

A GOOD PLACE FOR MAKING PLANS

Creative Estuary A national cultural planning toolkit

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Section 3: Ways of working

3.1 Community engagement and co-design

Community engagement and co-design are important to ensuring that the cultural infrastructure that is planned and delivered meets the need of the local community.

The key to successful community engagement and co-design is early and real involvement coupled with clear pathways and mechanisms for that co-design. Time throughout the process needs to be allowed for this. To be successful the community needs to make decisions rather than just react to a worked-up scheme.

Securing the resources necessary for the engagement process is a fundamental part of policy development, scheme feasibility studies and business cases. It must not be an afterthought late in the process.

Tools and pathways for engagement and co-design

To make sure co-design is successful, all partners in the development process have a role in embedding it in every stage of the process. This includes developing business cases and plan-making, and the development of specific development proposals. The local authorities, development corporations and the structures set out in the report have a role, and this is explored further below, and elements of this can be achieved through relevant hooks in Local Plan policies. But the private sector also has a role, as do architects, to embed and support community and stakeholders in the process in a meaningful way from the early concept design stages, through to the infrastructure being built and used. This on-going, long-term involvement of funders, users and other relevant stakeholders is particularly relevant to co-location, as set out in section six.

Figure three gives an overview of the potential approaches to engagement and co-design pathways. The following points highlight the main opportunities and priorities for engagement in cultural policy making and delivery components, and figure 4 shows how these components sit together.

- 1. Place-based Cultural Partnerships or Boards** (see the third critical component in section 2 and figure 2 in section 3)– are important for a number of reasons, including to best enable engagement and co-design. The governance structure outlined previously emphasises the need to develop, reinforce and nurture a cultural ecosystem as a basis for knowing and understanding who needs to be involved and to harness the power of this network. The key to this is establishing place-based Cultural Partnerships or Boards. These should be responsible for developing the local cultural network supported and championed by the strategic Cultural Infrastructure Investment Partnership or Board.

These place-based cultural partnerships provide:

- A clear and recognised pathway for engagement.
- An encouraging gateway for new cultural projects and ideas to come forward from the community and cultural entrepreneurs and be supported and/or developed further
- A signpost and gateway for developers to engage with the community and in the co-design of their schemes.
- A conduit for the councils to engage with the community to develop cultural proposals as part of their planning and cultural policy development and their regeneration and development plans.
- A recognised terms of reference to enable the community to make real decisions and take a responsible role in the process.

Representation from the local authority or development corporation planning team on these partnerships would enable the identification of proposals which would require such involvement at an early stage. And, importantly, would help identify those proposals which have advanced without this involvement so that steps can be taken to rectify the situation.

- 2. Cultural planning policy making and evidence base development** - engagement should happen at the policy making stage – this is the bedrock of early engagement.

Sometimes, however, cultural proposals are enshrined in a Cultural Strategy or the Local Plan and this can result in the community feeling that ‘it is a done deal’ when these schemes get to a planning application. Early engagement in policy making particularly when it comes to cultural infrastructure enables the community to be involved early and help shape their place, but also helps them understand some of the wider considerations the policy makers need to take into account. Involving the community in the development of the evidence base is a positive conduit for early engagement in the policy debate and must seek to involve elements of the community that might not be part of existing governance structures or board.



Figure 3: Model approach to engagement and co-design pathways and conduits

- 3. A Cultural Infrastructure Investment Programme** - the development of the Cultural Infrastructure Investment Programme at the strategic level, and the detailed place-based Investment Programmes, which should be led by the Place-based Partnerships or Board (as set out in figure 1 in section 2), provide a positive opportunity and process to engage with the community. Engagement should also provide a conduit for projects to come from the community for eventual inclusion in the programme, so this should not be seen as a one-way process.
- 4. Cultural Wellbeing Action Plans** - If enshrined in the Development Plan developers can be required to provide a Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan at planning application submission stage. The model policy as outlined in section four requires the developer to undertake meaningful community engagement and co-design of the Action Plan at an early, preapplication stage.
- 5. Cultural project business case development** - The place-based Cultural Partnerships or Boards will promote and support cultural project business cases. Co-design and engagement should be seen as fundamental to these business cases. The Place Board will be responsible for ensuring this happens and would be the conduit for this.

