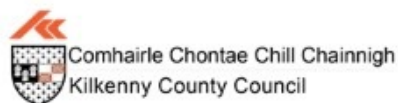




# Kilkenny City

## Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Report

2022



Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the individuals and organisations who assisted in the completion of this project by generously offering their time and expertise with special thanks to staff from Kilkenny County Council, the Kilkenny City Centre Task Force members and the Heritage Council for their financial support for this study. This report summarises the ideas created by level 3 Geography and Planning students from Queen's University Belfast as part of their EVP3004 – Conservation of the Built Environment module.

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# Contents

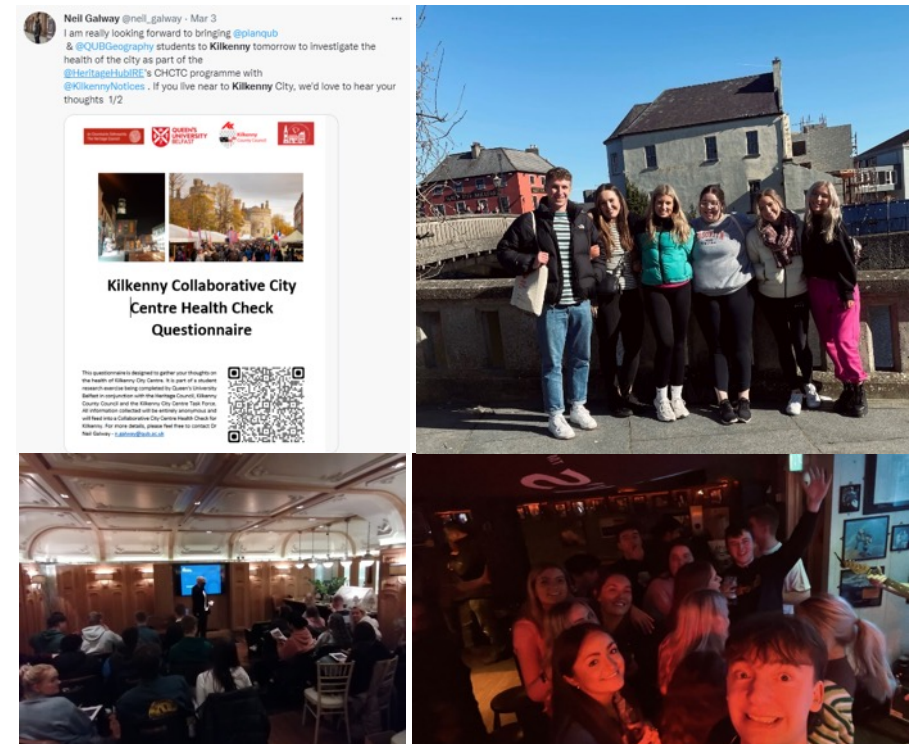
	Page Number
Introduction	6
Policy Context	9
Analysis	12
Projects	23



# Introduction

This Collaborative Town Centre Health Check was completed by final year undergraduate Geography and Planning students from Queen's University Belfast as part of the module: EVP3004 – Conservation of the Built Environment. Students were briefed on the Heritage Council's CTCHC process and its key steps in advance of the study by Dr Neil Galway and given background information on Kilkenny's history, planning and regeneration context by staff from Kilkenny County Council's planning team. The field work was completed by 28 students working in 5 groups on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The students completed detailed land use surveys of the city centre, footfall- and vehicular traffic- counts, parking surveys and public realm analysis. These steps were complemented by an online questionnaire, which was disseminated by Kilkenny County Council and members of the City Centre Task Force in advance of the field visit. The data gathered formed the analytical foundation for heritage-led regeneration strategies. This document is an edited summary of the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check findings with some of the regeneration ideas devised by the class.





# First Impressions

Kilkenny is a historically rich and vibrant city that boasts a range of activities for tourists to explore and a wealth of restaurants, cafés and bars to choose from. The city is treasured by its residents, who care deeply for its future, as was apparent from the many conversations the class held with the people living in the city; however, the residents recognised several opportunities for improvement.

The River Nore was central to the settlement first being established in this location and now through sensitive regeneration initiatives, the city has the potential to be returned to its river.

Secondly, the lack of spaces for the young people to hang out in the city centre offers further ground to enhance its liveability and broader attraction.

Lastly, Rose Inn Street poses a dangerous threat to the public as it is heavily congested with narrow footpaths. Making this street a two-way street again would represent a retrograde change to the character of Kilkenny.







Left: Rose Inn Street: Could two-way traffic ever have worked safely on this street? Are extra bollards for one-way system for pedestrians or cyclists?  
 Middle: Distinctiveness of the Medieval slips  
 Right: Potential for additional vibrancy of al fresco dining on St Kieran's Lane.



# Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021

## Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

- To seek the retention, repair and regular maintenance of original/early features in the buildings which contribute to the character of an ACA.
- To ensure that inappropriate materials (aluminium, uPVC etc) are not introduced to buildings within ACAs
- .To maintain the special character of ACAs when assessing proposals for signage and advertising.
- To seek the retention of mature trees/plantings which contribute to the character of the ACA.
- To ensure existing stone kerbs, or cobble stones, are retained and refurnished or replaced on a like-for-like basis.



### **Movement and Transport**

- The Development Plan aims to promote cycling and walking as efficient, fast and inexpensive forms of transport. This will be delivered through safe, well-lit footpaths and cycleways.
- Public transport is also highlighted as critical in achieving more sustainable travel patterns and a reduced reliance on the car.
- The 10-Minute City is a key concept based on the 'proximity principle' in the County Development Plan. It is about creating connected communities where a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking, cycle or public transport timeframes from their homes to destinations that meet their daily needs.

### **Placemaking**

- The Development Plan includes residential, educational, health, well-being and open space plans to improve placemaking, increasing the city's desirability and encourage people to move to the city.



## **National and Regional Development Policy**

### **National Planning Framework**

- The NPF is the overarching planning policy for Ireland and is based upon an increasing population. It covers public and private investment and aims to create and promote opportunities and to protect and enhance the environment.
- Climate change, sustainable mobility and low-carbon societies are key focuses of the NPF.

### **The National Development Plan 2018-2027**

The NDP outlines the investment priorities of the Irish Government in their attempt to implement the NPF and therefore meet the country's infrastructure and investment needs.

## Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Southern Region (RSES)

The Southern Region represents over 40% of Ireland's landmass, incorporates the 3 major cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford and has diverse landscapes. Kilkenny is situated within the region's South-East Strategic Planning Area. The RSES aims to:

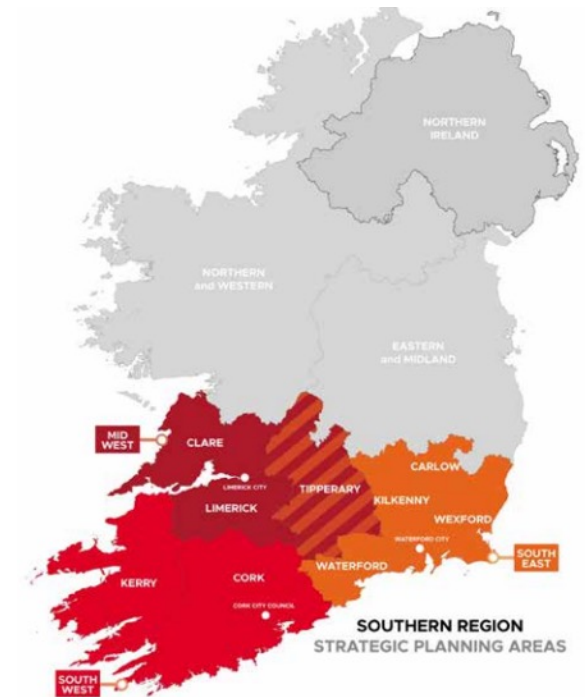
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Successfully combat climate change
- Achieve economic prosperity and an improved quality of life
- Accommodate growth and development in suitable locations
- Make the region one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions.

### Food Wise 2025

Food Wise aims to address Ireland's key industries of agri-food and fishing. Their growth and strategic foresight are named key factors in ensuring optimum opportunity realisation in years to come. It also emphasises the balance that needs to be made between environmental protection and economic competitiveness.

### Local Economic and Community Plan

The LECP forms a bridge between Kilkenny City Council's Development Plan and the RSES, ensuring cooperation and coordination between the two.

