objective by allowing for the reallocation of road space to pedestrians and providing an increased number of pedestrian crossings around the Square.

5.5.4 Urban Centres and Retail

The CDP seeks to strengthen the retail function of Kildare Town with a view, in part, to encourage the uptake of vacant units. In particular, it seeks to build synergies between the Kildare Tourist Outlet Village and the town centre. Three objectives support the designation of the town as a primary tourism destination:

'RET O42: Facilitate the consolidation/expansion of the town centre of Kildare Town through infill development and the redevelopment/regeneration of derelict/under-utilised sites and buildings particularly those within the Core Retail Area.

RET O43: Encourage the development of independent retail outlets and markets in the town centre that will create a unique character and shopping experience for tourists and visitors and add to the attractiveness of Kildare Town.

RET O44: Develop a well-designed pedestrian link from the Kildare Tourist Outlet Village (KTOV) to the town centre, in consultation with the various third party landowners, with a view to better integration, enhancing visitor experience and promoting the heritage and evening economy of the town centre in accordance with the guidance in the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 and accompanying Retail Design Manual.'

As evidenced through the Covid-19 Pandemic temporary works, the works and removal of the car parking spaces have the potential to stimulate the regeneration of Market Square. As demonstrated in the planning history part of this report, there has been renewed interest in commercial activity around the square, and particularly for tourism accommodation and restaurants. The rich heritage of the Square will be better enhanced which will support the town's designation as a primary tourism destination.

5.5.5 Community Infrastructure and Creative Spaces

The CDP seeks to provide for and facilitate the development of healthy, sustainable and socially inclusive communities. In particular, in accordance with SC A14, the Council supports the extension of Kildare town heritage centre. The proposal while not impede on the potential of the heritage centre. It will ensure the centre becomes the focal point of Market Square. It will act as the backdrop to social life and pedestrian activities as well as retain its usual functions.

5.5.6 Built and Cultural Heritage

The Square forms part of the Kildare Town Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), which is shown below.

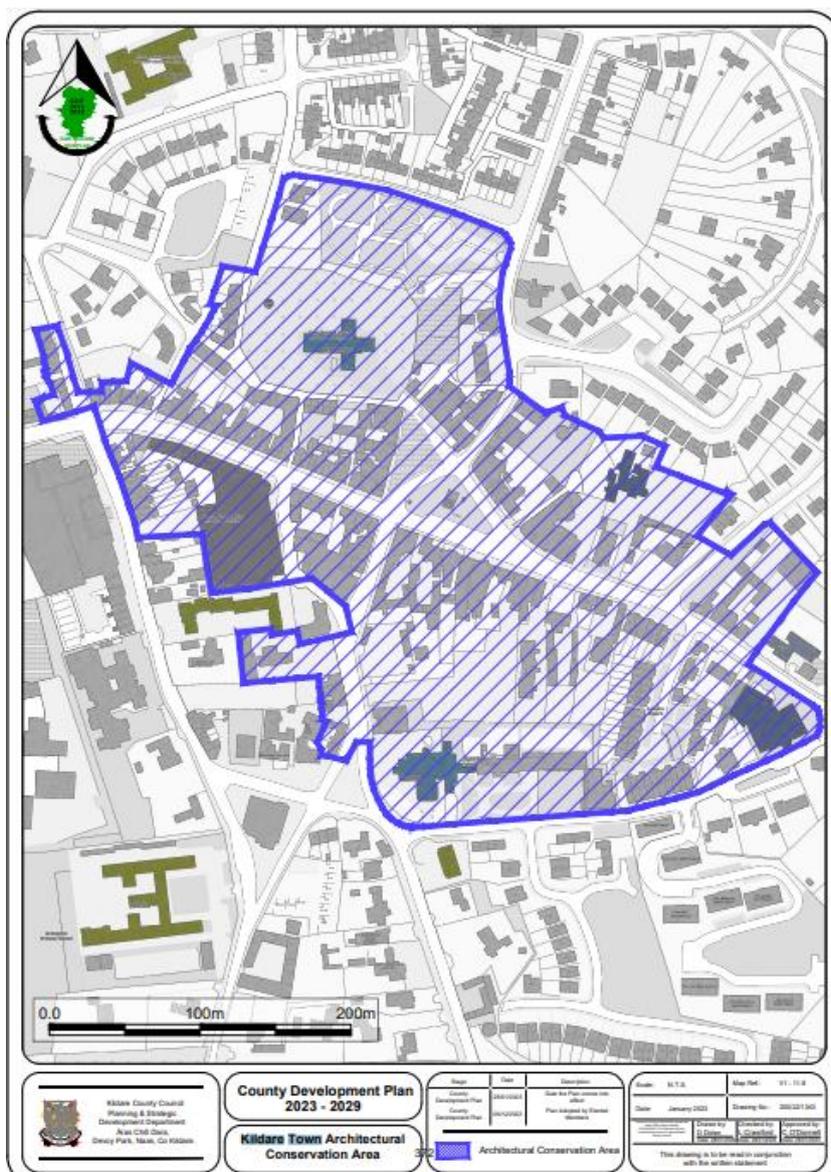


Figure 4: Kildare Town Architectural Conservation Area (source: Kildare CDP 2023-2029)

