

Kilkenny Framework Review

The Kilkenny Local Authorities have agreed to purchase the Diageo/Smithwicks site in the centre of Kilkenny city, because of its pivotal importance to the economic and social well being of the city and county. The brewery lands consist of approximately 5.5ha (13.5 acres). There is a further 0.8ha (1.9 acres) in public ownership immediately adjacent and available. The purchase of the Diageo lands presents a unique opportunity to shape the development of Kilkenny City into the future.

Following on from the successful peer review process undertaken for the Central Access Scheme and in line with the Governments Policy on Architecture 2009 – 2015, to promote high quality urban design and architecture it was proposed that a colloquium should be held of experienced and knowledgeable professionals in the area of urban design and architecture, planning and property, to develop a set of design principles which will inform the development of a master plan for the area.

This review was organised in two parts, consisting of a half day on 5th December 2012, which involved an introduction to the project, a forum for discussion and a site visit, and a day-long gathering on 5th February 2013.

This report is a summary of presentations and discussions which took place during the second stage of the review process at County Hall, Kilkenny, on 5th February 2013. The day involved a series of presentations by attendees outlining concerns, concepts and methodologies for the Diageo site and wider urban area, and concluded with a discussion of these ideas and future developments.

Chairing the meeting were:

Joe Crockett	County & City Manager
Michelle Fagan	RIAI President

Speakers included:

Martin Colreavy	Chief Architectural Advisor/Government Advisor on Architectural Policy, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Paul Keogh	Architect
James Pike	Architect
Seán Harrington	Architect
Shelly McNamara	Architect
Merritt Bucholz	Architect
Karl Kent	Planning Inspector An Bord Pleanála (retired)
Niall McCullough	Architect
Chris Boyle	Architect/UCD
James Nugent	Chartered Surveyor Lisneys
Aileen Doyle	Senior Advisor, Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Denis Malone	Senior Planner Kilkenny Local Authorities
Pat McCormack	Chartered Surveyor
Freddie O'Dwyer	Architect Dept of Arts Heritage & the Gealteacht
Tony Reddy	Architect
Peter Cox	ICOMOS Ireland
John Mulholland	Director of Services KCC with responsibility of the Borough Council area

Also in attendance were:

Mark Kennedy	Architect (Tony Reddy)
Michael Hayes	UCD/RIAI
Miriam Fitzpatrick	WIT

An Introduction

Kilkenny has a long history of interest in urban development. Through bringing together a diverse and talented group in order to inform the approach to the Diageo site, the design framework review may be understood as a part of this history. Kilkenny County planners and engineers are also in attendance in order to listen to the range of ideas and possibilities presented throughout the day. Of equal consideration is the question of how to appropriate the ideas conveyed here into the decision making process.

The site is of huge importance and could determine the future prosperity of Kilkenny for the next 100 years. Therefore, these sessions - their processes and outcomes - are of great significance. At this stage one cannot be too deterministic since times are so uncertain. However what is known is that Smithwicks will cease production at the end of this year and the brewery will be dismantled. Diageo will continue to hold 5 acres of the existing site with the possibility of converting these buildings into a visitor centre. The decision on this will be reached between now and June.

Thanks should also be extended to Niall Cussen and Martin Colreavy of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for their role in the peer review process for the central access scheme and for their guidance of the current design framework review.

Each speaker was allotted 10 minutes. The following is a summation of these presentations.

Martin Colreavy

An assessment of the external issues that will impact on future development of the site. The sustainable management of heritage in local government in terms of urban assets and town renewal can be about regulatory items. However the majority of issues we face are wider than heritage and use but include aspects such as the public realm, quality of life and jobs. Across Europe there is a push for a macro approach to heritage renewal at the town/city level as opposed to that of a single building. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, working with Paul Keogh Architects, have recently issued a re-use policy guideline titled, "Shaping the Future".

The matters to be addressed are broad and may include the fiscal environment, the market, the availability of anchor tenants, funding on a sustainable business model, management of place, flexibility of use and programme.

All issues of renewal are the same – what do we do? What we do today will be the heritage of tomorrow. Durability and longevity that will stand the test of time depends on the quality of space.

Success is dependent on strong spatial plan - a roadmap of what to achieve qualitatively. In terms of implementation this may involve fiscal incentives, direct and indirect funding to leverage gain of projects and the championing of urban government. The immediate local benefits and long-lasting quality environments rely on a constant re-evaluation of the project.