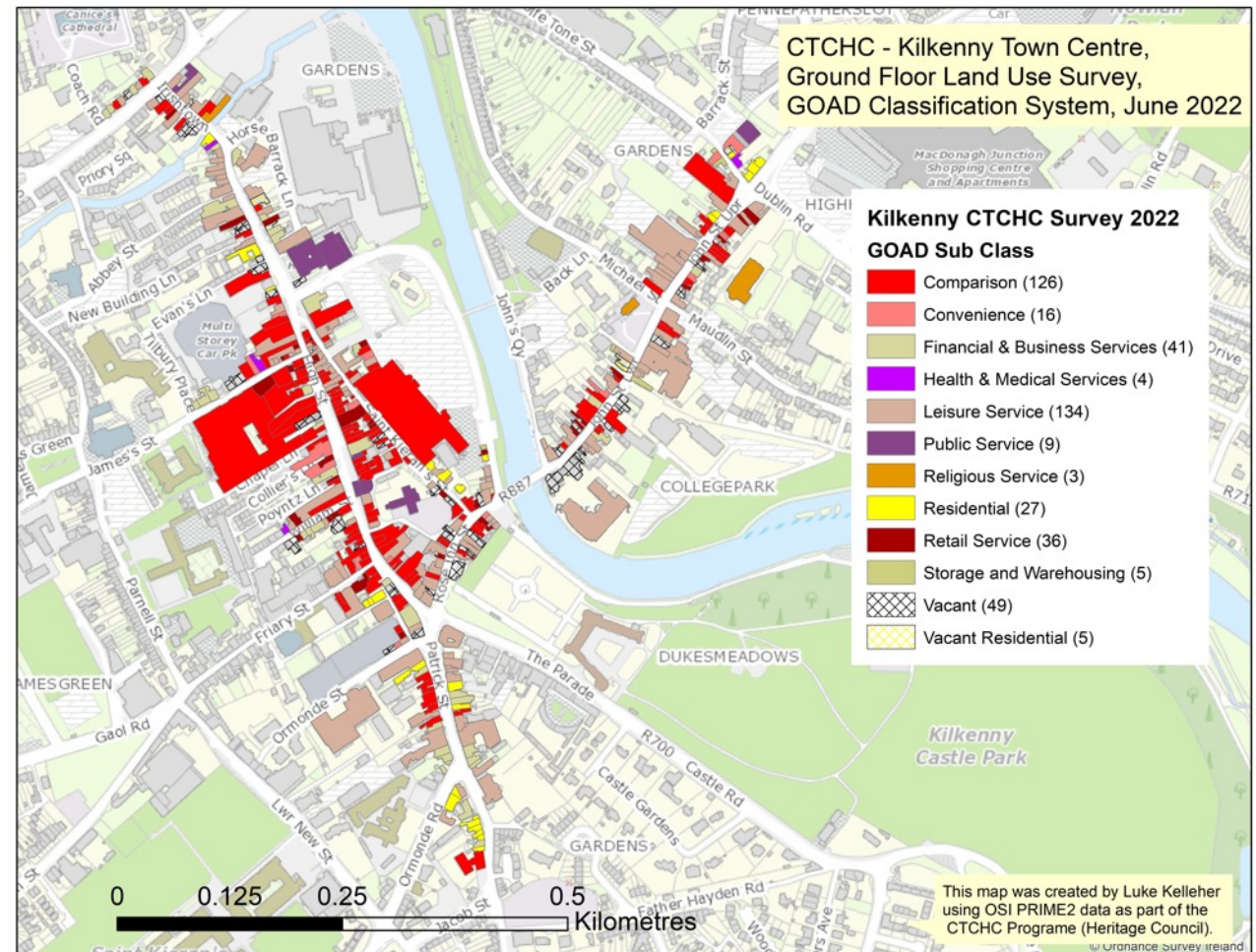




# Land Use Map

A land use survey was completed for Kilkenny City Centre with pockets of vacancy identified on John Street and Irish Town. Looking specifically at retail units, 20 out of 198 units were vacant, resulting in a retail vacancy of 10.10% within the study area. Below is a table which compares Kilkenny to other towns/cities that have undergone the CTCHC process with the Heritage Council.

Town/City	Retail Vacancy Rate
Kilkenny	10.10%
Sligo	18.4%
Ballina	19%





# Vacancy in Kilkenny

Despite vacancy rates in Kilkenny being lower than in other CTCHC towns in Ireland, there is still scope for redevelopment of vacant and derelict properties, especially focusing on reducing underusage of upper floors. The map shows current ground floor vacancy within the study area.

After analysing the current physical, social, spatial and historical characteristics of Kilkenny, we were able to identify some potential proposal sites to assist the regeneration and redevelopment of Kilkenny City. The images below show some of the buildings we were able to identify as vacant with the potential for redevelopment, whilst the map on the right shows the vacant buildings that were identified during the study.



# Average Friday footfall and vehicle count



The illustrated footfall statistics are the average taken from 2 fifteen-minute counts completed on the afternoon of Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March. These counts indicate that the highest levels of footfall were on the junction where Rose Inn Street meets High Street. It should be noted that footfall significantly exceeds the amount of vehicles for the entirety of the Medieval Mile but with diminishing footfall towards Irishtown.

There were constant levels of pedestrian movement at both ends of John Street, indicating that individuals were travelling on foot down the length of John Street between 3pm and 4pm, with lower readings at 4pm representing less foot traffic as the school rush hour ended. Notably, these average values are significantly lower than those for Saturday counts, implying that John Street is quieter throughout the week than on weekends, with fewer people heading into town from that way. Footfall is constantly greater over the bridge in the centre of town, whereas the Abbey Quarter, which is still under development, has the lowest.



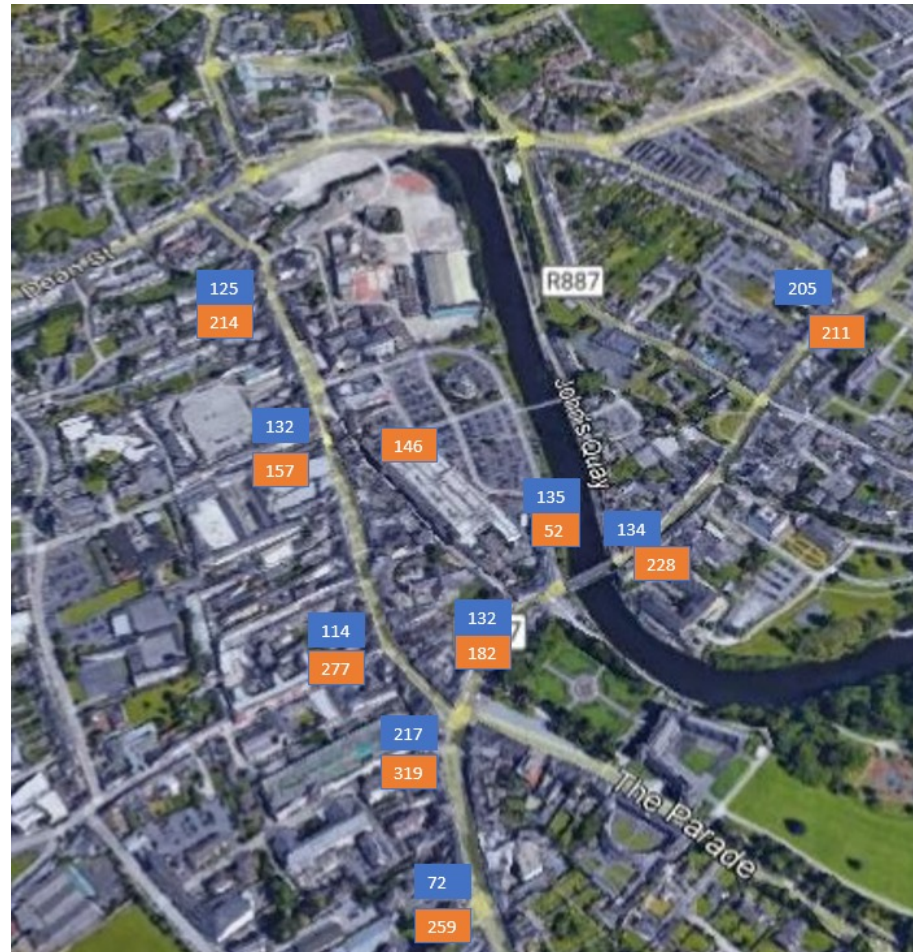


# Average Saturday footfall and vehicle count

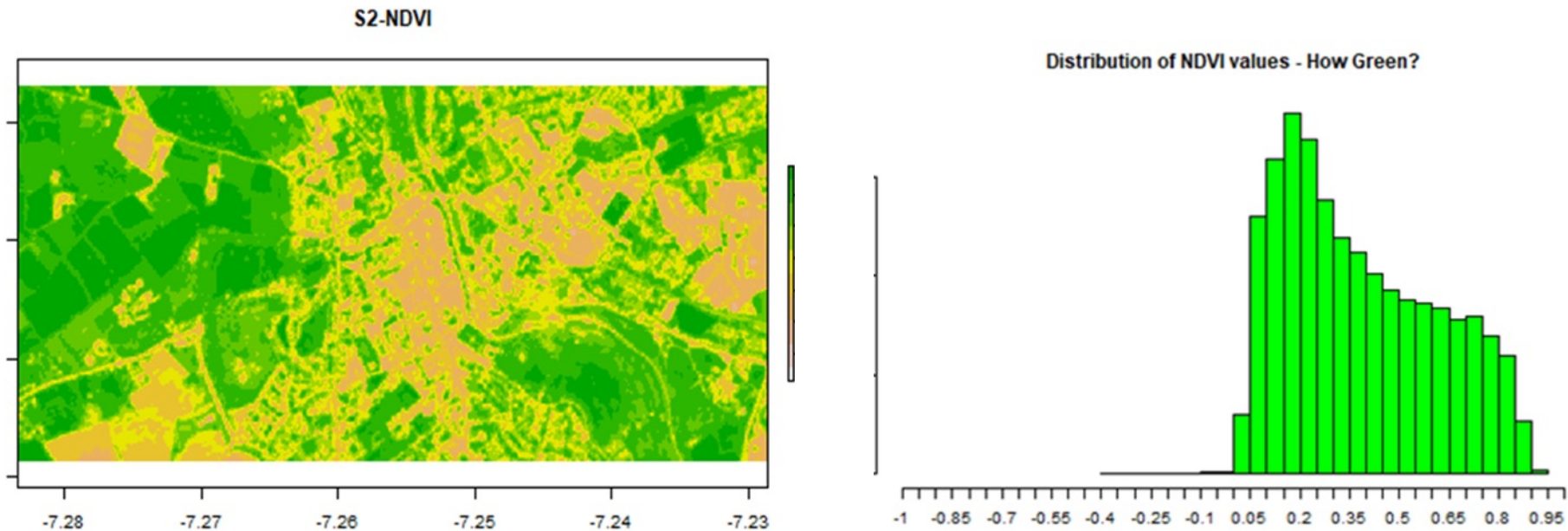
The illustrated footfall statistics are the average taken from 3 fifteen-minute counts taken on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March in the morning and afternoon. They demonstrate again the markedly higher footfall than vehicular traffic along the Medieval Mile and that the only place where vehicles outnumber pedestrian movements is along the West Bank of the River Nore as the count location was adjacent to one of the largest and the busiest car park in the city.