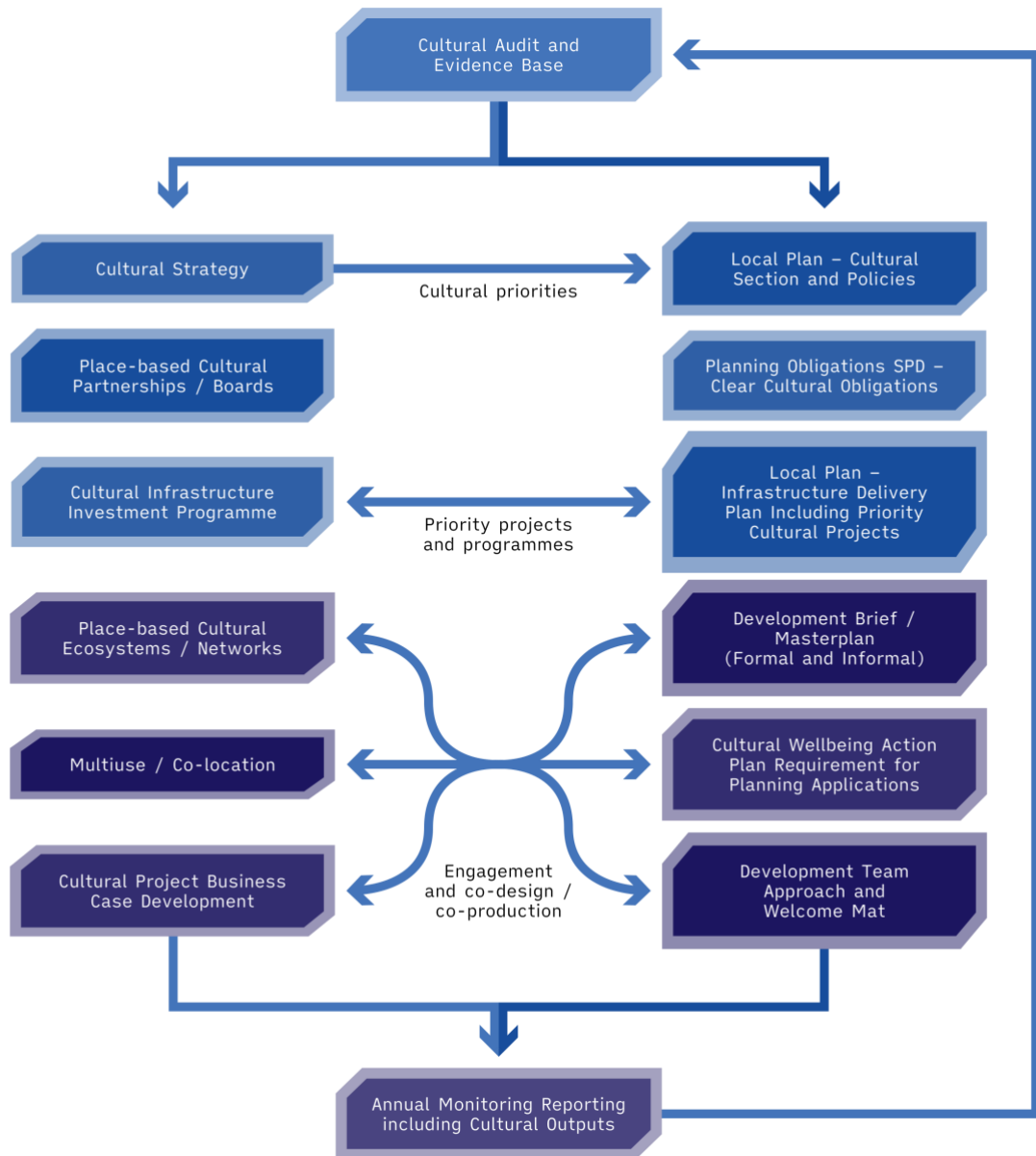


Figure 4: Cultural policy making and delivery components, including engagement

3.2 Gaining access to land and investment

The investment made in areas collectively by the development industry is far greater than the spending power of the majority of the public sector and cultural partners. Generally, however, this has been relatively untapped as a source of funding or for the direct provision of cultural infrastructure.

Successful examples indicate that positive and close working relationships between a developer and the planning team are critically important. As too is the potential role of local authorities and development corporations as landowners. This section considers other lessons and provides a model policy for securing Section 106 Agreement contributions.

Lessons from working with the private sector

Many developers recognise that incorporating cultural facilities in their schemes can help to enliven both commercial and residential schemes for potential occupiers, and as an ongoing destination for occupiers and visitors.

Successful examples, such as the Carriage Shed in Chester (see box 2 below), are largely the result of a **positive and close working relationship between the developer and the council team through a joint masterplanning process** and a developer who sees the benefit of cultural infrastructure for their business.