Sean Harrington

Importance of the city's main spine from Kilkenny Castle to St. Canice's Cathedral ought to be emphasised. It is the main strategic highway off of which are minor lane ways. The current situation is unsatisfactory though it is hoped the primary cause of this – the issue of traffic – will be dealt with following the construction of the Central Access Scheme bridge. One proposal is to strengthen this route through a series of interventions i.e. redesign the junction between the Parade and High Street in order to improve connectivity; make greater use of the Tholsel, perhaps as a tourist centre; piece together junction at High St. and St. Kieran St.; emphasise courthouse as a spatial centre of gravity.

At the point where the River Breaga intersects with watergate place is an opportunity to develop visual connection that link the Diageo site back towards the primary landmarks of castle and cathedral. Suggested location for a vertical garden, a green tower that would also act at night as a beacon.

Parallel to the main spine is the River Nore and the possibility for a greater east-west link. River corridor in its current guise is spectacularly underused. New pedestrian bridges could help activate frontage. Potential is here for the most memorable view in Kilkenny, comparable to the Loire valley castles. According to Rocque's map the castle garden's once went down to the river (where Dunnes Stores' car park is currently located). Could the bank side be a home for show gardens along the river, for example? Would enhance river frontage and create a parallel avenue to High St. Currently obstructing river access is the Diageo and Dunnes sites. The west side of High St. is defined by a grain of medieval lane ways. This beaks down on the east side. Would recommend reintroducing this fabric of lane ways and slipways from street to river. This site is not the place for European-style perimeter blocks and courtyards. Any solution must be specific to place, to Kilkenny.

James Pike

The present city centre LAP highlighted locations that needed renewal in 2005. Absence of Diageo site as at that time the brewery was hoped to stay in production. This work also included a study of parking. The key is how we organise traffic. The Central Access Scheme bridge and one-way street system is crucial in this respect. It is important to re-enhance and recreate the structure of the city itself. In the long run, this will be possible with the removal of traffic from High St. The Diageo site makes this possible. It is key in regenerating city centrepiece and building a frontage to the river.

Potential to link traffic through the Diageo site to meet the Central Access street and take traffic out of High St. A connection may be desirable to car park across from law courts.

River Breaga offers an interesting and important challenge. Could be opened up as a green link through the city. There is a concern that without development around it the new road becomes potentially dangerous. It must be made suitable for both pedestrians and cyclists. A reasonable scale of development, compatible with the existing city is recommended. Any uses, whether educational, residential or vehicular, ought to be designed compactly to maximise site.

Merritt Bucholz

Important to consider how events happen, how economies spring up, how ideas come about. A format is necessary that can overcome structural problems – the innovative format of the design framework review is an excellent example.

A 2008 research project in Limerick, “One City”, revealed divisions in how people saw places evolving. In this situation the University fulfils its role as a space for thinking. Local Authority statutory processes are a methodology for bringing projects to fruition. Often these projects become objects, and these objects get discussed. Perhaps less focus on the project as a physical object is required. Examples such as the Dublin Web Summit – attended by 4000 people – demonstrate the power of an idea and of a social network.

A process for the site ought to be encouraged. Questions should be asked such as how do we build knowledge? Who's doing the thinking? What is the framework? What's underpinning this thinking?

Building up a knowledge base is a long-term investment and should be built into any future imagining of how processes occur in Kilkenny.

It might be possible to expand new kinds of knowledge. The knowledge applied to building cities should not be limited to statutory planning instruments. The process needs to be opened to other disciplines.

The role of bottom-up planning and how the public engages with these processes is also important. For the Limerick Smarter Travel project a separate office was set up housing recent architecture graduates and local authority employees working together at the same table. This approach opened up new ideas and avenues that could not have occurred independently. A similarly diverse gathering - a possible future laboratory for Kilkenny - might attract people thinking about the intellectual and economic shape that this place might take.

Shelly McNamara

Is building the answer? In considering how to make an Irish town sustainable we need to begin with the way we even start to look at a place. We must consider the condition of this place. Given, for example, the river and flooding is a problem any new landscape should be a working landscape. If possibilities come out of the conditions of the place could it not deal with flooding, embracing and controlling it.

Masterplans' key weakness is that they give no thought to the land in section or three dimensions. A section can reveal contour, scale, what's below ground, geology and depth which can often be more informative.