Footfall statistics reveal that more individuals cross St John's Bridge into John Street Lower and pass the count spot than traverse the whole length of the street. This most likely suggests that on Saturday, individuals are crossing the River Nore on foot to shop or utilise services on John Street before crossing back, rather than arriving via the MacDonagh Junction and walking along the street. Vehicle counts reveal that more cars travel through the Maudlin Street intersection than cross St John's Bridge.

This indicates that vehicles are exiting the Michael Street one-way system and entering the Maudlin Street one-way system via John Street Upper. This is most likely due to the fact that the car parks for Langton's Hotel, Shem's Bar, and Kilkenny County Hall are all accessible from Maudlin Street, implying that more cars are going through.



# Plant life health and density assessment



NDVI is a measurement that shows how green a place is, using sentinel satellite imagery to measure light reflected back by plants. The map on the left shows how green Kilkenny is with a darker green colour indicates a higher and healthier amount of flora. A value between 0.1 to 0.2 indicates urban fabric and 0.3 to above is plant life, a higher number indicates more health and dense plants. As seen in the choropleth map on the left the city centre is almost all yellow and brown, indicating a lack of plant life and high amounts of uninterrupted urban fabric, further reflected in the histogram on the right which shows high values of urban fabric and low values of plant life. This is perhaps unsurprising as the medieval layout in the historic core is characterised by narrow streets, which lack space for street trees due to limited pavements.



# What is Kilkenny?

During the study, 130 questionnaire responses were gathered and analysed. This led to some conclusions regarding usage, travel and what is important to the local population. It was imperative to the study that the local people were given a chance to voice their opinions on the city. The word cloud below demonstrates the responses to the question “what is the first word you think of when you think about Kilkenny?”. The larger words represent the most common responses with medieval, beautiful, historic and vibrant being the most popular. The majority of the words given represent positive reflections about the city.



# SWOT Analysis

## Strengths

- Local people have a love for the city.
- Character and culture are key aspects of the city.
- Heritage provides a good draw for tourists.
- A compact city centre allows easy travel.
- Nightlife and social life.

## Weaknesses

- Busy traffic routes.
- Strong heritage and history may prevent an open-minded approach to other city character discourse.

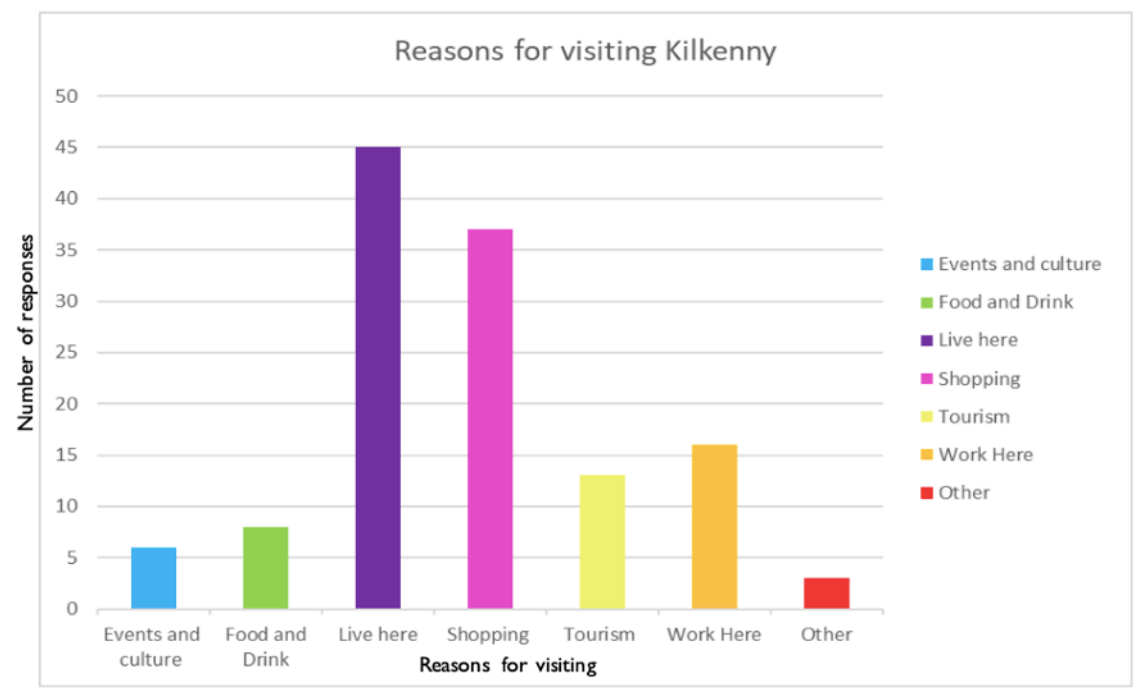
## Opportunities

- Vacant buildings provide potential for development and improvement without making sacrifices.
- Active travel to limit private car movement across the city.
- Further engagement with the communities.

## Threats

- Public transport provision.
- Varying wants and requirements from residents.
- Abbey Quarter may draw business away from High Street.

# Questionnaire Responses

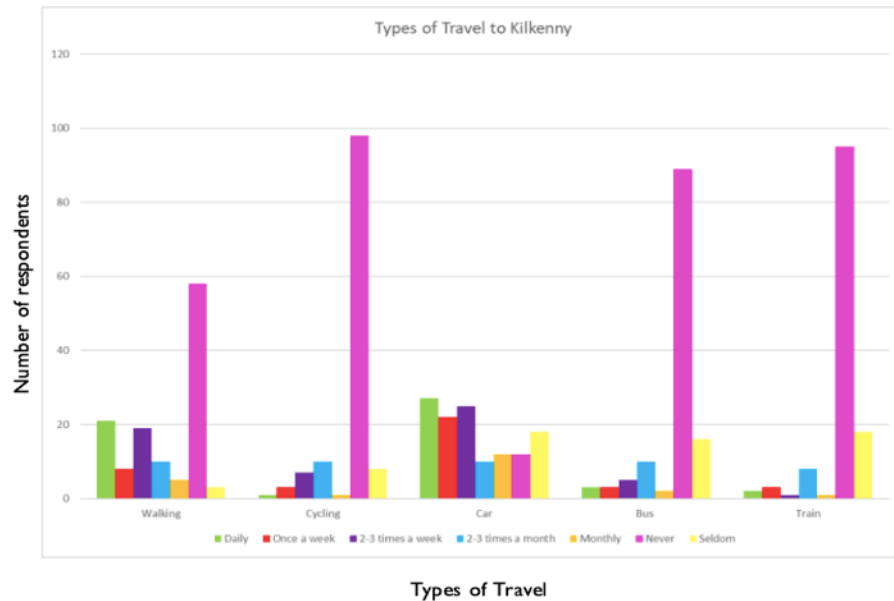


Reasons for visiting the town were recorded and as shown above, the most common reason for visiting was people already living within the city and shopping . The least common reason for visiting was events and culture. This is a direct consequence of the three main Kilkenny festivals occurring in May, June and August, and the study taking place in March. Dependent on the time of year the questionnaire is conducted, results will vary. Therefore, it is necessary to consider bias as result of the date the questionnaire was completed.

Interestingly, 50% of the sample said that they had travelled more than 10km to come into the city. This reminds us of the importance of the city for a wider rural hinterland as the primary settlement within a county, in the which the next largest settlement is markedly smaller.