Market Square and surrounding area have a rich heritage, which resulted in the designation of the ACA. More details are provided in section 2 of this report on what particular elements are located in and around the Square. In accordance with objectives AH O2, the council seeks to manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of County Kildare and avoid adverse impact on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest.

The Archaeological Impact Assessment prepared to accompany this Part 8 note that the project should seek to enhance and celebrate the historic character of the square. In this regard, it can be considered that the project will be successful as it reaffirms the role of Market Square as the focal point of the town.

The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment considers that the public realm works will ‘encourage gatherings whilst also allowing an open appropriation of the public space.’ It further states that these will ‘preserve and emphasise the domestic character that is and has been an intrinsic part of the history of the place.’

Kildare is a Walled Town, meaning it is, as a whole, designated as a monument. Under Policy AH P3, the Council supports the protection and conservation of the medieval fabric and form of walled towns. The Square forms an

integral part of the setting of St Brigid's Church. As seen on the Historic 6-inch map, most of the broad spatial structural principles are still present. However, it is evident that the square has evolved, with the principal modification being Bride Street truncating the Square into two parts. The proposals offer the possibility to regain some of the original spatial structure by allowing to close Bride Street as necessary and by allowing for gathering, lingering and socialising.

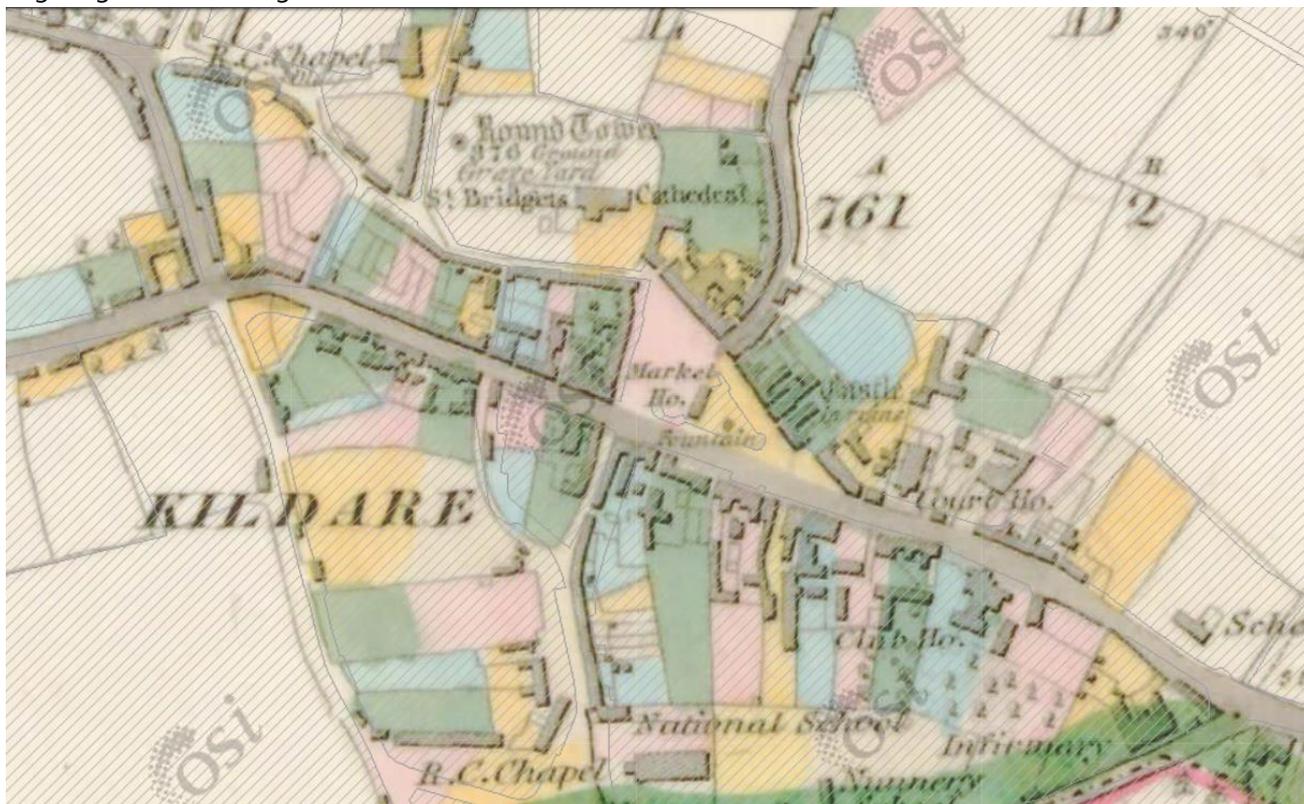


Figure 5: Extract of the Historic 6 inch map (Source: myplan.ie)