Box 2: The Carriage Shed, Chester

Developers Muse worked with Cheshire West and Chester Council to incorporate the 'Carriage Shed' into their commercial office development, Chester Place, in Chester city centre. The Carriage Shed was a large vacant railway shed located between Chester railway station and Muse's Chester Place scheme. It has been transformed into a flexible space for outdoor and covered events including craft and artisan markets, outdoor cinema and music. The council and Muse developed the carriage shed scheme together and through a series of land transactions acquired the building and its surrounding area. The council obtained European funding for the public realm enhancements and Muse now actively promote, manage and maintain the space as a venue and gateway to their office campus. The Carriage Shed was incorporated into a Section 106 Agreement however, the scheme was worked up without any positive planning policy to secure it.

A supportive regime

Often a developer has to engage and negotiate directly and separately with the different parts of the council or councils who have an interest in the planning application. This might include transportation and highways, environmental health, conservation, education etc as well as the cultural team. This can be challenging and often these separate teams have contradictory requirements. This uncertainty can be reduced through a **'development team' approach** – where the local planning authority brings these teams together and brokers a single voice through the planning case officer, often supported by a site development brief.

A development team should include cultural officers, where one exists, particularly on major schemes. If there is not a cultural officer role, then the planners must champion the importance of planning, underpinned by strong policies (see section three) in their up-to-date Local Plan and any expert support they can access from relevant colleagues in the structures set out in section two or upper tier authorities. Such an approach may require the developer and the local planning authority to enter into a Planning Performance Agreement and pay for this enhanced service. Experience shows that many developers are more than happy to fund such an enhanced joined-up approach to provide the certainty and clarity it provides.

Related to this, **creating certainty** for a development is a key issue raised by many developers who argue that they just need to know what to do and what to provide, within reason, to secure a successful planning consent and a completed and occupied development. This needs clear,

unambiguous, and consistent guidance from the local planning authority. This approach can be successful, however, it can lead to a more ad hoc approach and its success largely depends upon the skill and determination of the development control planning officer leading the planning application process and is more a negotiation process between the developer and the local planning authority. Uncertainty still remains, therefore, until the applicant gets through the planning committee which may take a very different view.

Understandably, this approach often lacks, or is perceived to lack, transparency. It is preferable, therefore, to work more formally with developers, through tools such as Cultural Wellbeing Action Plans, because these also can require preapplication community engagement.

Certainty is best secured and communicated through an up-to-date Development Plan policy approach – this provides certainty for the developer, a policy context for the planning officer and members of the planning committee and transparency of decision making for members of the public. A successful approach also provides:

- clarity of requirements;
- clear evidence and justification supporting the requirements;
- consistency in approach;
- transparency in both approach and decision making; and
- a development team approach that actively involves culture officers or relevant local authority and development corporation staff with an emphasis on cultural, where they exist, and establishes a coordinated ‘welcome mat’ as a support system for investors.

A co-ordinated ‘welcome mat’

The development team approach is part of a co-ordinated ‘welcome mat’ to support and nurture cultural investment and investors. The public sector is well experienced in providing such support for major commercial and business investors by providing a multidisciplinary development team to streamline the planning process, providing workforce recruitment and training, unblocking problems at senior levels, providing transport and travel planning support, and so on. This is generally not the case with cultural investments.

However, it is an essential support mechanism because it:

- supports and nurtures early ideas;
- provides support with viability, audience and business case development;
- provides advice on funding sources and facilitates a pathway to funders;
- provides pathways to engagement and co-design;
- enables navigation support through the planning and other regulatory processes; and
- provides delivery support and advice on ongoing management

Cultural investors and entrepreneurs will be good at thinking about cultural infrastructure but may be new to navigating the complexity of funding and funders and regulatory systems. Support and handholding are therefore essential. The best avenue to enable the ‘welcome mat’ is through the Place-based Cultural Investment Partnership/Board with specialist support from the Strategic

Cultural Infrastructure Investment Partnership/Board who can wrap support around and nurture cultural investors and help to navigate the necessary processes and unblock enroute.

Cultural infrastructure and Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy

Examples of cultural infrastructure, other than general public realm enhancement and public art, secured through a Local Plan policy are hard to come by. This is largely because Development Plans have in the past been silent about culture generally and specifically about requiring the provision of new or improved cultural infrastructure as a fundamental part of development schemes. An exception to this is in Wandsworth, where the borough council has successfully secured affordable workspace and studios for artists and creatives through its economic policy to require a proportion of commercial floorspace to be provided as low cost. This was secured through a very detailed Local Plan policy that requires 10% of the economic floorspace to be provided as flexible space for small businesses at an affordable rent in perpetuity (Wandsworth Local Plan, 2020, p325 and 326). Model Planning Policy 12 in section three above replicates this approach.

