**Special Meeting of Kilkenny County Council held on 27th May, 2015 at 5.00p.m.**

**Chair:** Cllr. P. Millea

**Cllrs:** M. H. Cavanagh, M. Shortall, J. Brennan, M. McCarthy, P. Fitzpatrick, A. McGuinness, P. Cleere, M. Doyle, P. O’ Neill, B. Gardner, D. Kennedy, M. Doran, J. Malone, M. Noonan, D. Fitzgerald, K. Funchion, P. Dunphy, F. Doherty, E. Aylward, T. Breathnach, G. Frisby.

**Officials:** J. Mulholland, P. O’ Neill, M. Prendiville, S. Walton, S. McKeown, D. Malone, T. Lauhoff, N. Louw, K. Hanley, B. Tyrrell and A.M. Walsh

**Apologies:** Cllrs. M. O’ Neill & M. McKee

Cllr. Millea opened the meeting and advised that the executive will make a number of presentations on the draft master plan for the Abbey Quarter and the proposed variation of the City & Environs Development Plan. He advised members that there will be an opportunity for questions when all the presentations have been made.

1. Mr. Mulholland briefed the meeting on the changes that have taken place since the 1st draft of the Masterplan in November, 2013.
* Removal of buildings from the environs of the Abbey
* Finger building changed to reflect the existing urban green
* Social & Community housing to the north of the site
* Pedestrian/cycle priority shared space.
* Urban Park at the Abbey
* Conservation Planning commitment
* Park and walk site close by
* Extension of scope of plan to include Bateman Quay

He referred to the extensive consultation that has taken place. He outlined to this meeting that there are three important opportunities arising for the Council since January 2015 as follows:-

* Funding allocation of €4.5m for new social housing which needs to be delivered urgently
* Written expression of interest from ISIF
* Application for funds under European Regional Development to be made during the summer.

He also advised that the grant of €600k from Failte Ireland needs to be spent by the end of 2016. There are written expressions of interest from 2 prospective business occupiers.

Mr. Mulholland recommended to members that the finalisation of the masterplan be completed over the next few months with a view to members approving it in July 2015 and that the Council commence the process for a variation of the City & Environs Development Plan to put a statutory footing in place for high level objectives for the Brewery Site.

 He outlined in his presentation 9 high level objectives for the variation and these will be circulated in this presentation to members. He advised members that there will be further opportunities for public consultation on individual projects.

1. Mr. Prendiville gave an update on the funding options and referred to his previous presentation given to members in March, 2015. He outlined in his presentations the funding options for Kilkenny County Council for the development of the site. The site has been purchased by both local authorities and development of infrastructure including the Park will be funded through grant and ERDF Funds. The development of commercial offices requires investment from other parties - such as NTMA/ISIF which is the Council’s preferred option. Mr. Prendiville outlined the key principles required in establishing partnership with ISIF, A separate joint venture company will be established Kilkenny County Council equity will be 49% i.e. land and ISIF equity will be 51% i.e. cash. Legal agreement will be put in place to govern the set up and operation of the joint venture. The board of the joint venture will represent the interest of both Kilkenny County Council and ISIF and board members will have the relevant skills. ISIF will lend the finance to the joint venture on commercial terms. Kilkenny County Council will not be required to guarantee the borrowings. There is no risk to Kilkenny County Council. The joint venture is responsible for all aspects of marketing, development and operation of the commercial operation space.

Shareholders agreement will be reviewed at the end of 3 years and there will be options available to withdraw for both parties if no substantial development has taken place. Any costs incurred will be shared pro rata if this happens and ISIF will be compensated for their share of any increase in land values subject to a cap of 10%.

**(c )** Mr. Denis Malone, Senior Planner made a presentation to the members and outlined in his presentation a brief re-cap on the history of the site since agreement was reached to purchase in May 2012. He listed the significant investments in the preparation of the draft master plan.

He outlined to the meeting a summary of the views expressed at the public consultations, workshops and written submissions.

He detailed the work undertaken since 24/1/2015- Archaeology study has been completed Strategic Environmental Assessment has been advanced, Flood Risk Assessment and Appropriate Assessment has been completed. Iterative Design process advanced concepts considered for initial Linear Park. Further public engagement took place on 16th May, 2015. A number of illustrations were shown on the changes made to the draft master plan. Details on street widths were shown and compared to the existing urban realm. Mr. Malone referred members to major points to note such as

* Substantial urban park at Abbey Quarter
* Change to the urban blocks proposed
* Community Housing area included
* Pedestrian and cycle friendly and traffic management controls
* Commitment to sensitive treatment of architectural and archaeological assets on the site.

Mr. Malone outlined that the next steps in this process is to place the revised draft master plan on public display, formalise the variation and public display. Both of these will need to be considered at a special meeting in late July.

Further work will be undertaken on architectural and urban design framework and masterplan provisions to be inserted into the development plans by way of variations . Work will be further advanced on individual projects i.e. Linear Park, Brewhouse, Mayfair, Infrastructure and Archaeological investigation.

Mr. Mulholland advised the meeting that all presentations will be circulated to members and will be placed on the Council’s website.