The water pump located adjacent to market house will be maintained in accordance with AH A19.

Given the designation of the area as an ACA, the proposal put forward by Kildare County Council will not be detrimental to the character and setting of Market Square, in accordance with AH O65. Essentially, it will bring back the Square to its former use.

5.5.7 Urban Design, Placemaking and Regeneration

Under Chapter 14, the plan aims to create vibrant and bustling towns and villages, with a range of activities, *'where residents benefit from inclusive, attractive, connected, vibrant and well functioning places to live, work, visit, socialise and invest in.'*

It is Council policy to *'Apply the principles of people-centred urban design and healthy placemaking as an effective growth management tool to ensure the realisation of more sustainable, inclusive, and well-designed settlements resilient to the effects of climate change and adapted to meet the changing needs of growing populations including aging and disabled persons'* (UD P1).

The proposal makes significant contribution to the achievement of objective UD O2 which seeks to:

'Ensure that town centres remain the focal point of their respective settlements by maintaining and enhancing their role as dynamic, attractive, resilient and inclusive environments, and as established destinations for commercial, retail, civic and recreational activities.'

As evidenced with the Covid-19 temporary works, if socialising is facilitated at Market Square, then it will happen. The Square has retained its appeal as a place to meet, gather and socialise. Formalising the use of the Square as a square will allow Market Square to be the focal point of Kildare Town.

It will also contribute to meeting Policy UD P2 on the development of towns as environmental assets, to ensure their regeneration and renewal and Objective UD O8 whereby it provides for the *'effective presentation of, development and management of people-centred and universally accessible public realm.'*

5.6 Kildare Local Area Plan 2023-2029

The Kildare Town Local Area Plan (LAP) was adopted in October 2023.

5.6.1 Vision and Strategic Principles

The LAP seeks

'To promote the social, economic and physical development of Kildare Town as a self-sustaining growth town in a compact, permeable and sequential manner; to address deficiencies in social infrastructure so communities may thrive; to ensure the town centre develops as an inclusive, vibrant, attractive and connected place; to harness the town's existing strengths of equine, ecclesiastical and retail assets; and to create a high-quality, low carbon, universally accessible environment for residents and visitors alike.'

The vision will be achieved with the support of guiding principles, several of which are particularly addressed by the subject proposal such as:

- Creating compact and connected communities, which seeks inter alia the creation of a *'people-centred, walkable and cycle-friendly town'*.
- Delivering 'Catch-up infrastructure' which considers the need to provide a high quality and universally accessible network of public open space.
- Enhancing Kildare Town as a Tourist Destination where the Town is to capitalise from its tourism potential, whilst preserving and enhancing its unique historic identity.
- Ensuring a vibrant town centre by promoting a town centre first approach, with the intention of better utilising the town existing environmental assets such as underutilised spaces with a view to maximising economic activity and employment growth. Particular areas of focus include the public realm improvements identified in the Town Renewal Masterplan and the alleviation of traffic congestion in the town centre through the closure of Bride Street to traffic.

5.6.2 Core Strategy

In accordance with CSO 1.2 of the Core Strategy, the Council seeks to *'protect and enhance through appropriate regeneration and transportation strategies, the quality, ambience and vitality of Kildare Town Centre in order to create a pleasant and attractive environment for business, tourism and recreation for both visitors and residents.'*

5.6.3 Zoning

Map 10.2a of the LAP provides the zoning for the town as shown in the figure below.

