



**TO: AN CATHAOIRLEACH
& EACH MEMBER OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**RE: PART VIII - Renovation and Restructuring of the Sessions House, Logan Street,
Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny**

**Planning & Development Acts 2000-2019
Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2019**

Date: 10th July 2020.

Dear Councillor,

In accordance with Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, please find attached the Report of the Director of Services, including the Planning Report, in relation to the public consultation process undertaken for the proposed renovation and restructuring of the Sessions House at Logan Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny – this public consultation was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Part VIII of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

I am satisfied that the proposed development is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and is consistent with the provisions of the Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019.

Third Party Submissions

No third party submissions have been received in relation to this application.

Colette Byrne,
Chief Executive.

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh



Chief Executives Report on the Consultation process
for the proposed Renovation and Restructuring of the Sessions House
at Logan Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.



July 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 – 2019 and Part VIII of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 -2019.

The proposed development will involve the renovation and restructuring of the Sessions House, Logan Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.

1.1 Public Consultation

Notice of the proposed development was advertised by Notice in the Kilkenny People newspaper published on Friday 27th March 2020. Public Notice was also erected on Sessions House Building on 27th March 2020.

Further to the “Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Act 2020” orders were made under Section 251A of the Planning and Development, Act 2000, as amended, which resulted in an extension of time for a range of specified/appropriate periods and timelines under this Act.

These orders resulted in the suspension of the planning period from 27th March 2020 to the 23rd May 2020. An amended Public Notice, which provided confirmation of the changes to the duration of the public consultation period, arising due to the Covid-19 suspension, was published in the Kilkenny People Newspaper published on Wednesday 25th May 2020.





A copy of both notices are provided in Appendix 'A'.

Details of the proposed scheme were also advertised via the Kilkenny County Council Public Consultation Portal <http://consult.kilkenny.ie/>

Plans and particulars for the proposed Scheme were available for inspection from Friday 27th March 2020 until Wednesday 24th June 2020 at the following locations:

- Planning Department, County Hall, John St., Kilkenny.
- Area Office Thomastown Municipal District, Lady's Well Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.
- www.kilkennycoco.ie
- <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>

Submissions and observations were invited with respect to the proposed development dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the proposed development will be carried out, with a final date for receipt of submissions on Wednesday 08th July 2020.

The following Statutory Body was invited to make submissions on the scheme:

- Department of Culture, Heritage & The Gaeltacht.

The documents on public display were as follows:

- Project Drawings
- Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment
- Appropriate Assessment Screening
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening
- Archaeological Impact Assessment

2.0 Brief description of the proposed works

2.1 Existing site

The site of the proposed development is located at Logan Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. The building was formerly the Court House serving Thomastown and the surrounding district up until 2005, but it has remained vacant since then. Kilkenny County Council acquired the building in 2012 with the intention of facilitating its development to further serve the community. The current proposed development offers the opportunity to provide a sustainable new use for the building, whilst also promoting the vibrancy of Thomastown as a creative and artistic hub in the region.

The Sessions House is a graceful, early 19th Century structure, the earliest purpose built civic structure in the town and is the most prominent feature on the streetscape of Logan Street. The symmetrical facade of the Sessions House faces Logan Street and is set back from the medieval street line, to form a small urban space. The building is of three bays, dominated by the double height central bay of the Court Room. The style is a simple pared down classicism, the gable of the Court Room faces the street. To either side of the central bay (Courtroom) are recessed single storey entrance bays, one of which served as a jury room with panelled doors. The roofs to these single storey bays are entirely concealed behind the parapets. The rear of the building comprises of a two storey structure, which served as a dwelling house for the building.

It is located on a very restricted site. The rear of the building fronts onto the Bridewell building, with a narrow open courtyard/access passage between both buildings, and it is abutted by buildings on both sides - Capitol Hardware to the right/south and Framewell Gallery to the left/north. The Bridewell was built to provide holding cells / lock-up / prison facilities for the Sessions House and was constructed sometime between 1837 and 1875.