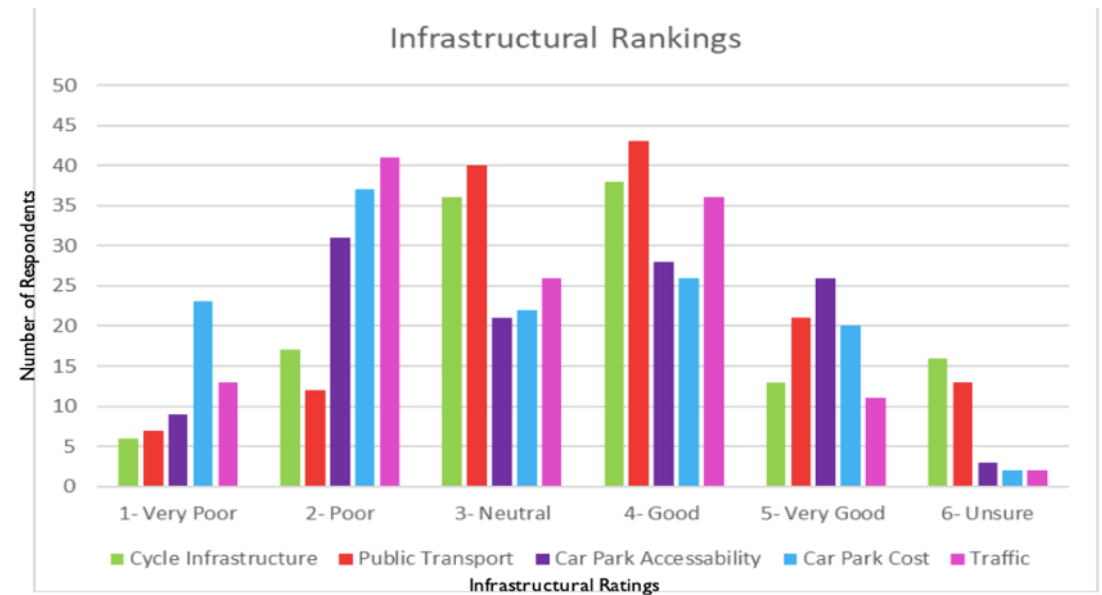


# Types of Travel



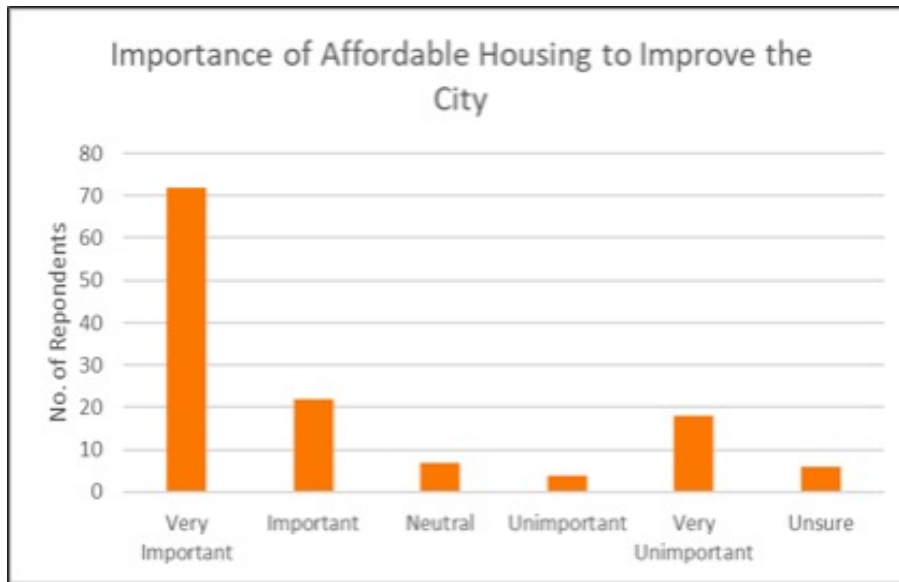
The most common method of transport into the city is by car. Many of the respondents stated that they would never walk, cycle, and use the train or bus. The second largest method of transport into the city was walking, however, this was much less popular than private car. The train was by far the least used transport method. The new proposed active travel arrangement could possibly change the travel patterns of commuters into Kilkenny.

When analysing the responses gathered from use of the surrounding availability of modern infrastructure, the recurring theme was that generally improvements could be made across all types of infrastructure.



The public transport system is rated highly amongst locals, however, the results presented in the graph opposite say otherwise, with 90% of respondents claiming to never use the bus and 95% claiming to never use the train. Furthermore, congestion is debated within the city, with traffic being considered 'poor' by many, although it was closely followed by 'good'. This can be explained by the graph, where daily walking and daily use of car placed highest. Thus, the contrasting views of walkers and drivers can be clearly seen.

# City Centre Housing



The need for affordable housing within the City Centre has been a prevalent issue throughout our study of Kilkenny City Centre. Providing affordable housing is important to attract young families into the city and increase the vibrancy, with 73% of respondents stating its importance in improving Kilkenny's overall appeal. As well as the possibility of turning upper floor vacant spaces into residential housing, the Abbey Quarter also aims to provide housing for future residents of Kilkenny.

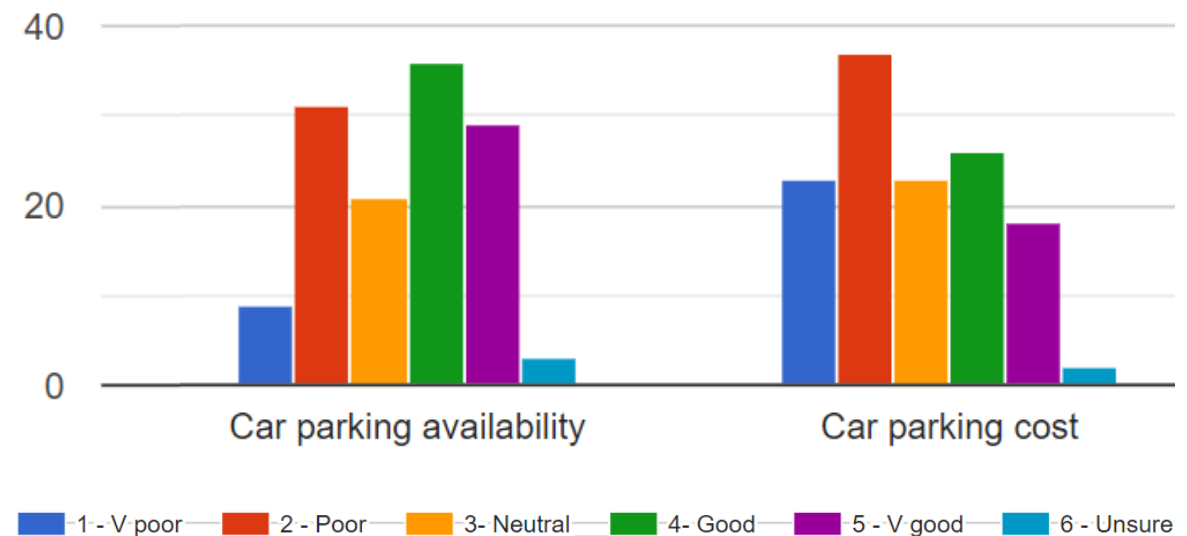
Providing a safe city is important with 74% of respondents viewing safety, as a very important factor that needs improved upon. A further question asked about the need to pedestrianise the city centre, 61% of respondents expressed the importance of this to improve the city, which is linked to the need for safety within the city centre. The questionnaire responses not only highlighted the improvements needed but also the beauty and historic significance of the city. It allowed us to ensure the plans and ideas we are presenting are suitable and will improve Kilkenny's city centre for future generations.

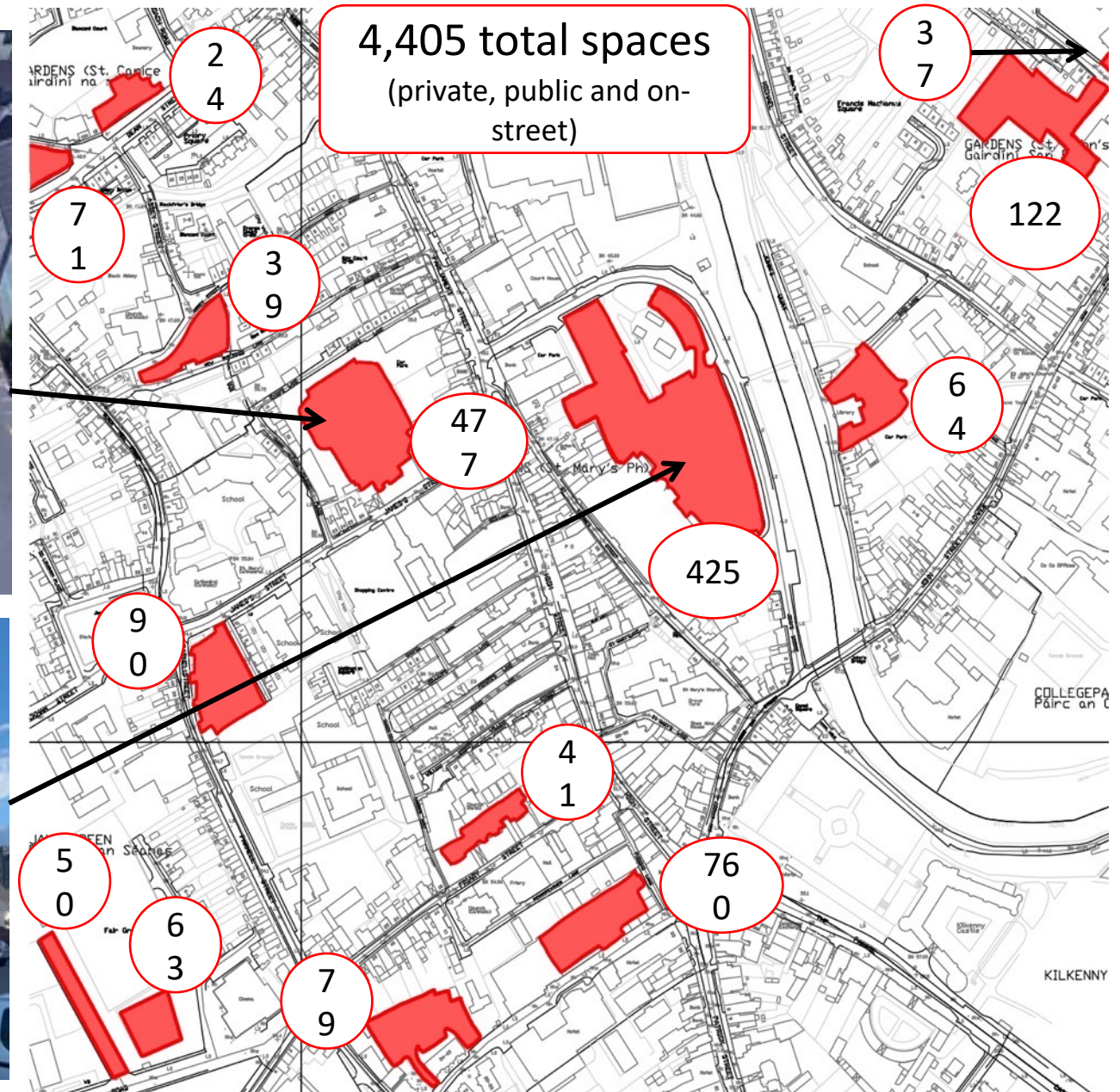


# Car Parking

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate car parking availability throughout the city centre. It was a rather polarising question, with a similar range of responses across the poor, good, and very good categories. During the site visit, most of the car parks throughout the centre had a good availability of spaces. The exception was the Market Yard car park behind the Dunnes store, which was operating at about 90% capacity during the visit. It was clear that on-street parking was the most popular option, however, this made the already busy streets feel congested and vehicle-dominated.