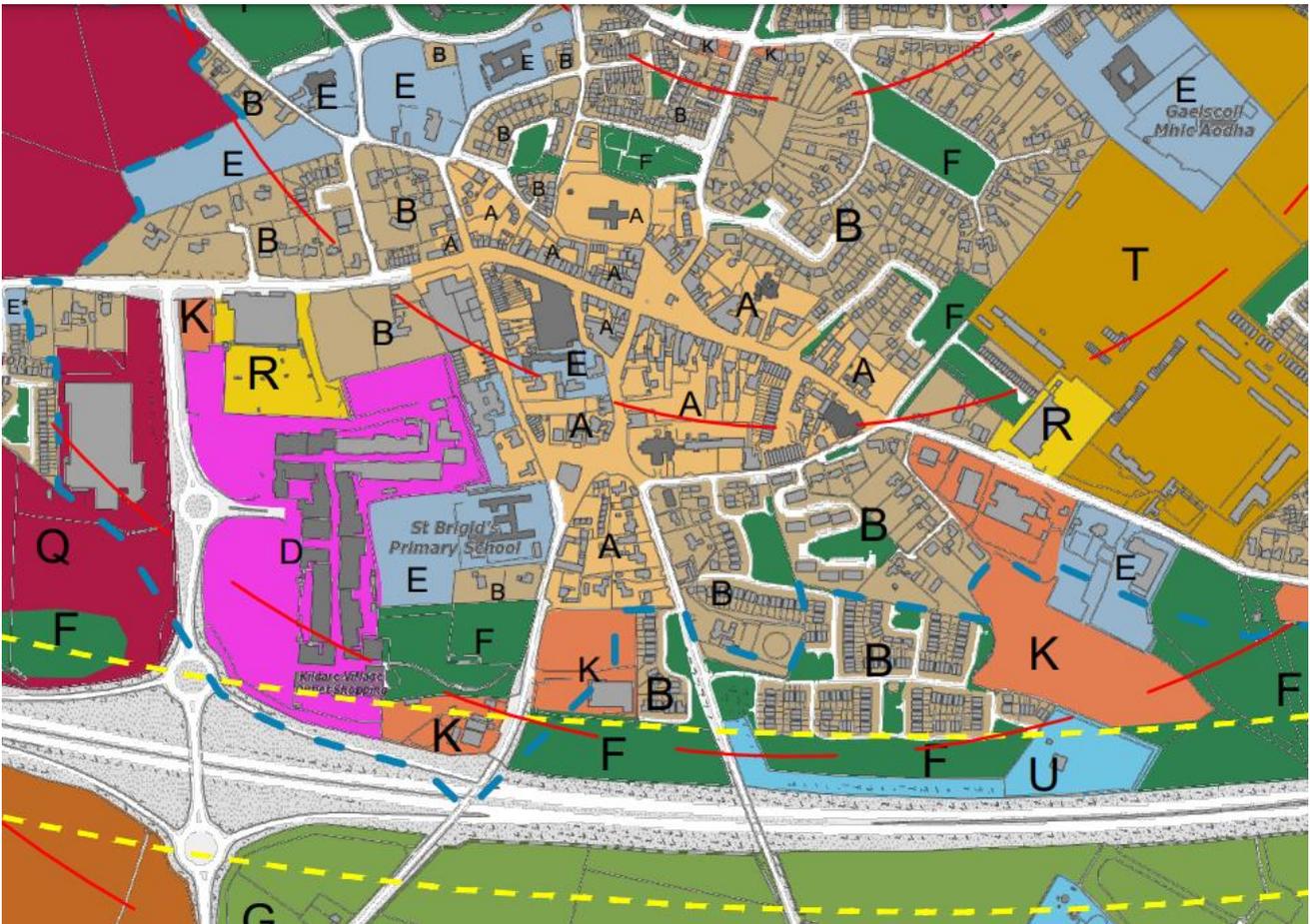


Figure 6: Land Use Zonings (source: KCC)

Given the location, the Square is zoned 'A' Town Centre. The objective is to 'protect, improve and provide for the future development of the town centre'. Given the proposal consists of public realm improvements, it is supported by the zoning objective.

5.6.4 Consolidation and Renewal of the Town Centre

The Part 8 proposal makes significant contribution to the achievement of the town centre objectives in particular:

'TCO 1.1 Reinforce the town centre as a primary location for commercial, civic, social and cultural development through the promotion of new high-quality infill and backland development that consolidates the existing urban core.'

'TCO 1.3 Protect the vibrancy, ambience, quality and vitality of the town centre by:

- (i) Promoting an appropriate mix of day and night-time uses.*
- (ii) Preventing an excessive concentration of non-desirable uses including takeaways, off-licences, bookmakers, phone repair shops and vape shops (where planning permission is required).*
- (iii) Facilitating development that will attract and retain commercial and retail activities in the town centre.*

(iv) Encouraging the re-use of vacant units for alternative functions and uses such as live-work units, residential units, remote working hubs, enterprise incubation, tourist spin-off enterprises, tourist accommodation, niche retail including food or craft enterprises and cultural offerings such as theatre or museum.'