The key to Wandsworth's success is a Development Plan policy that has the detail and the teeth to operationalise it and a council that is determined to ensure it happens. This is rare for cultural infrastructure. But it needn't be. Councils are generally very successful in securing planning gain through Section 106 Agreements for affordable homes, transport infrastructure, public realm enhancements, open and green space and general community facilities. Cultural infrastructure is just the same but, to date, it has not been seen as a priority.

The key to changing this is to incorporate specific policies into a current Local Plan that provides a clear and unambiguous requirement to provide cultural infrastructure and to give that policy teeth by requiring the developer to provide a Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan at planning application submission stage, that clearly illustrates how the developer is going to deliver the Local Plan policy requirement for additional cultural infrastructure as part of the development or, exceptionally, where the local planning authority agrees, to pay a commuted sum for the provision of cultural infrastructure provision. Furthermore, the policy needs an up-to-date Planning Obligations SPD that operationalises the Local Plan policy by outlining in detail the requirement for:

- cultural infrastructure provision;
- the provision and delivery of a Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan;
- commuted sum calculations; and
- housing number and commercial floorspace triggers for the requirement to kick in.

Model Policy 3 and the associated Model Planning Obligation SPD provisions outlined above in section four seek to provide such an approach. Such a policy needs to state, in some instances to secure larger cultural infrastructure projects to serve, for example a large development area with multiple developers and multiple planning applications, that commuted sum payments can be pooled.

Generally, current practice within local authorities shows that it is felt that using the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to provide cultural infrastructure is inappropriate and ineffective. This is because planners feel that Section 106 Agreements can be more effective at securing benefits in the case of larger development schemes and generally the contributions secured through Section

106 Agreements far exceed that secured through CIL. Box 3 below sets out a model approach to securing Section 106 contributions.

CIL monies are also largely taken up with more immediate requirements to enable the development to proceed such as transport infrastructure and flood defence measures so there would, in reality, be little if any funding available for cultural infrastructure through a CIL.

Box 3: Model approach to securing Section 106 contributions

- A Local Plan that includes explicit and contemporary evidence based cultural infrastructure policies.
- A Local Plan policy that is strongly justified that clearly and unambiguously requires the provision of cultural infrastructure as part of major development schemes – that provides the specificity required.
- A planning policy that is operationalised through requirement to provide and deliver a Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan and a current Planning Obligation SPD that explicitly includes cultural infrastructure requirements and the detail necessary – unit / floorspace triggers and commuted sum calculations.
- The determination of the local planning authority to prioritise cultural infrastructure in the planning process.

Schemes with challenged viability

In some cases, developments may not be able to provide the cultural infrastructure required by the planning policy framework. Box 4 sets out a model approach to dealing with challenged viability.

Viability may be challenging for a number of reasons, including site constraints and development costs. This is common in some town and city centre redevelopment sites where ground conditions could be abnormal.

It would be unreasonable to refuse developments if their independently verified viability appraisals show conclusively that the scheme could not justify the extent of provision that the Cultural Infrastructure the Development Plan policy required. This is a negotiation – supported by the developers Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan. However, it is also important that the local authority or development corporation secures expert advice or consultancy support from people who have an understanding of cultural and creative industries who can, if necessary, robustly challenge feasibility studies and viability appraisals that might argue that cultural infrastructure is not viable as part of a proposal.

A number of alternative options are available to the local planning authority in this situation:

- To accept a reduced cultural provision based on what can be supported by the scheme.
- To consider a co-location option, rather than separate, specialist cultural infrastructure.

- To agree to take a commuted sum – this maximises the sites commercial development potential and therefore optimises the commuted sum. The council would need to use this commuted sum to provide new cultural provision, to enhance existing facilities, improve access to existing cultural facilities or achieve what cultural benefits it could off site.
- To agree a commuted sum and use it as match funding to lever in external funding from other sources.
- The use of commuted sums is a commonly used source of match funding to support external funding bids and to lever in additional funding to support, for example, highway infrastructure and public realm projects and there is no reason why the same cannot be the case to support cultural infrastructure schemes. The Place-based Cultural Investment Board and its Cultural Investment Programme would provide the support for funding bids and a source of priority cultural investment priority projects – that are ‘oven ready’ to proceed (via its Cultural Infrastructure Investment Programme).