With the desire to increase residential, business, and commercial use in the centre, it will be imperative to the success of any project that people can travel in from further afield; however, increasing parking costs is not the way to do this, as there are already great facilities for this that are not being utilised, as instead on-street parking is clearly favoured. With the scope to increase pedestrianisation in the city centre, there definitely is capacity amongst existing car parks to absorb for any loss of spaces to pedestrian-focused projects.





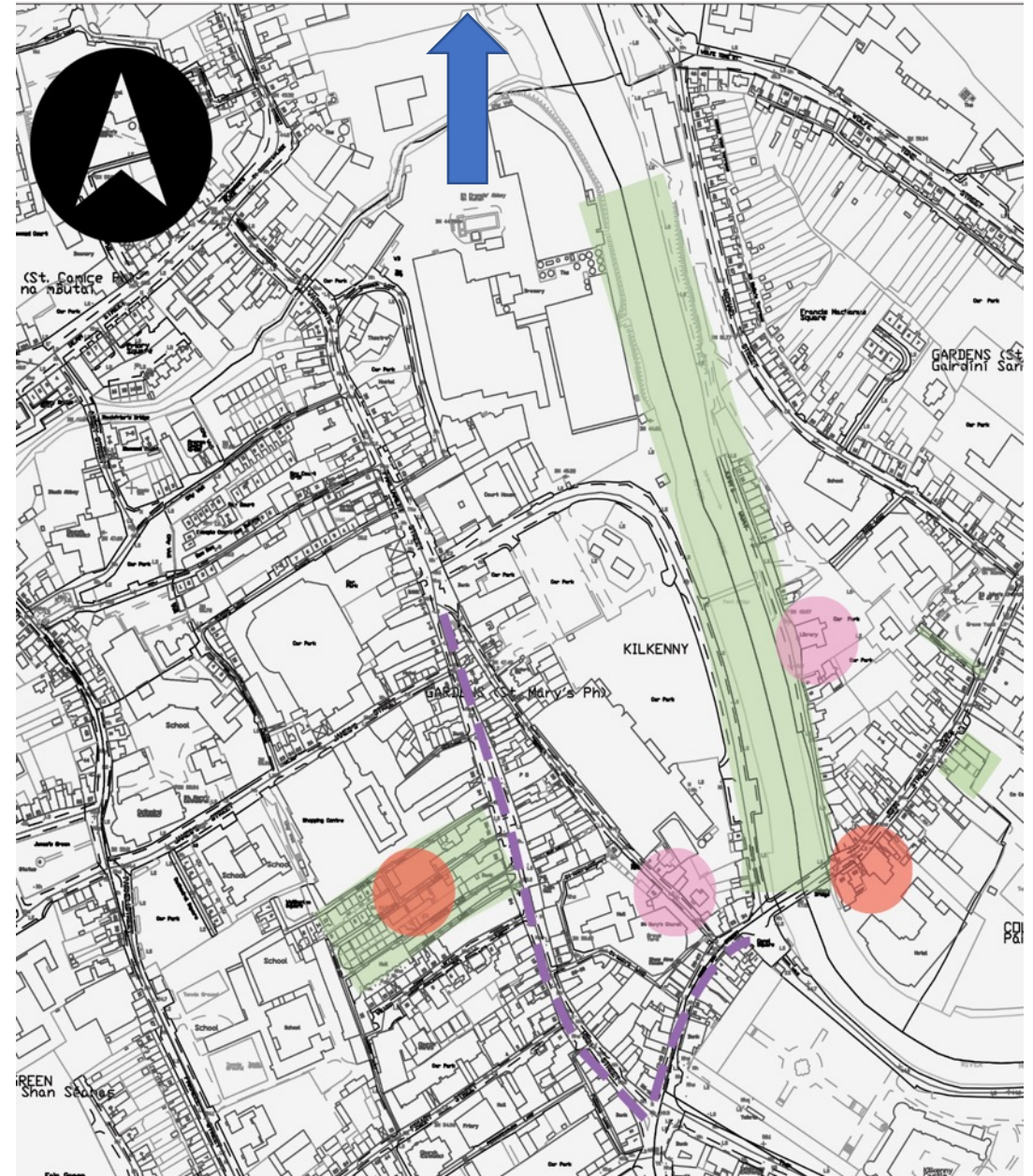


# PROJECT MAP

- Vacancy Opportunities
- Public Realm Improvements
- Active Travel Hub
- Greening Projects
- Pedestrianisation

City wide

First floor housing opportunities





# Bridge House



After part of the building was destroyed by a fire, Bridge House is currently under refurbishment to restore the Georgian features of the building. This accommodation is needed, from the analysis of the current offer of- and demand for- hostels in Kilkenny, as well as many locals stating the need for good affordable accommodation for tourists. Its rich historic architecture, alongside festivals and eateries, attract many tourists throughout the year. New modern and affordable accommodation for these tourists is crucial, but preservation of Kilkenny's historic landscape is of equal importance.



A refurbished model of the exterior and interior of the Bridge House (as shown above) gives it a fresher look that is more visually appealing. A modern reception area is shown above, with a reception desk, seating area and possible an information corner for tourists to gain information about the city.

This model shows new windows, however, keeps a traditional look, fitting with the style of the Georgian building. To improve the exterior condition, a new gate will surround the building, alongside decorative features, such as plants and signs for the new hostel, because the building is very visible from the mains street and castle, it is imperative that its exterior is kept in great condition.

The interior image shows a modern reception area, this could have an information area for tourist, as it would be prime place to advertise the Abbey Quarter. The area should be a hub for residents and modern space for welcoming guests into Kilkenny.

# Ballroom of Romance

Regenerating the Carlton Ballroom of Romance into a functioning and usable community centre would be a great investment for the city. This site is also an opportunity to create a new place for people to socialise, creating more diverse social spaces on the High Street for all demographics to enjoy. Having opened in 1958, we believe this site is important to preserve the heritage, memories, and history that it holds. Keeping it as a social space for the community would honour this heritage.





The images shown on the right are examples of what some of the rooms could look like in the community hub, which could be enjoyed by a wide range of people. This could be used by youth groups, hosts activities, and provide spaces for positive community interactions.

Reflecting the vibrancy of the city through activities and events is a great way to get people involved in this type of space. Paint and pour (bottom left image) is a relatively new trend whereby people get together for an art class and enjoy a glass or two of wine. These types of events would be popular amongst locals but also a great alternative for hen or stag dos that come down to the city. Animation (bottom middle image), craft, and music classes could also be run out of spaces like this, highlighting local businesses and cultivating both traditional and modern arts. Of course, the possibilities are almost endless, and this is a great opportunity for people to build social connections in the heart of the city. Additionally, spaces like this always benefit local businesses, with people grabbing dinner before a class, or going for a drink afterwards.







# Public Realm

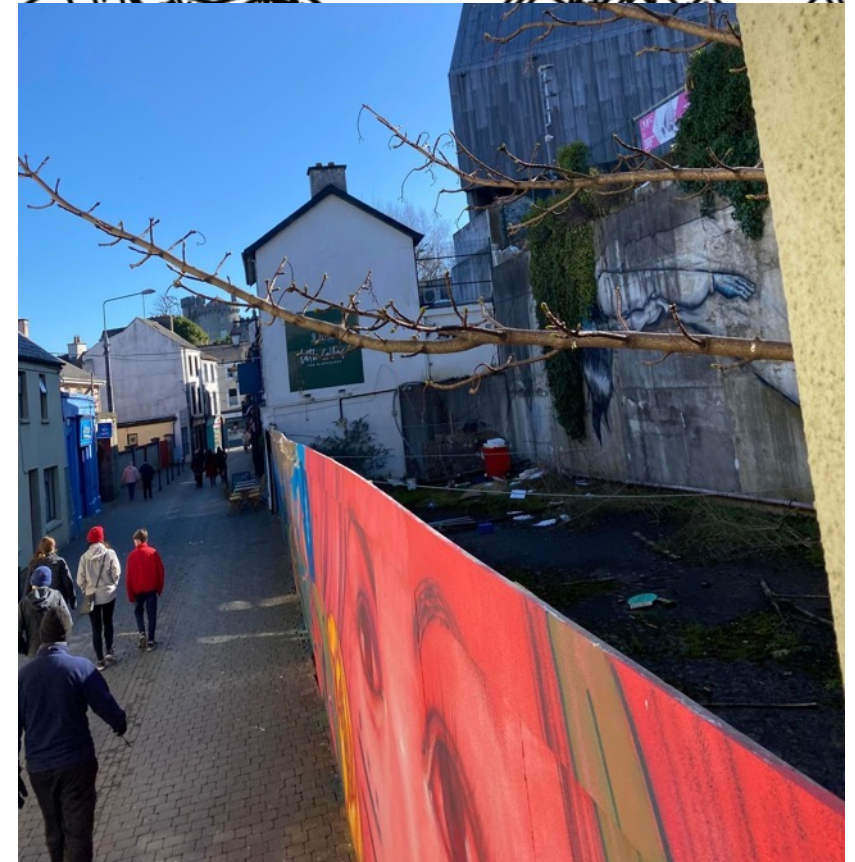
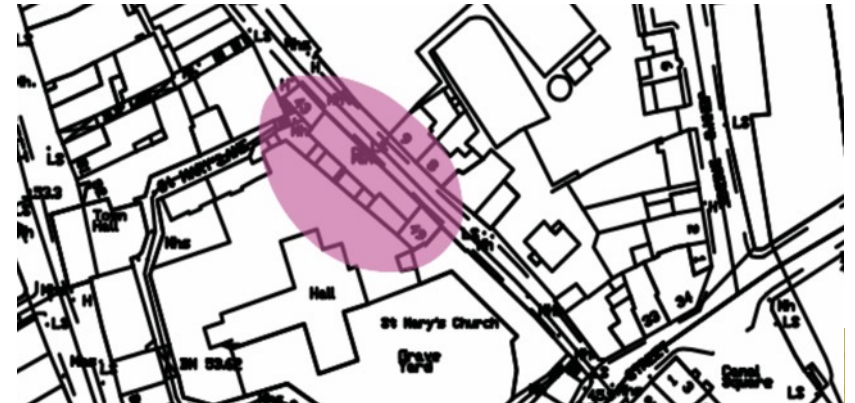