Under section 4.2 town centre regeneration and public realm, the key priority is the urban renewal of the Town Centre, in particular through the enhancement of the public realm. This, in turn, will promote activities, business and vitality. The Council intends on improving the image of the centre to make the town more attractive and vibrant.

5.6.5 Town Renewal Objectives

To that effect, the Council prepared the Draft Kildare Town Centre Masterplan which details a series of public realm projects to be developed over a period of ten years. This plan is due to be published in Q1 of 2024. The LAP clearly states that the plans contained in the masterplan have a statutory framework by way of their inclusion in the LAP.

Objective TCO 2.1 states that it is an objective of the Council to: *'Support and facilitate the implementation of the projects detailed in Table 4-1 (as per the Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan) as follows:*

- *Market Square and Environs Project*
- *Cycle and Pedestrian Network Enhancements Project*
- *Public Realm Enhancements Project*
- *Train Station Improvements Project*
- *Courthouse and Water Tower Improvements Project'*

'TCO 2.4 Ensure that urban renewal works prioritise the enhancement of the streetscape and heritage assets of the town centre of Kildare, to sustain and improve its unique attraction for living, working, visiting and investment.'

'TCO 2.5 Support and facilitate an extension to the Heritage Centre (Market House) as appropriate, to facilitate the development of additional office, retail, hospitality and performance space and the relocation of the existing ESB substation. Any future extension to the Heritage Centre would be subject to normal planning and design requirements.'

'TCO 2.6 Support the completion of a public realm strategy for Kildare Town, as part of the implementation of the Town Renewal Masterplan. Such a strategy shall incorporate a bespoke materials palette, including for pavement, signage and street furniture which will complement and enhance the natural and built environment of Kildare Town'

The proposed works will formalise the use of the Square as public performance space, with Market House as its backdrop.

5.6.6 Economic Strategy

Urban renewal also forms part of the economic development strategy for the town as it can help realise the regeneration opportunities and make it adaptable with a view to ensure it remains vibrant, viable and attractive.

The continued use of the Square as a market is supported by EDO 3.5 which seeks to 'Support the continued development of a high quality 'market' within the town'.

5.6.7 Built Heritage

Given the rich heritage of the town, the council has a series of policy objectives to protect and enhance the built heritage of the town. The area around the Cathedral and Round Tower and Market Square is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) as set out in section 2 of this report. All designations are presented in section 2 of this report and in Map 8.2 of the LAP, as represented below.