Box 4: Model approach to dealing with challenged viability

- There is an open book dialogue between the developer and the local planning authority.
- There is a process established to check, challenge and verify the developer’s viability appraisals involving an independent property expert with knowledge and experience of the cultural and creative industries.
- A co-location option is considered.
- There is a Development Plan policy that enables, exceptionally, for the local planning authority to take commuted sum payments in lieu of its cultural infrastructure policy requirements.
- That the Local Plan policy is supplemented by an up-to-date Planning Obligations SPD that operationalises the policy.
- If a culture team exists, that both it and the planning team are involved in this negotiation process.
- That there is a proactive approach to using such commuted sums as match-funding to lever in other external funding supported by the Place-based Culture Investment Board and its Cultural Investment Programme.

Securing meanwhile uses

Meanwhile uses are becoming an attractive way to reuse vacant buildings, animate vacant plots of land and to revitalise high streets. They are a positive and relatively easy way of providing things to do and places to go for incoming residents in the early stages of new developments and to encourage cohesion between new residents and those in existing, surrounding neighbourhoods. More enlightened developers are now seeing meanwhile uses as a way of positively using their land pending permanent redevelopment and minimising the costs of having to secure, manage and maintain their land and buildings in the meantime.

Box 5 gives the example of an approach being taken in Chester. This example illustrates a coming together of interests:

- A council seeing meanwhile uses as a positive way to add colour, promote cultural activity and a way to re-energise its high street and reuse vacant shop uses – an economic imperative.
- Landlords that see real benefits both financially and in making their vacant assets more attractive to potential investors.
- A local community generated and led CIC that has a viable and credible business model with an objective to promote art and culture and help support their local high street.

Box 5 - Place for Arts, Chester

The art shop popups, 'Place for the Arts in Chester' is a local Community Interest Company (CIC) that has successfully established four temporary art shops in vacant shop units on Chester's high streets. The company approaches landlords with a model proposition based upon a no-cost six-month license or lease, which provides benefits to the building owner such as providing occupation, security, heating and insurance cost and business rate reductions together with providing a more attractive unit for more permanent potential occupiers. This was seen as a high street revitalisation project by the council and the company worked through the council's Regeneration Cabinet Member to secure additional business rate relief. Artists pay a half commercial rate to exhibit in the units and they staff the shop. It costs up to £1,000 to upgrade each shop for this use. This is a model that breaks even financially for up to six shop units and the Company is looking towards potentially expanding to more than six and is contemplating expanding the concept to include low-cost artists workspace. This model is being used to enable pop-ups in many places across the UK.

This exemplar did not require any planning consents and could therefore be quickly delivered. Many larger meanwhile uses may require planning consent, which adds time, costs and uncertainty into the process. As meanwhile uses are temporary they may not be able to provide all the things that a more permanent use could and should incorporate. These uses could be a little messy and, in some cases, be a more 'unusual' development form. Realistically, this can be challenging to the planning process, causing objections to be raised and may be difficult for planning committee members and officers.

The complexity and inflexibility of the development control system, the uncertainty involved, the cost of making planning applications and the time taken to determine any planning application and associated regulatory processes such as licensing and Building Regulations makes the delivery of meanwhile uses difficult and in some instances precludes it. To promote such meanwhile uses the planning process needs to be fast, flexible, low cost, accessible and simple to use and more certain.

Such a system should involve:

- An outline / preapplication stage to establish the principles.
- An early community engagement process.

- A simplified planning application with basic minimum components.
- A reduced application fee based upon the length of the duration of the meanwhile use.
- A proactive engagement of the planning officers involved.

A meanwhile use detailed toolkit, which outlines this process and provides other advice on navigating the council's regulatory processes together with model leases and licences, would be a helpful device. For example, the Brighton and Hove Culture and Creative Network has produced the basis for such a toolkit as part of their aspiration to promote meanwhile uses in their area.¹ Drawing on this example, box 6 sets out a model approach to securing meanwhile uses.

Box 6 - Model approach to securing meanwhile uses

- Member and officer training on the economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits of meanwhile uses and how to positively deal with them.
- Acknowledging that meanwhile uses are temporary – therefore they should not be expected to provide all the essential infrastructure that a permanent development normally would.
- Simplifying and accelerating the planning application processing timescales for meanwhile uses and making it cheaper and more certain for applicants.
- Producing a detailed meanwhile use toolkit.
- Providing a Local Plan policy that clearly justifies and positively supports meanwhile uses on their own or as an interim use, pending permanent redevelopment of a site or reuse of a building – providing certainty and a clear supportive policy context. Model Policy 9 in section three outlines such a policy.