An ETH student project based in Galway City analysed reclaimed ground, took it away, opened up the body of water and turned the city towards the sea. The project was not about building but about analysing existing conditions and responding accordingly.

One existing condition is that of typology. There is a plot type in Kilkenny – could this be stretched or adapted to respond to the conditions of place?

Cities are layers of time. We need new ways of mapping what's existing. We need to look at towns and cities in a fresh way. Perhaps look at sites not as architects but as human beings, as scavenger. How can we go step-by-step, reuse what's existing, make a temporary intervention and allow what's temporary to lead to the permanent. This site could be exploratory in terms of agri-business, technology or education pilot projects. The answer isn't always to clean it out and tidy it up.

Design does not make good places. Project's ambitions ought to range from the most basic to the most grand. Aim for the big idea but also the achievable one. Try to grow something and at the same time build on steps that lead from one to another.

Karl Kent

From the 1780 map, Kilkenny still displays the characteristics of a Norman town. Norman society revolved around the Church (St. Canice's) and State (the Castle) while in between lies the High St. There is evidence of very little change since 1280 (other than closing of the abbey). It is an almost intact medieval city.

Traditionally, the reason for the lack of development on the Diageo site is because it floods. While the old points of power (the church and castle) continue to act as visual bookends, modern power structures are more complex and sophisticated. The city wall has been succeeded by the ring road.

Existing constraints on site include water courses, bisecting roads, the abbey ruins and the issue of flood protection. The site's central location is a major strength and the proximity to the R. Nore is a fantastic opportunity. A fine grain approach is recommended due to presence of the church and castle. Meanwhile the existing heritage on site such as the friary (which is of national significance) and the remains of the Smithwicks brewery need to be treated appropriately.

It is envisaged that the traffic situation will improve. As public transportation is not a feasible option at present, any development must provide for adequate car parking. Heavy traffic should be kept to the north of the site where it will link with the Central Access Scheme road. Increased permeability of the site is also suggested with primary vehicular access from the north and secondary access from the south, possibly through the Dunnes car park. Site must link existing pedestrian network to proposed pedestrian bridges over the river.

The view of Kilkenny ought to be protected and development should not be more than 4-5 stories residential. A possible model for this is Kassel, Unterneustadt, Germany.

Land use should be mixed. Limited retail is recommended to lead into existing commercial street network.

Accommodation for the elderly is worth considering, particularly to tackle the undesirable out-of-town nursing home.

Tourism and culture would also be appropriate uses.

The south of the site could accommodate educational facilities. The centre might form an urban square followed by the old brewery buildings, Central Access Scheme and starter units. The northern end would be reserved for accommodation for the elderly.

Paul Keogh

The urban is the most critical problem that we have today in terms of sustainability. A paradigm shift is required. This project is not just about the Diageo site. At a larger scale, it is about the river and the creation of a new waterfront. There are examples of cities across the world regenerating on the waterfront.

Retail guidelines stress that we must look at the vitality and viability of our city centres. We are at a moment of crisis in the future of our towns. Surveys suggest that most people would like to live in small villages since they proved a sense of connectivity, place and relationships. How can our towns and cities respond to this desire.

We must respond to the historical character and existing heritage. Development should improve upon these characteristics.

A high quality public realm is key – the city of Barcelona found its future in the public realm.

Urban structure must be addressed. Streets have been reduced to routes for travel in many cases. This has resulted in a loss of life, activity and variety.

Access to and through the site should be clear and comprehensible. Sustainable travel needs to be considered.

Land use and density should focus on renewal and consolidation in order to make compact cities. It is crucial that we get people back living in the city centre.

Mixed-use is recommended. Every district must serve more than one function. There is scope to encourage the sharing of facilities and forging commonality.

Built form should be sympathetic to scale and characteristics of existing urbanism, and should be of quality design.

Development ought to be sustainable. Issues such as water management, alternative transport and energy use must be considered.

Good design makes for better urban environments. It adds to the economic competitiveness of an area, offers better quality of life and will ultimately create the heritage of tomorrow. The process that developed the regeneration of Temple Bar i.e. managed by a dedicated development agency, may offer a possible model for delivery.

Finally it is worth considering the words of John Ruskin, that, "When we build, let us imagine that we build forever."

Niall McCullough

Site might thought of as having everything in terms of topography, history, connectivity and proximity to the river. In some ways it appears almost too easy. So it is worth stopping and thinking of alternatives.

