

To Michael Sweeney
Property Management Unit
Wexford County Council

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**RE: Enniscorthy Castle Quarter, Enniscorthy Castle - 6 and 7 Castle St
Enniscorthy.**

Location

The subject site is located adjacent to Enniscorthy Castle, close to the junction of Castle Hill, Castle Street and Church Street in Enniscorthy Town Centre.

Proposal

The proposal is to redevelop and restore the setting and environs of Enniscorthy Castle which is defined as a Monument (ref. WX20 031003) by providing a new open space following the demolition of the vacant castle nightclub building and demolition of a small apartment block. The nightclub is a mid-20th Century building and extends along the narrow gap between Athenium and 6 & 7 Castle Street.

The works will also involve the properties, 6 & 7 Castle Street, currently a sports goods shop, and the properties to the rear which include 3 apartments. The inclusion of these properties will enable improved access to the Castle and access to the new Castle Green Space. These properties, 6 & 7 Castle Street, are listed in the Wexford County Development Plan 2022 to 2028, as Protected Structures (reference E054) and described in the NIAH as a detached four-bay three-storey house with dormer attic, c.1800, with square-headed carriageway to left ground floor, and single-bay three-storey return to north-east continuing into single-bay single-storey range to north-east.

Policy Background-Wexford County Development Plan 2022 to 2028

Wexford County Development Plan 2022 to 2028 is the relevant plan covering Enniscorthy Town. Enniscorthy is defined as a Level 2 Large Town in the plan. The Town is identified as providing a range of functions including housing, employment, education, health care, retail, recreation, tourism and culture.



Enniscorthy Town Strategic Objectives include:

Objective ET02

To develop and facilitate new tourism related developments, both direct and indirect, that will expand the tourism offering and potential of the town and its surrounding area, and to work with key stakeholders to develop Enniscorthy as a vibrant visitor hub and tourism destination town in the county.

Objective ET06

To improve the public realm and attractiveness of the town centre as a place to live, work and visit through key urban regeneration projects/environmental improvement schemes such the proposed Templeshannon Regeneration project, brownfield sites along the Quays and other town centre enhancement works

Chapter 7 Tourism:

Wexford County Council strongly supports the development of tourism as a key pillar of economic growth for the county. Objectives of the Council include:

Objective TM09

To deliver the Ireland's Ancient East Programme and facilitate the phased rollout of the branding strategy, orientation signage and the enhancement of the visitor experience at the chosen programme sites.

Objective TM10

To maximise the potential of the main towns in the county as tourism visitor hubs, and to implement guidelines such as the Fáilte Ireland Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns to inform the development and operation of the towns as tourism destination towns, and to work with all stakeholders to leverage funding streams that will assist with maximising the tourism potential and offering of the towns.

Chapter 13 Heritage objectives include:

Archaeological Objective AH01

To conserve and protect archaeological sites, monuments (including their settings), underwater archaeology and objects including those listed or scheduled for inclusion on the Record of Monuments and Places and/or the Register of Historic Monuments or newly discovered sub-surface archaeological remains.

Objective AH09

To protect historic urban defences (both upstanding and buried) and associated features and safeguard them from inappropriate development in accordance with National Policy on Town Defences (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008).

Objective BH03

To promote the development of heritage-led regeneration and engage in and promote initiatives to revitalise the historic cores of our towns and villages together with local communities, heritage property owners and other stakeholders.

Enniscorthy Town Centre First

The Enniscorthy Town Centre First Plan, (ETCFP) (2023) identifies the challenges including population decline, vacancy while setting out the opportunities for reuse of vacant properties, infill development, commercial investment, cultural activity, improved public realm and connectivity.

The ETCFP sets Enniscorthy Town Centre vision as a sustainable, thriving, beautiful and welcoming place of unique sense of place and quality of life. The Town Centre will be the social and cultural heart of Enniscorthy, where a rich diversity of businesses and activities will flourish and be sustained.

The ETCFP identifies a number of projects within the town centre of which the “Castle Heritage Quarter” covers the area and properties around the Castle (see below).