Use of council / public sector owned assets to deliver cultural infrastructure

The use of public sector owned land and assets is a more secure way to deliver cultural infrastructure.

Two approaches are available:

1. Direct public sector delivery

The council funds and delivers a cultural facility directly itself on its own land. This could be funded through its capital programme, through prudential borrowing, through accessing other external funding or through a mixture of these.

This approach is usually driven by either a service delivery imperative or a clear political / corporate will. The creation of a co-location hub delivered through this method could also be

¹ The Meanwhile Use Toolkit is available at <https://cultureinourcity.com/resources/meanwhile-use-toolkit-2/>

justified by providing an enhanced community facility to serve, for example, a disadvantaged neighbourhood and/or by providing a positive regeneration impact on a struggling high street.

In the case of a co-location hub which brings together partner services who formally occupied other premises, the financial business case for the hub could be supported by the disposal of these vacated premises and the efficiencies created through co-location into a more modern and more efficient building. It is more common for such hubs to be a co-location of public service partners, such as community health, police and Job Centre Plus, alongside the council, and with some community meeting provision rather than a co-location of cultural facilities. However, it could be based upon the co-location of synergistic cultural activities.

As with any project, this requires a clear business case coupled with a council-led delivery team to make it happen. Again, early community engagement and co-design would be key to its success. The council would most likely be responsible for the ongoing management and maintenance of the facility, however, it could also transfer it to a Cultural Trust or the Place-based Culture Investment Partnership / Board (or an operational arm of it).

2. Cultural infrastructure delivered as part of a larger commercial scheme.

The alternative approach to direct delivery is for a council to partner with a private developer to deliver a larger scheme on land that the council owns and /or assembles. This can support the delivery of cultural infrastructure that is being enabled through a larger commercial development scheme. The approach is based upon the council providing its land holding and/or powers of land assembly and the developer provides the finance and expertise, develops the scheme and takes the development risk. The council gains the resultant cultural facilities provided as part of the development and a share of the commercial return from the development.

This approach can be undertaken through a joint venture partnership or, more usually, achieved through a development agreement between the two parties that clearly and formally outlines roles, responsibilities, deliverables, financial relationships, return share, and so on. These are predominantly city or town centre projects and their objectives are usually about the economic regeneration of a place and the remodelling of an urban centre.

Previously such schemes were predominantly retail-based and anchored by a new department store. However, because of the changing demand for bricks and mortar retailing, such schemes are now anchored in a different way – by cultural facilities and by creating a new and exciting destination with lots to do, see and experience. Such approaches are, therefore, more focused on mixed use, where cultural infrastructure such as a cinema and new covered market hall are delivered along with hospitality outlets, new homes and new commercial workspace, which is set within an active and animated public realm.

Box 7 - Time Square, Warrington

Time Square in Warrington was completed in 2021 through a partnership between the developer Muse and Warrington Borough Council on council owned land previously occupied by a tired and failing town centre retail centre and market hall. The motivation for the scheme was to revitalise the town centre.

The scheme was outlined in the council's economic regeneration strategy, *Warrington Means Business (2020)*, and in greater detail as part of its Town Centre Masterplan. Interestingly, the role of the partners evolved during the project with the council becoming the funder and Muse the deliverer. However, it remained a commercial project, but with the council gaining the cultural facilities and also the full financial return.

The £142m scheme comprised a new contemporary covered market that was open during the day and into the evening, combining market traders with cafes, bars, restaurants, events and activities (more an activity hub than a traditional market), commercial cinema, commercial bars and restaurants, some retailing, a new car park, space for the local university, all set around a large animated and curated public square. The scheme also included new council offices which provided partners with space to create a public sector hub.

The scheme has been successful. It has drawn a new audience to the town centre and the regeneration impacts are leading to surrounding streets receiving increased investment. The council is also receiving its commercial return as its funder.

Please visit <https://timesquarewarrington.co.uk/> for further information.

The challenge of council finances now means that it is relatively rare for cultural infrastructure to be delivered directly by councils, apart from smaller projects. The commercial approach is now a model more commonly used particularly in schemes driven by an economic regeneration town centre revitalisation imperative.

