

JOHN'S QUAY / JOHN STREET URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY

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NOVEMBER 2024



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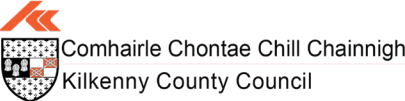
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MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONSULTING TEAM

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1. INTRODUCTION



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1.1 DOCUMENT PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

MCORM Architecture and Urban Design has been appointed by Kilkenny County Council as lead consultant of the proposed multidisciplinary team to produce an Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay/John Street area, funded by THRIVE Strand 1 - as defined by Kilkenny County Council - and prepare a Part 8 Application of a selected heritage building within the area to be presented to THRIVE Strand 2 funding. The THRIVE programme "supports locally developed plans that take an integrated strategic approach to the regeneration of our towns and locally selected projects that assist in creating town centres that function as viable, vibrant, and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit while also functioning as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community".

- This Urban Design Strategy is funded by THRIVE under Strand 1 (Figure 1-2) for the purpose of:
- Development and enhancement of integrated urban strategies using a Town Centre First Framework, e.g., a Town Centre First Masterplan.
 - Identification of projects that promote the conservation and adaptive reuse of our built heritage stock while reducing vacancy and dereliction in town centres.
 - Prioritisation, development and specification of project proposals to create a pipeline of investment-ready built heritage refurbishment, renovation and adaptive reuse projects.

THRIVE promotes a citizen-centred community-led approach to planning and design under the Town Centre First framework and will fund projects that embrace the core values of the New European Bauhaus – sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion. This approach and New European Bauhaus principles are integrated in the proposed strategy as follows.

- The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay/John Street and its environs with additional key features such as the Butler Gallery, the Carnegie Building, County Hall and a landscaped open space around the Ball Alleys adjoining Michael Street and the Kilkenny War Memorial. The developed Urban Design Strategy has been the result of an integrated approach of the multidisciplinary consulting team in five main areas:
- 1) Planning, Environment and Climate
 - 2) Heritage and Local Culture
 - 3) Movement and infrastructure
 - 4) Public realm
 - 5) Economy, focusing in local businesses

A multi-layer analysis of the subject site has been carried out, as demonstrated in the baseline and evidence-based input reports accompanying this Urban Design Strategy. In addition, The Design Team engaged with the public and stakeholders from the outset of the project to identify the potential of the John's Quay / John Street area and its assets.

A multi-phased engagement process was conducted to ensure that the strategy was rooted in the needs and aspirations of the community. This engagement process included two key components: public survey and co-creation workshops. Please refer to the final Engagement Report prepared by CBRE for complete detail on the evolution and final outcomes of this process. Section 4.1 of this report also demonstrates how this engagement process has fully informed the design, as set by the THRIVE guidelines.

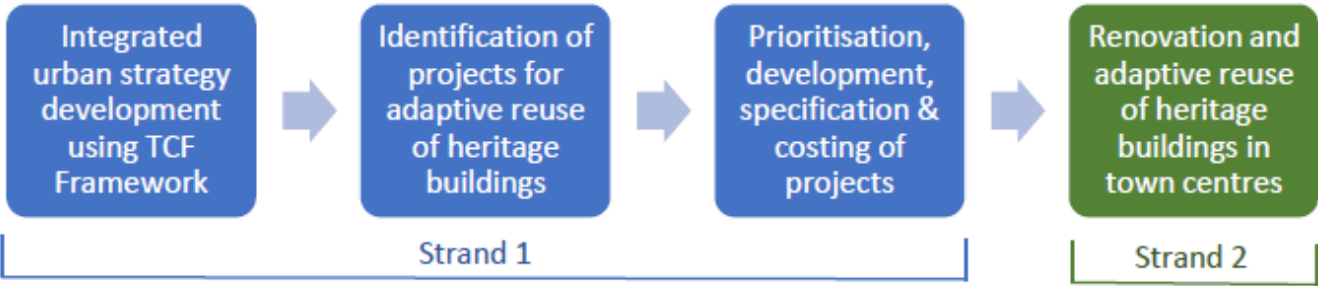


Figure 1-1. THRIVE – the Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme – is an exciting new grant scheme for local authorities and is delivered under Ireland's two ERDF Regional Programmes (Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027 and Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027). THRIVE offers 100% under the Strands shown in the figure. Source: THRIVE Guidelines, THRIVE is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.



Figure 1-2. New European Bauhaus, setting principles for beautiful, sustainable and inclusive urban development, embraced by the proposed Urban Design Strategy. Source: European Union.



Figure 1-3. Panoramic photography showing the historical frontage of John's Quay and John Street southern gateway defined by Matt the Millers and Kilkenny River Court Hotel. Own source.

1.2 PROJECT BRIEF

It is the aim of Kilkenny County Council to develop an Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay and John Street area that provides a vision for a new, vibrant and exciting future for the study area. The new integrated Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay and John Street area in Kilkenny City also needs to incorporate an analysis of a number of heritage buildings, in particular the Carnegie Library on John's Quay and No. 75 and 76 John Street, Kilkenny, properties currently in public ownership, and are to remain in public ownership for the foreseeable future. The key objectives for this scheme, as defined by Kilkenny County Council, are:

- For the approved **Urban Design Strategy to act as a guide for the future regeneration of John Street and John's Quay area including its vacant buildings that will enhance the streetscape creating inclusive places** that focuses on transforming public spaces to strengthen the connections between people and these places;
- Identify a **pipeline project for THRIVE Strand 2 and provide a guide for developing other future projects** thus enabling Kilkenny County Council and/or community to benefit from future funding streams, such as THRIVE, and from various other sources - refer to Appendix A & B for the THRIVE Application Guidelines and Strand 2 Application Form;
- **Create a place that offers all the benefits of the 10-minute neighbourhood** and provides convenient access to a wide range of higher-order assets such as community infrastructure;
- **Develop the Carnegie Library and surrounding area at John's Quay as an important interface in the cultural field** by ensuring cultural heritage remains as publicly accessible property;
- At **No. 75 and 76 John Street** (public ownership occupied buildings), develop proposals for the **regeneration of the building and its street frontage**, bringing it back to full usage;
- For the **County Hall courtyard**, create a **lively, accessible, and multi-functional public square that blends with the surrounding architecture**, a space that reflects **local culture and identity**, improves **pedestrian and cyclist connectivity**, uses space efficiently, and fosters a unique and inclusive community area. The square will be designed to adapt to future needs, ensure public safety, and provide creative spaces for social and cultural activities;
- Provide a **range of new infrastructure and services** to meet the needs of the broader Kilkenny City area, such as:
 1. For **John's Quay**, develop proposals for an **integrated outdoor space that enhances community engagement and promotes active lifestyles** by creating a cohesive and accessible environment that includes a boardwalk at St.John's Bridge, pedestrian and cycle links, river access, and recreational facilities;
 2. For the **green area near the Ball Alleys**, develop proposals to **transform this underutilised green space into a vibrant and inviting environment** that serves as a retreat for city residents and visitors, a place that fosters relaxation, socialisation, and community interaction; and
 3. For **Back Lane**, develop proposals to **revitalise the lane to create a safe, vibrant, and accessible corridor for pedestrians and cyclists**, enhancing connectivity and promoting active travel modes within the community.
 4. Enhance **John Street** into a **pedestrian friendly, inclusive, and vibrant urban street** that will strengthen the visibility and role in serving as access to and between key destinations in the city as well as the potential to develop its function for social and business activity. This objective includes several critical components – improved pedestrian facilities, inclusive placemaking, economic growth/business activity, visitor experience and sustainability/liveability.



Figure 1-4. Overview of key places and features within the subject site for this Urban Design Strategy. Own source.

1.3 SITE IDENTIFICATION AND CONTEXT

John's Quay and John's Street form a key part of Kilkenny's historic urban core. The area's character is deeply rooted in its medieval past, reflected in its narrow streets, historical buildings, and proximity to the River Nore. The architectural conservation area (ACA) status highlights the need to carefully balance development with heritage preservation. The area includes key heritage structures such as the Carnegie Library, historic bridges like St. St.John's Bridge, and adjacent architectural landmarks that shape the local identity. This unique mix of historical and architectural significance presents both an opportunity for regeneration and a challenge in terms of preservation.

John's Street has traditionally served as a town-centre hub for local businesses, entertainment venues, and nightlife. This street is known for its vibrant after-dark economy, with pubs, restaurants, and cultural venues drawing both locals and tourists. However, this concentration of nightlife activity also brings challenges related to noise, foot traffic, and public safety, particularly at night. Additionally, the area sees a mix of daytime uses, with local shops, cafés, and small businesses serving the community, though retail diversity is limited and heavily skewed towards hospitality and tourism. We can already recognise the following challenges in the area (among others):

- Nightlife and Safety;
- Regeneration and Retail Diversification;
- Traffic and Connectivity;
- Riverside Activation (John's Quay and Handball Alleys)
- Public Realm Improvements across streets, lanes, green areas and environs of heritage buildings.

Please refer to the Baseline Report and Environmental Assessments accompanying this Urban Design Strategy for a complete and integrated analysis of the study area.



Figure 1-5. Study area boundary (SK001). Source: Kilkenny County Council

1.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OVERALL KILKENNY CITY

In addition to the geographical identification previously provided, this section is to identify the study area within the wider Kilkenny context in terms of zoning structure and network of green spaces and biodiversity corridors.

As the public survey revealed, the site is mainly a “travelling through” area centrally located between the city’s historical area and it’s eastern gateway to Dublin. However, its location, potential mix of uses and retail continuity from the western side of River Nore evidence the potential of the site as a new vibrant centrality for Kilkenny city based on attractive public realm, local retail dynamism, culture and administrative/work hub for Kilkenny Co. Co.

The conceptual map provided opposite also shows the interrupted continuity of ecological corridors along the river Nore which end at Peace Park north of the site and at County Hall environs/Kilkenny River Court hotel south of the site. The proposed Urban Design Strategy will set design proposals to provide pedestrian and ecological continuity along John’s Quay linking site’s adjoining northern and southern natural amenity areas.

Q3: What do you primarily use the John's Quay / John Street area for?



Figure 1-6. Results of the public survey asking for the main role of the area within Kilkenny City. Own source.

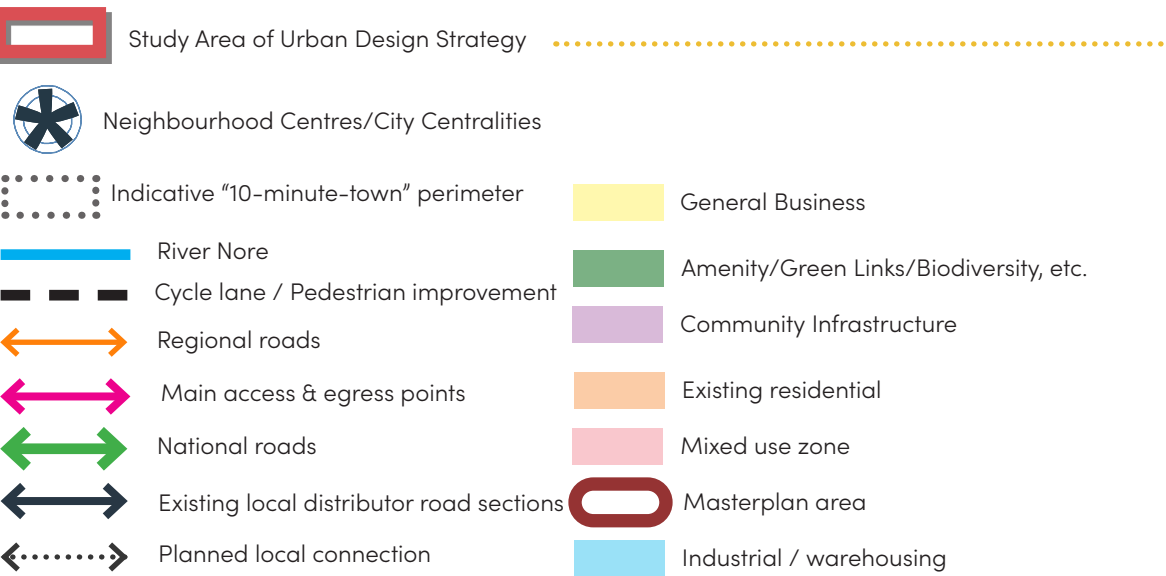


Figure 1-7. Kilkenny City conceptual analysis identifying the study area within the overall urban structure and uses of the city. Own source.



2. INTEGRATED APPRAISAL



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2.1 ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTERLINKAGES

As set in the THRIVE Programme and overall ERDF European Programme, the proposed Urban Design Strategy for John Street and John's Quay integrates economic, social, and environmental objectives in a way that strengthens the area's overall sustainability and livability. By addressing these three pillars collectively, the strategy ensures that improvements in one domain positively reinforce outcomes in the others, creating a holistic approach to urban revitalization.

Economic Interlinkages: The strategy's focus on enhancing the public realm and accessibility directly supports local businesses at John Street by drawing more foot traffic and encouraging longer stays in the eastern side of River Nore. Increased vibrancy and attractiveness make the area more appealing for retail and tourism. By prioritizing sustainable, low-maintenance infrastructure, the strategy also supports long-term cost efficiency, reducing operational costs for the city and local enterprises.

Social Interlinkages: A key objective of the strategy is to create a welcoming and accessible space that fosters social interaction, community pride and celebration of local heritage and culture. Enhanced pedestrian pathways, green spaces, and community-focused amenities support inclusivity, bringing people together across age groups and backgrounds. By promoting active, people-centred spaces, the strategy helps address social isolation, encourages healthy lifestyles, and increases community resilience.

Environmental Interlinkages: The strategy places environmental sustainability at its core, incorporating climate adaptation, biodiversity, and pollution prevention into urban design. Green infrastructure, such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and native plantings, not only manages stormwater and enhances biodiversity but also creates a more enjoyable, shaded environment for visitors. Reduced car dependency, through improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, also decreases emissions, contributing to climate goals while creating cleaner, healthier air for the community.

This Urban Design Strategy interweaves *CLIMATE*, *ENVIRONMENT*, *HERITAGE*, *INCLUSION*, *HOUSING*, *PUBLIC REALM*, *LOCAL ECONOMY*, and *SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENT* into a cohesive framework to support Kilkenny's sustainable growth. Each domain connects with others, ensuring that improvements in one area positively influence the broader urban landscape, as illustrated opposite.



Figure 2-1. Photographs identifying economic, social and environmental assets of the study area. Own source.