Kilkenny is an inland city. There is a history of gentle geography of monuments as landscape. Partly due to its inland location, the relationship between the city and river is intense. From an aerial perspective it is possible to note the clear edge that is formed between city and river at its ends. The city is an object best viewed from the river.

Kilkenny is a strong, designed object and the Diageo site has an intrinsic part to play in this history of view, monuments and lane ways. Similarities may be drawn with Edinburgh and its comparable obsession with views and axes.

In Edinburgh also, a landscape is left between the old and new town. Could Kilkenny offer the 21st century equivalent in Ireland?

Perhaps it is necessary to extend into the wider landscape of the city. Consider views of the castle as the setting of a scene. Make a quay and urbanise the far side of the river, across from the Diageo site. It may be that a major public building on the opposite side is necessary though there may also be other routes to encourage development. The city's extraordinary relationship with water may offer the possibility of a reinforcement of the old edge of the city. The idea of objects as landscape could be a way to start thinking about the site. A discussion is required on the increment of development along the site between city and river. How much do you extend? How much do you green?

James Nugent

An a-z of things worth talking about. Beginning with p for profitability and the acknowledgement that this project is not about making the most amount of money but what's the right thing for the city.

A – accessibility. Permeability is key to integrating site with the city. Currently there is a noticeable loss of vitality towards the site beyond High St.

B – brewery. This function still has a role to play, perhaps as a micro-brewery remaining onsite. Also would be worth rethinking the Diageo site under its original name of Smithwicks in order to relate more strongly to Kilkenny.

C – cultural uses. Kilkenny is known as a city of culture. Perhaps suggest an outdoor use such as open air cinema or market.

D – Dunnes. Car park site still has a contribution to make. The Diageo site can't be looked at in isolation.

E – educational. There is scope for some sort of educational use. It is worth remembering that Trinity college employ more people than Dublin's tech companies combined.

F – flats. Possibility for residential use. Many apartments designed for transitory living. We need to design for the long-term.

G – grab. Consider the possibility of an anchor building or tenant.

H – heritage. Important to protect the existing city.

I – innovation. Kilkenny has a legacy of jobs in traditional crafts which it could build on.

K – kaleidoscope. The site is suitable for mixed-use development. Favourable to residential, commercial and social uses.

M – materials. Incorporate local materials. Again there is a history here – Kilkenny limestone is an example of this.

N – numbers. Site density should remain at existing city levels.

O – oriental. Kilkenny is twinned with Suzhou and it may be possible to exploit link with businesses in China.

P – phasing. Project has to be capable of being built. Some aspects might derive a profit, thereby subsidising others.

R – retail.

S – sustainability.

T – tourism.

U – uniform. Avoid pre-packed design or a one-size-fits-all approach.

V – vandalism. One of the positive sides to Kilkenny is its individuality. Be careful not to harm the existing fabric.

W – walk on water. Suggest a linear park along the river. Be mindful of the weather – covered walk in parts might be recommended.

No x

Y – youthful. Aim to create a place with energy and vitality.

Z – zoning.

Chris Boyle

The government have decided that we don't need any more universities and that many will even merge. It might be that this is a great time to make a university - at exactly the point when nobody wants one.

Consider the small town college. It started as a vocational academy, a technical school, and accrued its university status over. It is the sort of place where nobody gets a job from attending alone but everyone seems ambitious and motivated. It is worth remembering that the pressure of time isn't on this project and there is the potential to grow over time. We just have to think differently.

Within this island we inhabit, there are certain intensities. Is it Europe's backwater or the country that produced the likes of Joyce and Beckett in a single century?

Consider the case of a seasonal bridge in Africa. An architect replaces a temporary structure with a permanent one using gabions that allow the water to flow through. Yet the bridge remains staggered because of locals' belief that evil spirits can't turn corners. We need to think what are our own conditions?

Is it possible to make a building of a place, of a thought, of a person.

Trongate, Glasgow is a place to make art. It acts as a graphic, a shop and a building offering affordable studios. Creative people often need help to work, require places to work.

The site needs superheroes.

“What Is the What”, a novel by Dave Eggers based on the real life story of a Sudanese refugee was so successful that profits were used to fund a school in its home town. It is an example of creativity becoming tangible.

Similarly, the story of Chicago bicycle manufacturing is one of locally made objects becoming a part of everyday life.

Could industry return?