The Sessions House is located within a zone of Archaeological Potential and within the Town Centre Architectural Conservation Area as set out in the Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019. It is listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Kilkenny, Reference Number C228, and it is also listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) Reference Number 12317058.

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

The details of the proposed development as presented in the Planning Notice for the development are as follows:

- a) Change of use from vacant courthouse/residence to educational facility with exhibition/gallery/retail space and associated uses
- b) Construction of new mezzanine with the former courtroom
- c) Removal of single storey lean-to structure on the north side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels
- d) Removal of single storey structure to yard on the south side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels
- e) Installation of new mechanical and electrical services
- f) Restoration, alteration and refurbishment of the existing structures including;
 - Renewal of external renders,
 - Construction of new insulated concrete floors,
 - Renewal of roofs over entrance lobbies; refurbishment of eaves, gutters, downpipes; insulation of all roof spaces,
 - Repair of windows where feasible or replication incorporating slimline double glazing,
 - Alterations to internal layouts and internal and external door openings to improve accessibility and fire safety.

2.2 DESIGN CRITERIA

The design of the proposed works to the Sessions House, Logan Street, Thomastown has taken into consideration the requirements of the following Regulations and Policy Documents:

- Building Regulations.
- Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.
- Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 as amended.
- Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019.
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities', DAHG 2004.

3.0 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

No submissions were received in relation to this application.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROPER PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

The Planning Authority has determined that the proposed development is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the proposed development (see planners report in Appendix. 2) the proposed development is consistent with the provisions of the Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019.

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCILS INTENTION WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Proposed Development

Part VIII Proposal

The Renovation and restructuring of the Sessions House at Logan Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.

I recommend that Kilkenny County Council proceed with the proposed development in accordance with the plans and particulars made available for public inspection and taking into account the recommendations made by the Planning Department and other commitments given in this report.

Signed:



Mary Mulholland
Director of Services

Appendix 1

COPY OF PUBLIC NOTICES



Planning and Development Act 2000 - 2019

Planning and Development Regulations 2001 - 2019

NOTICE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT BY A LOCAL AUTHORITY

Restructuring and Renovation of the Sessions House, Logan Street,
Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.

In accordance with Part XI and Part 8, Article 81, of the above regulations, Kilkenny County Council hereby gives notice of its intention to restructure and renovate the Sessions House on Logan Street, Thomastown Co. Kilkenny.

The proposed development will consist of:

- g) Change of use from vacant courthouse/residence to educational facility with exhibition/gallery/retail space and associated uses
- h) Construction of new mezzanine with the former courtroom
- i) Removal of single storey lean-to structure on the north side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels
- j) Removal of single storey structure to yard on the south side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels
- k) Installation of new mechanical and electrical services
- l) Restoration, alteration and refurbishment of the existing structures including:
 - Renewal of external renders,
 - Construction of new insulated concrete floors,
 - Renewal of roofs over entrance lobbies; refurbishment of eaves, gutters, downpipes; insulation of all roof spaces,
 - Repair of windows where feasible or replication incorporating slimline double glazing,
 - Alterations to internal layouts and internal and external door openings to improve accessibility and fire safety.

The Sessions House is located within a zone of Archaeological Potential and within the Town Centre Architectural Conservation Area as set out in the Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019. It is listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Kilkenny, Reference Number C228, and it is also listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) Reference Number 12317058.

In accordance with the requirements of Article 120(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) the Planning authority has made a preliminary examination of the nature, size and location of the proposed development. The authority has concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and a determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required.

