

Carlow County Council

Preliminary Report for The Carlow Exchange, Potato Market, Carlow Town

Part 8 Process

Date: 25/02/2021
Proposing Department: Local Enterprise Office
Circulated Departments: Transportation/Roads/Carlow Municipal District Office
Environment/Water Services
Community
Fire Services/Building Control
Finance
Planning

Context

Carlow County Council wish to create a covered open space in the centre of Carlow Town at Potato Market, in the old Tully's Yard, called The Carlow Exchange. This will be a community space and will potentially be used on Saturdays by the Carlow Farmers Market, and during the week be other groups in the Town/County. It would be operated from the Local Enterprise Office and would be hired for a nominal fee for events/workshops etc. Carlow County Council has entered into a 15-year lease with the owner and now wishes to bring the project to Part 8 to create a covered outdoor space in the centre of Carlow Town.

Development will entail retaining the existing stone walls, replacing the existing gate to the yard, building a series of new folded roofs over the yard, the creation of a new second pedestrian/vehicular gate, and resurfacing of the space, including all signage and all ancillary works associated with the creation of this multi-functional community space. The proposed works does not consist of works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure and will not require an Integrated Pollution Licence.

There are many potential uses for this versatile space, including:

Cinema • Community Garden • Conference Centre • Craft Space • Cultural Use • Dance Classes • Gaming Uses • Playground • Recreational Space • Restaurant/Café • Science/Technology, and many more.

The Carlow Exchange could become the primary space in Carlow Town Centre for exchange of information, culture, ideas, could become an economic and social hub, and become a place to host public events, tell stories and share ideas. It could host social, political and cultural exchange, community debate, banter and incidental interactions, and could be used to display architectural models, drawings, maps, photographs and be an interesting space for architectural historians, researchers, geographers, poets, writers and thinkers.

The purpose of this project is to protect and enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre and to provide for and improve cultural, tourism, public facilities, amenity and other uses appropriate to the centre of a developing urban core. Certain anti-social uses will be restricted. It is an objective of the Council to encourage the full use of town centre buildings and lands including backlands and vacant properties, and the regeneration of this vacant space will lead to a more engaging and friendly civic space for tourists and locals alike.

According to Failte Ireland, one of the key visitor challenges facing Carlow Town is perceived to be “derelict and unattractive buildings in prominent positions including key visitor corridors.”

The Situation Analysis completed by Future Analytics as part of the broader County Carlow Tourism Strategy makes the following comments in relation to the potential of Carlow Town:

Carlow Town as the county town is a retail, services, accommodation and education hub. However, the town lacks visual appeal in places, in comparison to other destinations, and the visitor core lacks definition. Further work to define this area through improvements to the public realm would help to define the area

Enhanced event spaces will not only encourage more festivals and events but also encourage visitors to use the Town Centre as a place to sit and chat, thereby increasing dwell time in the Town. As outlined in Failte Ireland's Tourism Destination Towns guidelines, public realm supports public interaction, contributes to place making and can transform towns into high-quality places to live, visit and invest - encouraging day and evening economies. It has socio-economic, environmental and cultural benefits.

This new space in the centre of Carlow Town will regenerate the Potato Market by creating a space of endless possibilities using a yard which has been vacant and unused for many years. This will create a civic space and rejuvenate the Town Centre in keeping with the objectives of Project Carlow 2040 Masterplan for Carlow Town.

As part of this Strategy, it is sought to reinforce the critical role of the Town Centre as the heart of Carlow. The Town Centre will become a destination not just for shopping but for many activities, with a focus for visitors and tourists, taking in the unique architectural, cultural and heritage attributes of Carlow's townscape. Additionally, this Strategy will support the concept of increased residential density in the Town Centre which will support not only retailers, but a host of other amenities including retail services, restaurants, leisure and arts, providing more activity throughout the day and ensuring passive surveillance. Carlow has an important relationship with the Arts which forms a key part of the Town's identity and can be further developed as an asset and attractor. Through the promotion of public art, there are opportunities to improve the public realm and create a more distinctive place. This strategy proposes bringing a new emphasis to the town centre by the regeneration of its core. We will achieve this by a renewed focus on better integrating existing elements of Carlow's urban fabric to provide new opportunities for growth and public interaction (Project Carlow 2040, November 2020)

Detail drawings/maps of the area have been completed by Conor Moriarty, Senior Executive Architect with Carlow County Council, and are included as part of this report.