Consider the Kilkenny hurlers who inspire our dreams. Think of the making of the hurl and a vanishing Ireland. Compare it to the making of the Louisville slugger, the quantities produced and a forest of bats. Perhaps a museum and factory of bats or of hurling and ash sticks. What might it look like? It might be a brand, a market, a forest or a factory. A forest might be the answer, and there might be a road driven through the forest. And that is where we are.

Aileen Doyle

Important to place the Diageo site and development process within the context of national planning policy and due hierarchy. At the strategic level, the National Spatial Policy defines Kilkenny as a hub and driver of the south-east region with Waterford as a gateway. Any development plan must be consistent with these policies.

The LAP 2005 for the city centre was translated to the city plan in 2008. The review of the city plan started in 2012 and provides the opportunity to respond to changes regarding the fate of the Diageo that have since occurred. Any variation to the plan will have to respond to 2010 Planning Act. Section 28 guidelines have since postdated any plan in place for Kilkenny.

In terms of flood risk guidelines it is preferable to avoid areas prone to flooding. If it is not possible to avoid then the substitution of programme for less vulnerable uses is recommended. Any uses must be justified and mitigated. A flood risk assessment will have to be prepared prior to any development on the Diageo site.

The Retail Planning Guidelines focus on keeping city centres and towns alive as places to work and play and live in. It's not just about good architecture but also deals with appropriate use and the quality of the public realm.

Design guidelines for urban roads and streets (which will be launched in March 2013) focuses on sense of place-making, integrated street networks, greater legibility and permeability, and advises on multidisciplinary teams.

A draft LAP is useful as a guide to a good Local Area Plan. It's intended to provide detailed planning policies for areas expected to experience serious development. It also deals with how to engage communities at a strategic level. Innovative methods may be necessary to get people involved and deliver quality outcomes for those communities. It is key to identify the mechanism that will secure implementation of the infrastructure required to deliver.

Denis Malone

Diageo site is 5.5ha with 0.28ha taken up by the proposed Central Access Scheme. It is located in a flood zone adjacent to the River Breaga. It is also adjacent to a Special Area of Conservation (along the River Nore). The site is currently zoned as industrial. St. Francis Abbey – a protected structure and national monument – occupies a space on the site. There are water issues to be addressed in terms of quality, disposal etc.

Development offers the opportunity to link to the city centre, provide growth and add open space to the centre of Kilkenny. In doing so, it is important to establish good urban design principles. One possibility is to provide an edge to the city with a linear park along the river bank.

The purchase of the site by the County Council was described by the Kilkenny People (newspaper) as, "An immensely significant occasion," and the site should be viewed as an opportunity to deliver something for local citizens.

Given its significance, there may be a need for open space around St. Francis's Abbey and a way of establishing visual links to surrounding monuments. In this regard, the new pedestrian bridge might have a viewing platform. Urban design layout will be influenced by which vistas are to be retained while maintaining due regard for the extension of existing lane ways across to the river.

Finally it is important to consider how do we take this thinking and bring it to the public arena. How do we engage people with the process of making a development plan and what objective do we put in?

Pat McCormack

Worth considering the issue of profit. Profit as expressed in terms of rates, rental income, capital value on land utilisation, and of the land's capacity to deliver on design and planning aspirations.

A dividend can be developed to people of Kilkenny that can be generated from a commercial approach to Diageo and Dunnes site.

This site is ideal for construction of 60,000-75,000 sqm of retail and leisure development. The building footprint will depend on height and sight lines, and other factors that are part of the planning process. The current economic environment means that while construction couldn't begin today, it would be practical in 3-4 years to build in a single phase of development, perhaps planned in stages.

Development will need to comprise of 4000 car parking spaces as well as a considerable block of properties involving a leisure element such as health and fitness, a gym, or cinema. These functions will operate during trading hours and thereafter. The development plan must address building form and parameters must be set that are viable and that will not damage economic output.

As well as the Diageo and Dunnes sites there is the Mart site, and a plan should exist that incorporates all three. Profit generated from the retail element could go towards pedestrianisation of High St. and the taking of cars out of the city centre. The challenge is to try to incorporate these ideas into a pragmatic and economically viable proposal that will reinforce the retail core.

