



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED: WYCLIFFE & CITYWIDE**

**CABINET**

**5 NOVEMBER 2001**

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**CULTURAL QUARTER**

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**Report of the Director of Arts and Leisure**

**1 Purpose of Report**

To seek member consideration and approval of the development of a Cultural Quarter in St George's south area of the City Centre. The plan for developing the Cultural Quarter provides a framework to progress capital developments for the Performing Arts, Film, New Media, Visual Arts and provision of Cultural Industries workspaces within the city centre.

**2 Summary**

The Arts & Leisure Department, in consultation with the Arts Council of England and East Midlands Arts, determined that Leicester needed to develop an Integrated Arts Capital Strategy that would respond to the artistic and cultural aspirations and needs of a regional centre with a projected changing demography and the aim of increasing access by all communities. The mapping study, research and consultation process outlined in the Integrated Arts Capital Strategy have revealed a city where its cultural centre is ripe for investment and radical reshaping. All the key cultural buildings in the city have had their structural shortcomings convincingly illustrated and the Arts Council of England (ACE) have indicated their unwillingness to fund independently developed capital plans for each site. The Strategy which has emerged of repackaging and reprogramming the city's cultural venues led to ACE, as part of its Capital One completion programme, earmarking a sum of up to £10 million in July 1999 for the development of a Cultural Quarter within the City. This strategy has been underpinned by the recently approved Cultural Strategy, which has received wide acclaim regionally and locally.

In September 1999 the Arts & Leisure Department commissioned Arts Business Limited to undertake a study to research, assess and present options for future Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Film and New Media provision within the City Centre, and the respective role and positioning of key arts organisations responsible for live performance, film, new media and visual arts.

The Integrated Arts Capital Study was to be undertaken in three stages. The first two stages are completed, and the findings of these two stages formed the basis of a report to the former Arts & Leisure Committee in June 2000.

At this meeting the report was approved as the basis for further consultation with City based Arts Organisations, Agencies, Artists and allied professions, other Departments in the Council, in particular the Education and Environment and Development Departments, East Midlands Arts Board, Arts Council of England National Lottery Board and potential funding partners.

The Cultural Quarter proposals provide an overarching framework for reconfiguring and relocating Leicester's key arts, media and broadcasting provision as a cultural regeneration driver in the St George's area of the City. The Cultural Quarter will be concentrated in the St. George's South area, located south of Humberstone Gate, close to public rail and bus transport.

The Cultural Quarter will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider St. George's Area which in turn will produce the most significant major regeneration scheme the city has probably ever undertaken. This radical, holistic approach will revitalise the city centre and generate significant cultural, educational, employment and environmental outputs to the wider benefit of people across the city's communities.

The proposal to develop the Cultural Quarter is based on the following vision:

Leicester will be the cultural production house for the East Midlands and a regional flagship city for cultural investment and the cultural industries. It will be a city that offers culturally diverse opportunities for training, for making, for distribution and for exhibition.

The vision implies that Leicester will become a city that provides cultural activity in performance, in visual arts, in crafts, in moving image and media and in training and education.

This vision and strategy requires leadership, political will and commitment. Strong partnerships will be required to develop this vision, but the benefits are enormous.

Leicester will become the key cultural centre in the region by building on the demographic change of Leicester and its diversity. Leicester has the opportunity to occupy a special place in cultural development regionally, nationally and in Europe by becoming a beacon for the support and development of contemporary culturally diverse practice and specifically South Asian cultural activity.

The Cultural Quarter will comprise:

- a new centre for the performing arts with 750 seat and 300 seat theatres, production, dedicated community & education and rehearsal facilities and a new 450 seat music venue. Estimated cost £30 million, including the value of Council land

- a new film and media centre, to establish a regional film theatre in Leicester with accessible media resources to provide support to film makers and production companies. Estimated cost £6.8 million
- a new contemporary visual arts centre offering increased space for major contemporary and touring exhibitions and the opportunity to house new major collections, increased support for the exhibition of crafts, and dedicated spaces for education and community work and the support for young and emergent artists / makers. Estimated cost £9.9 million, including the value of Council land ( A PFI scheme could be an option for development of this facility )
- new creative production facilities comprised of subsidised studio space for visual artists, commercial workspace for creative technology, broadcasting and media organisations, subsidised office space for the City's voluntary and professional not for profit arts organisations and accommodation to provide facilities for networking, training and business support. Estimated cost £4.8 million
- enhancement of the environment and in particular the development of public spaces within the Cultural Quarter at an estimated cost of £4.5 million to include public art, signage and landscaping works

A phased timescale of at least eight years is predicted for the development of the Cultural Quarter at an estimated cost of approximately £58 million, including the value of Council land, for the proposed developments and associated elements, and the key actions required to realise this major regeneration project.

In order to comply with the timetables established by other agencies and in particular the Arts Council of England and the Government Office of the East Midlands the following submissions have been made:

- An expression of interest for entry into the Arts Council of England's National Lottery Capital Two programme for a contribution to the new Film & Media Centre, the new Contemporary Art Gallery and for the Creative Production facilities. The subsequent application, if the proposal is approved by the Arts Council of England for submission to phase 2 of the Capital 2 programme, is estimated at £5 million.
- An application to Government Office East Midlands for ERDF Objective 2, funding of £11.75 million towards the Cultural Quarter (including a bid for £630,000, over the period 2002 – 2006 towards the establishment of the Creative Industries Regeneration Team) £5 million of which has already been secured as the Cultural Quarter has been identified as one of three Strategic Development Opportunity sites in the East Midlands. The remaining £6.75m applied for is still under consideration.

In addition to the aforementioned expressions of interest the department is progressing the development of funding strategies to secure the finance for the proposed facilities. This work is at an early stage, as further feasibility work for each of the new facilities is required to identify the detailed business activity and outcomes to match to the criteria of each potential funding partner.

However, it is envisaged that the development of the Performing Arts Centre and the Creative Industries Production Facilities as the first phase of development, will act as the catalyst for the wider regeneration of the area and will potentially assist with securing the funding required to enable other facilities to be developed. In particular it will demonstrate the Council's commitment to the Cultural Quarter developments and thereby promote a climate for further opportunity to extend and follow up the initial discussions that have been held with potential funding partners and property owners in the area.

In addition it is proposed to bring forward the development of the Creative Industries Production facilities (Incubator Units) given a proportion of the £5m Objective 2 funding so far approved has been allocated for this purpose.

### **3 Recommendations**

The views of Cabinet Members are requested.

### **4 Financial & Legal Implications**

Commitment to phase 1 of the project will result in a commitment of £6.6 million being made from the Council's capital resources over the period to 2005/06. This will represent a pre-commitment against the capital programme for 2002/03 to 2004/05, which has yet to be approved. Full financial implications are provided in the supporting information.

### **5 Consultation**

Various consultations have been undertaken in the writing of this report, these include representatives from Leicester Theatre Trust and Leicester Arts Centre Trust.

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