The Warrington example (box 7) was a scheme that originated as a commercial development that was being undertaken in partnership through a Development Agreement. The approach morphed into a scheme where the council acted as the funder. This was due to the difficult financial market in which the scheme found itself, coupled with a determination that the council make things happen. However, the model is still the same - a commercially driven scheme on council owned land that is anchored by new cultural facilities and the creation of a vibrant and attractive place. This enabled the creation of a new cultural destination and a commercial return for the council. This model is being now applied at varying scales in other places across the country.

This illustrates the new power of cultural infrastructure to act as the essential anchor to urban development schemes and their power in creating and reinforcing destinations and wider economic regeneration in, and reimagining of, our town and city centres. The private development industry is now recognising this, see for example box 8, and the more enlightened developers are using the power of culture and place as anchors to their development schemes. Such developers

are also grasping the opportunity of promoting meanwhile uses as an interim step in creating these new places. This new recognition should be positively tapped to enable new cultural infrastructure and the reimagination of town and city centres.

Box 8 - 'CreativeTrade' by Milligan

Milligan is a development group that has focused on developing and operating in the retail, leisure and housing sectors for many years and have successfully led mixed use regeneration schemes across the UK. For example, Milligan has been selected by Ashford Borough Council to lead the council's Ashford Town Centre 'Reset' project.

Milligan acknowledge the power of culture and creative industries in leading the regeneration of places and particularly historic buildings. They are actively progressing their concept 'CreativeTrade', which provides new makers with serviced studios, apprentices, business support, marketing and retail opportunities and gives customers access to unique talents and crafted goods. They seek to locate these hubs in historic buildings particularly heritage industrial structures that link past industrial heritage to new creative activity. Coupled with hospitality, events and markets the concept aims to create a unique creative experience and destination.

The concept is currently being promoted in central Manchester, London and Glasgow. Milligan see their CreativeTrade concept as the future of retailing and a powerful driver for the regeneration of the high street.

Please visit <https://milliganltd.com/works/creativetrade/> for further information.

Working with the private sector to deliver such culture anchored development schemes requires:

- **Leadership** - Council leadership and determination.
- **Culture as the new anchor** - The recognition of cultural facilities and place creation as the new anchor to such major projects.
- **A planning policy context** - The embedding of the project into a planning policy context – either an informal regeneration strategy or the Development Plan.
- **Development briefing** - the preparation of a clear development brief that reflect the anchoring role of culture and place – to form the basis of developer competition.
- **A transparent developer competition** - the selection of a development partner and building a close and positive commercial relationship between the council and their Development Partner. This competition stage raises the profile and the visibility of the scheme both locally and in the property market.
- **Early engagement** - Positive engagement in the design process.
- **Co-design of cultural elements** - Positive co-design in the cultural infrastructure components of the scheme.
- **Understanding the commercial roles of each partner** – the council contributing its land and land assembly powers, the developer as scheme development and taking scheme risk. The return to the council is specific cultural facilities and the regenerative effects of the

scheme and both parties share in the resultant commercial return. This being embedded into a clear and robust Development Agreement.

- **The establishment of a shared development team** – the project being a shared endeavour.
- **Council project management** – the establishment of a dedicated multidisciplinary corporate delivery team - within the council. This should positively include the council's culture team as a key component.
- **Embracing a different way of working in a commercial development context** – the council therefore needs to employ project leads skilled and experienced in this way of working and employ skilled experts to advise it.
- **Letting go** - letting the developer get on with what the developer is good at and not trying to over-control the scheme.

3.3 Co-location

Successful co-located facilities can be an attractive way to deliver and manage cultural infrastructure. This section explores the key components to help achieve successful co-location.

The benefits of co-location

Co-locating facilities can be an attractive and important way to deliver and manage cultural infrastructure. The benefits of such an approach may vary from place to place, but include:

- Making a project more viable – both to provide and to run.
- Creating more footfall.
- Making a facility more creative – through the synergies between the grouped activities
- Providing opportunities to reuse multiple vacated properties and use these to fund the new provision.
- Enabling facilities to transfer to new more sustainable, efficient and cost-effective premises.
- Providing real economic and regenerative benefits.
- Making culture and creativity more accessible to a wider audience.
- Enabling cross-sector collaboration and partnerships, such as arts and health.
- Enabling culture and creativity to embed into a new place and community from the early stages. Specialist cultural infrastructure can take many years to be realised.
- Enabling community cohesion and serendipity.

Considerations for successful co-location

In order to make co-location successful, a number of issues will need to be considered and addressed.