There is a current seepage of shoppers to Carlow and Waterford. That seepage will have a detrimental effect on

existing retail and artisan trading community. This type of development will reinforce the retail core and be of benefit to everybody. It will also help prevent out-of-town retail development from occurring. With regards to the proposal for an educational facility, this ought to be visualised within the Mart site. The result of this introduction of students to the city will give Local Authorities the impetus to encourage development of the upper floors of Kilkenny. Currently the ground floor along many streets is seen as attractive for retail but the upper floors are vacant. This could provide significant residential development without the need for new apartments.

Frederick O'Dwyer

Kilkenny is home to a culture of architectural heritage and conservation. The Kilkenny Archeological Society was established in 1849 (and later grew to become the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland). This organisation took on conservation projects itself, funded by voluntary contributions. These projects were undertaken by local and amateur archeologists.

In the 1850s, St Francis' Abbey was restored by the Archeological Society. It was later taken into state care. The concrete arch was added in the 1890s and is itself significant as an example of the early use of reinforced concrete in Ireland. The area outside the abbey walls has yet to be excavated and this will impact on any future development. The brewery itself should be noted as an archeological artefact. This does not mean that it requires preservation, but it must certainly be recorded in terms of buildings, processes and machinery. The River Breaga is also an archeological artefact and parts of the original medieval city wall still define its edge. The size of the site (approximately between 0.3-0.5 times the size of the existing city) offers many opportunities. However any development should respect the existing scale of the city and its historical/archeological context.

Tony Reddy

The Diageo site holds huge potential for the future of Kilkenny as a new creative quarter. There is a great urban tradition in Kilkenny. The 1st Duke of Ormond, James Butler, brought back an understanding of what makes great cities from his time in France. He envisaged turning Kilkenny to the river.

Bishop Berkeley (who name adorns multiple college buildings) was from Kilkenny and yet the city has missed out on a third level education facility. It would make an ideal place for one.

In 2008, Kilkenny was awarded The Great Town Award by the Academy of Urbanism. It was the only place in Ireland to win one of these and the only place that had the recognition to win votes in an international competition.

Kilkenny has already attracted various companies simply because it's a nice place to live and work. It has the attributes of a great creative city. Dublin's Temple Bar reinvented itself having grown from a project based on heritage. If Kilkenny produces an appropriate creative quarter it can compete to attract companies.

A framework for mixed-use development is required. If the council do not determine the form that they want, there is the danger that someone will come with a big cheque and cause Kilkenny to miss out. There is an opportunity to be a modern city of the 21st century built on its heritage. Lay down a framework of urban moves. Put in a quayside with a landscaped promenade. Hide car parking. Make the river accessible and link across. Commit to the existing urban grain. Pedestrianise High St. If you create the network – the walkway, the park, the urban square – the rest will follow.

Whether cultural, commercial or educational use it will attract institutions and people. You merely have to put in the framework and they will come.

Peter Cox

The importance of energy conservation ought to be raised. The development phase is the key point to set up key aspects. Energy conservation is one of these aspects. The industrial and social heritage is important. St. Francis' Abbey first made ale on the site since the 1400s. Smithwicks have been there since 1706.

Kilkenny is an active member of the UrbAct scheme (a European scheme for sustainable cities). Site could play a role as part of this programme by addressing low energy design principles, consumption, embedded energy in existing buildings etc. It ought to be asked whether a clearing of the site is necessary and is there not the potential for reuse? Sustainability of materials must also be considered. The use of local materials should be preferred. In recent years we have seen the disintegration of the Irish granite market due to the import of cheaper Chinese granite. This process must not be encouraged.

In considering the organisation of the site do not confine possibility to the red line of ownership. UNESCO include a buffer zone around a site to allow for connectivity and compatibility with the surrounding area.

The use of the river would be a plus in sustainable terms. However flood alleviation measures have slowed the current so it may not be possible to incorporate as part of a productive landscape.

The possibility for sustainable public transport shouldn't be neglected. We might look to make a major parking facility on the Mart site with a system of electric buses to the centre. This has been shown to work in a number of European cities.

John Mulholland

The Dunnes car park hosts around 450 spaces and accommodates approximately one million parking events per annum. It is a key part of allowing people to gather and do business.

The Mart site should also be part of the vision for the area. There is no reason why both sides of the river shouldn't receive equal attention. The Mart site is only 250m away.

Current infrastructure is unsustainable and outdated in many instances. There is potential for an urban heating network, a policy of retrofitting existing building and including passivhaus design principles. A sustainable energy community is possible. This is particularly pertinent given the real danger of future fuel poverty.