# Streatery

An area on St. Kieran's Street near to the junction with Rose Inn Street has been identified with great potential for redevelopment. It is currently a vacant area of land that contains overgrown weeds and is boarded up. To fit with the town's vibrancy, the borders are adorned with artwork from local artists, naturally brightening up the area.

Due to the busy-ness of this pedestrianized street and its main use tying in with the commercial and hospitality sector, it is essential to capitalise on this by recommending a Streatery (street eatery) – a modern twist on hospitality. During the initial briefing with the Kilkenny City Council, the general aim mentioned was to get people back into the centre with the city task force working hard on this. The Streatery, as a tactical intervention, will be a great addition and achieve the aim of getting people back into the city. An array of food trucks, potentially from local eateries/chefs, will locate themselves at the proposed site.







Dublin



London

This creates exciting new business prospects for old, new and upcoming businesses. Streateries allow local eateries to display their creativity, leaving a lasting impact of modernity on the city, additionally attracting younger people as studies have shown. It would also naturally benefit the economy of the city.

Along with this, a seating area will be provided, taking inspiration from other examples – Dublin and London. This addition to the city will be enjoyed by all ages, it will further enhance the day and nightlife of Kilkenny with the aim to attract people who live outside of the city. The Streaterie would also become an attractive spot for tourists to visit. Not wanting to take away from the existing art, it is strongly recommended that the local artists paint the area where the Streaterie will be located, creating more vibrancy within the city.



# Carnegie Library

The Carnegie Library was donated on behalf of the Carnegie Foundation; therefore, it will remain as a library. However, with a new library planned to be built in the Abbey Quarter, new ideas have been calculated on how to maximise the potential opportunities that the site could accommodate.

Firstly, it could be turned into an education hub for the youth in the city, with parts of the building turned into classrooms where homework clubs can take place, rooms for demonstrations whilst remaining a library. This leads to a natural positive impact on the educational and social development of the youth in Kilkenny.

The large car park behind the library offers potential to be transformed into an outdoor learning environment by taking a small section of the car park and turning into a natural playground, it will be more environmentally-friendly alternative to a more standardised playground. It will encourage all ages to spend more time outdoors, which has been shown to have a positive impact on mental and physical wellbeing.

Valby Parken, Copenhagen (pictured bottom left) and Kingsway College Playground, Ontario (bottom right) are examples of outdoor playgrounds, whilst they are at different scales, perhaps taking elements from each could be an achievable goal. The Carnegie Library could become a fun area for youth to hang out as well as an educational space.



# Living Over the Shops

Over the last number of years, the focus on housing options within towns and cities has been on creating housing developments on the outskirts, which in turn attracts people outside of the city centre. Now, as towns respond to the changing commercial environment, and as population grows, the focus has been put back on the need for town centre living and the array of benefits this brings from an economic, social, and environmental perspective. However, encouraging and facilitating people to live in town centre locations, and adapting older buildings to the demands of modern living can be challenging. Within the Town Centre First policy, particular emphasis is placed upon converting unused upper floor units into housing and trying to have people living over shops again. This also helps to manage the sprawl of settlements and is a more environmentally friendly option than building new developments on the outskirts of the town. It also reduces the dependency on cars within the town centre.

With the percentage of the population aged 65 or more projected to increase from 14% in 2019 to 26% in 2051 (Sheehan and O'Sullivan, (2020), there is an opportunity for older people to choose housing that is centrally located within our towns and appropriate to their needs. This can help them to enjoy more active, healthy and socially connected lives and to age independently and comfortably within their community. The same can also be said for young professionals. This type of housing will help people to choose the most suitable home to meet their needs and enable them to 'rightsize' as they move through different stages of their lives. Within Kilkenny itself, there are several opportunities for residential units to be developed. Particularly with the development of the Abbey Quarter, there will be more job opportunities within Kilkenny, and with it more people looking to relocate close to the city. We understand there is the potential to incorporate new residential units within the Abbey Quarter, however, having flats/apartments in upper floor units would be a good way to make sure that the Abbey Quarter and city centre remained integrated as people walk to and from their workplace to their residence within the town.



Source: Sheehan, A. and O'Sullivan, R., (2020) Ageing and Public Health – an overview of key statistics in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Dublin: Institute of Public Health.

# Active Travel Hub

The responses to the question asking what is the first word you associate with Kilkenny included “traffic” and “crazy traffic”. This is an issue that would need to be sorted out immediately, as it is considered as a push factor that could drive people away from the city. Consequently, the Council stressed the desire for a potential park and ride, as they are wanting to implement better bus travel.

Therefore, a solution could be an Active Travel Hub, a popular choice among every student groups proposals. There are various potential locations for the active travel hub, one of the locations could be to the north of the Abbey Quarter, slightly past the skate park, which is located in the area in blue on the map to the right. This space will house bike racks and promote cycling and better travel across the city. It will further include a park and ride, that will transport locals and tourists to and from the castle, this would hope to discourage private vehicle use on High Street and in turn lower congestion rates.

CS Lewis Square in Belfast hosts a Sustrans active travel hub that focuses primarily on cycling. It utilises nearby greenways and acts as a community active space where cycling lessons and family cycles take place. Something like this in Kilkenny would be hugely beneficial, particularly within the Abbey Quarter where the proposed riverside greenway will run. Having the active travel hub lead directly onto the proposed park and greenway of the Abbey Quarter development would be a great addition as it promotes walking and cycling.





The Active Travel Hub can link straight into the city core along an attractive walkway / cycle linkages along a reinvigorated and animated West Bank of the River Nore.



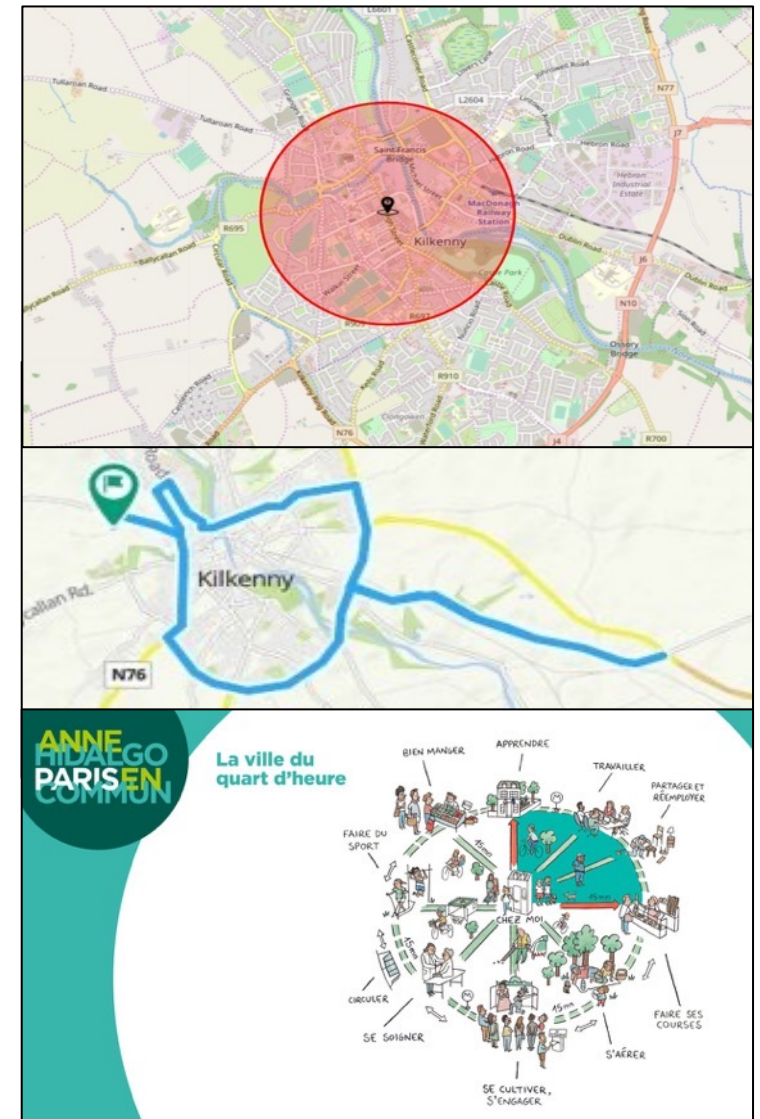
# The 10 Minute City

The ten-minute city idea is an urban design concept in which most daily necessities can be reached or accomplished by either walking or cycling for 10 minutes from a resident's home. This is the main aim of policy and strategies for Kilkenny City. As seen in the Kilkenny maps, the majority of the city centre can be accessed through 10 minutes of walking and cycling. Therefore, this city is already very walkable and accessible through active travel. The city is already on track to achieve this initiative if safer facilities can be provided to encourage modal shift.

