



2 Upper Bridge Street

This development of six apartments in Callan, Co.Kilkenny is unique in its approach to addressing problems which are at the fore in modern day Ireland that is; homelessness, housing shortages, vacant sites in urban areas and the hollowing out of previously vibrant town centres.

The site sits at the mid point of the main street of what was once a vibrant Irish market town know for its strong urban grain and tight streetscape. Previous development of the building was left half finished and abandoned in 2010, an all too familiar sight ubiquitous with ill conceived Celtic Tiger era development.

At one point this extremely narrow two way street was the main road linking Kilkenny with Cork and would have enjoyed plenty of passing trade to supplement its regular farming community clientele.

The arrival of the motorways, population shift towards larger urban settlements and out of town living saw a general decline in Callan. This decline synonymous with unused buildings and vacant sites portrays the town as run down and unloved.

It is in this context that the The Good Shepherd Centre an organisation which provides social housing for people experiencing difficulties accessing a home in Kilkenny and it's environs stepped in to rescue this vacant building and provide quality and affordable homes to single people and families.

Working with Kilkenny based CANICE Architects the proposal involved a change of use at ground floor level from commercial to residential, therefore providing six new single bedroom apartments each with their own outdoor space along with a larger outdoor communal area to the rear at ground floor.

The architects believed it was important to address the brief while also addressing the historical and urban context of the site. As a commercial street they believed it vital that a change of use at ground level to residential does not mean that the streetscape should have to read as such.

Extra sensitivity was needed due to the location of the building within an Architectural Conservation Area and the fact that the building itself is a Protected Structure.

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CANICE Architects

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Additional information

Local authority: Kilkenny County Council
 Project size: 360m2
 Completion date: January 2020
 Architects: CANICE Architects

Photography: Brian Cregan and CANICE Architects

The building had been given this status due to its previous shopfront design which was listed as ‘a finely-detailed shopfront exhibiting high quality craftsmanship which contributes significantly to the artistic design distinction of the composition together with the visual appeal of the site at street level’, now sadly lost during the last unfinished round of development.

Therefore the scale, proportion and materiality of the new facade was inspired by what was found locally both historically and present day. Glazed tiles used on a much loved local bakery on the same street are present here applied in a more contemporary fashion with a colour scheme derived from a local artist Helena Gorey’s recent exhibition in the RHA which was influenced by the colours she identifies in the local Callan landscape. Indeed Callan has a strong connection with artists such as Tony O’Malley and Barrie Cooke and this link was one of the reasons CANICE Architects were so determined to collaborate with local artists throughout.

Another local artist Mollie Anna King produced hand made signage for the building which again used the colour palette in a more subtle fashion. Internally the colour continues in the common spaces, reminiscent of Victorian tenement blocks which used colourful glazed

tiling to enliven the everyday journey from street to individual apartment door.

It is hoped that this new addition to Upper Bridge Street whilst primarily providing new homes to people in most need will also help to progress the already gallant efforts of the locals in their committed campaign to use art as a direct generator for urban renewal in this mid-sized Irish town.

CANICE Architects

CANICE Architects was formed by Damien Curry & Emily-Ann Gilligan in 2017. The partners gained 10 years experience working in London for award winning architecture studios on a number of Europe’s most exciting projects before establishing the practice in Ireland. The practice’s experience lies mainly in the arts & culture, educational and housing sectors with many of their past projects located in historically sensitive settings.

The practice is based in the medieval City of Kilkenny famous for its many well-preserved churches and monasteries and long history of craft based industries. A combination of interests in both the authentic historic building craft and the contemporary avant-garde forms the basis of the practice’s critical approach to the advancement of architecture.



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