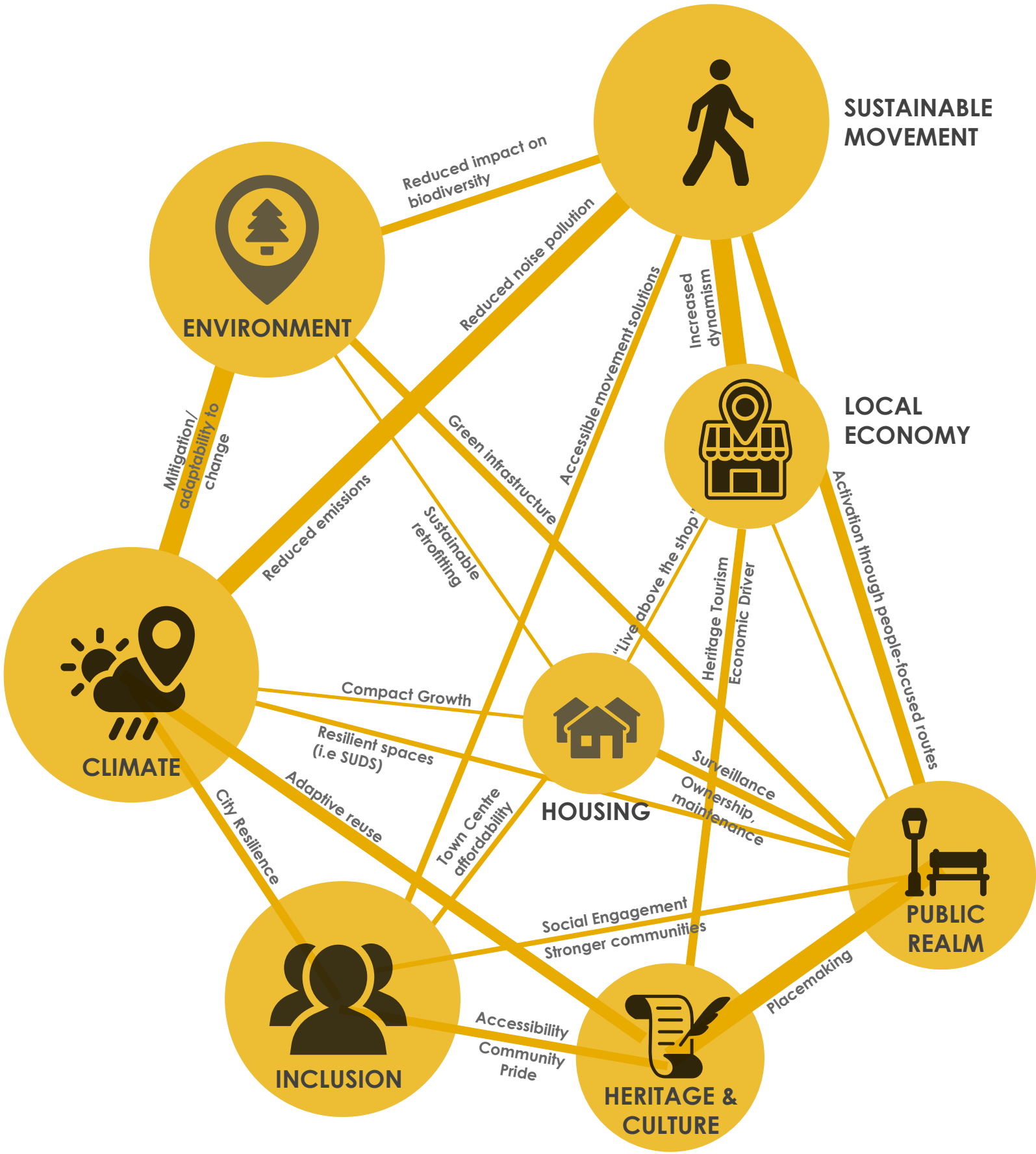


Figure 2-2. Illustrative diagram identifying main linkages that the strategy will consider for its proposals and urban design. Own source.

2.2 INTEGRATED APPROACH: PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS

This is the main document of the Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay and John Street outlining the approach, vision and proposals for the study area. Furthermore, the proposed strategy goes beyond urban design principles including the inputs of a multidisciplinary consulting team, along with those from key stakeholders and a wider audience, including the local community, among others, as presented in section 2.2.

It is important to highlight the documents that accompany this Urban Design Strategy:

- **Baseline Report**, including Planning Policy and Studies Context Assessment; Mobility and Transport Information; Receiving Social, Economic, and Physical Environment Assessment; baseline Land Use Assessment; Planning Activity Assessment; Built Heritage and Architectural Heritage Assessment; Archaeology; Drainage and Flooding Data; Utilities and Services Assessment; Identification of key projects impacting the area; Public Realm Design Proposals Assessment; and Land Ownership Information. This information has been structured in the following domains within the report: 1) Introduction; 2) Urban Planning and Public Realm; 3) Environment; 4) Urban Mobility and Infrastructure; 5) Heritage and Archaeology. An Updated Engagement Report, including the synthesis of stakeholder feedback to refine the strategy to date of the Baseline Report, and a Social Infrastructure Audit, were also submitted.
- **Final Engagement Report**, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the community's input, collected through surveys and co-creation workshops, to inform the future transformation of the Johns Quay / John Street area in Kilkenny City.
- **Environmental Assessments**, including a Geological, Hydrological and Geo-hydrological Report, a SEA Screening (with a AA Screening note), a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Tree Survey for the study area.
- **Infrastructural Strategy**, describing the strategies for transport and utilities infrastructure proposed as part of the John Street Urban Design. The report is based on information gathered through a Stage 1 Report (engineering baseline assessment) carried out by PUNCH, developed with Kilkenny County Council (KCC) through a series of detailed workshops, presentations, and discussions carried out between September - November 2024. The report comprises existing strategic plans by KCC, as well as those put forward as part of the John Street Urban Design Strategy.
- **Energy and Sustainability Strategy**, providing a pathway to improved sustainability for the site. They outline key sustainability and energy issues and requirements that should be coordinated into the Urban Design Strategy.

According to the above and the domains set in the previous section, the following principles for the Urban Design Strategy are set out:

- **CLIMATE**: Commit to mitigation and adaptation through low-carbon mobility and climate-resilient urban spaces.
- **ENVIRONMENT**: Foster biodiversity, sustainable water use, and green infrastructure for a healthy, resilient urban environment.

- **INCLUSION**: Ensure accessibility and social cohesion, promoting community pride and equal resource access.
- **SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENT**: Promote walkability, cycling, and accessible transit to reduce car dependence.
- **HERITAGE AND CULTURE**: Prioritize preservation and adaptive reuse, integrating Kilkenny's history and culture into modern urban life.
- **LOCAL ECONOMY**: Strengthen local businesses, heritage tourism, and job creation to drive economic vitality.

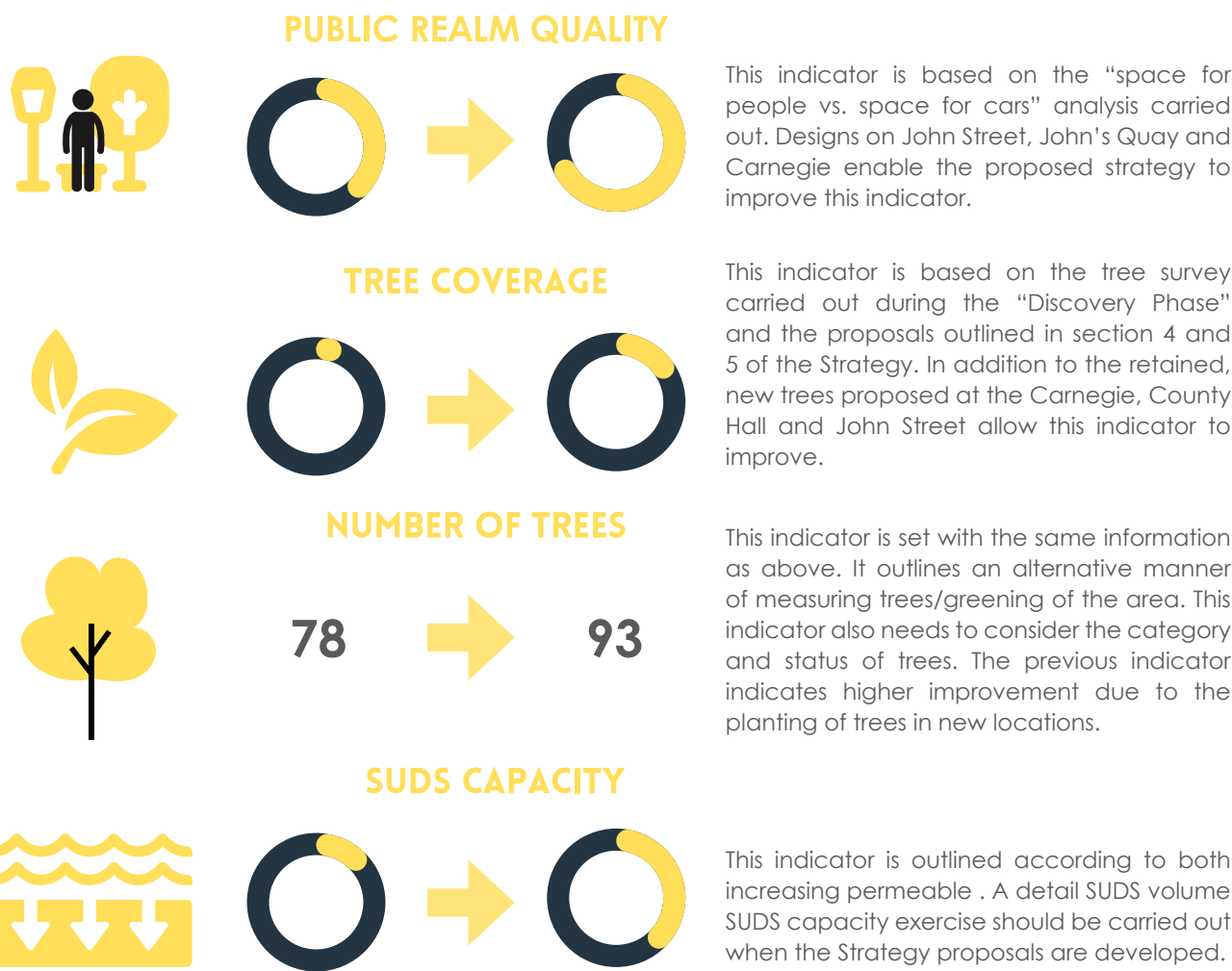
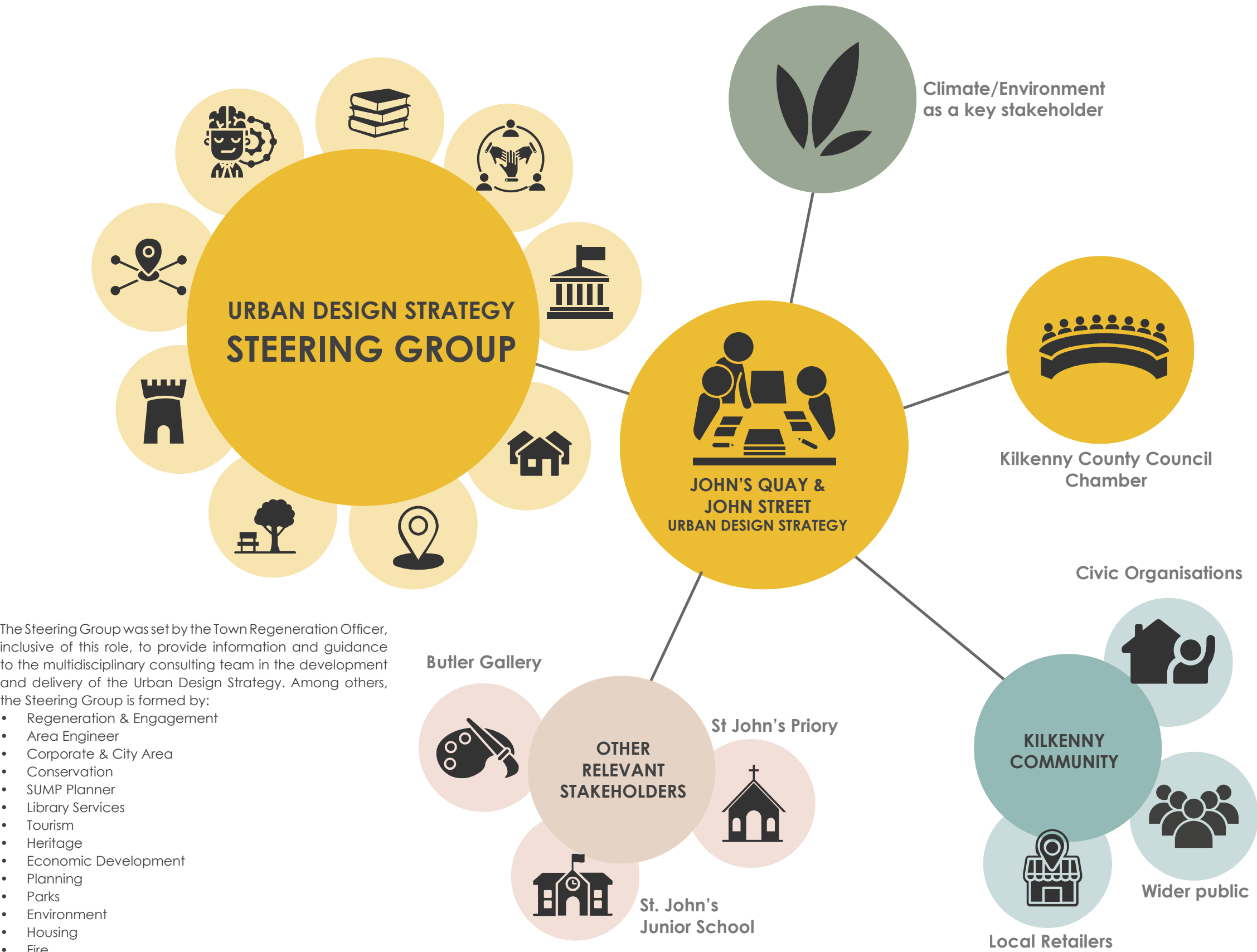


Figure 2-3. Indicative way forward for an Urban Design Strategy KPI dashboard. Own source.

Additional indicators could be set according to the principles previously outlined. These indicators could be "area of community facilities", "housing in the area", "local retail vitality" or "pedestrian footfall", as an example.

These, and other similar to same, are not yet included in this document as they are dynamic and contingent on the implementation of the Strategy in the mid and long term (the above are provided as they refer to the already proposed sketch-design of the different areas contained within the subject site).

2.3 PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS MAP



The Steering Group was set by the Town Regeneration Officer, inclusive of this role, to provide information and guidance to the multidisciplinary consulting team in the development and delivery of the Urban Design Strategy. Among others, the Steering Group is formed by:

- Regeneration & Engagement
- Area Engineer
- Corporate & City Area
- Conservation
- SUMP Planner
- Library Services
- Tourism
- Heritage
- Economic Development
- Planning
- Parks
- Environment
- Housing
- Fire
- Council Facilities/Council Property
- Water
- Roads

Figure 2-4. Multi-stakeholder and multilevel governance map illustrating the main local stakeholders involved during the development and delivery of the Urban Design Strategy, in addition to main actors and documents guiding its governance and implementation. Please refer to the Final Engagement Report accompanying this Urban Design Strategy demonstrating the participation of the actors highlighted herein.

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE



2.4 STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE COVERED AREAS

The proposed Urban Design Strategy has had full regard on existing strategic documents concerning the covered areas may be used as territorial strategies to support and frame same, in particular:

- The **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region**, which is a comprehensive framework developed by the Southern Regional Assembly to guide the long-term physical, economic, and social development of Ireland's Southern Region. Effective since January 31, 2020, the RSES aims to implement the National Planning Framework (NPF) at the regional level, promoting balanced regional development and sustainable growth. Kilkenny is set as a key town by the RSES and it is the fourth largest settlement in the Region. It is centrally located within the region with good road and rail links to Dublin (proximate to the Urban Design Strategy study area) and elsewhere. In particular, it highlights the *"recreational assets of the River Nore walking route and development of other walking and cycling routes around the City"*, which the presented strategy aims to enhance along John's Quay and in connection with John Street, County Hall and the Butler Gallery - Carnegie Library area.
- The **Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027**, which is a comprehensive plan outlines the spatial and economic development goals for Kilkenny, emphasizing sustainable growth, heritage conservation, and community well-being. It serves as a foundational document for urban planning initiatives.
- The **Kilkenny County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2021-2024)**, which outlines measures to address climate change impacts within Kilkenny, focusing on resilience and adaptation in urban planning and infrastructure development.

In addition, the emerging Kilkenny SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan), which is planned to be approved in Q1 2025, is relevant for the study area and envisages operations within same. The Urban Design Strategy has been fully informed by the SUMP process to date and includes a specific section addressing how its determinations and proposals should be integrated in the SUMP (section 4.5).