As per Article 120(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), where any person considers that the development proposed to be carried out would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, he or she may, at any time before the expiration of 4 weeks beginning on the date of the publication of this notice apply to An Bord Pleanála for a screening determination as to whether the development would be likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Plans and particulars of the proposed development will be available for inspection or purchase for a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy during office hours from Friday 27th March 2020 until Friday 24th April 2020 inclusive, at the following Kilkenny County Council offices by appointment:

- Planning Dept., Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John St., Kilkenny City from 9am to 1pm & 2pm to 4pm Monday to Friday (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays) by appointment only. To make an appointment please contact: 056 7794010 or email: planning@kilkennycoco.ie
- Area Office of Thomastown Municipal District, Lady's Well Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny from 9am to 1pm & 2pm to 4pm Monday to Friday (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays) by appointment only. To make an appointment please contact: 056 7794340 or email Thomastowoffice@kilkennycoco.ie

Details of the proposed development can also be viewed at <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/> and www.kilkennycoco.ie

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development will be carried out, may be made online at <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>, in writing to the Planning Section, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny or sent to the following e-mail address sessionshouse@kilkennycoco.ie. **The latest time and date for receipt of submissions on the development is 5.00pm on Friday 8th May 2020. Submissions should be clearly marked "Proposed development of the Sessions House, Logan Street, Thomastown Part B"**

Martin Prendiville, Head of Finance.



**Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended**

**UPDATED PUBLIC NOTICE IN RELATION TO
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT BY A LOCAL AUTHORITY**

**Restructuring and Renovation of the Sessions House, Logan Street,
Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.**

In accordance with the provisions of Part XI of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, and Part 8, Article 81, of Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, Kilkenny County Council gave notice on 27th March 2020 of its intention to restructure and renovate the Sessions House on Logan Street, Thomastown Co. Kilkenny.

Further to the "Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Act 2020" orders were made under Section 251A of the Planning and Development, Act 2000, as amended, which resulted in an extension of time for a range of specified/appropriate periods and timelines under this Act. These orders expire on 23rd May 2020 and accordingly, the public consultation for the redevelopment of the Sessions House will now recommence.

Plans and particulars of the proposed development will be available for inspection or purchase for a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy during office hours until Wednesday 24th June 2020, at the following Kilkenny County Council offices by appointment:

- Planning Dept., Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John St., Kilkenny City from 9am to 1pm & 2pm to 4pm Monday to Friday (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays) by appointment only. To make an appointment please contact: 056 7794010 or email: planning@kilkennycoco.ie
- Area Office of Thomastown Municipal District, Lady's Well Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny from 9am to 1pm & 2pm to 4pm Monday to Friday (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays) by appointment only. To make an appointment please contact: 056 7794340 or email Thomastowoffice@kilkennycoco.ie

Details of the proposed development can be viewed at <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/> and www.kilkennycoco.ie

In accordance with the requirements of Article 120(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) the Planning authority has made a preliminary examination of the nature, size and location of the proposed development. The authority has concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and a determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required.

As per Article 120(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), where any person considers that the development proposed to be carried out would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, he or she may, at any time before the expiration of 4 weeks beginning on the date of the publication of this updated notice apply to An Bord Pleanála for a screening determination as to whether the development would be likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development will be carried out, may be made online at <https://consult.kilkenny.ie/>, in writing to the Planning Section, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny or sent to the following e-mail address sessionshouse@kilkennycoco.ie . The latest time and date for receipt of submissions on the development is 5.00pm on Wednesday 8th July 2020. Submissions should be clearly marked "*Proposed development of the Sessions House, Logan Street, Thomastown Part 8*"

Mary Mulholland,
Director of Services.

Appendix 2

Planner's Report

**Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council
Part 8 Planning Report**



**Planning & Development Act 2000-2019
Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 - 2020**

Part 8 Ref. No.: Part 8 01/20

Development: Restructure and renovate the Sessions House to accommodate an educational facility on Logan Street, Thomastown Co. Kilkenny.

Date 10/07/2020

Site Location and Description

The Session House holds a prominent position along Logan Street. The Sessions House is listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Kilkenny, ref: C228, the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Ref: 12317058, while it is also located within the Thomastown Architectural Conservation Area and the Historic Town of Thomastown.

The building was formerly the Court House serving Thomastown and the surrounding district up until 2005. The building was acquired by Kilkenny County Council in 2012 with the intention of facilitating its development as a Community Arts Centre by the local Community Arts Alliance. The building has been vacant since its last use as a court house in 2005.

