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**Surveys reveal houses in path of Kilkenny City Centre Access Scheme are not medieval.**

EXPERT reports into the architectural heritage of two houses in Kilkenny due for demolition to make way for an important new road scheme reveal they don’t date back to medieval times.

The houses at 21 and 22 Vicar Street are due to be dismantled to make way for the **Central Access Scheme,** an access scheme to support the functioning of the city centre and to enable further central development, rather than on the edge of the city.

The €10.7 million project involves the construction of 700 metres of a new road across the former cattle mart and the Smithwicks brewery lands, with a new River Nore bridge. It was approved by [An Bord Pleanála](http://www.irishtimes.com/search/search-7.1213540?tag_organisation=An%20Bord%20Pleanála&article=true) in 2011.

The Kilkenny local authorities today (Thursday April 17th) published two reports into the buildings at 21 and 22 Vicar Street commissioned following concerns that they contained a late medieval gable, or at least the remnants of one.

The surveys and investigations were carried out by consultant archaeologists **Valerie J Keeley Ltd,** and architectural and historical buildings specialist **Rob Goodbody of Historic Building Consultants,** under licence and supervision of the **Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.**

The Rob Goodbody report says that the front and rear walls of 21 and 22 Vicar St, and their internal walls date mostly from 1881 and 1908 respectively with no evidence that they date to medieval times. The report says there are small remnants from the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Prior to these investigations there was no clear understanding of the date of the gable wall that forms the southern end of 22 Vicar Street. Mr Goodbody says this has now been shown to date “in all likelihood” to the eighteenth century, but with significant alterations and additions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See illustrations attached.

In relation to a stone lined opening in the gable he goes on to state; *“There is a strong possibility that it was taken from an earlier building and incorporated in this wall, in the same way that many other individual stones were built into the walls and were found here and there during the works.*

*“Whatever the date and the circumstances under which this stone-lined opening came to be in this location, the evidence for the date of the gable wall shows that it cannot be of medieval date.”*

He also cites an identical stone opening in one of the walls of the enclosed car park adjacent to the houses.  An Environmental Impact Study has identified this wall, the bull inn wall, as of 17th century origin.

Meanwhile the report from Valerie J Keeley Ltd, who was commissioned to carry out a series of archaeological investigations shows that earliest archaeology found dated from the late 17th/early 18th century, and not further back to medieval times.

The works carried out included archaeological monitoring of all ground works, and were part of the conditions of An Bord Pleanála permission.

12 test trenches were excavated within the interior and gardens of No 21-22 Vicar St, and in the pavement in front of the houses as well as in the Diageo Ltd carpark to the south of No 22 Vicar St.

According to the report archaeology was identified in each of the 12 test trenches. It said: *“The earliest archaeology present dated from the late 17th/early 18th century, and corresponds with buildings and walls depicted on Rocques Map of Kilkenny (1758). There was substantial evidence of 19th century archaeology in several trenches.*

*“None of the test trenches have yet revealed evidence of in situ archaeology earlier than the late 17th/early 18th century, although several disturbed artefacts that were not in their original setting, and are believed to date to the post medieval or medieval period, were recovered.”*

The Goodbody report also examined several historical accounts that claimed that number 22 Vicar Street had been a manse house belonging to a Church of Ireland official, the Prebendary of Tascoffin.

His research found that these were based on a misunderstanding of the original record. The only original source to mention a manse house at this location was written in 1679

*“The document written in 1679 did not say where on the land the manse had stood, but as it had been demolished prior to that time it is clear that none of the buildings now on the site are the manse house. The gable wall cannot have been part of the manse as it was the gable end wall of building on the site next door to 22 Vicar Street, which was not part of the land owned by the Prebendary of Tascoffin”.*

**These reports together with previous reports show conclusively that the houses at Vicar Street are not medieval.**

**Note:** Full copies of the reports available by email on request.

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