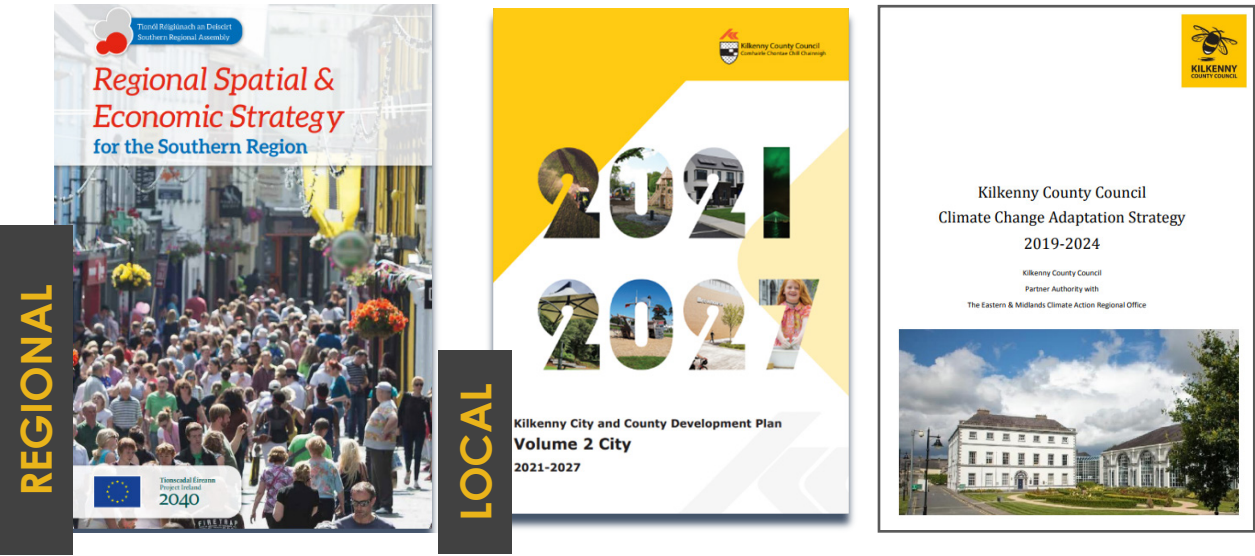


Figure 2-5. Strategic documents concerning the study area that have been considered by the Urban Design Strategy, along with relevant not site specific policy and guidance documents.

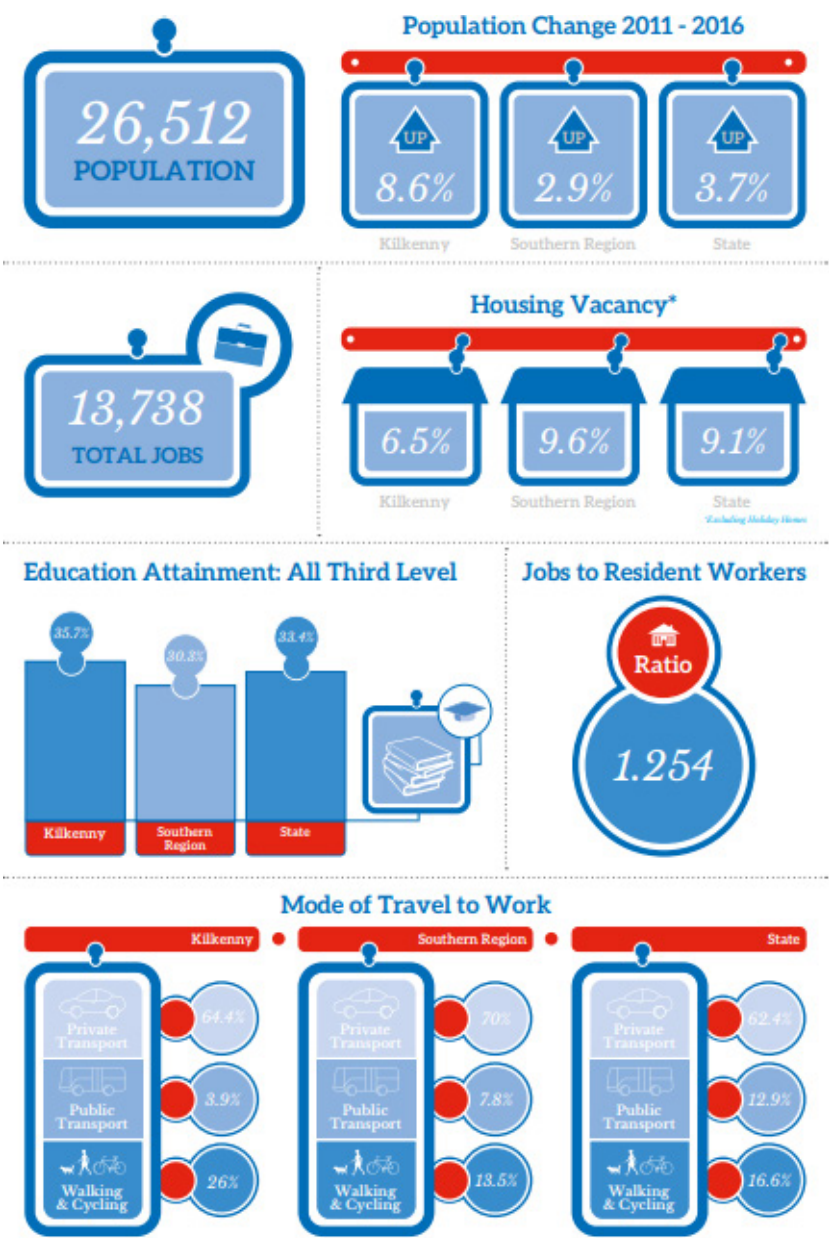


Figure 2-6. Overview of Kilkenny City in the Southern Region RSES. Source: RSES for the Southern Region (2020).



Figure 2-7. Visual of Kilkenny City SUMP. Source: Kilkenny Co.Co.

3. STRATEGIC VISION



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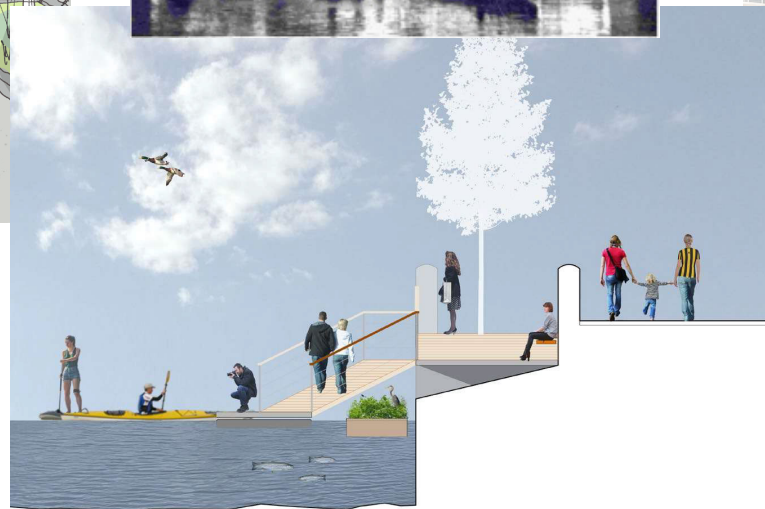
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3.1 VISION STATEMENT

The vision presented for the John's Quay and John Street area in Kilkenny draws upon a comprehensive understanding of the site, its development needs and potential, interlinking social, economic and environmental factors.

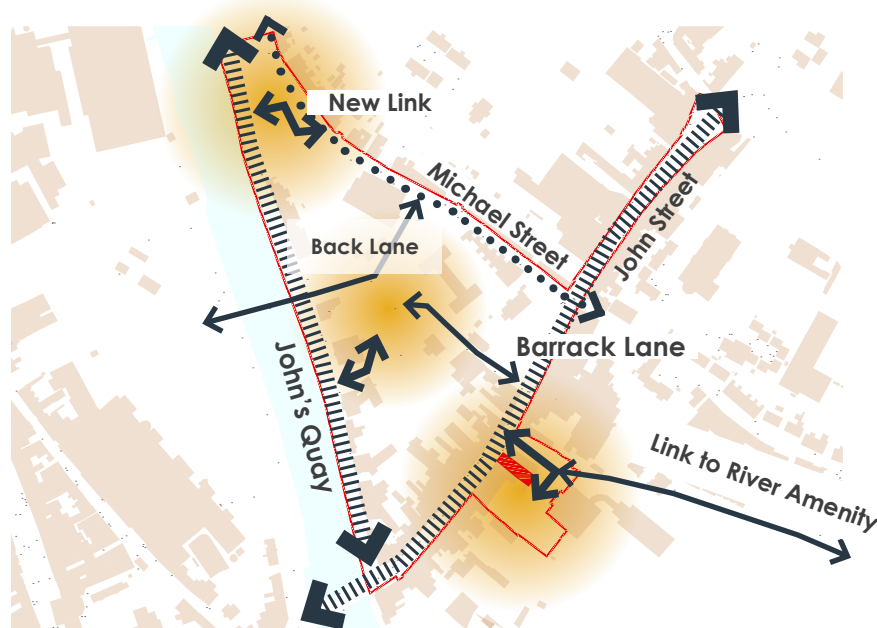
The Urban Design Strategy has identified key opportunities for public realm revitalisation, biodiversity and climate resilience, grounded in a strategic mix use approach, including local retail, culture, community infrastructure and housing. The appointed multidisciplinary team, in conjunction with key stakeholders and the wider public involved through cocreation workshops and public surveys, has therefore developed an Urban Design Strategy Vision as follows:

"Honouring the heritage of the John's Quay and John Street area through strategic mixed-use placemaking and public realm revitalization, providing for climate-resilient and biodiversity-rich spaces, and embracing local culture."



3.2 KEY VISION DRIVERS

PUBLIC REALM REGENERATION



Opportunities

- Overall increase of footfall and pedestrian permeability throughout the area. Links to also consider continuity of biodiversity corridors throughout the site, including existing vegetation and new planting to allow for same (i.e. Back Lane, John's Quay).
- Three connected public realm hubs of diverse and complementary character and use: Park/Handball Alleys, Butlers Quarter (public realm in between Carnegie Library and Butlers Gallery) and County Hall.
- Increase of accessibility and safety across streets, lanes and other public real areas.
- Meet the need for change in terms of non-sustainable mobility and car reliance. Public realm design to favour pedestrian and cycling movement throughout the site and wider Kilkenny historic town centre. Embrace tactical urbanism approaches to gradually make meaningful and beneficial changes in movement and behavioural trends for the Kilkenny community.

Challenges

- Anti-social behaviour impacting on street furniture and other public realm features.
- Current parking requirements for residents and visitors.
- Gentrification (rise of rental and purchase values of retail units and dwellings in the area).

PLACEMAKING MIX OF USES AND ACTIVITIES



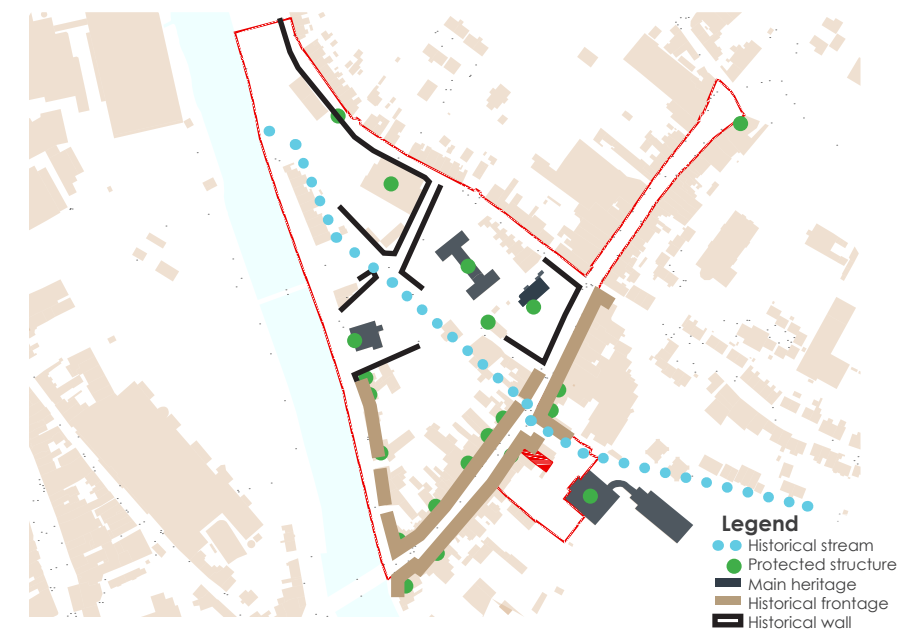
Opportunities

- The zoning objectives and facilities at the subject site already promote a mix of activities, beyond the nightlife economy that characterises the area (particularly John Street).
- The aim for public realm regeneration can help to increase footfall and, therefore, economic dynamism along John Street and John's Quay via local retail and hospitality promotion.
- A cultural hub including existing Butler Gallery and repurposing of Carnegie Library can complement economic activities at John Street and John's Quay.
- Existing residential infill areas can benefit from the above opportunities and embrace the 10-min towns' model.

Challenges

- Residential areas to coexist with busy business areas (i.e. nightlife).
- Building retrofitting to promote housing in the area and "live over the shop" is constrained by building regulations (i.e. fire or accessibility)

HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND REVIVAL



Opportunities

- St. John's church (including historic stone wall) as the medieval origin of the area.
- Beyond the heritage masterpieces of the area, historical building frontages and built form to be preserved.
- Historical routes and water streams to be unveiled for pedestrian permeability and wayfinding

Challenges

- Preservation costs, including both retrofitting and long-term maintenance
- Re-purposing of buildings to meet current standards and regulations (i.e. fire or accessibility)
- Integration of archaeological features

3.3 RELEVANT PRECEDENTS



GREEN QUAYS, BREDA (NE)

Source: Urban Innovative Actions

This nature-inclusive quay regeneration project in Breda (The Netherlands) focuses on biodiversity and sustainable urban design. The project integrates green infrastructure, like vertical ecosystems, into urban river regeneration.

This project can be relevant for John's Quay and Handball Alleys landscaped area, as it focuses on ecological design and sustainable water management. While design might not be fully replicable in detail, its principles can inspire a more vibrant John's Quay, including more natural and strategic planting to maximise views to Kilkenny's Castle while maximising permeable surfaces, biodiversity and walkability along the river, also integrating the existing green amenity and Handball Alleys into the overall scheme.



CLONAKILTY 400 - TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

Source: West Cork County Council

The Clonakilty 400 project was a comprehensive urban renewal and heritage conservation initiative launched to commemorate Clonakilty's 400th anniversary. The project focused on improving the public realm through streetscape upgrades, pedestrianization, and sustainable urban planning. It also emphasized the preservation and restoration of historic buildings, blending modern infrastructure with Clonakilty's rich cultural heritage. The initiative successfully revitalized the town, attracting tourists and fostering community pride while enhancing walkability and environmental sustainability.

Through cultural events and public engagement, the project strengthened Clonakilty's identity as a vibrant, historically significant town. It now stands as a model for heritage-led regeneration in small towns across Ireland.



TULLAMORE REGENERATION FRAMEWORK (TRF)

Source: Offaly County Council

This project developed an overall strategy for Tullamore and is already revitalising the town center of Tullamore via prioritised specific public realm projects, focusing on improving pedestrian spaces, streetscapes, and urban design. The enhancements included repaving streets, adding green spaces, public art installations, and improving street lighting.

Within the TRF, the Church Street Project (image above) aims for a more accessible and vibrant urban environment. The project involves upgrading streetscapes, improving pedestrian accessibility, and integrating green spaces and public seating. The redesign of Church Street also focuses on preserving its historical character while introducing modern infrastructure that supports sustainable development.



4. URBAN DESIGN STATEMENT



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4.1 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND COCREATION

DISCOVERY AND DEVELOP PHASES

All strategies under Strand 1 of THRIVE must integrate New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles, ensuring inclusivity, a multidisciplinary approach, and active involvement of the public and stakeholders in the Integrated Urban Strategy's design and implementation.

In this regard, engaging stakeholders in the urban design process was crucial to inform the strategy and ensure it reflects the needs and aspirations of the community. The co-creation workshops were designed to gather feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders. These workshops provided a platform for participants to voice their concerns, share ideas, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The data analysed in this section of the report was collected during two co-creation workshops: a Key Stakeholder Co-Creation Workshop and a Community Co-creation Workshop. These were held on Monday, 16 September 2024, from 14:00 to 16:00 and 18:00 to 20:20, respectively, at The Carnegie Library, John's Quay, Kilkenny, which is also a key feature within the strategy.

Within the consulting team appointed, CBRE (Planning and Engagement) outlined the engagement and cocreation strategy, and dinamised these workshops. Key members of the design team, including architects, urban designers, landscape architects, conservation architects, engineers and ecologists also attended these workshops to exchange views with participants and respond to queries of key stakeholders and the wider public.