4.4.2 The Castle Heritage Quarter

PACKAGE	LOCATION
Two	The Castle Heritage Quarter
ETCFP Strategy	Contributes to strategy elements TV 1-4; LV3; L01-8; CT1,3; AT3,5;

Outline

The Quarter will provide a focal point for the rich heritage of the Town. It will draw on the diversity of urban spaces to give important urban blocks including Enniscorthy Castle, the Abbey, and the rich fabric of street buildings. It will also provide the sort of space and amenities needed to support the wider heritage offer in town. The rich fabric of street buildings in the Quarter has the potential to extend the current offer of supporting uses such as retail, food, drink and entertainment. The Quarter will be the focus of attraction and development for tourism in Enniscorthy. It will require the involvement of different stakeholders in partnership to deliver development, refurbishment and improvement of urban space.

This package will be an important catalyst to the regeneration of the function, fabric and image of the Town Centre and Enniscorthy. The package supports the vision and spatial strategies of the ETCFP. Most crucially it is key to making the single most important contribution to the strategies for a thriving and a great Town Centre.

The package is also a central element of the urban regeneration initiative. Both which will package and provide will extend. Consultation for the ETCFP highlighted the importance of the Castle and the surrounding streets to the people of Enniscorthy and the importance of its role in their regeneration.

Public space improvement

Access and movement

- Improvement of all public spaces surrounding the Heritage Quarter block is the package, in conjunction with Packages One and Three.
- Planned pedestrianisation and pedestrian prioritisation of all spaces in line with incremental, active travel traffic management measures for the Town Centre, such as one-way traffic management, closure of sections to through-traffic, gate-based controls etc.
- Planned pedestrianisation of Castle Hill in conjunction with Package One, with restriction and potential elimination of through traffic. Potential extension of pedestrianisation to Abbey Square with later traffic management measures and infrastructure.
- Upgrade of Slaney Street and Slaney Place and Road in conjunction with Package Three, Templehouse Hub and Link Package.





Layout and design

- Coherent approach to allocation, layout and design of all urban space between building footprints.
- Design to emphasise the civic and heritage importance of the Castle and the Athenium.
- Design for AEs for physical accessibility and for flexibility of movement and use.
- Flexible sloping floor plans minimising stepped, level changes. Provision of benches and informal resting places in sections of steeper gradients.
- New street furniture and lighting to be prioritised at the edges of spaces.
- High quality, durable materials, preferably recycled and locally sourced, to include reused and recovered material.
- New public art (by commission).
- Potential for urban heritage locational and interpretative signage, as part of a larger strategy for the Town and County heritage strategies.
- Rationalisation of all overground and underground services and infrastructure. Undergrounding of all services and utilities in consultation with service providers.
- Investigation of potential for a small district heating loop, connecting waste heat sources and potential users.

Redevelopment and refurbishment

Redevelopment

- Protection and enhancement of core heritage assets of the block.
- Preparation of a block master plan, underpinned by a detailed heritage and building and archaeological study. Study to identify later building stock which may be removed to provide for redevelopment.
- Potential for new informal courtyard (subject to rationalisation of later building stock) which could provide a linking and focal space for the cultural and heritage activities of the Athenium and the Castle.
- Maximise views from the courtyard to the Town and wider landscape and screen as appropriate nearby exposed and unsightly structures and buildings.

Refurbishment

- Prepare detailed proposals for the conservation of the Castle.
- Prepare detailed proposals for the conservation and refurbishment of The Athenium, for potential multi-purpose use.
- Establish a vacancy team, force as part of the Town Team, with support of the professional services of Wexford County Council.
- Update of the building vacancy survey on vacancy in the Castle Heritage Quarter.
- Target vacant ground floors in collaboration with stakeholders and the business community, with a focus on new areas of business activity, support for heritage and cultural uses and the evening economy.
- Target vacant upper floors in collaboration with stakeholders and the business community. Identification of a pilot Living Over The Shop (LOTS) project.
- Promote and investigate supports for further, traditional shopfront and facade repairs and refurbishments.

Assessment

The development of the Castle would see the expansion of the site as a Heritage Attraction. The Castle forms part of the County's rich historical heritage, with Norman origins, the building and surrounding buildings have played their role in the medieval and more modern history of the nation. There is a need to remove some of the less sympathetic 20th Century additions surrounding the Castle and Athenium such as the nightclub and apartments to open up or restore the Castle ward. The purchase of these properties will ensure control and essential access to the site. The development of this project is fully in compliance with Objectives ET02, TM10, AH09, and BH03 of the Wexford County Development Plan 2022 to 2028 and forms a significant element of the Castle Heritage Quarter project as outlined in the Enniscorthy Town Centre First Plan.

I therefore consider that the development will comply with the objectives of the Wexford County Development Plan 2022 to 2028, the Enniscorthy Town Centre First Plan and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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