The Diageo site is ideal for mixed uses. Could include neighbourhood retail, entertainment and new river front theatre. Maybe unite the abbey and the river while respecting the old paths. A small scale urban park could connect the abbey with Evan's turret and add to the familiar medieval character of Kilkenny.

Zoning should be for an arts, crafts and entrepreneurship quarter. Residences could be included in the form of homes over the shop. Cost of servicing would be far lower and more efficient than an ex-urban location. Whether money is scarce or not it is the right thing to do.

There is also a need for coach and bus parking and this could be a possible interim use.

Facilities for youth, open areas, theatre should similarly be considered.

Discussion

Following the presentations, a discussion took place as a response to some of the issues which had been raised during the day. The following is a summation of the main points.

A number of common themes might be noted among speakers. An understanding of a structure of lane ways, the significance of the castle and cathedral, an idea of plots and grain, and an ambition to re-imagine the use of the river and its banks reoccurred throughout the presentations.

The issue of methodology repeatedly arose also, in particular the concept of framework. There is precedent for some of this thinking in the work of Florian Bagel – projects which involve designing a landscape that might become a city. It was noted that the most abundant resources currently available are time and land, and that this in itself might provide a starting point. Within this context there is the potential to harvest the energy of young people. There are many young graduates in architecture and other fields with the skill, talent and energy to design. Parallel to this is an opportunity to develop agricultural and tech based start-ups. A framework should not just be about design but should take a broader attitude. What already exists that could be tapped into? It could be that by allowing people and ideas into the site, an architecture will develop.

21st century Kilkenny has been compared to 18th century Edinburgh. It is worth recalling that Edinburgh's new town took 20-30 years to create. It would therefore be inappropriate to have a design competition for the Diageo site with one solution. It may be better to have a competition for many solutions. These ideas could then inform future development and act as a manifesto for the city.

In Clonmel, during the early 80s, the local development plan was publicly discussed. It set key aims, general policies and sketches of what might happen. Thirty years later one could say it's nearly finished. If development had happened too quickly it would have happened the wrong way. When setting a plan it is best to emphasise key issues and then have a framework that can allow ideas to generate.

In general, the problem of Irish towns is that nobody lives in them. That is the cause of their decline. Retail isn't going to save the town. The most sustainable way of dealing with the future is people living in town. The site could accommodate a population of 1000-1500. Well meaning policy such as pedestrianisation can fail. Drogheda is an example of this. Living over the shop is another possibility. Attracting families to live in the city centre is key. The aim must simply be to make Kilkenny the best possible place to live.

Kilkenny as a city maintains a relationship to its hinterland that is unique. It is still perceived as a market town. However this accounts for a great dependence on the car and traffic is a significant problem. The Dunnes car park is seen by many as an attractive reason to come into Kilkenny. One might claim that a heritage town shouldn't have a car park situated between its historic poles but that what makes the city work. It gives the place vitality. Whether the Dunnes site can have a role to play in future development is debatable. New possibilities may emerge in the future.

Flooding is no longer an issue for the site due to remediation works by the OPW. In some respects this has not been sympathetic to the city but it has been successful. There still may be opportunities here to make use of the river.

Multiple issues are intertwined and if some develop at different rates it could tie the Council's hands. Something as simple as somebody writing the wrong thing into a development plan can restrict the possibilities for the site.

Public participation must have a role to play. There are existing policies such as Local Agenda 21 and the Aalborg Charter that can offer guidance in this respect. It has also been noted that when the issue of the Diageo site was posted on Kilkennycoco.ie that the article generated a substantial amount of interest and comments. People are clearly interested but the boat could be pushed out further with regards to public consultation. A recent initiative has been to put up displays around the city of what's going on in the locality. A multi-media approach may be required to encourage a broad demographic to get involved in the planning process.

The Design Framework Review has been envisaged as a brainstorming session in the fields of design, property and planning. It has been about going back to first principles and considering what it is we're doing and why we're doing it. From that point of view, the day has been an enormous success and should offer a way forward in responding to difficult, complex questions. Whatever happens the conversation must not be left closed and hopefully all participants will be willing to be engaged on a one-to-one basis. In a place like Kilkenny, that holds up design as important, it must be understood that good design won't necessarily get you a good place. Building towns is an untidy process and there is no single, right answer. But the place has to be of the people and Kilkenny might be said to strive, more than anything else, for a "quiet excellence".