The rear of the Sessions House is the Bridewell, a remarkable stone structure built to provide holding cells / lock-up / prison facilities for the Sessions House.

Planning History on site:

13/410 – permission granted for material change of use and development. Works to the building consist of restoration and refurbishment of existing fabric, including renewal of external render, new insulated concrete floors, renewal of roofs to side bays and insulation of all roof spaces, installation of new electrical and mechanical services. Single storey lean-to structures to the side and rear of the building to be demolished and replaced by new single -storey structures. Internal 20th Century partition walls to be removed and internal doorways modified to improve accessibility and new doorways formed. A protected structure

18/625 permission granted for an extension of duration for the above

Referrals:

The project was referred to the following for comment:
Department of Arts... (Archaeology) – No report at time of writing.
Conservation Officer – no objection subject to condition see report dated 6/07/2020.
Area engineer - no report at time of writing.

Contents of internal reports and report received from the referrals have been noted.

Third Party Submissions

There were no submissions received in relation to this development.

Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019

Zoning

The site is zoned for town centre use where the objective is *To protect, improve and provide for the future development of the town centre*

Permissible Uses: Dwellings, retailing, retail warehousing, wholesale outlets, offices, public buildings or places of assembly, cultural or educational buildings, recreational buildings, halting sites, hotels, motels, guest houses, clubs, private garages, open spaces, public service installations, medical and related consultants, restaurants, public houses, car parks, halls or discotheques, and other uses as permitted and open for consideration in residential zoning.

Open for Consideration: Open space, workshop or light industry, small incubator uses provided that there is no adverse impact to the amenity of adjacent residential area

It is considered the proposed use as an educational facility with exhibition/ gallery/ retail space is acceptable at this site and complies with the above zoning objective.

Section 5.4 Town Regeneration Strategy of the LAP identifies

The Sessions House as a key historic building in Thomastown. Currently empty, where it is important to find an appropriate use for it, so that it continues to serve the community, and is preserved for the future.

5.4.1 THOMASTOWN REGENERATION PROJECT

National Policy Objective 16 of the National Planning Framework sets out to '*target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes*'. Kilkenny County Council, in association with Kilkenny Leader Partnership, National Design and Craft Council of Ireland, Thomastown Community Network and Thomastown Community Centre have collaborated to develop the '**Thomastown Regeneration Project**'. This project seeks to redefine Thomastown Town Centre with the provision of modern library services, flexible creative and arts spaces, improved public realm and tourism facilities, town centre living space and enterprise opportunities. The regeneration project is based around 5 projects that combine to create investment of scale that will significantly contribute to the rural economy of the town.

One of the 5 projects includes Renovation of the former Court House (Sessions House) into a Craft and Design Centre in conjunction with the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland.

It is considered the proposed development, which includes use of the building as an educational facility with exhibition/ gallery/ retail space will adhere with the Thomastown Regeneration policy as outlined above.

Assessment

The proposed development includes the following:

- a) Change of use from vacant courthouse/residence to educational facility with exhibition/gallery/retail space and associated uses;
- b) Construction of new mezzanine with the former courtroom;
- c) Removal of single storey lean-to structure on the north side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels;
- d) Removal of single storey structure to yard on the south side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels;

- e) Installation of new mechanical and electrical services;
- f) Restoration, alteration and refurbishment of the existing structures including:
 - Renewal of external renders,
 - Construction of new insulated concrete floors,
 - Renewal of roofs over entrance lobbies; refurbishment of eaves, gutters, downpipes;
 - insulation of all roof spaces,
 - Repair of windows where feasible or replication incorporating slimline double glazing,
 - Alterations to internal layouts and internal and external door openings to improve accessibility and fire safety.

Visual Impact

New extensions are proposed in the north west corner, and the eastern perimeter of the ground floors, while two extension are proposed on the first-floor level, to the side of the central Court House. The extensions either side of the central Court House are located far enough back from the Logan Street façade to have limited or no visual impact, while also maintaining a level of symmetry found in the original design. These extensions will have a standing seam metal finish identifying them as modern intervention. I have no objection to the design of the proposed extensions and alterations.