As illustrated opposite, the baseline analysis report developed by the multidisciplinary design team, along with the multi stakeholder cocreation approach carried out during the develop phase discovered existing and potential nodal points which, focussed on public realm activation and sustainable movement, could be connected via accessible linkages. John Street and John's Quay are identified as existing public realm corridors that shall be enhanced to maximise people-dedicated spaces, accessibility and social interaction within the same, in addition to their current travel-through function linking to Peace Park north and the city centre south.



Figure 4-1. Word cloud indicating main topics of discussion and sample of hand sketches elaborated by workshop participants in the discovery phase.

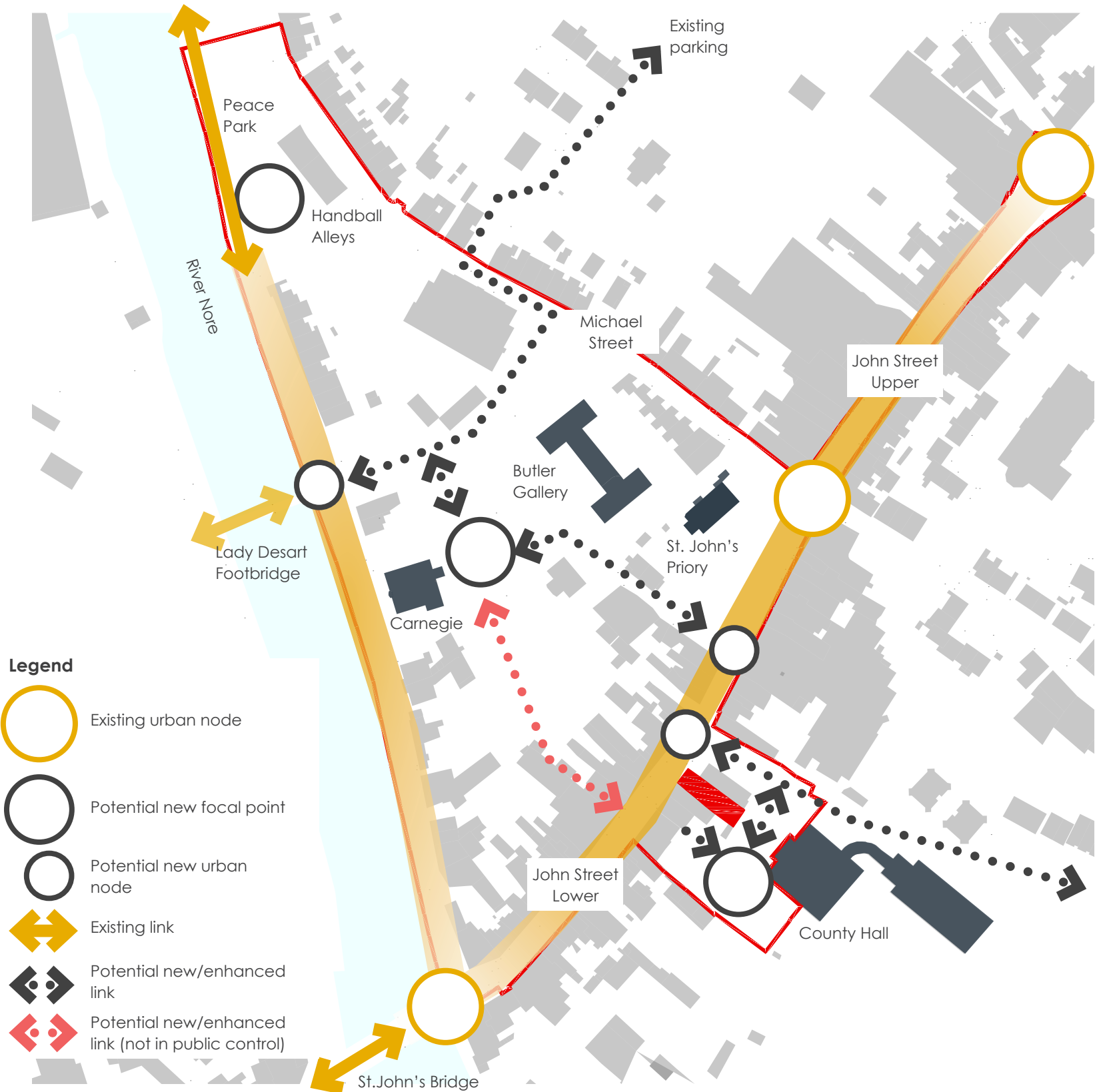


Figure 4-2. Schematic summarising the collaborative analysis and preliminary design through the cocreation processes that took place during engagement activities with the Urban Design Strategy steering group and wider public.

The Develop Phase began with a public survey to understand the community's and stakeholders' strategic desires, issues, constraints, and opportunities. The survey was available online via a link / QR code and in hard copy at the Council's offices at County Hall, John Street Lower, Kilkenny. A survey drop was also conducted for residential properties within the area. The survey included both open and closed questions to obtain quantitative and qualitative data.

Subsequent key stakeholder and community co-creation workshops engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including local authorities, businesses, and the public. These workshops gathered further insights into the issues facing the Johns Quay / John Street area and highlighted opportunities for improving its urban fabric.

Both the key stakeholder and community workshops generated a wealth of feedback, which was categorised into themes for analysis. The word cloud below summarises the main themes that were discussed, explored in detail and incorporated in the final Urban Design Strategy:



These workshops also highlighted the need to address Projects 2 and 3 in conjunction, recommending that buildings No. 75 and No. 76 be closely integrated with the County Hall plaza. This integration will create a cohesive public space, benefiting from the increased activity generated by these connected buildings, as illustrated opposite where the public realm masterplan unifies both (brown outline east of John Street).

The “Develop” phase concluded with the prioritization of Part 8 applications for the three key projects identified in the Urban Strategy brief. Kilkenny County Council is committed to fully utilizing these buildings to enhance the vibrancy of the John's Quay/John Street area, attracting more residents, visitors, and workers alike. The result of this prioritisation is as follows:

KEY STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP	PUBLIC WORKSHOP
1. Carnegie Library	1. Carnegie Library
2. No.75 & 76 John Street	2. No.75 & 76 John Street
3. County Hall	3. County Hall

Table 4-1. Sample of marked draft Urban Design Strategy plans including feedback received during engagement workshops. Own source.



Figure 4-3. Draft Urban Design Strategy masterplan including preliminary design proposals and specification of projects in which the strategy should focus on. Own source.

The activities and uses within buildings directly shape the character and vibrancy of the public realm, with each influencing the other in a dynamic, interconnected way. This relationship was emphasized in both workshops, highlighting how the Urban Design Strategy presents a unique opportunity to strengthen this linkage, ensuring that building uses actively contribute to a lively, engaging, and cohesive public realm.

In this regard, it is submitted that the proposed Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay/John Street will bring new activities to the area (as illustrated opposite) including: a new Local Studies Hub to showcase the rich heritage and ancient past of Kilkenny, an active public park (Peace Park) with a design to favour play and social interaction and an enhance Council Hub including mix-use diverse community spaces to increase the attractiveness and diversity of the area. Public realm interventions will favour the proposed new uses, in addition to existing, with particular regard to local businesses along John Street.

The proposed Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay/John Street will enrich the mix of activities and uses within a 200m radius, or 5min walk side to side, as illustrated opposite.



Figure 4-4. Images of the first round of cocreation workshops. Own source.



Figure 4-5. Draft Urban Design Strategy masterplan including existing and proposed activities within the study area. The Carnegie and no.75 and 76 John Street are highlighted as new community facilities to be delivered. Own source.

DELIVERY PHASE

During the “Delivery” Phase workshops, the Draft Urban Design Strategy initiatives and strategies were presented to the participants for consideration. This included an overview of the findings from the Develop Phase, the primary strategies of the Urban Design Strategy, and a detailed explanation of the proposed initiatives.

These workshops provided a platform for participants to voice their concerns, share ideas, and identify opportunities for improvement in the Draft Urban Design Strategy, which received support in terms of the board and waterfront enhancements, public realm upgrades, support for local economy and culture, and increased green spaces and ecological corridors within the study area. In terms of aspects to be improved or reconsidered and opportunities to be incorporated, the tables provided overleaf summarise how the strategy has addressed those:

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGE	UD STRATEGY PROPOSAL
Safety concerns	The strategy proposes a mixed-use approach that increases the current diversity of activities and significantly increases footfall in the study area. The strategy also proposes bespoke ground lighting in selected heritage areas: St. John's Priory wall along John Street and Butler Gallery elevation in front of the Carnegie.
Flooding/Water management	Current hard-landscaped impermeable areas, such as the Carnegie environs and County Hall public realm will be transformed to nature-based civic areas. John Street Lower will feature landscaped areas and new trees in selected locations, particularly along its southern section.
Parking/Traffic Issues	The strategy proposes a balance that supports both business needs and community accessibility. The majority of the current parking offer in the study area is retained. The brief is to protect residential amenity while allowing for an overall enhancement of the public realm. Parking areas and loading bays are proposed to be integrated within soft-landscaped and pedestrian friendly public realm areas. Additional linkages to the town centre, northern and southern riverfront natural amenity and proximate parking areas (as highlighted in orange opposite).

Table 4-2. Challenges response to feedback received in the “Delivery” phase.

IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITY	UD STRATEGY PROPOSAL
Increased greenery and sustainable landscaping	SUDS will be introduced into Carnegie and County Hall public realm areas. Greenery along the Peace Park and John's Quay North will be retained and enhance to achieve ecological continuity along the River Nore and favour pollination. Low planting will be introduced in Back and Barrack Lane to enhance their aspect and maximise biodiversity within the study area. Pollinator friendly planting will be introduced below the proposed boardwalk in John's Quay South. Trees and landscaped areas along John Street will bring nature-based SUDS into the current fully impermeable street.
Improved Accessibility Features	As demonstrated in figure 4.2 the engagement process and proposed strategy discover new linkages that shall be enhanced with new paving solutions that are accessible for all. The widening of footpaths along John Street will also help to avoid current barriers that currently compromise accessibility.

Continues overleaf

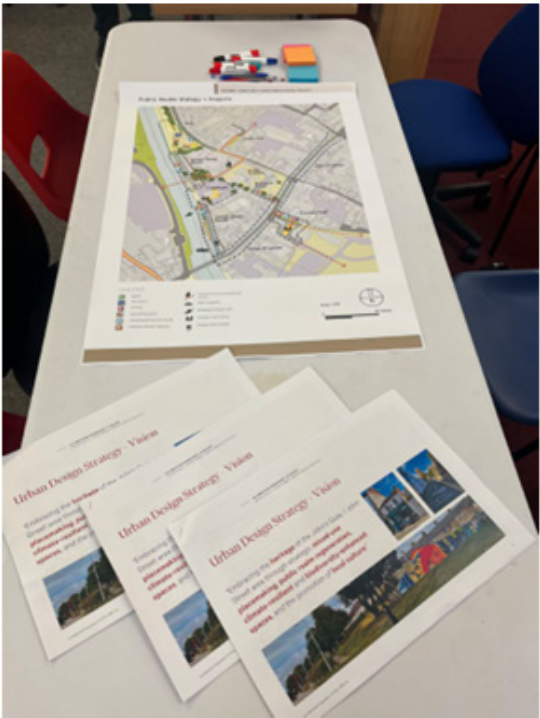
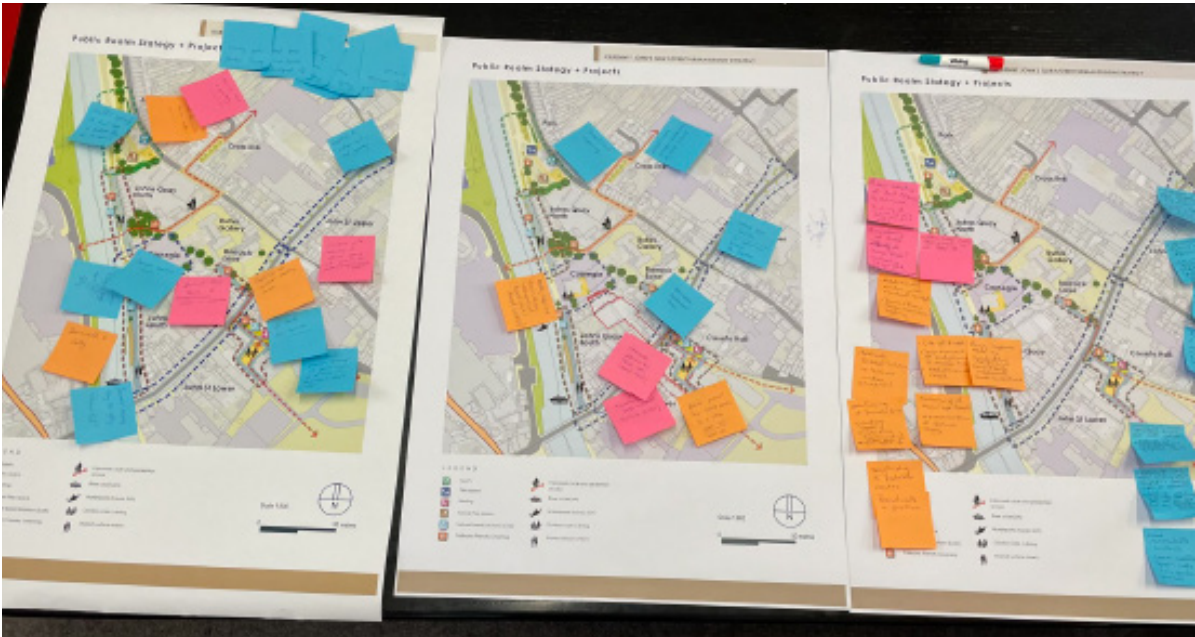


Figure 4-6. Images from the workshops carried out during the Delivery Phase. Own Source.

IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITY	UD STRATEGY PROPOSAL
Enhanced Cultural and Social Spaces	The Strategy emphasizes a strong connection between an active public realm and the vibrant use of buildings in the area. The retrofitting and repurposing of council-owned properties, including social and cultural spaces such as local studies centers, art studios, and exhibition areas, will fully leverage this opportunity to enrich the cultural and public realm offer east of River Nore.
Wayfinding and Signage	The strategy proposes to enhance navigation at key locations within the study area, as outlined below: - Unified paving along linkage from Butler Gallery to County Hall across John Street. Special paving treatments at County Hall to reveal historical stream along northern boundary. - Unified paving in North-South link, connecting from the future Abbey Quarter west of the River Nore to Carnegie and the northern car park along Back Lane. - Night wayfinding with ground lighting at public fronts of St. John's Priory and Butler Gallery. - Additional wayfinding features to match Kilkenny existing codes, heritage lighting and other public realm items to preserve the value and aesthetics of streetscapes.

Table 4-3. Opportunities response to feedback received in the "Delivery" phase.

In addition to the above, the thematic analysis of workshop feedback for the John's Quay/John Street Urban Design Strategy highlighted core priorities such as accessibility, support for local businesses, heritage preservation, and improvements to the public realm. A key focus was on creating a more retail-friendly environment to support local businesses, with ideas such as adding outdoor seating near shops and promoting "living above the shop" initiatives. Enhancing residential quality, fostering mixed-use development, and supporting heritage preservation through spaces for community events, a potential museum, and improved access to historical sites were also emphasized.

Participants strongly advocated for activating the waterfront with an accessible boardwalk, river swimming and boating facilities, and incorporating nature-based solutions to enhance ecological value. Accessibility and safety were seen as essential, with recommendations for universal design standards, improved lighting, and traffic-calming measures to make the area safer and more inclusive. Additional themes included sustainable water management through systems like rain gardens and swales, as well as a strategic approach to parking to balance residents' needs with reducing congestion.

The consulting team appointed acknowledged the range of proposals and conversations that arose in the "Delivery" phase workshops. In liaison with the council, the above have been coherently incorporated in an integrated Urban Design Strategy that is detailed in the following sections. Please refer to the Final Engagement Report accompanying this Urban Design Strategy for complete detail on workshops and public survey carried out.