Responses from Circulated Departments

Environment Department:

Subject: Re: 202046 - Carlow Exchange

There are no environmental issues other than potential noise issues in the operational phase (I think music is mentioned as possible activity).

It might be a good idea to include a short consultant's report on noise impacts.

This should be addressed in the Part 8 report.

Pat Connolly (SEE)
Environment Department
Carlow County Council

Transportation Dept./Municipal District Office:

I confirm no objection to the proposed development from a Roads and Traffic Perspective.

The proposed development will serve to regularise the arrangement with regards the Farmers Market. Relocating the stalls from the public footpath will enhance public safety and will provide for safer access through the public area of Potato Market during events.

Adequate car parking both on street and off street is available within a short walk of the proposed facility.

It is recommended that access to the facility is controlled to prevent unauthorised use.

Kieran Cullinane,

Senior Engineer – Transportation and Special Project Delivery

Community, Recreation, & Amenity Department:

From a Community perspective the design should be an inclusive space for all the Communities. When expressions of interest are sought for the space usage ethnic, excluded and marginalised communities should be contacted directly to ensure that they are part of the discussion. This project should be for all citizens to use and enjoy and likes of ethnic cultural activities should be encouraged and supported. Branding/wording etc should ensure full inclusivity. Established activities like the farmers market should also be encouraged to have a wide range of Irish and ethnic products available.

Initiatives for special categories or groups e.g. a quiet sensory experience for people with Autism should be considered as part of an events programme and the design should ensure that these can be facilitated. The space should also be universally accessible and CCUAM should be included in the conversation to ensure needs are met.

Facilities should ensure that there are segregated systems for waste management and waste minimisation should be encouraged in design and operation.

Renewable energy options should be considered for operations to ensure that the site has minimal carbon impact. Opportunities may exist for solar PV given the proposed structure so design might consider this if appropriate.

As previously mentioned, wording should ensure compliance with the Official Languages Act.

Brian O'Donovan

Ardoifigeach Feidmiúcháin | Senior Executive Officer

Pobail, Caitheamh Aimsire & Fóillíocht, Comhairle Chontae Ceatharlach , Halla an Bhaile, Ceatharlach

Fire Department/Building Control:

Fire comment below on the Carlow Exchange project based on the attached drawings and images.

1. Should the premises be describable as a building then the requirements of the Building Regulations would apply and necessitate the relevant notifications and applications including an application for a fire safety certificate and disabled access certificate.
2. Although this is described as a covered open space, it does appear (based on the drawings and images attached) that there is such a degree of enclosure that would benefit from the following fire safety measures (which would be required under a fire safety certificate)...
 - a. At least two independent means of escape
 - b. Fire detection and alarm system and
 - c. Emergency lighting system (green running man over the exits)
3. Designated car parking for holders of a disabled person's parking permit would be required under a disabled access certificate.

Neal O'Grady CEng | Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Carlow County Fire Service, Fire Station HQ, Green Lane, Carlow, R93 XE72.

Wider Strategy for Carlow Town

The creation of the Carlow Exchange community Space is part of a much wider strategy for the development of Carlow Town, as part of the Failte Ireland's Destination Towns Programme and as part of Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration which is a 20-year Masterplan for Carlow Town and was approved by Council in December 2020. The creation of a civic space in Carlow Town centre has been a long-term aim of Carlow County Council and will add to the strategic goals of the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area to create a vibrant Town Centre. It is an aspiration also of the Project Carlow 2040 Plan, approved in November 2020.

Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration outlines a number of intervention areas within Carlow Town, and one such area is the Town Centre and Potato Market area. This new civic space will regenerate this area and put to use a former yard which has been vacant and unused for many years, creating an iconic central area for the wider community to enjoy, and will be suitable to many and multi-functional uses. It will also provide for numerous artistic and cultural events and groups, linking the 'cultural quarter' with the centre of Town.

The aforementioned strategic vision has been central to the development of this Regeneration Strategy and the objectives and Interventions outlined within it. Each Intervention incorporates key ideas locally within each area, while being aware of the part each Intervention will play in

the broader Regeneration Strategy for the Town. There are six Interventions identified in this Strategy. The Intervention Areas were informed by extensive public consultation and consist of:

- **Town Centre - Potato Market and Barrack Street**
- *Cultural Quarter (including links to the Railway Station)*
- *The Barrow Track / Civic Spine*
- *The Pembroke District*
- *The Burrin Riverfront*
- *Link Streets (Dublin Street and Tullow Street)*

(Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration)

Pierce Kavanagh
Economic Development Officer
Local Enterprise Office
Carlow County Council