The map to the right shows existing cycle lanes surrounding Kilkenny. Implementation of more cycle lanes throughout the city centre could help realise the idea of a 10-minute city, in-so-doing decreasing traffic and congestion. It will also promote a healthier lifestyle amongst residents and help to combat climate change.

Parts of Paris are heavily congested, this has been acknowledged by the urban planners who have under the leadership of Mayor Anne Hidalgo put strong efforts into achieving the idea of a 15-minute city, which aligns with their vision of creating a fitter future for current and future generations. The picture here shows the things that can be achieved 15 minutes from home.

Brussels has also established itself as 10-minute city as they recognised that being one of the most congested cities in Europe, meant that radical change was needed. Increased pedestrianization of public spaces and the creation of segregated cycle lanes aided with this process.







# Greening Projects



# Community Garden

As mentioned in the Choropleth map earlier, other than the very expansive Kilkenny Castle Park, the city centre is lacking in green space. The space at the back of the properties adjacent to the council building on John Street could be transformed into a community garden.

Community gardens can help to alleviate some of the issues that affect urban areas. They can benefit many communities by boosting the availability of healthy and local foods, community engagement and promoting social bonds, minimising environmental hazards and impacts of climate change, cutting food miles, and establishing a more sustainable system.

The image to the right are an example of the same type of community garden called Manly Vale community garden and playground that was built in Australia by Warringah Council.

They sought to deliver a playful community garden that would offer a balance of recreational play for a range of ages, together with a community garden facility. They encourage sustainability by utilising recycled and local materials.





# The Windmill Garden

The proposed “Windmill garden” would incorporate the following features:

- Raised vegetable beds for disabled and elderly use
- Large floor level vegetable beds for larger plants such as currants
- A greenhouse for year-round food growth, with a compost heap to provide free fertilizer for the site
- A small children's play area to encourage use of the garden by the next generation of gardeners
- Secure bike parking for use in the garden and cyclists on John Street
- A small garden shed for tool storage, seed germination and social gatherings, with a “green roof” to promote ecology
- Moss walls for carbon capture and reducing air pollution locally at the site



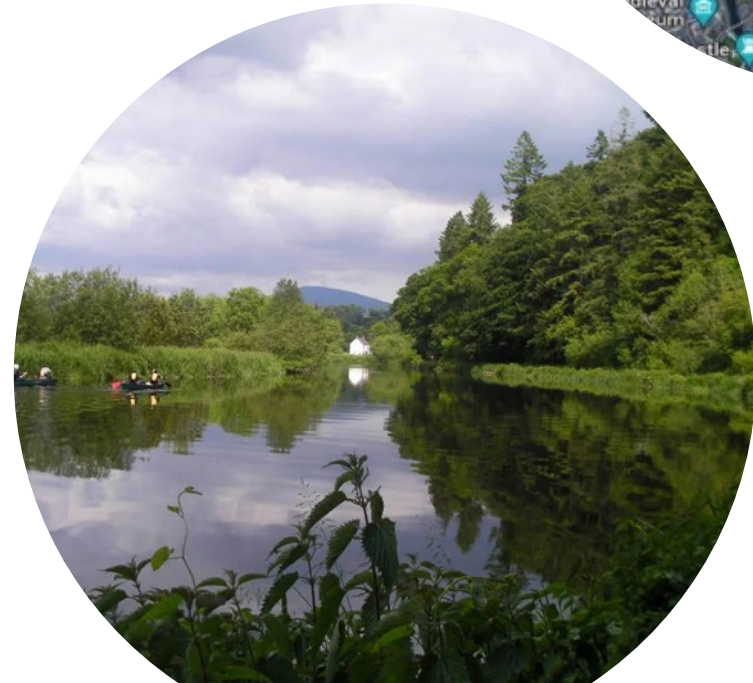
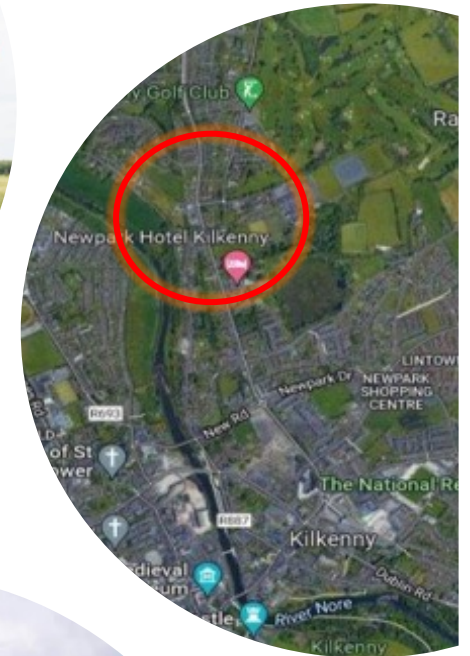
# Revival of Kilkenny Blueway



There is already a swimming site to the north of the city centre; safety is relatively good at this site, with ladders to get into the water and lifeguards on duty at various times of the day.



We recommend that the amenities at this location be enhanced, that changing facilities be provided, possible from the old maturation vessels from the brewery, and that access to the facility be integrating the proposed active travel facilities and greenways between the swimming area and Abbey Quarter.





## Precedent: Weir Pool in Thomastown

To ensure the success of this project, the community organisation that swims at the Weir Pool in Thomastown will utilise social media to raise awareness about the benefits of outdoor swimming and urge individuals in the community to participate.

The organisation also uses its web presence to connect with young people and create awareness about environmental protection and education.

This plan should use a similar approach, with the goal of engaging with the communities of Kilkenny and promoting tourism and active use of the waterway.



# Waterfront Animation

Activities including as hydro-biking and kayaking/canoeing might be further developed on the River Nore, boosting economic growth and providing an enjoyable pastime for both locals and tourists. Enniskillen and Dublin are two other settlements that have undertaken similar initiatives.

In these places, hydro-biking and kayaking provide a unique experience for inhabitants and visitors to sightsee and absorb in the rich legacy. Kilkenny has a beautiful and distinctive riverfront with the opening of the riverside part of the Abbey Quarter site and it would be excellent to showcase and enhance this existing and interesting way for locals and visitors to experience the city.

By integrating this with the proposed swimming site and the tourist attractions of the Abbey Quarter, diversification of land use and income streams can all be promoted within the city centre via the revival of the Blueway.





# Greenways

We plan to increase the amount green infrastructure within Kilkenny city centre and also to enhance the connectivity between green spaces. One way to do this is through the creation of greenways and green streets.

Greenways are transportation and ecological corridors that are recognised for their capacity to connect people and wildlife. These open space ribbons are found within linear corridors that are either natural, such as rivers and streams, or man-made, such as abandoned railroad lines and utility corridors or the greening of lanes and roads within cities such as Kilkenny

Greenways, such as well-known examples from Waterford and the Great Western in Mayo, give a range of advantages that eventually improve the economic, environmental, and social health of an area. These advantages include:

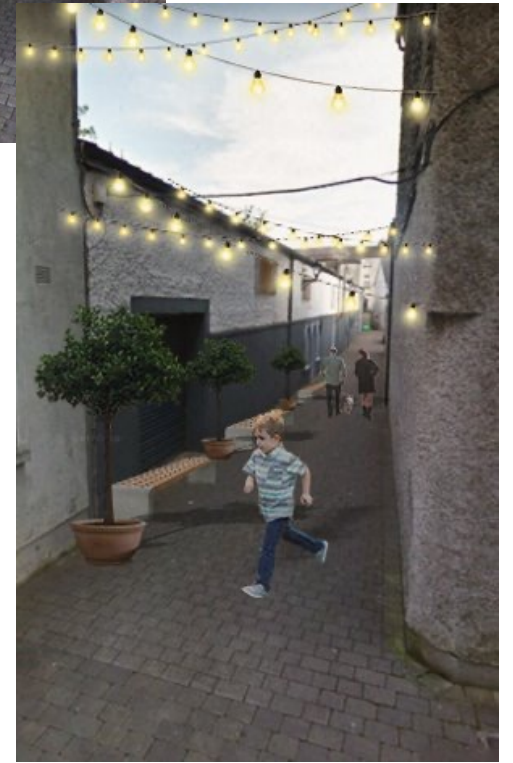
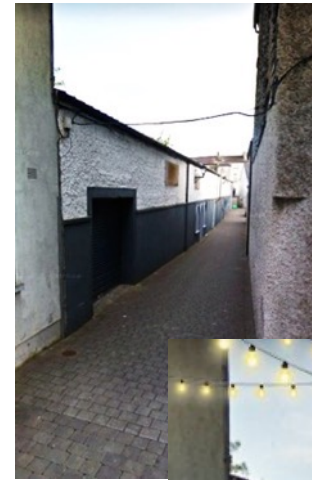
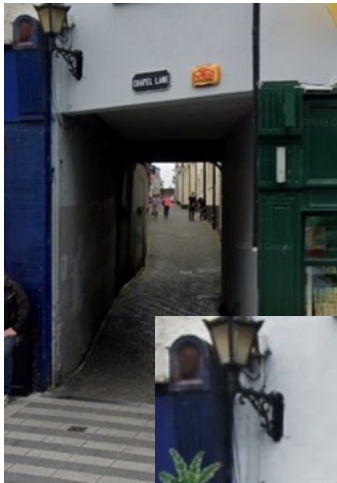
- Adding Value and promoting Economic Activity
- Improving Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation
- Improving Health Through Physical Activity
- Clear skies, clean rivers, and wildlife protection
- Flood Protection for People and Property
- Increasing Cultural Understanding and Community Identity

We propose to create a sense of connectivity and new identity for the city, a Kilkenny 'Green Quarter' whilst also supporting travel of wildlife within the city promoting biodiversity.