Car parking

There is no off street car parking associated with this site. There is a number of on street parking spaces to the front of the site. The site is located in the town centre and in close proximity to a large public car park located at the Quays, Thomastown. Having regard to the historic use of the building as a courthouse and its town centre location in close proximity to a large public car park, it is considered that the change of use to educational facility/ exhibition space would not significantly increase the car parking requirement at this location.

Conservation

The Sessions House is listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Kilkenny, ref: C228 and is within the Architectural Conservation area of Thomastown.

The building consists of an attached single-bay double-height (gable fronted) courthouse with central tripartite window, and single-bay single-storey recessed porches (accessing internal aisles) either side of the central block. The porches containing cut-limestone thresholds, and cut-limestone surrounds with thumbnail beaded cornices on blind friezes framing timber panelled doors. Internally, the two side aisles allow access to the central court room, and associated witness box and jurors box, while also allowing access to the Judges Room, and, living quarters on the first floor of the two-storey building adjoining the Sessions House. To the rear of the Sessions House, is the Bridewell, a remarkable stone structure built to provide holding cells / lock-up / prison facilities for the Sessions House.

An Architectural Heritage and Impact Assessment was prepared by Bluett and O' Donghue Architects

Having reviewed the documentation and attached reports the Conservation Officer in his report assessed the application on the proposed internal changes, external changes and the insertion of the new Mezzanine. The Conservation Officer concludes that he supports the proposal;

The building remains of enormous significance in Thomastown, is recognised for its architectural, artistic, historical and social special interest, and is representative of an important element of Thomastown's civic architectural of before and after independence. The proposed development will lead to an acceptable adaptive re-use strategy.

The Conservation Officer has recommended a number of conditions be attached.

Archaeology

An Archaeological Impact Assessment Report was prepared by Coilin O Drisceoil which outlines a number of recommendations in Section 6 of the report. This report was referred to the Department's Archaeology Section and to the Conservation Officer who stated all recommendations shall be adhered to in full, with all subsequent archaeological findings and reports being submitted to the Planning Authority for record purposes.

Impact on Natura 2000 site

A Screening exercise was completed by the Planning Authority, which showed that no significant impact is likely having regard to the distance of the subject site from any Natura 2000 site.

EIA Conclusion

A preliminary examination of the nature, size and location of the proposed development has been carried out which determines that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. It is therefore concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is not required

Conclusion and Recommendation:

Having regard to the planning history of this building located in the centre of Thomastown and the proposal to sensitively refurbish this Protected Structure and return it to diverse town centre use as educational facility with exhibition/ gallery/ retail space, it is considered that the proposed development is a welcome initiative and should be supported.

The Planning Authority considers that the principle of the proposed development as set out in the subject Part 8 Application, plans and particulars is consistent with the zoning objectives for the site and accords with the policies and objectives of the Thomastown Local Area Plan 2019 and Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014 - 2020 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

It is therefore recommended that the Part 8 Application to Restructure and renovate the Sessions House to accommodate as an educational facility be approved by Council having regard to the following recommendations.

- The Project service upgrades and their installation shall be presented for agreement with the Architectural Conservation Officer.
- A sample lime render panels for external re-rendering shall be presented for agreement once cementitious render has been removed.
- The limestone thresholds at the front doors shall remain in situ: where level changes are required for universal access, they shall be accommodated by modifying the adjacent footpath.
- Windows dating to the 19th century and from the 1920s shall be retained and repaired, while all new windows must match their architectural details. The current window opening winches are something of a rarity. Therefore, alternatives to shortening of same should be considered where possible
- Archaeological recommendations as per *Section 6.0 Archaeological Impact Statement and Recommendations* in the submitted Archaeological Assessment shall be adhered to in full, with all subsequent archaeological findings and reports being submitted to the Planning Authority for record purposes.


Arlene O'Connor
Senior Executive Planner

Date 10/7/2020

Appendix 3

Part 8 Scheme Drawings