He stated that the planning application for the Linear Park will probably be to Bord Pleanala.

1. Mr. Tony Lauhoff, Project Engineer gave a powerpoint presentation on the Archaeological review of the site. This review is still a working draft. He outlined to the members the plan area and indicated on the map the extent of the area and the various monuments/structures included. He advised that an archaeological report has been commissioned to enhance the understanding of the site, to create a record of the existing knowledge base and to inform the master plan process for future decision making on the available information. In the re-development of the site, the historic character, monuments, views and prospects will be protected.

He advised what is required to be delivered from the archaeological review and the objectives of the strategy. The principle objective is to retain and celebrate the historic quality of the plan area, to promote its significance through interpretation and presentation. The change needs to be managed appropriately and the Abbey and surrounding monuments need to be at the centre of the development.

He advised that a heritage and conservation plan will be prepared in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. New views will be created. The archaeological findings will be presented and in order to enhance the visitors experience there will be soft and hard landscaping proposals. All the historic monuments will be retained, conserved and sensitively incorporated into the Master plan area.

1. Mr. Tony Lauhoff presented an overview on the emerging landscape design proposals. He stated that the River Nore will be the focus for the park. There will be a skate park incorporated into the design. Different areas of the park will be developed to cater for all ages and needs. The Linear Park will be 15 wide and a park will be developed around the Abbey. This area is in a Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation and cognisance must be taken of this. A number of slides were shown depicting different concepts and pockets of spaces e.g. Park Gateway, Linear Walk, opening up access to the River, seating areas and gardens around the Abbey.

Multi functional spaces will be provided. There will be limited vehicular access. The park will be more pedestrian friendly.

There will be opportunity for public consultation at planning stage.

Mr. J. Mulholland stated that a lot of information has been given by all the presenters. A copy of the Flood Risk Assessment presentation will be included when the presentation are being e-mailed to members. He stated that a lot of work has been put into the different projects across a lot of displinces. A number of reports will be available to the public over the next few years on the various projects. There will be many opportunities for public feedback. It is vital that we proceed to the final master plan and Mr. Mulholland recommended that the Statutory Variation process commence immediately in order to avail of the best opportunities that have presented over the last few months.

Cllr. P. Millea thanked Mr. Mulholland and all the staff for their detailed presentation. There has been a number of briefing meetings, public consultations on the master plan and there will be opportunities for more. He requested members to approve the commencement of the variation to the City and County Development Plan.

It was proposed by Cllr. D. Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr. B. Gardner and agreed: - “That a variation to the Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan 2014-2020 be proceeded with and that it be advertised for public consultation”.

Cllr. Noonan requested that amendments be considered to the draft text circulated. Mr Mulholland advised that amendments/submissions can be made once the variation is published, and the report will come back to the Council for consideration and approval.

Contributions were received from Cllrs. M. Noonan, A.McGuinness, B. Gardner, M. H. Cavanagh, M. Shortall, J. Brennan, F. Doherty, P. Millea, P. Cleere, T. Breathnach and M. Doyle.

Members welcomed all the presentations and the updated reports on the work undertaken over the last few years on the draft master plan and the significant changes incorporated. In general, members welcomed that there will be further opportunities for public engagement on the individual projects and requested that consideration be given to having an open day and allowing the public to walk the site. Queries were raised on the following issues:-

* Clarify variation process and timelines
* Clarify status of temporary bus/car park
* Addition of social houses is welcome but further details required on the design and location which is near a busy road
* Issues regarding retaining or demolishing the Mayfair and Brewhouse, cost to retrofit building.
* Clarify time periods for funding proposals for development of the site, concerns regarding losing grant for Linear Park and other projects if decisions are not made.
* Further information required on joint venture and land values, funding options.
* Opportunities to amend the approved master plan. If new information on Archaeology comes to light
* Concerns re spur road through the site.
* Can a micro brewery site be incorporated into the site?

Mr. Mulholland, Mr. Prendiville and Mr. Malone responded to all the queries raised by members.

Mr. Mulholland re-iterated that 3 years has elapsed since the site was purchased and we have been treading carefully over the last few years to ensure that the development of this significant city site is right for Kilkenny. Provision will be made for members to meet the staff involved for further clarification on any issue and staff are available at any time if members wish to meet on a one to one basis. The site has not yet been vacated by Diageo and as soon as site comes into the ownership of Kilkenny County Council, a site visit can be facilitated. All the projects are challenging in their own rights but Kilkenny does need investment and jobs and there is also a social housing crisis.

He reminded members that funding will be lost if the linear park project does not proceed now. The retention of the Mayfair and brewhouse was agreed by members and it was noted that their redevelopment would be in keeping with sustainable development. There are currently interested parties interested in the office space that would be provided by these buildings.

Funding will determine the development of the site. In the absence of funds the site will be left as it is for many years.

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Shortall, seconded by Cllr. D. Kennedy and agreed: - “That an open day be held for all interested parties”.

It was proposed by Cllr. M.H. Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. J. Brennan and agreed: - “That a Special Meeting be convened on 27th July, 2015 at 10.00a.m. to discuss the final master plan and consider the variation to the Development Plans”

The meeting then concluded.