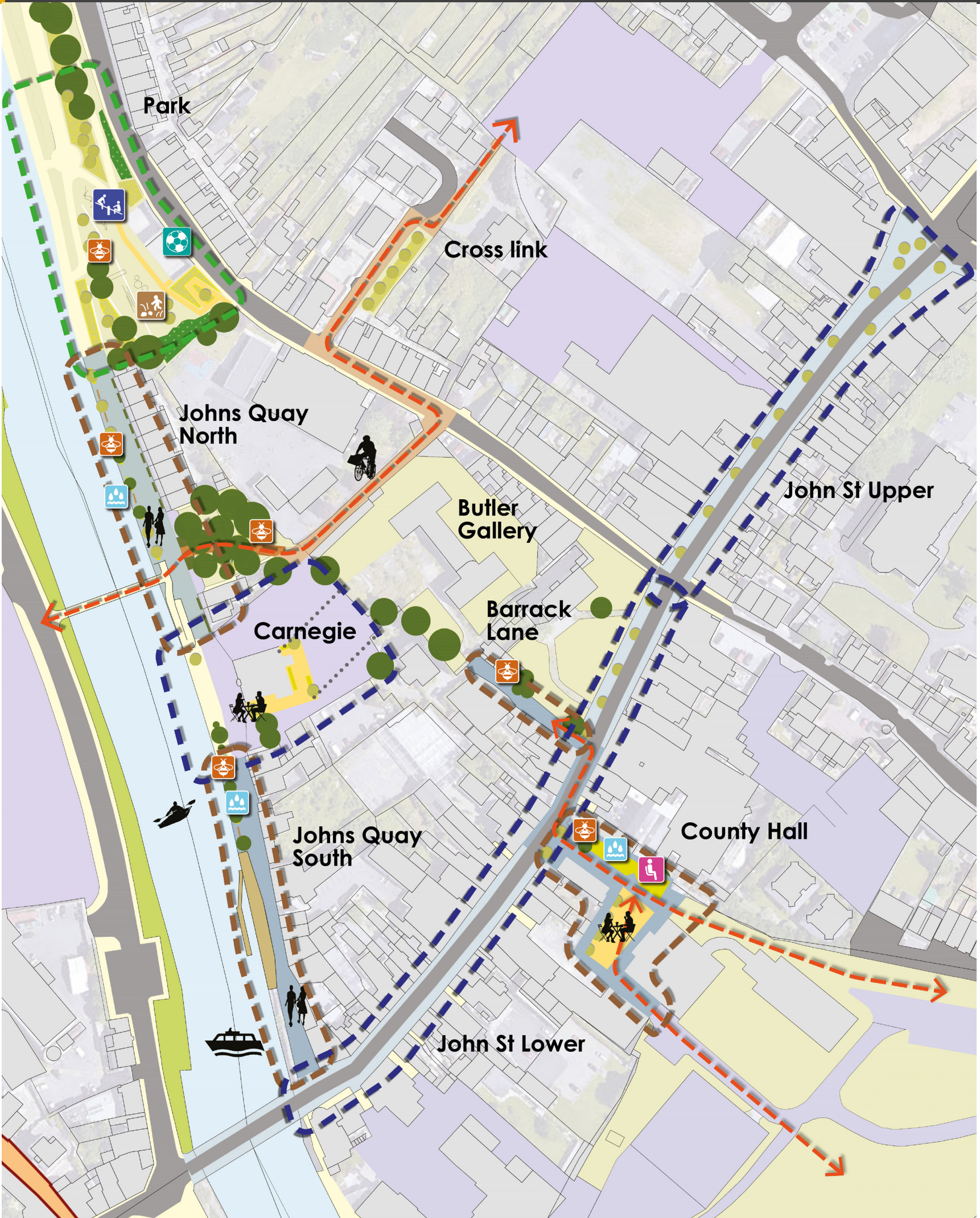


Figure 4-7. Draft Urban Design Strategy masterplan including preliminary design proposals and specification of projects in which the strategy should focus on. Own source.

4.2 URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY STATEMENT

FROM A TRAVEL THROUGH AREA TO A NEW ATTRACTIVE CENTRALITY IN KILKENNY

The John's Quay and John Street Urban Design Strategy envisions a thoughtful revitalization of Kilkenny's historic eastern riverside area blending its rich heritage with contemporary urban design principles. This strategy seeks to enhance the public realm by creating a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant space that respects the area's medieval architectural character in which current features, namely the former Carnegie Library, the Butler Gallery and public-owned properties along John Street, can be activated, stand out and be accessible for all. By embracing Kilkenny's unique cultural identity, the project will foster community pride and contribute to a lively, inclusive environment that celebrates both the past and present.

A primary goal of the strategy is to establish public realm regeneration that emphasizes connectivity, safety, and accessibility, particularly along John Street and John's Quay, in addition to their adjoining lanes and potential public realm areas (Carnegie public realm or County Hall plaza).

The design reimagines the riverside as a dynamic, pedestrian-oriented corridor linking John's Quay with the heart of Kilkenny, creating seamless movement across the area via an accessible boardwalk and jetty as a potential access to boats coming from main stops and hubs located south of this point. Enhanced walkways, inviting seating areas, and thoughtfully positioned green spaces will offer residents and visitors alike a welcoming place to gather, relax, and connect with the River Nore. Defensive planting and traffic-calming strategies will also contribute to protect residents' privacy and amenity in the area.

At the heart of this transformation is a commitment to placemaking through a diverse mix of uses to favour a 10-min neighbourhood model in Kilkenny City and particularly John's Quay/John Street. The strategy integrates existing residential and local retail uses with a future cultural use of the Carnegie building as a Local Studies Hub, including a showcase and exhibition space related to local heritage and culture, and the repurposing of publicly-owned properties at no.75-76 John Street for a mix-use centre including spaces and activities for the community and office accommodation to create a sustainable Coucil Hub concentrating most of its services, activating the County Hall plaza and frontage along John Street.

The strategy advocates for a balanced and liveable atmosphere throughout the day and evening beyond the current day time travel-through function and nightlife focus of John Street. The strategy also recommends to keep the engagement achieved in workshops with key stakeholder, local businesses and the community to enjoy and take ownership of the enhanced public realm and facilities.

Finally, the design strategy places strong emphasis on heritage preservation and revival. Within the scope of the strategy, historic buildings and streetscapes will be carefully valued, adapted for contemporary use and allowing for full accessibility, respecting Kilkenny's architectural legacy while accommodating modern needs. This approach ensures that the unique character of John's Quay and John Street remains a central feature, enriching the experience of the public realm and strengthening Kilkenny's identity as a vibrant, historic urban centre in the eastern side of River Nore.



Figure 4-8. Photomontage showing how the interface between John Street and Back Lane could look like after implementing the Urban Design Strategy proposals.

4.3 URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUT



Figure 4-9. Draft Urban Design Strategy masterplan including preliminary design proposals and specification of projects in which the strategy should focus on. Please refer to 1:500 drawing accompanying the strategy. Own source.

4.4 CHARACTER AREA AND ARCHITECTURAL STRATEGY

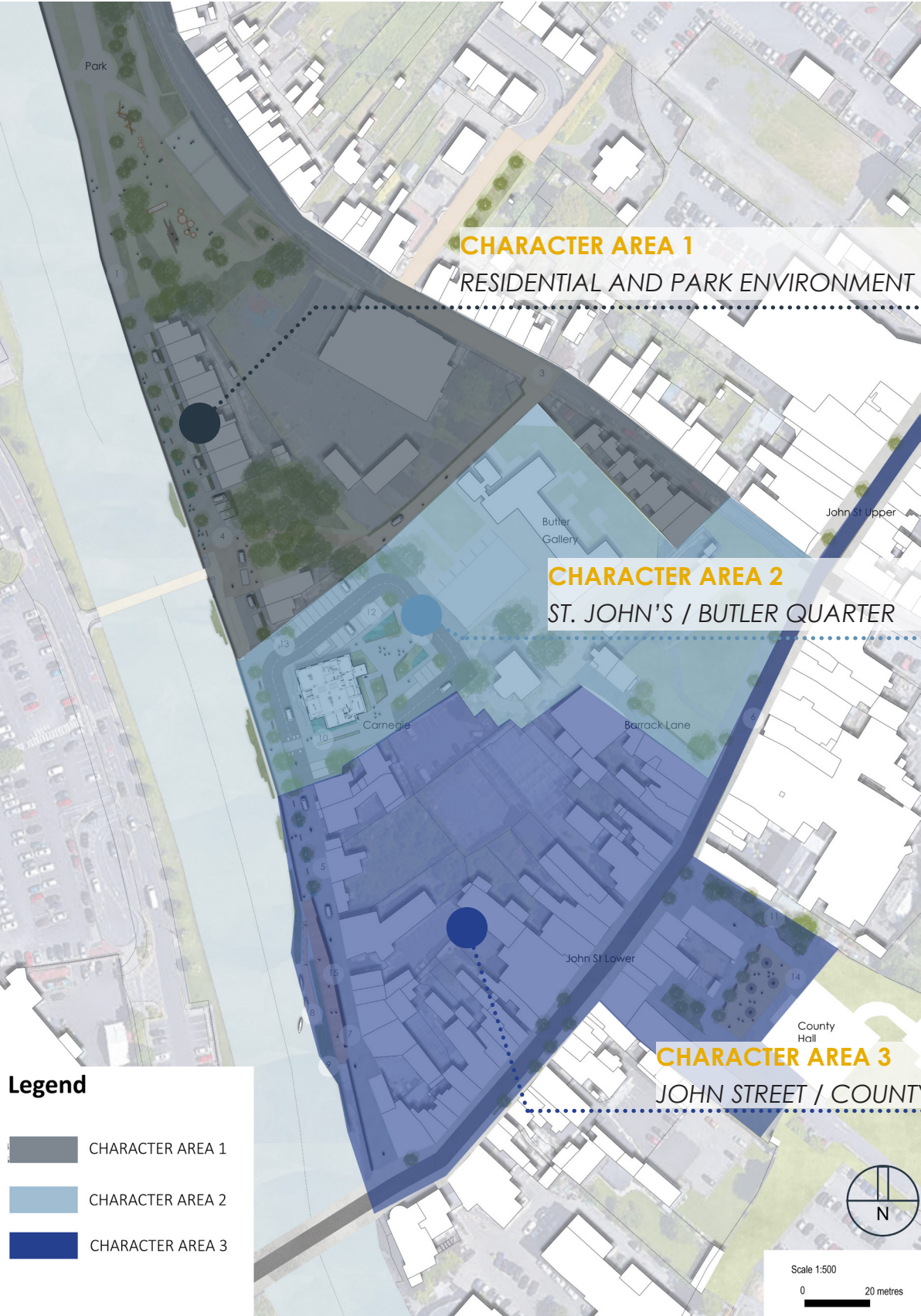


Figure 4-10. Overview of architectural character in the study area showing the current status of the built fabric and public realm across the three different precincts identified.

CHARACTER AREA 1

RESIDENTIAL AND PARK ENVIRONMENT



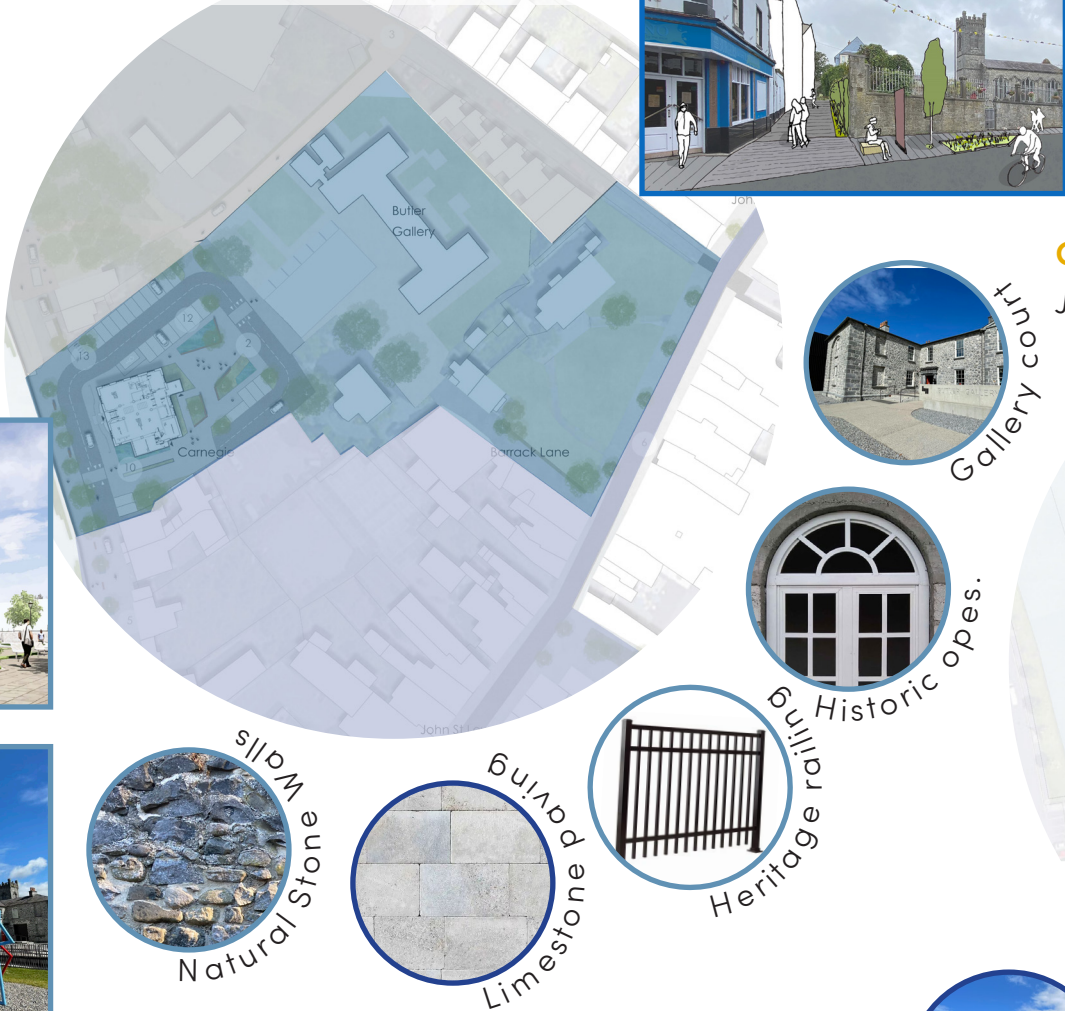
Along with the previous character overview, this section provides an outline on how essential urban design principles for the study area shall be implemented in the three character areas previously identified. It aims to guide architectural approaches within each character area, encourage diverse, innovative design, and establish principles for building and public realm linkages, as follows:

- **Character Area 1** is a riverside residential and park environment in nature. Built fabric consists predominantly of terraced housing finished in victorian red brick and grey render. Peace park features natural mature/semi-mature trees and a historic Ball Alleys that shall be retained and integrated in a new dynamic and natural place space with seating/gathering areas.
- **Character Area 2** is the most monumental featuring John's Priory, Butler Gallery and the former Carnegie Library. All of same are protected structures and any extension or alteration shall preserve and reinforce their historical character.

The limit established between Character Areas 1 and 2 corresponds to the threshold between John Street and Michael Street/ ACAs.

