

Leicester**How did you decide which area to designate as a cultural quarter?**

The Council, through ABL Cultural Consulting, undertook a Capital Options Feasibility Study. This study included a site options analysis to determine which part of the City Centre the Cultural Quarter would be developed in. The St. George's south area of the City Centre was chosen for the following reasons:

- i) The area was in decline, as a result of the failing textile industry, and therefore it provided an excellent opportunity for a cultural led regeneration approach to be adopted and implemented,
- ii) It was an East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) – priority regeneration site and because of this there was maximum opportunity to secure EMDA funding for the development
- iii) The Council owned a number of sites in the area which meant that we could either develop on these sites or use them to resource the purchase of land in the area
- iv) The area was part of the European Regional Development Fund Objective 2 programme – eligible area, again this would provide opportunities to secure partnership funding for the development
- v) As the area was in decline it was underused – therefore it provided the potential to maximise a sense of 'ownership' amongst the City's diverse community / population
- vi) It was close to public transport – both bus and rail

What were your objectives in establishing a cultural quarter?

Essentially:

- i) to drive and lead the regeneration of this run down part of the City Centre (the Council led programme has generated a private sector investment in the area of @ £60 million – these are mainly residential developments)
- ii) to provide state of the art, fit for purpose facilities to support the production and presentation of performed work (theatre, drama, dance, music etc) film & media and (at the time the commitment was made to the CQ) the visual arts
- iii) to provide a resource (managed workspace and incubation space) to create a cluster of creative industries

Has designating the areas a Cultural Quarter had any effect on those cultural institutions outside the designated area?

None that is evident to date. Leicester is still in the process of developing the Cultural Quarter. To date only the LCB Depot (managed workspace for Creative Industries) is operational. Curve, the new Performing Arts Centre is due to open in December this year and the new Digital media centre is under construction (construction is scheduled to be completed by July next year)

The key issue is ensuring that there is an active network between all of the arts providers, regardless of whether they are in the CQ area or outside of it, to ensure that there is co-ordination and healthy competition between the various offerings.

Which partners are involved in developing the area?

This really depends on the Project. Below is a list of the various partnerships established for the delivery of each project:

- i) LCB Depot. Developed by the City Council. Partnership funding was provided by East Midlands Development Agency, Leicestershire Economic Partnership and ERDF Objective 2 programme. During the development of the project I established a 'Potential End user Forum' which I consulted with regularly. As this project was responding to an identified gap in the City arts Infrastructure there was no obvious delivery partner organisation. During the operational phase (July 2004 to current day) a number of partnerships have been generated to provide Business Support to the Creative Industry Sector, these include, De Montfort University Innovation Centre, Princes Trust, Business Link etc. The Councils investment to this project was £1.3 million. Total project cost £4.75 million.
- ii) CURVE (Performing Arts Centre). The City Council is the Lead partner, working in partnership with Leicester Theatre Trust (the end operator) and in association with Leicester Arts Centre Trust (operator of Phoenix Arts Centre), the live work previously provided through the Phoenix Arts Centre will transfer to Curve in the operational phase. The following organisations have provided partnership funding - Arts Council England through the National Lottery, East Midlands Development Agency, Leicestershire Economic Partnership and ERDF Objective 2 programme. The Councils investment to this project is @ £37 million. Total project cost is forecast to be £61.5 million.
- iii) Digital Media Centre. Again the City Council is the Lead partner for this project. This project has by far the most complex partnership arrangement for its delivery. The partners are, Leicester Arts Centre Trust, De Montfort University and Blueprint (a public/ private regional partnership established to drive regeneration across the region). Funding partners are, Leicestershire economic Partnership, ERDF Objective 2 programme, de Montfort University and Blueprint. The Councils contribution is up £7 million. Total project cost is forecast at £21.5 million.
- iv) Public Realm Works. The funding partners for this project are, Leicestershire Economic Partnership, East Midlands Development

Agency, Liveability and ERDF Objective 2 programme. The Council's contribution is @ £0.5 million.

How did you engage local residents in the process of establishing a cultural quarter?

This has also varied dependant upon the project. At the Feasibility stage consultation was widespread, with most of this being undertaken through existing and known organisations.

At key stages in each project we have undertaken consultation on specific issues associated with the project.

We have staged consultation exhibitions – also around key themes / issues. Presented at a number of events, with the opportunity for a Q&A.

What have been the successes of the cultural quarter initiatives?

In real terms it is too early to say. However I would cite:

- i) Private sector investment in the area totalling an approximate £60 million
- ii) LCB Depot – exceeded it 3rd year operational target of 80% occupancy within the first 18 months, and this has been sustained.
- iii) Securing the level of public sector investment into the projects:
ACE - @ £14.1 million
EMDA - @ £8.1 million
LSEP - @ £3.6 million
ERDF - @ £9 million

What are the key factors in gaining that success?

- i) Political and officer champions for the programme, and demonstration of delivery
- ii) Quality development
- iii) Sheer hard work, enthusiasm and determination

Have your visitor numbers increased as a result of establishing a cultural quarter? If yes - by how many over what length of time?

Not possible to answer at this stage.

What have been the problems of the cultural quarter initiative?

There have been many challenges and problems to overcome. So I will highlight the following:

- i) Increasing cost of the Curve project
- ii) Media profile / coverage
- iii) Maintaining stakeholder (partner funder) confidence,

How were these issues overcome?

I will respond in relation to the 3 items listed above, in the order they are cited above:

- i) reviewing project management arrangements to ensure that the project was managed appropriately and robustly, value engineering, resist change – only instruct change absolutely essential to complete the build, review forecast cost against similar projects.
- ii) Establish a forum for partners to generate key messages all parties can sign up to, regular meeting / informal off the record briefing of key media personnel, answer letters of criticism / complaint quickly and honestly. Generate news releases about positive aspects of the project / programme
- iii) Regular briefing on key project issues and challenges, secure ‘buy in’ and ownership of solutions to problems and challenges.

If you were to start it again today what would you do differently?

- i) establish a more robust framework to manage the partners and partnership
- ii) formal sign off at key stages in the project
- iii) manage, at a later stage in the project – when price is more certain, the announcement of the forecast total cost – explain in more detail where and how costs may increase
- iv) over a longer time frame
- v) identify and secure more personnel for the development and delivery phases