Bringing activities and facilities together under one roof requires leadership, experience, and a dogged determination. As such it requires senior leadership to make it happen. Co-location does not have to be driven or lead by the public sector, for example the local authority or a development corporation, but it can be and the role for the public sector party might be to broker, negotiate and overcome many of the challenges that will emerge.

Arguably the most critical stage of any co-location proposal is a **robust business case**. This business case needs to convincingly outline the justification for co-location and the form of co-location proposed. It should also be undertaken by people or consultancies with knowledge and understanding of culture and creative industries. The business case can build on the benefits outlined above, but it also needs to cover:

- Up-to-date evidence of local need and demand rather than existing s106 formulae for council run services and facilities.
- Costs of feasibility, project management, construction, fit out and running the facility – whole life costings.
- The management regime and organisation responsible.
- Synergies between potential tenants (why they would be good co-locators).
- The economic, social and environmental case for particular organisations or sectors co-locating together.
- Funding and funding opportunities including external funding and any ongoing subsidy and support, etc.

A successful co-location will need to not only be a hub of facilities but it should also be **an accessible and centrally located hub for the community it serves**. It needs, therefore, to be accessible particularly by active travel means (ie by foot, bicycle and public transport). As part of a major housing area, for example, the hub should form a part of the local centre being created, and a larger hub serving a town or city needs to be in the heart of the city or town centre. This debate happened at length during the development of the Storyhouse cultural hub in Chester [see box 9] – should it be located on Chester’s riverside at the edge of the city centre or should it be in the heart of the city centre on the high street. It was decided that the high street location was preferred because of its accessibility, its regenerative impact on the high street, its visibility and to maximise footfall to the facility.

Many of the failings of co-location result from grouping activities and partners in one building, but, the users still operating totally separately in their own spaces with no interaction between them. This is a wasted opportunity. The real benefit of co-location is to **bring activities and partners together who can create this synergy** and break any physical barriers down between them – so they mix. This maximises creativity, new ways of working and maximises footfall and use.

Box 9: Storyhouse, Chester

Storyhouse in Chester was a co-location of theatre, small cinema, library, community space and workspace coupled with a bar and restaurant. The library is still run by the council with council staff. All these activities co-mingle and leak into each other. The workspace is surrounded by books and the restaurant bar forms a hub that leaks into the rest of the building. It is hard to see where one activity starts and where another ends.

This was a difficult trick to pull off. The key was to **involve users and providers in an intensive process of co-design with the architects for the scheme but also to use experts to challenge and enable creativity**. One particular expert was a creative library designer who opened people’s minds about what a library could and should be. This synergy also has the benefit of further building the audience and involvement in cultural activities – young people using the library see and feel the theatre; cinema goers are tempted to try the theatre; restaurant users feel and see the library surrounding them and hot desk users can work all day surrounded by cultural activity.

Co-location requires **dedicated support and a dedicated team to make it happen**. It cannot really be achieved successfully on the back of an existing job. It needs the skills and experience to achieve co-design, real synergy between co-located uses and in negotiating and brokering the management and design challenges that will emerge. This requires dedication by the organisation leading it.

In order to avoid a co-located facility being ‘taken over’ by a dominant partner, it is important for there to be **shared governance and management arrangements** and for those to be reviewed

as and when necessary. If an individual organisation has the management responsibility for the facility, it can result in the loss of any synergy and true co-location. This would also limit footfall and the audience. The most effective management regime is therefore a more neutral organisation that combines all the users of the building as equal partners. This could be a dedicated charity or trust set up with true co-location and shared management and use as its core terms of reference. This can and should be built into the contractual relationship with the funders and/or local authority or development corporation and guaranteed through ongoing contract monitoring and review.

A supportive planning policy and regime also provides a number of benefits for co-location hubs, including:

- Increasing the visibility of the concept and requirement.
- Providing a supportive policy context that is important during the determination of any planning application for such a hub.
- Outlining the expectation that all major development and regeneration proposals require the inclusion of such cultural hubs as part of their schemes whether they be promoted by the council or by private developers.
- Setting out the requirement that such hubs should be considered as part of a developers Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan and the early engagement and co-design considerations set out in the Local Plan's Cultural Wellbeing Action Plan policy.
- Providing certainty for developers – clearly setting out what is required of them.

Box 10: A summary of a model for successful co-location hubs

Successful co-location hubs will contain the following elements:

- clear leadership;
- a robust business case;
- maximised accessibility;
- a central /hub location;
- real co-location;
- co-locating uses with synergies;
- early and real co-design;
- a dedicated delivery team; and
- shared governance and management
- A supportive planning policy and regime