CHARACTER AREA 2

ST. JOHN'S / BUTLER QUARTER



CHARACTER AREA 3

JOHN STREET / COUNTY HALL

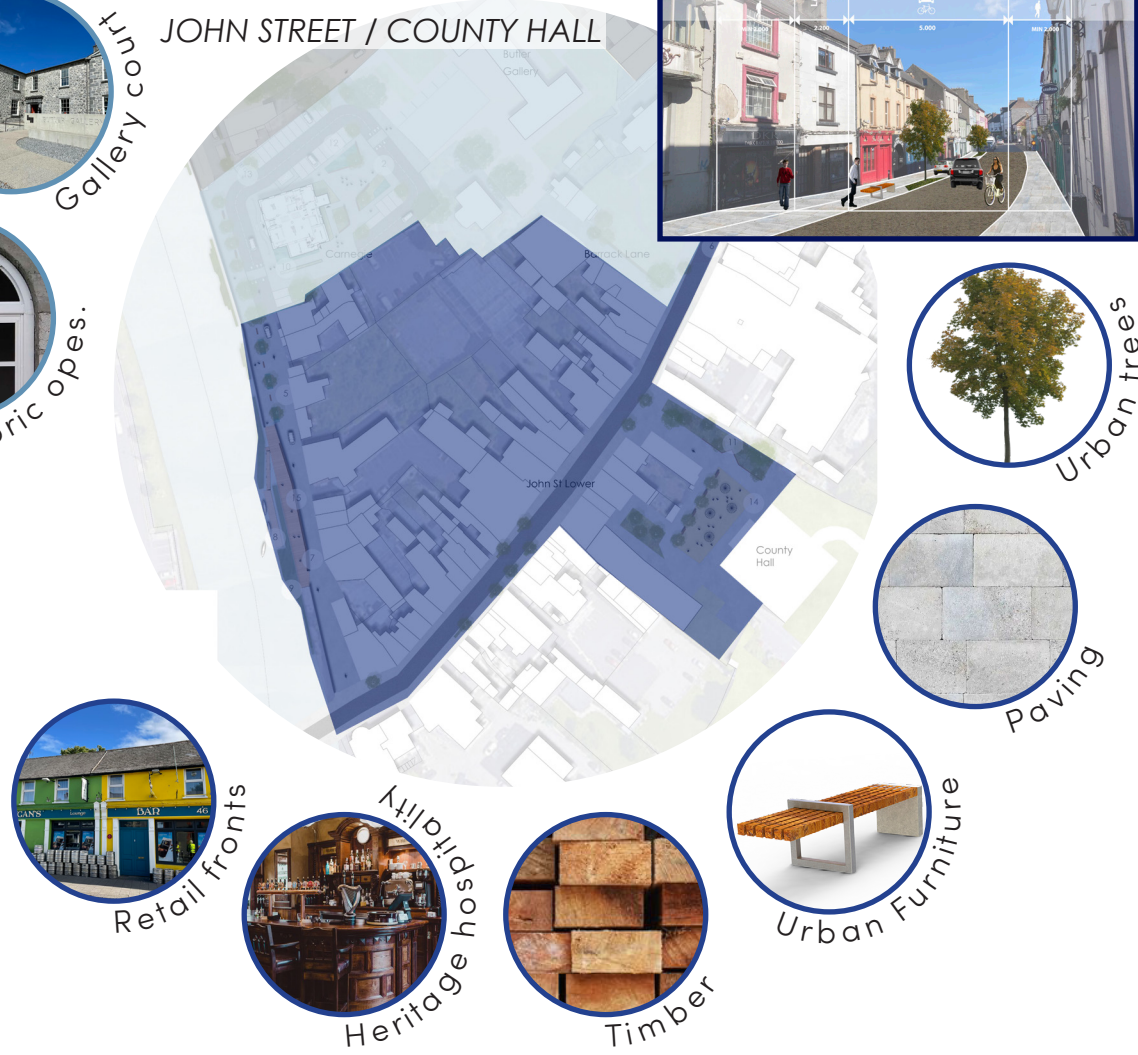


Figure 4-11. Architectural Character Guidance. This guidance shall be read in conjunction with the overall Urban Design Strategy for John's Quay/John Street presented in this document, along with ACAs and other heritage policy determinations.

4.5 INTEGRATION INTO KILKENNY SUMP

Kilkenny will be the first Irish city to approve and implement a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP). The SUMP process for Kilkenny kicked off in September 2022 and will finalise in Quarter 1 2025 - this strategy is being produced between September and November 2024. The SUMP is being developed with the ambition of satisfying the mobility needs of people and businesses in the City and its surroundings, aiming for a better quality of life. This plan will see the implementation of a vision, objectives and specific measures that relate to the movement of people in the city, such as the design of the streets, integration of public transport and safer walking and cycling infrastructure. The measures will be designed to make the City a vibrant, more user friendly, healthier and sustainable city for people.



Figure 4-12. SUMP design proposals, indicative images of John Street Upper and John Street Lower on the right. Source: Kilkenny County Council.

The integration of the Johns Quay and John Street Urban Design Strategy into Kilkenny's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) will focus on aligning with the SUMP's guiding principles to enhance mobility, sustainability, and quality of life in Kilkenny City. As Kilkenny City pursues its goal to become an accessible, sustainable city by 2030, this strategy will prioritize land-use and transportation integration, supporting the "10-minute city" vision to reduce transport demand and eliminate unsustainable journeys. As highlighted in the diagram and after cocreation design processes, John Street and John's Quay are identified as the main public realm corridors within the strategy's subject site, comprising opportunities to foster sustainable mobility and enhance public realm areas with wider footpaths and both more accessible and attractive design configurations of same and adjoining lanes and links.

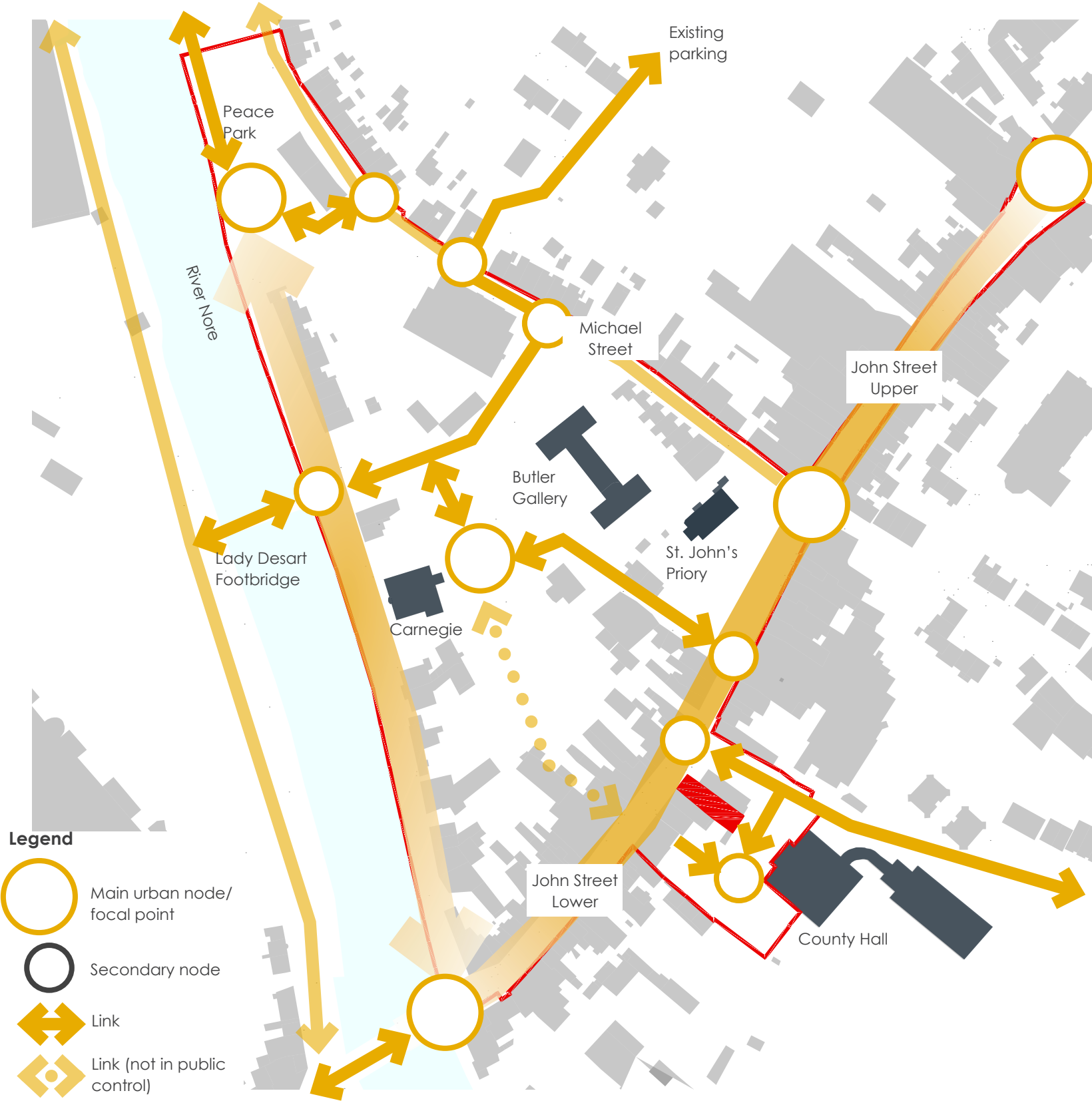


Figure 4-13. Schematic illustrating mobility considerations included in the Urban Design Strategy. Own source.

The consulting team engaged closely with the Kilkenny County Council planner responsible for the SUMP to ensure that the Urban Design Strategy aligned seamlessly with the plan's objectives through the cocreation workshops previously explained. SUMP existing documentation has been also reviewed since its process kicked off and gathered critical insights into the SUMP's evolving principles, including sustainable movement, urban space reallocation, and enhanced city center permeability. This engagement allowed the team to refine our approach, adapting the strategy to emphasize accessibility, adaptive reuse, and placemaking that resonates with Kilkenny's unique heritage.

The draft Urban Design Strategy was subsequently presented at the second cocreation workshop in which mobility planning and other council service managers had the opportunity to provide valuable feedback, which has been incorporated to this strategy as presented herein.



Figure 4-14. Photomontage showing how John Street Upper can look like after implementing the Urban Design Strategy. Own source.



Figure 4-15. Photomontage showing how John Street Lower at St. John's Priory and Barrack Lane can look like after implementing the Urban Design Strategy. Own source.

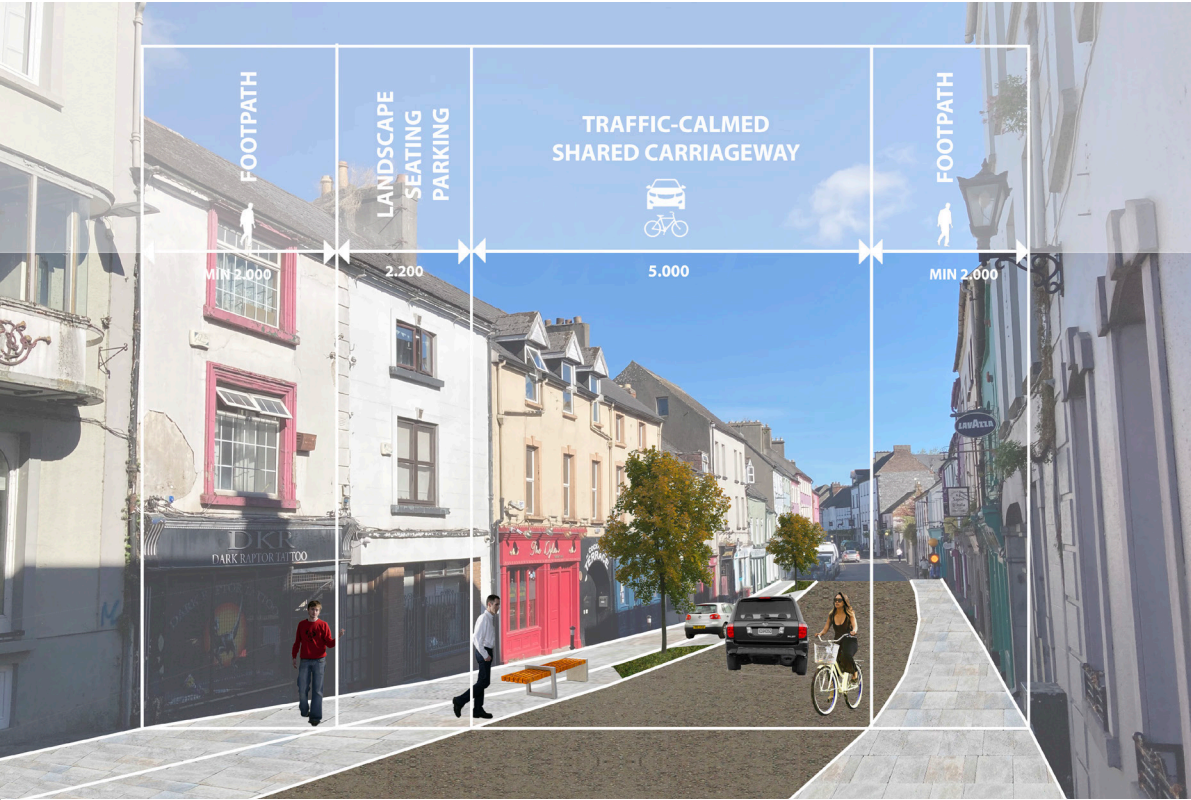


Figure 4-16. Photomontage showing how John Street Lower at no.75-76 publicly owned properties can look like after implementing the Urban Design Strategy. Own source.

5. DETAIL OF PROPOSED PROJECTS



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhoibriú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Deiscirt
Southern Regional
Assembly



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

5.1 THE PARK

The public open space north of the study area, Peace Park, enhancements aim to enrich its role as a vital green space in Kilkenny. Pollinator-friendly planting, including wild flower meadows and a micro woodland, will boost biodiversity, making the space lively and ecologically supportive.

Natural play equipment and terraced seating overlooking the river will add recreational opportunities, encouraging both relaxation and active use of the space. Additionally, the Handball Alleys will be revitalized with a complementary use, enhancing the park's cultural value and celebrating its heritage.

A new pedestrian and cycling link from Michael Street will improve accessibility, seamlessly connecting the park to its surroundings and encouraging sustainable movement options for locals and visitors alike. These enhancements will make the park an even more inviting and ecologically vibrant community space.

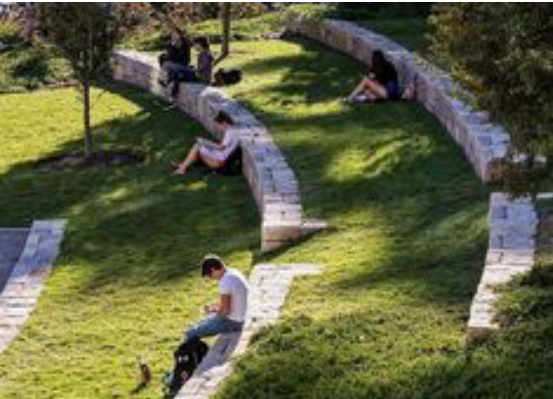


Figure 5-1. Reference image of stone terrace riverside terrace seating.



Figure 5-2. Current status of park and Ball Alleys. Own source.



Figure 5-3. Illustration showing how the enhanced park would look like with the proposed design.



Figure 5-4. Illustrative site plan of proposed park enhancements. Own source.

5.2 JOHN'S QUAY NORTH

This section of John's Quay in between the Park and the former Carnegie library requires for the protection of the existing residential amenity while contributing to an increase of pedestrian footfall at this and surrounding locations.

The main aim is to provide an attractive walkway from St.John's Bridge to the Park / Ball Alleys by limiting traffic and parking to residents with a "tactical urbanism" approach which dissuades visitor traffic particularly at this section of the quay.

The Strategy proposes the incorporation of protective planting along the inner side of the street along the public/private threshold better protecting front gardens of dwellings.

The main carriageway is treated as an environmental street/homezone in nature defined by existing planting that defines a more public outer side of the street. The motivation for this design proposal is to promote sustainable movement and social interaction, similar to other riverside sections in Kilkenny. It is also proposed to redefine the configuration and pruning of the existing treeline to enhance views to the river and to the existing attractive pedestrian bridge (Lady Desart Footbridge) connecting to western riverside (future Abbey Creative Quarter) and Kilkenny Castle to the south.



Figure 5-5. Illustrative site plan of proposed park enhancements. Own source.



Figure 5-6. Illustrative site plan of proposed John's Quay North redesign.

5.3 JOHN'S QUAY SOUTH

The brief is to develop a scenic boardwalk along the riverbank to encourage leisurely strolls and enhance accessibility. A jetty to facilitate stopping of river cruises and water sports, is also proposed to boost tourism and recreational activities. The presence and planning for main river boat boarding and parking facilities is noted by the strategy and the proposal for this jetty is thought as a secondary stop to provide the option for access and activate this section of John's Quay, as per its historical aspect (see historical photograph below).

It is proposed to introduce floating vegetation to create a vibrant biodiversity corridor along the river, supporting local wildlife and improving the ecosystem. The existing road surface shall be redesigned as a shared space, prioritising pedestrians and cyclists to promote safer and more sustainable transportation options.



Figure 5-7. Historical photograph of John's Quay South. Source: Kilkenny Co.Co.



Figure 5-9. Illustrative section of the proposed boardwalk and jetty at John's Quay South. Own source.



Figure 5-8. Illustrative site plan of proposed John's Quay redesign along its southern section. Own source.