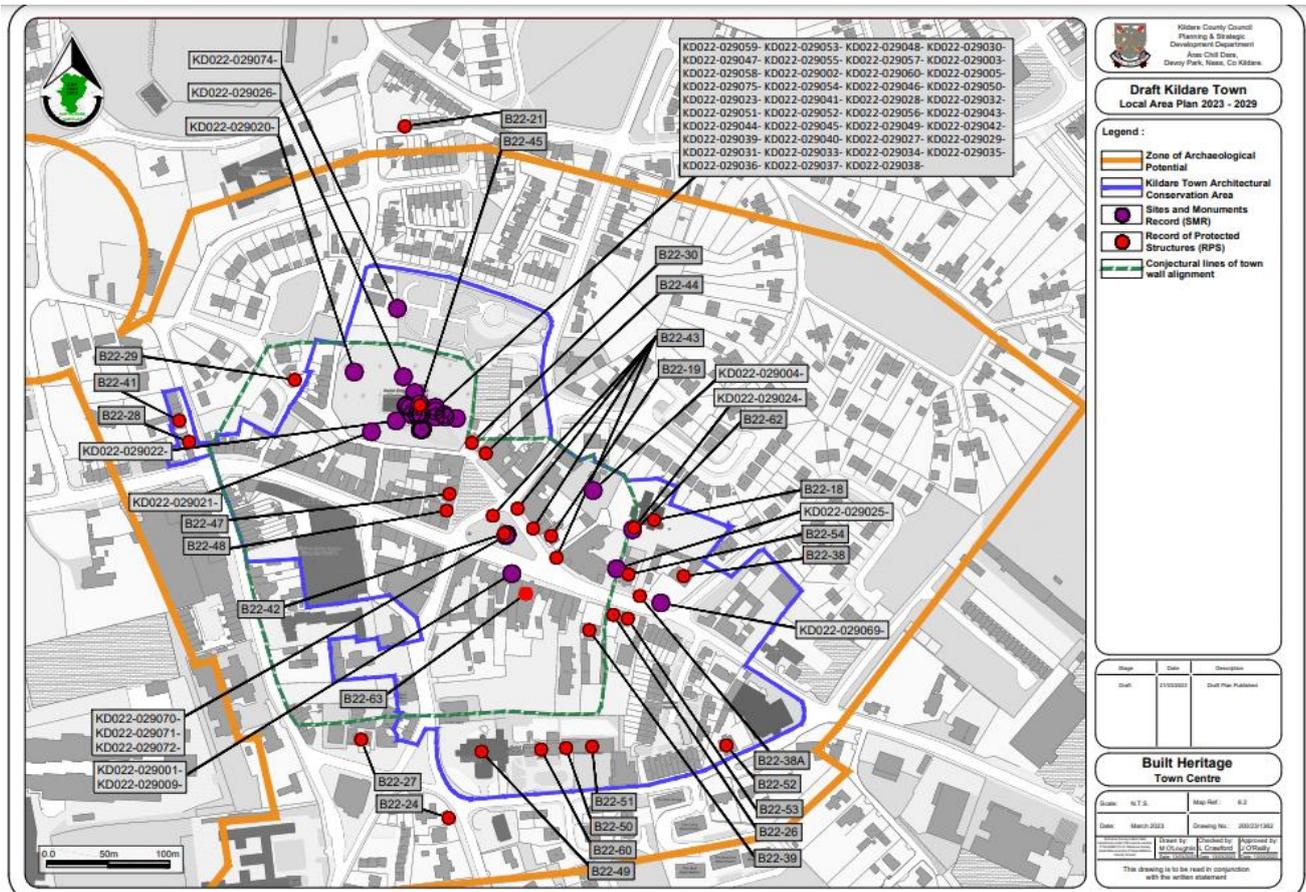


Figure 7: Built Heritage - Town Centre (Source: Kildare Local Area Plan 2023-2029)

In the Architectural Conservation Area, several views are protected as shown on Map 8.3 of the Kildare LAP 2023-2029.