The next page shows several concepts for greening of lanes around the city centre.









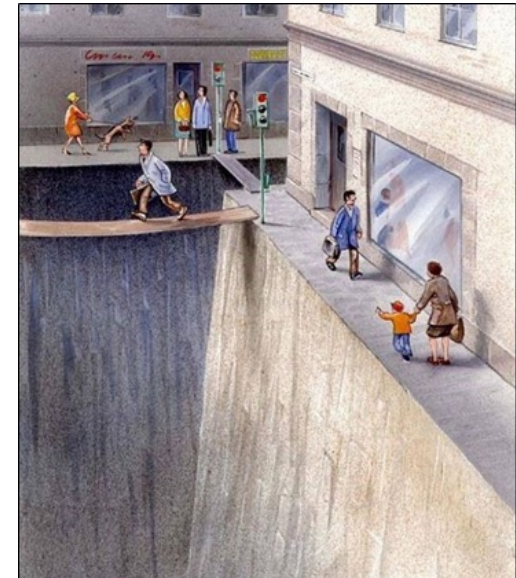




# Public Realm Improvements

Whilst the medieval layout of the historic core is central to the distinctive historical character of Kilkenny, it also limits space to facilitate movements within the city. In places such as Rose Inn Street, the minimal distance between buildings has resulted in very narrow footpaths to allow for two-way traffic. As part of COVID recovery measures, a one-way system has been introduced with regularly-spaced bollards used to widen footpaths. This reallocation of the road diet has given a more generous allocation of space for shoppers, residents and revellers within this popular heritage city despite some local opposition to the one-way system.

The delineation of this additional temporary pedestrian space could be improved as the width of the widened pedestrian area and continued presence of a raised kerb made many students feel that this was a cycle lane. There were also regular instances of cars being parked between bollards on High Street. The previous poor levels of street allocation to pedestrians evoke Claes Tingvall of the Swedish Road Administration's well-known sketch that demonstrates how much of our city centres have been given over to through traffic rather than those who contribute to the vibrancy of our town centres.

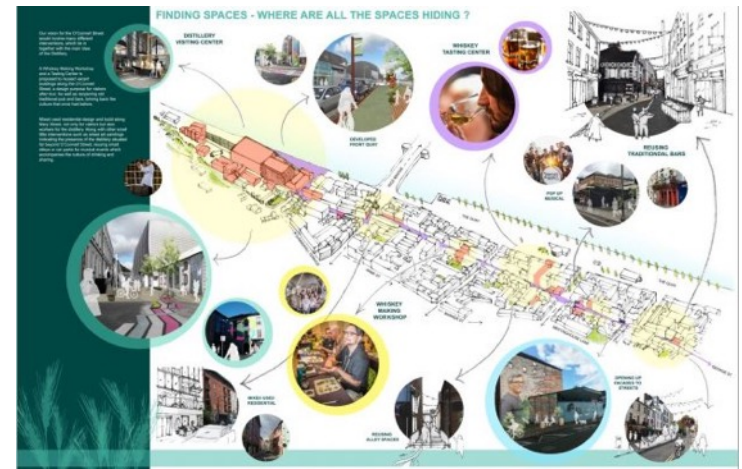


## Non-economic benefits

Since COVID has highlighted the extent to which cities have been given over to the movement and parking of vehicles, city administrations around the world have been reimagining their city cores to prioritise public life. Examples of such schemes vary in scale from the famous re-imaging of Time Square to the more comparable "flexible and phased pedestrianisation" of the Cultural Quarter in Waterford, a city seeking to expand upon the largest pedestrianised precinct in Ireland.

Research has identified the following benefits of re-humanising / de-trafficking city centres:

- Positive impacts on frame of mind (Solnit 2001).
- Health benefits through promoting active travel.
- Increases child-friendliness of space.
- Reduces air pollution and urban noise (Nieuwenhuijsen 2020).
- Pedestrian streets could transform the shopping experience from goal oriented (i.e., drive to destination, buy the planned items, and leave) to experience oriented (i.e., walk around, take a coffee break, and chat with friends).
- Increasing dwell times
- Taking back the city generally enhancing liveability.
- Improving the townscape quality and heritage buildings' setting and prominence.





# Options for Kilkenny

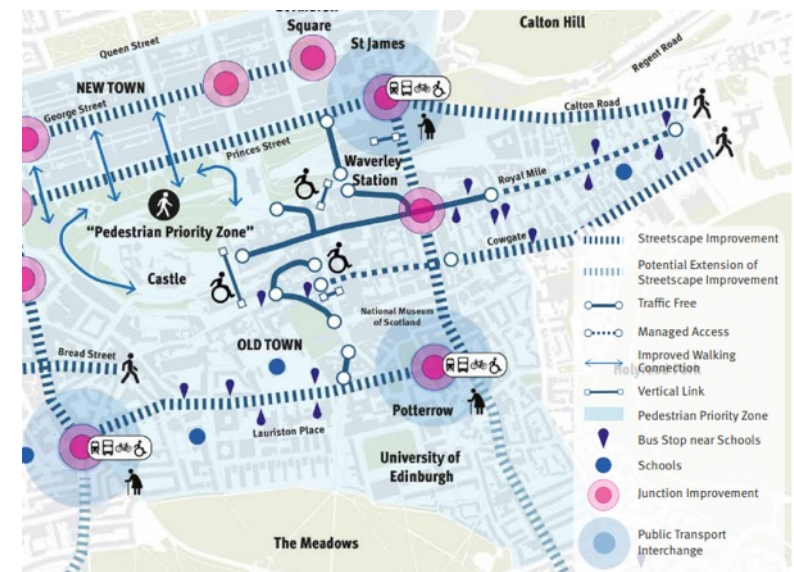
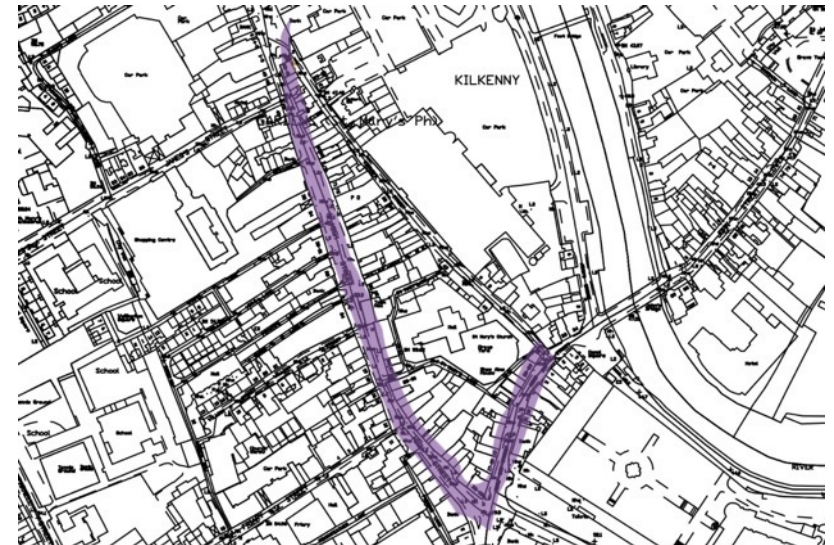
61.2% of questionnaire respondents felt that more pedestrianisation was either important or very important for making the city centre more liveable. Only 20% felt it was unimportant or very unimportant. The following phased approach is suggested as an option for Kilkenny.

Phase 1: remove all bollards and formalise the one-way system on Rose Inn Street and High Street removing car parking on the latter to rebalance the road diet. Street closures to become regular occurrences to enhance existing cultural and festival offer and to allow traders the opportunity to enhance their Al Fresco dining and commercial options in a managed way.

Phase 2: full removal of traffic from Rose Inn Street and High Street up to Bateman Quay.

This approach offers parallels between Medieval Mile and Edinburgh's Royal Mile with its City Centre Transformation Strategy project as both would plan to remove traffic from the Castles to half-way down these iconic streets. Whilst such schemes will inevitably concern some traders, it should be noted that there is a significant oversupply of car parking in multi-storey car parks within two minutes-walk of High Street. Such a decision would show that Kilkenny is enhancing the quality of its environment, visitor experience and dwell times in its commercial heart.

Visuals by Paola Fuentes de Leon on the possible changes on the following pages illustrate how this could look.





BEFORE



AFTER







# Concluding thoughts

Kilkenny is a city blessed with an unmistakable historical character and a vibrancy that most towns across Ireland would envy but it faces many urban challenges to remain competitive. The hospitality and cultural sectors are clearly very important to Kilkenny but car-dominated urbanism acts as a serious challenge to creating a more liveable city centre. The Abbey Quarter development offers an excellent opportunity to have a catalytic impact on the city by opening up the river to its people and providing desirable accommodation and public spaces for new residents and employment.

We hope that this student Collaborative Town Centre Health Check exercise has helped to stimulate some discussion on how the city can build upon its already impressive reputation and built form by introducing some additional progressive regeneration projects.







# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