5.4 JOHN STREET LOWER

The John's Quay/John Street area primarily functions as a transit route, with secondary uses for work and social activities, particularly in hospitality venues. Younger adults favor leisure and social gatherings, while older adults primarily use the area for work. This suggests a need for investment in pedestrian-friendly spaces and amenities, such as street seating and green areas, to support these uses.

Perceptions of the area are mixed, with common negative descriptors like “neglected” and “tired,” alongside positive terms like “historic” and “potential.” Younger respondents see the area’s potential for modern, innovative spaces, while older adults focus on the need for revitalization of its historical assets. The area would benefit from a design strategy that balances heritage restoration with modern amenities, creating an environment that meets the diverse needs of all age groups and enhances its social and economic vibrancy.

John Street and John's Quay are key areas of focus for the proposed Urban Design Strategy. Particularly, the redesign of John Street aims to enhance accessibility and sustainable movement, which result in improved liveability and vibrancy of the existing local retail. The key design proposal is to enhance the public realm along the street, particularly from the river to St. John's Priory and Michael Street including wider footpaths (min. 2m), street furniture and trees, and an overall more accessible and attractive configuration, as illustrated below.

John Street Lower presents the opportunity to be revitalised as a vibrant street at all day times with a clear prioritisation of increasing space for people according to universal design principles, in addition to DMURS and the emerging Kilkenny SUMP.

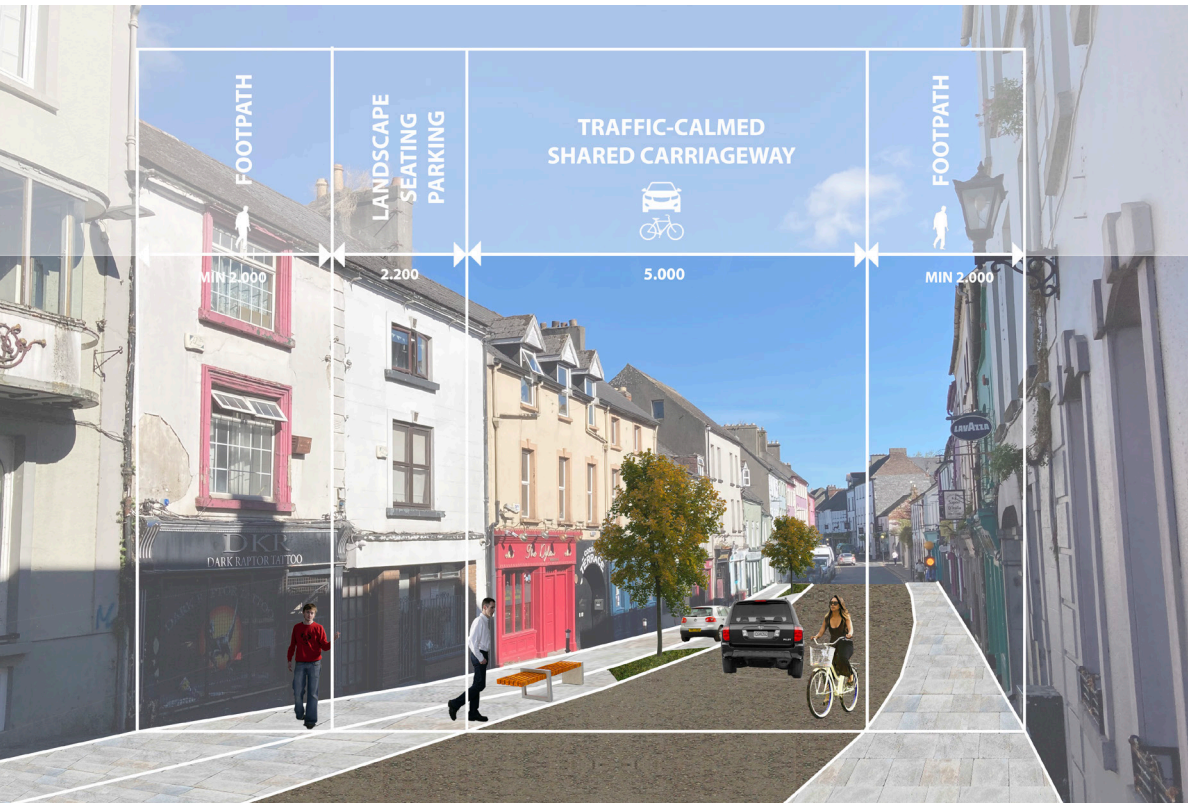


Figure 5-10. Photomontage of how John Street could look like with the implementation of this Urban Design Strategy.

Q22: How satisfied are you with the current traffic flow in the John's Quay / John Street area? (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)

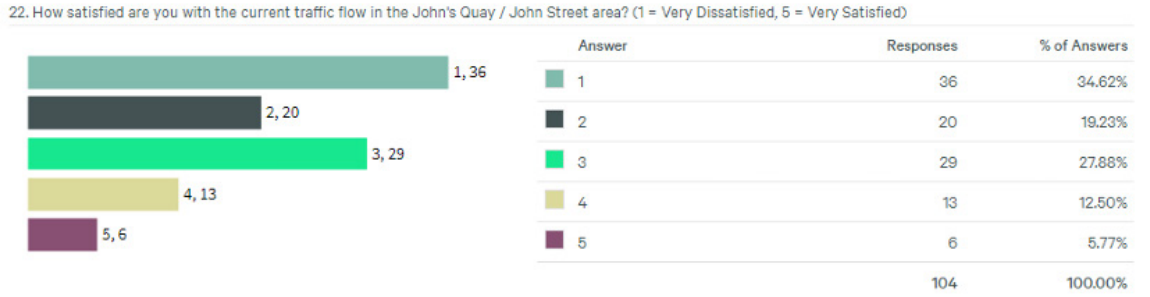


Figure 4-17. Results of the public survey asking for the main role of the area within Kilkenny City. Own source / Engagement Report (CBRE).



Figure 5-11. Illustrative site plan of proposed park enhancements. Own source.

5.5 JOHN STREET LOWER - BARRACK LANE

Within the overall approach to the enhancement of John Street, the design brief at this location is to:

- Apply new wayfinding signage to clearly mark the entrance to Barrack Lane and the Butler Gallery.
- Create a resting space on the street with seating and greenery.
- Pave Barrack Lane as a pedestrian laneway, with vehicular access limited to residents. Detail of pavement works along Barrack Lane are subject to assessment of existing archaeological remains.
- Use Kilkenny limestone for a unified paving of footpath and laneway, extending same to the Butler Gallery entrance to the north-west and to County Hall to the south-east.
- Include a low-planting buffer along St.John's Priory historic stone wall to preserve same and favour biodiversity continuity within the subject site.



Figure 5-12. Illustrative site plan of proposed interface between John Street and Barrack Lane with St. John's priory as the main backdrop feature. Own source.



Figure 5-13. Illustrative site plan of proposed park enhancements. Own source.

5.6 No. 75&76 JOHN STREET - COUNTY HALL

As previously presented, these projects are proposed to be addressed in conjunction. Currently County Hall is quality public realm space but constrained by controlled car access from John Street and presents poor pedestrian and cyclist connection to the southern River Nore amenity. Therefore, and according to the overall vision, the Urban Design Strategy proposes to:

- Add a shared surface at the John Street interface to highlight the gateway.
- Install floor signage linked to the historical stream for better wayfinding.
- Restrict car circulation to the south-eastern edge of County Hall.
- Introduce soft landscaping for vegetation and sustainable drainage (SUDS).
- Activate the space with repurposed buildings No. 75 and 76 John Street, and the historic County Hall.
- Create an intimate garden west of the main space for artists linked to the rear of No. 75 John Street, which would be repurposed as a working space with studios for them.

The strategic proposals for the buildings in particular are:

No. 75 John Street:

- Will be retrofitted, maintaining its current volumetry as a mix-use public facility. Minimal extensions shall just happen horizontally to the rear, respecting the proposed intimate garden.
- It is proposed to be redesigned with a flexible internal layout to favour connections to no.76 John Street and a mix of uses and activities for the community as identified in the strategy analys and as public workshops and survey suggest. The rear elevation facing County Hall will overlook an intimate garden, serving as an amenity for future users and visitors.
- Futher detail will be defined via a Part 8 planning application process.

No.76 John Street:

- Will be retrofitted and extended, mostly to its original footprint, but leaving a buffer to respect the existing remains of Kilkenny's medieval wall.
- Should feature a permeable and flexible ground floor, preserving its historical character and aesthetics facing John Street.
- Will have internal communication with No. 75 adjacent building and the County Hall plaza.
- Council offices will be located at the rear end of the ground floor (near the historic County Hall building) and on upper floors.
- Futher detail will be defined via a Part 8 planning application process.

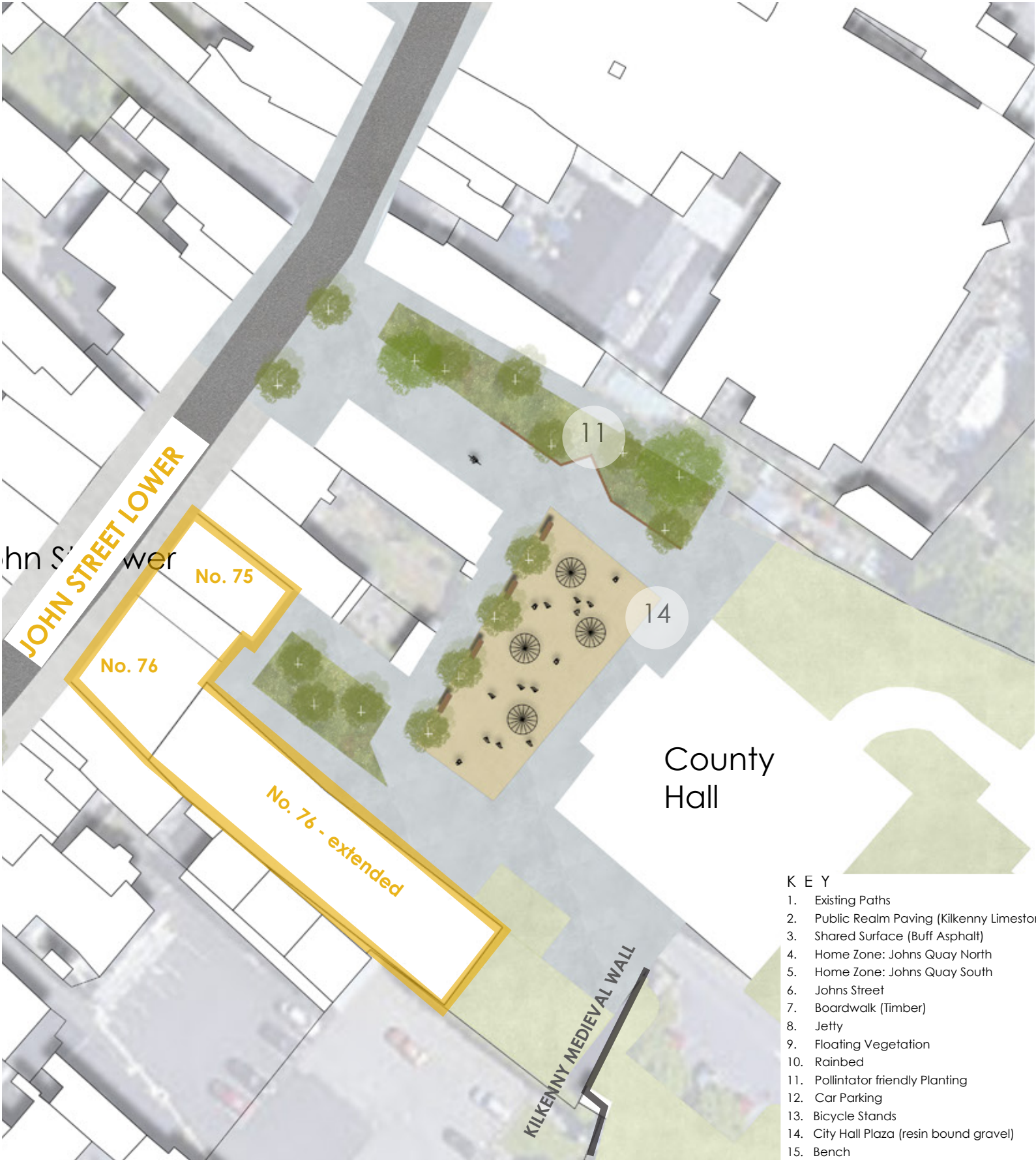


Figure 5-14. Illustrative site plan of proposed redesign of County Hall plaza overlooked by publicly-owned properties no.75 and 76 John Street outlined in the image.

5.7 CARNEGIE - KILKENNY LOCAL STUDIES HUB

The building is located within the John Street ACA and will therefore retain its architectural character. A minimal southern extension is proposed to create a more flexible ground floor layout, aligning with the Culture Lounge concept to allow for exhibitions related to local studies knowledge, research and activities. According to its current layout and volume, its function aims to follow its double-bay configuration including:

- A local studies office, research and storage space in the northern bay satisfying the needs identified for the correct functioning of the repurposed heritage building.
- A local studies public room in the southern bay also featuring a “veranda” extension, spacially linked to its surrounding public realm in the south. This space will enhance the open-plan area dedicated to the public within the building and will present the Local Studies Hub externally, showcasing its internal activities and attracting visitors.
- It will include staff working spaces and facilities in an open plan layout to favour interaction among them and the wider public.

The repurposing and internal design of the building is closely linked to the overall urban design strategy and particular public realm enhancements proposed at this location. The works outlined below will be executed in a second phase after the building retrofitting:

- Enhancement of pedestrian / cyclist routes around the building /through the site to improve accessibility.
- Introduction of green spaces to create inviting outdoor environments.
- Installation of public art installations to reflect local culture and history.
- Improvement of lighting for safety and ambiance during evening hours. It is proposed to install ground linear lighting along the Butler Gallery frontage to show the former route of a historical stream crossing the study area from north-west to south-east towards the River Nore.



Figure 5-15. Illustrative view of how the Carnegie and surrounding public realm would look like with the implementation of the proposed Urban Design Strategy. Own source.