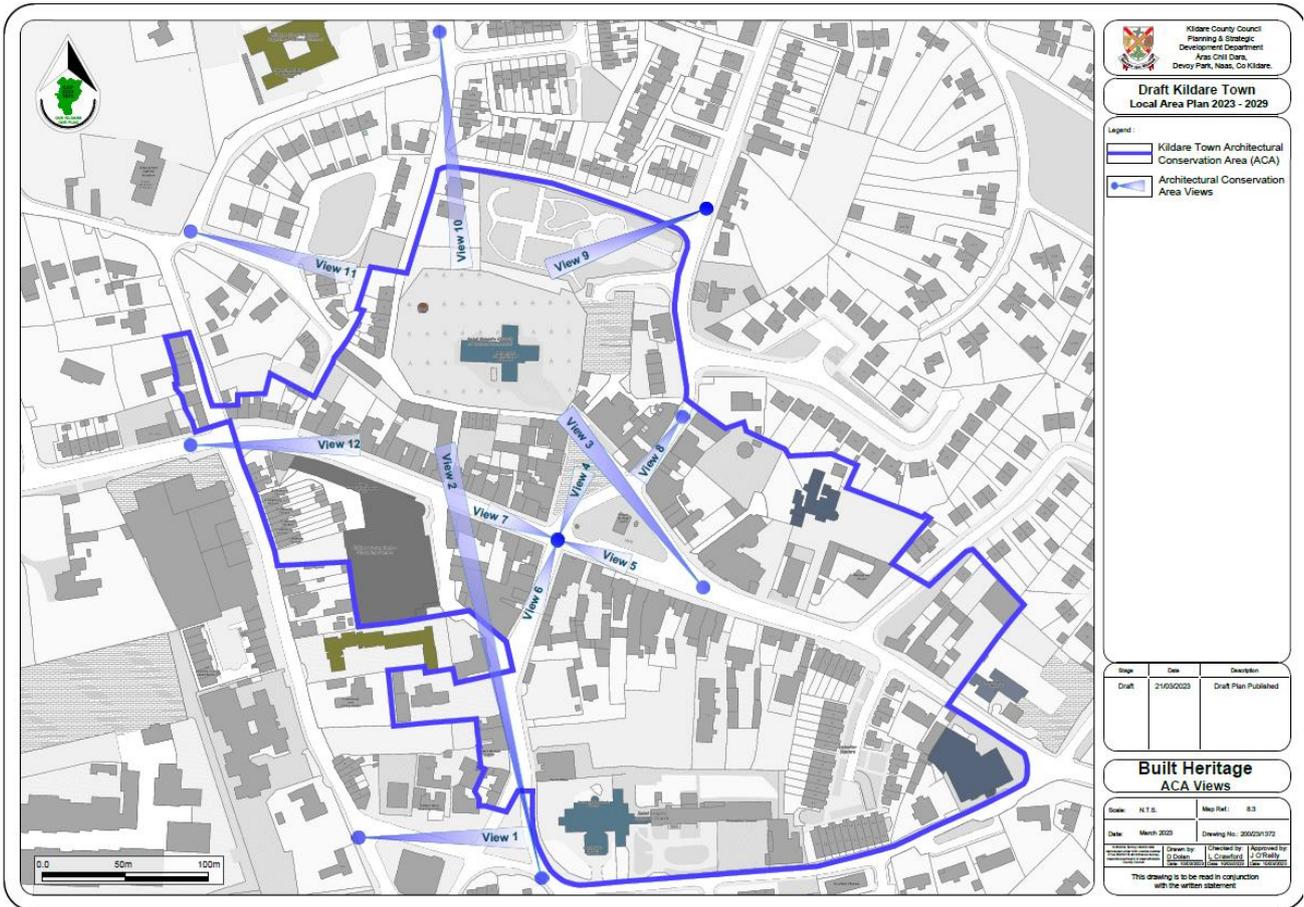


Figure 8: ACA View (Source: Kildare Local Area Plan 2023-2029)

The proposal will formalise the removal of car parking, declutter and enhance Market Square. It will allow to clear the scope of the views to and from Market Square, including View 8 (Station Road toward Market Square), View 4 (junction of Bride Street and Dublin Road toward Market Square), View 3 (Silken Thomas towards the Cathedral).

The proposal will support BHO 2.1 of the LAP insofar as it will enhance the special character and visual setting of the ACA. By using the Square as its intended use, a forum to meet and socialise, the Square will regain vitality and see its vistas freed from visual clutter. The buildings fronting the Square will form a better relationship with the Square, something that has been somewhat truncated by the use as a public car park. It is also aligned with BHO 1.5 which supports the sensitive incorporation of public amenity and open space around monuments.

The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment report state that *'the new pavers are to be set along lines running East to West, informed by sight lines towards the Round Tower and Cathedral. This will have the visual impact of drawing the two parts of the original Market Square together and connecting them visually with the Round Tower and Cathedral, which will have a positive visual impact on the architectural heritage of the site'*.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Roads and Traffic

6.1.1 Kildare Town Transport Strategy

The LAP includes the Kildare Town Transport Strategy, 2021. The overall objective of the strategy is to promote a modal shift from car traffic to cycling and walking. To achieve this, the LAP includes a series of measures, some of which regard Market Square. Cycle 35 and Cycle 36 regard different parts of Market Square and are graphically presented on map 7.2 as follows:

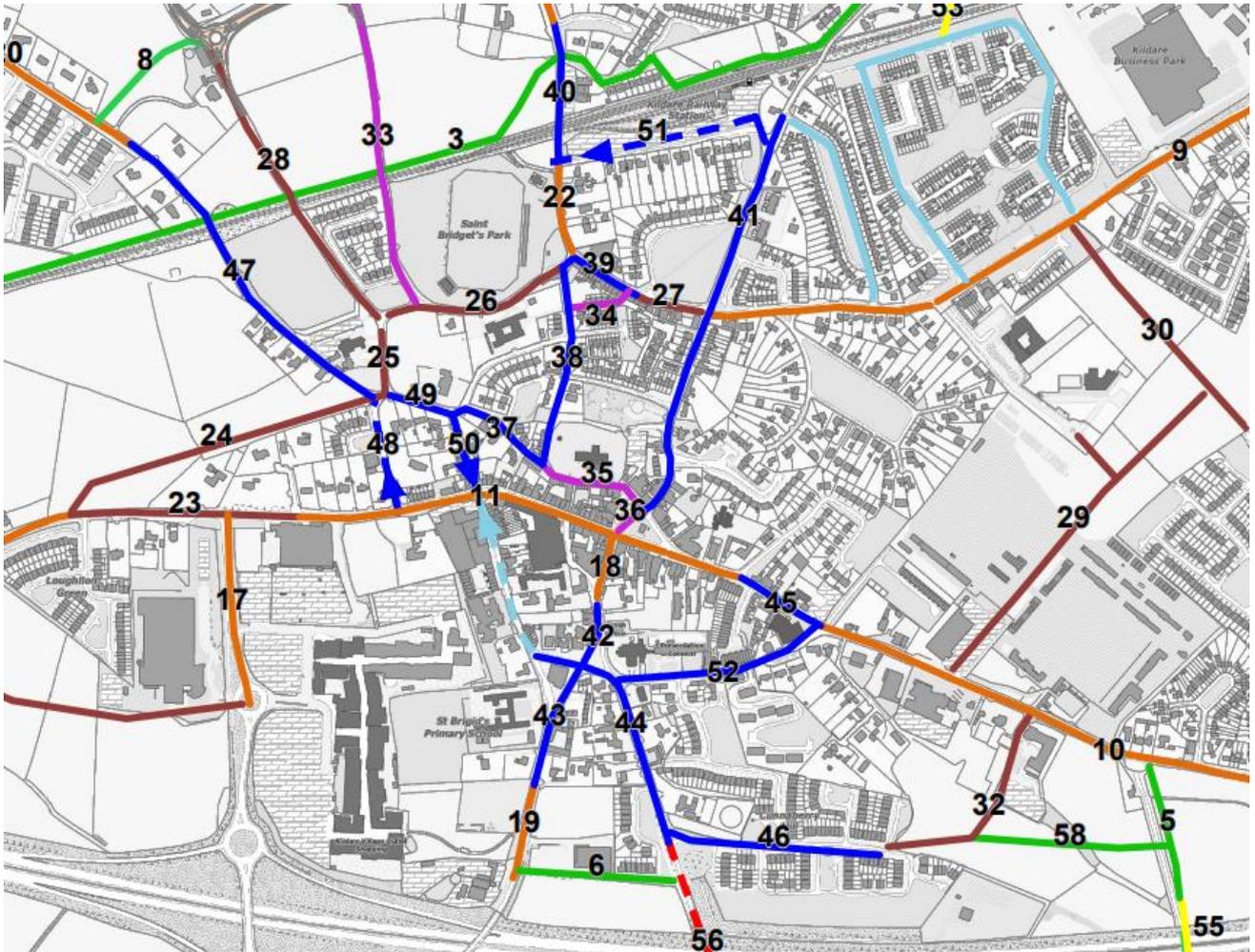


Figure 9: Movement and Transportation - Cycling Measures (Source: Kildare Local Area Plan 2023-2029)

6.1.2 Road Measures

The Kildare Town Transport Strategy identifies a number of long term-objectives which regards the provision of new roads to allow the diversion of through traffic away from Market Square. This will be achieved once the development of the Former Magee Barracks Road and the Northern Link Street. Under this proposal, temporary closure is proposed. A similar objective is proposed under MTO 3.2 iii of the written statement of the LAP which also seeks the long-term permanent closure of the street.

The Part 8 is accompanied by a Traffic and Transportation Assessment by AECOM which considers the closure of the market on market days and note how it will further improve attractiveness of walking to and from Market Square and that the proposed works are in line with national and local policy.

6.1.3 Public Transport

As shown on Map 7.3 – Movement and Transportation, Public Transport Measures, all bus stops located on Market Square should see their quality improved in accordance with PT 3. This would be combined with more frequent services on line 126, which bus stops are located on the Dublin Road side of Market Square.

6.2 Engineering Services

Engineering services are discussed in the Infrastructure Report prepared by AECOM.

6.2.1 Surface Water

The proposed development will provide a new 225 mm dia. Surface water draing within both Bride Street and Market Square East so that new gullies can outfall to.

On Dublin Street, full height kerbs are maintainted and a number of standards road gullies at the kerblines are proposed.

6.2.2 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

The proposed development includes bioretention system / tree pits which will allow to replicate the natural characteristics of rainfall run-off.

6.2.3 Water Supply

Water pop-ups are proposed to service market events.

6.3 Archaeology

An Archaeological Impact Assessment Report was prepared and accompanied the part 8 documentation. It recommends that a suitably qualified archaeologist should be present to monitor ground disturbance works. This should be carried out under licence to the National Monument Service.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

7.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report was prepared and concludes:

'Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development which is below the thresholds set out in Class 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 5, the criteria in Schedule 7, the information provided in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and the following:

- *The scale, nature and location of the proposed impacts*
- *The potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures*
- *The results of the any other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment*

It is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and it is concluded that an environmental impact assessment report is not required.'

7.2 Appropriate Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was prepared and concludes:

'Therefore, with regard to Article 42 (7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site. On this basis, the assessment can conclude at Stage 1 of the Appropriate Assessment process, and it is not necessary to proceed to Stage 2.'

8. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development has been formulated in the context of national, regional and local planning policy. The proposal makes substantial contributions to the renewal of Market Square with positive spin off benefits for the Town Centre.

By reallocating space from car parking to the public, pedestrians, social and commercial activities, it is envisaged that the Square will reclaim its former role as a forum and central meeting and activity point in the town which is unique to Kildare and attractive to residents, business owners and visitors alike. The Accelerated Covid-19 Pandemic works have demonstrated how beneficial the use of the Square other than as a car park and can stimulate interest in the uptake of retail and commercial units on the Square and within the wider town centre. Given the rich heritage of the town and its potential, this Part 8 proposal will be a catalyst of long-term change and renewal, as supported by national, regional and local policies.



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