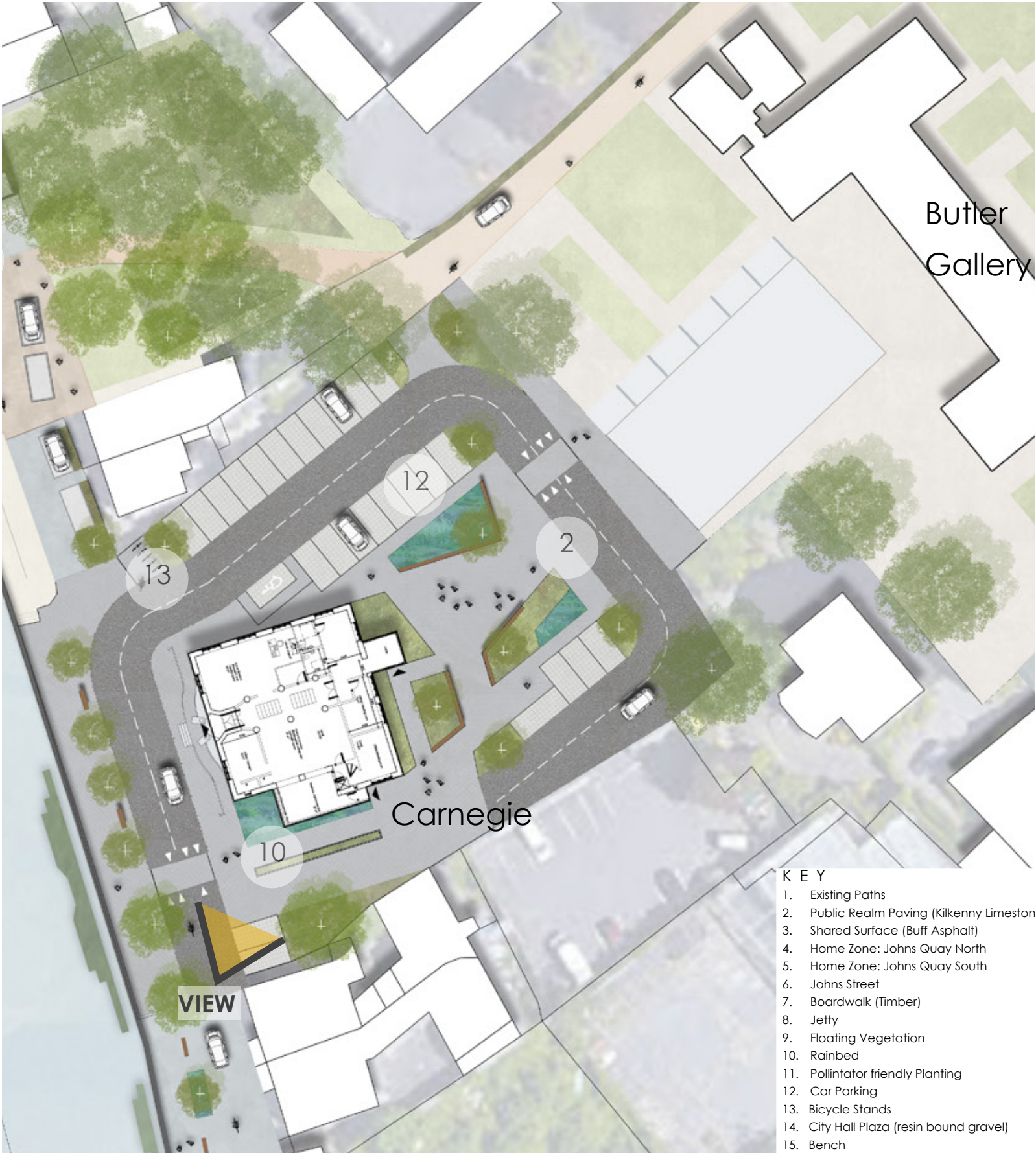


Figure 5-16. Illustrative site plan of an indicative internal layout for the Carnegie and surrounding public realm. Own source.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhoibriú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Deiscirt
Southern Regional
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Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

6.1 URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE

This section of the Urban Design Strategy outlines key principles and recommendations to guide the development of John Street and John's Quay. This guidance is structured to support the Strategy proposals detailed above and to align with Kilkenny's objectives for sustainable growth, heritage conservation, and improved community infrastructure and public realm. Each recommendation aims to address practical needs, including public realm enhancements, sustainable mobility options, heritage preservation, and economic support. By following these guidelines, future developments will contribute to a unified urban environment that meets the area's functional and community requirements.

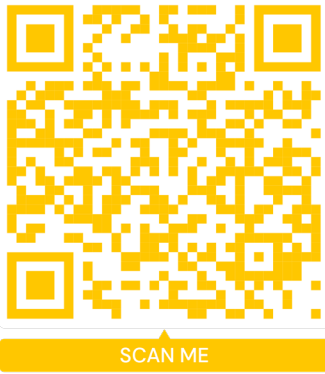


Figure 6-1. QR code including links to local, national and international best practice that is applicable to the proposed Urban Design Strategy.

1. SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Business-Friendly Streetscape: Improve shopfronts, signage, and pedestrian flow to create a visually appealing commercial area.
- Activate Public Spaces for Commerce: Use outdoor spaces for seasonal markets, dining, and events that attract visitors and stimulate local businesses.



2. PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Buildings: Transform historical sites, like The Carnegie Library, into community spaces that celebrate Kilkenny's heritage.
- Public Art Installations: Incorporate cultural markers and public art that reflect Kilkenny's history, fostering a sense of place.



3. REVITALISE THE PUBLIC REALM

- Greening and Landscaping: Integrate more greenery along the River Nore and main streets, contributing to a healthier, more inviting atmosphere.
- Public Seating and Maintenance: Install high-quality seating and maintain a clean environment, fostering a pleasant and interactive public realm.



From top to bottom:
1. Activated commercial gateway in Zaragoza (Spain)
2. Medieval Mile Museum in Kilkenny, repurposing 13th century church (McCullough Mulvin Architects).
3. Clonakilty 400 Urban Design (Cork Co.Co., Giulia Valone)

From top to bottom:
1. Current aspect of John Street, Kilkenny.
2. Proposed Carnegie Building repurposing and public realm revitalisation within the Urban Design Strategy.
3. Cork Proby's Quay

4. IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

- Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure: Expand and upgrade pathways to make them more accessible, with dedicated cycling lanes and improved public transport connections.
- Universal Design Standards: Ensure all public spaces incorporate features like ramps and tactile paving, enhancing accessibility for those with disabilities.



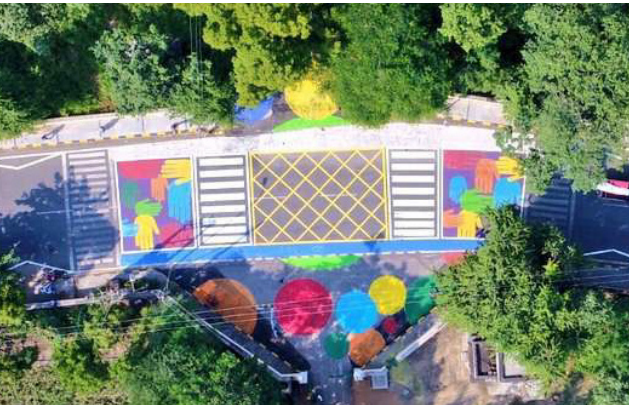
5. DEVELOP THE WATERFRONT AND BOARDWALK

- Boardwalk and Recreation Facilities: Construct a boardwalk along Johns Quay with seating and recreation areas, creating a scenic and vibrant waterfront for public enjoyment.



6. ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

- Lighting Strategy: Implement energy-efficient lighting in poorly lit areas to improve safety and encourage evening activities. Innovative ground lighting solutions integrated in paved areas could be explored at Butler Gallery and St. John's Priory boundaries, along with County Hall, following the historical fabric (i.e. east-west stream)
- Community Safety Programs: Increase police presence and community-led initiatives, such as neighbourhood watches, to foster a greater sense of security.



7. IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

- Nature-Based Solutions: Use permeable surfaces and green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, to manage flood risks and promote resilience.
- Flood Monitoring: Regularly monitor flood-prone areas and maintain control measures, ensuring ongoing resilience.



From top to bottom:
1. Shared-surface accessible public realm at new Kilkenny Library (own source photograph)
2. River Dargle Scheme boardwalk (Co. Wicklow)
3. Tactical Urbanism in front of School, Uaipur (could be implemented in Michael Street).
4. Rain Garden (SUDS interim guidance, Gov. of Ireland)

From top to bottom:
1. Traffic-calmed street (Tulamore Regeneration Framework
2. Section of proposed boardwalk and jetty in John's Quay.
3. Ground lighting in heritage areas (Navarrete, Spain - left - WOW Centre in Porto, Portugal - right).
4. Rain Garden (SUDS interim guidance, Gov. of Ireland)

6.2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There are several funding options available that could support Kilkenny's plans to enhance public spaces like those in the John Street and John's Quay area. Many of these funds are aimed at projects that improve community areas, increase accessibility, preserve heritage, and introduce sustainable practices.

Locally, Kilkenny County Council offers grant programs such as the Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Grant Scheme, which helps fund community-benefiting facilities, and the Festival Grants Scheme, which supports events that bring in tourism and contribute to Kilkenny's cultural life. For climate-related projects, the Community Climate Action Programme offers grants for initiatives that promote low-carbon and sustainable spaces.

On a broader level, national and EU programs like the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), the LIFE Programme, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) provide support for projects focused on urban renewal, environmental resilience, and sustainable mobility. These options align well with Kilkenny's goals for public realm improvements, support for local businesses, and green infrastructure development.

While public-private partnerships are generally opportunities to be considered for funding public projects, it is not recommended to include those here because the buildings involved are publicly owned and designated solely for public use and non-profit activities. Public-private partnerships typically rely on mutual benefits, including potential commercial interests for the private sector, which does not align with the public-focused and community-serving purpose of these sites. Instead, the funding approach prioritizes grants and government programs that specifically support publicly oriented, non-commercial spaces.

The table provided overleaf includes an outline of the above, including the description, conditions and opportunities of the most important European and national programmes that could help funding the Urban Design Strategy proposals.



Figure 6-2. Indicative overview of funding opportunities for the Urban Design Strategy proposals.



Figure 6-3. Illustrative site plan of an indicative internal layout for the Carnegie and surrounding public realm. Own source.

FUNDING OPTION	DESCRIPTION	CONDITIONS	OPPORTUNITIES
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	EU fund supporting regional economic development, including sustainable urban mobility, social inclusion, and environmental projects. Details of the ERDF for Ireland can be retrieved in this link.	Projects must align with EU cohesion policies and demonstrate long-term socio-economic benefits. The Southern Region where Kilkenny is located is classified as 'more developed' by the EU. In Ireland, the ERDF for the 2021-2027 EU period is channelled through the State Regions, namely the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-27 from which Kilkenny can benefit of. The Programme will invest €663 million, supported by €265 million ERDF and €398 million Government of Ireland funding, to strengthen EU economic, social and territorial cohesion by correcting imbalances between regions under three strategic priority areas: • Smarter and more competitive regions. • Greener more efficient regions and Just Transition. • Sustainable Urban Development in our Regions (Town Centre First Framework - THRIVE Programme) The ERDF cofinancing rate from Europe is 40% with the balance of 60% provided by the Government of Ireland. Kilkenny County Council can receive 100% of funding for integrated Urban Design Strategies within the THRIVE Programme Strand 1 (third area above) and projects that promote conservation and adaptive reuse of our built heritage (THRIVE Strand 2) ,as detailed on the "opportunities" column.	Funding opportunities are related to the development and/or enhancement of integrated urban strategies for designated settlements. These strategies (THRIVE Strand 1) must meet the following criteria: (a) They must use the Town Centre First Framework which promotes a multi-disciplinary, participatory and community led approach to identify and develop projects and initiatives tackling town centre regeneration, vacancy and dereliction. (b) They must seek to promote the values and working principles of the New European Bauhaus and the implementation of circular economy principles in the built environment. (c) They must meet the criteria5 set out in Article 29 of Regulation (EU) 2021/10606 to be eligible for ERDF support. Identification of projects that promote the conservation and adaptive reuse of our built heritage stock while reducing vacancy and dereliction in town centres. Prioritisation, development, and specification of project proposals to create a pipeline of investment-ready built heritage refurbishment, renovation and adaptive reuse projects, bringing one of them to a stage of readiness where it can be included in a THRIVE Strand 2 application.
EU LIFE Programme	The EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action, supporting projects that contribute to environmental and climate objectives.	Projects must align with EU environmental and climate policies, demonstrating innovation, best practices, or governance improvements. Co-funding is typically required as it typically covers 60% of investment projects.	Supports projects focusing on nature conservation (i.e proposed biodiversity corridors, pollinator-friendly planting or Park enhancements), environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation (SUDS in public realm areas and John Street) or application of the New European Bauhaus principles (i.e Carnegie building, County Hall / 75&76 John Street).
Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)	Irish government fund supporting regeneration projects to drive sustainable development in urban areas.	Projects must align with urban regeneration, improve quality of life, and promote sustainable growth. Proposals typically require co-funding from local authorities.	Significant funding for large-scale projects; aligns with public realm revitalization (e.g. John Street and John's Quay) and heritage preservation.
HERITAGE COUNCIL funding schemes	Irish funding program supporting local heritage projects, including conservation, cultural heritage, and historical site improvements.	Projects must focus on heritage conservation and community benefit. Limited to community groups, local authorities, or NGOs with heritage-focused objectives.	Supports conservation efforts in historic areas, aligning with the heritage aspects of the proposed Urban Design Strategy (e.g. environs of Butler Gallery and St. John's Priory). Funding offers will be renewed in 2024.
NTA Active Travel Investment Programme	Provides funding for projects that encourage sustainable transport, including walking, cycling, and urban mobility improvements.	Must align with national sustainable transport objectives; generally requires proposals to demonstrate expected reductions in car dependency and improved accessibility.	Supports sustainable mobility initiatives; suited to enhancing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Pedestrian connections across the study area and enhancements to favour sustainable and active movement along John Street and John's Quay could be subject to this funding.
Section 48 Development Contributions	General development contributions levied by local authorities to fund infrastructure that supports overall development within the jurisdiction.	Applied universally within the local authority area, based on a predetermined scheme; developers contribute based on project size and type.	Funds cansupport broad infrastructure improvements, including public realm enhancements and transportation upgrades (proposals in the strategy might be prioritised in conjunction with the emerging Kilkenny SUMP).
Section 49 Development Contributions	Supplementary development contributions for specific infrastructure projects or services that directly benefit developments in the area.	Levied in addition to Section 48; targeted toward specific projects like new transport infrastructure or public services that directly benefit the development.	Provides targeted funding for strategic infrastructure needs, such as enhancing connectivity in John Street and John's Quay.

Table 6-1. European and National funding opportunities.

6.3 CONCLUSION AND STRATEGY DNSH STATEMENT

The proposed Urban Design Strategy for John Street and John's Quay presents a comprehensive approach to revitalizing this historic area, focusing on sustainable mobility, accessible public spaces, and the enhancement of Kilkenny's cultural character. Through careful planning and alignment with Kilkenny's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), the strategy aims to create a vibrant, community-centred environment that respects both the past and future needs of the city.

The strategy also aligns with investment in this project should do no significant harm to the environmental objectives as outlined in Articles 9 and 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 to facilitate sustainable investment. The proposed Urban Design Strategy embraces and aligns with these environmental objectives as follows:

1. Climate Change Mitigation:

By facilitating sustainable and active transport options like walking and cycling through the proposed connections and public realm enhancements, the strategy helps reduce car dependency and lower carbon emissions, contributing directly to Kilkenny's climate targets.

2. Climate Change Adaptation:

Incorporating climate-resilient features, such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), prepares the area for extreme weather events and helps manage stormwater, addressing climate-related risks.

3. Sustainable Use and Protection of Water Resources:

Through SuDS and green infrastructure, the strategy enhances water management, reduces runoff, and protects local water bodies, supporting sustainable water use and pollution prevention.

4. Transition to a Circular Economy: Emphasizing reuse and upcycling in public space improvements supports a circular economy by reducing waste and promoting durable, low-maintenance materials.

5. Pollution Prevention and Control: By encouraging pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, the strategy aims to cut down on traffic congestion and vehicle emissions at the John's Quay and John Street area. Green urban spaces contribute to improved air quality and pollution control.

6. Protection and Restoration of Biodiversity and Ecosystems: Green spaces and native planting within the strategy (Park, John's Quay, public realm at the Carnegie and County Hall) enhance urban biodiversity, fostering habitats for local wildlife and strengthening ecosystems within the study area and wider Kilkenny, with a particular focus on the River Nore, which is a Natura 2000 site.

Figure 6-4. Illustrative sketch of how the interface between John Street Lower and Barrack Lane could look like. Own source.

6.4 WAY-FORWARD AND ROADMAP

To implement the strategy effectively and successfully, the following way forward and phased roadmap is recommended:

Detailed Design and Funding Identification:

Develop specific design concepts that reflect the environmental objectives and secure relevant funding through local, national, and EU sources focused on public space, green infrastructure, and sustainability.

Initial Improvements:

Test smaller interventions according to tactical urbanism principles, such as temporary pedestrian zones or green installations, to gather community feedback and fine-tune larger-scale improvements in detail.

Full-Scale Implementation:

Projects shall be developed through Part 8 applications according to the principles outlined in this Urban Design Strategy. These projects should be prioritised emphasizing pedestrian and cycling connectivity, sustainable drainage, and active ground-floor uses to create a lively, community-oriented public realm.

Ongoing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adjustments:

Regularly monitor the area's performance, gathering insights on usage, accessibility, and community impact to make evidence-based adjustments and maintain the area's vibrancy as envisaged herein.

This phased approach balances ambition with practicality, allowing the strategy to evolve with feedback, funding opportunities, and changing urban needs, creating a sustainable, resilient John Street and John's Quay that serves as a model for responsible urban revitalization.





7. APPENDICES



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APPENDIX 1 - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Geological, hydrological and geo-hidrological report

SEA Screening and AA Screening Note report

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)



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APPENDIX 2

INFRASTRUCTURAL STRATEGY



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APPENDIX 3

ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY REPORT



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JOHN'S QUAY & JOHN STREET URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY



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