

Herefordshire Cultural
Partnership

Developing Cultural Spaces and Places in Hereford City

Final Report

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BOP
Consulting



Prepared by Iain Bennett and Bethany Lewis, BOP Consulting

Additional research by Elizabeth Parker

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Executive Summary

Hereford, people and places

The story of Hereford's cultural places and spaces is one of distinctive and important assets and heritage. The telling of that story, preservation of those assets and recognition of their contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of the city and county are, however, undermined by a lack of evidence, shortcomings in strategic coordination and underinvestment in their fabric.

In recent years, central Government's austerity policies have resulted in significant cuts being made to the budget for local cultural activity. More recently, however - prior to the Covid-19 emergency - the Council had begun plans for further cuts. Its actions have been influenced by a surge of activity dedicated to raising the level, visibility, and quality of the local cultural offer, spurred on by a range of local actors via the Hereford Cultural Partnership and leading to the first dedicated Cultural Strategy for the county.

Recent strategies, stakeholders, and policies across fields including tourism, retail, and community development recognise the local cultural industries' (CCI) contribution to wider local economic and social agendas. The county has a relatively low economic output level and high employment levels in lower wage sectors, with a large small business economy and lack of available skilled workforce. The Council sees skills development and building on local assets - including the defence & security sector, heritage and culture assets, and others - as important to economic development. Whilst Hereford lacks the scale to be a creative industries hub, greater focus on its existing strengths - including a vibrant visual arts sector, fuelled by the presence of the region's only specialist art college - can be used to more effectively counter some of the structural imbalances in the sector, attributable at least in part to its relative remoteness from large centres of population and markets for creative services.

Natural environment, historic sites, films and theatre are particularly popular cultural pastimes. However, the local visitor economy is underperforming. Its development is critical to several plans and strategies, highlighting a need to

create a shared brand and raise awareness of the area's cultural and natural assets. This means recognising the central role of cultural tourism in Hereford's economy, and using that to leverage an 'attract and disperse' strategy which presents the city as a base from which to explore the surrounding countryside and nearby market towns. Efforts to bring about and coordinate the delivery of this are supported by a range of local actors.

Whilst the city of Hereford's population age is comparable to the national average, the county has a comparatively old population; data and forecasts suggest this is an ongoing trend. The urban population (Hereford and the surrounding market towns, all in 'day-trip' driving distance from Hereford) is growing proportionally faster than its rural population. However, poor road and rail infrastructure constrains local and longer-distance travel: with a potential impact on attracting visitors to the city, and on the ability of to convert day visitors to longer stays involving travel around the county on either a first or subsequent visits. Improvement plans - including the development of Hereford railway station and improvements to public spaces across the city - are critical to ambitions to improve the visitor economy. There is no current data on demographic variations in cultural engagement, but anecdotal evidence of a lack of activities for teenagers, consistent with an overreliance on private cars as the main means of transport.

Significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve central Hereford's vibrancy and retail offer, led by developments such as Old Market and the work of the local BID. Pre-COVID, these efforts were beginning to show results in a reduction of empty retail spaces and increase in footfall.

Various plans highlight the importance of community engagement and health. The Council's Talk Community initiative, which aims to 'help the community help each other', sees culture and creativity as, "part of resident's everyday lives." The Cultural Strategy recognises the importance of, "*working together [to] achieve great things,*" and this communitarian spirit is reflected in survey findings which suggest that the county enjoys a level of regular volunteering that is significantly higher than the national average.

Cultural infrastructure

Hereford Cathedral and associated treasures are **significant heritage assets**, key visitor attractions and a 'geographical anchor' in the city centre. Hereford is one of only five cities in England to be designated an Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI). The conservation area and AAI, which incorporate the city defences and castle foundations are also significant, but have limited visibility. A 2011 Council conservation plan recognised the value of the defences to the city as visitor destination and suggested ways to increase their visibility.

Compared to all mapped assets, there is a relative proliferation of **museums** and **visual arts organisations**. Whilst Hereford is home to several museums, most are very small, open only sporadically or by appointment. Most have a (local) heritage theme and are based in heritage buildings. Several have had recent investment. Hereford boasts modern, state of the art museum learning and archive facilities with recent considerable investment from the Council. But there are key questions around the future of two of the Council's main sites, MAG and Town Hall, both of which are in need of investment and renewal.

Hereford is home to a range of visual arts organisations of different types and scale, including several smaller-scale galleries and studios. There are three existing, small artist studios, each are small studios for with around 10 tenants each, largely artists. Several galleries and studios have connections between themselves and the Hereford College of Arts, the region's only specialist art college: which highlights the service it offers students in linking up with (local) partners and suggests a degree of networking within the city's visual arts scene.

Heritage sites and cultural assets are spread out across the city, with a large number located in the historic centre of city within easy walking distance of the High Town, train station and each other. The animation of the city centre is enhanced by a vibrant and fast-growing **independent food sector**. Complementing this is the Butter Market, currently undergoing regeneration, which includes proposals for a multi-purpose arts venue on the top floor.

Hereford boasts several successful and long-standing recurring **festivals and events** which cover a range of themes from music and film to food and drink

and event to an international blacksmithing festival. It also participates in Herefordshire Art Week, which provides an opportunity for local studios and galleries to open their doors the public.

What little data is available on the **creative economy** specific to Hereford suggests a small creative sector with a relatively high proportion of musicians, performing and visual artists. Pre-COVID-19, local creative employment has been growing at a substantial rate, above national average, and there were indications of a pool of CI talent resident in Hereford but working elsewhere.

At present there is no **dedicated shared creative workspace** in Hereford, beyond the three small artist studios included in the mapping in chapter 3. One of the studios offers a space to a College HCA graduate each year for a year, reporting that most stayed on as tenants beyond the year. Whilst anecdotal, this indicates potential to retain graduates if they find the right environment to work in. Assessed against several other county towns and smaller cities, Hereford emerges as the only city without any workspace provision for creative tenants, beyond those three artist studios.

Across all comparator cities, artist studios and creative workspaces tend to be located in city centres, often in converted buildings and of varying sizes, indicating a certain degree of flexibility possible in converting spaces to their new use and in the viability of spaces in terms of size. Artist studios often include other public spaces such as cafes, workshop space, gallery/ exhibition space. Several locations have a mix of studios for 'clean' and 'dirty' creative use. Evidence of the variety and flexibility of successful models, and their integration within areas of high footfall (rather than on new build business parks) should be shared with commercial landlords, as it presents Hereford with an opportunity to take advantage of any 'distressed inventory' in city centre retail premises that may be a consequence of the Covid-19 emergency.

Hereford's strengths in heritage, museums and visual arts are offset by the small number of specialist performing arts venues (including theatres as well as larger-scale flexible music venues). There are only two significant performing arts companies (Courtyard Theatre and 2Faced Dance – although both are Arts

Council England National Portfolio Organisations. Despite the relatively limited offer, cultural participation levels in Hereford are similar to those in the comparator towns and cities.

Herefordshire Cultural Partnership has a critical role to play here in translating the Council's corporate objectives, and those of the Cultural Strategy, into an evidence base and set of deliverable plans. This includes:

- Mapping creative industries: cultural organisations, creative businesses and stakeholders will need a clear, shared understanding of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment and businesses.
- Creative workspace: engaging artists and creative businesses to shape spaces designed around their needs, and in some cases, managed cooperatively. Aggregating up these tactical opportunities would present a new model of resilience, reassurance, and restart for the city centre property market and the creative sector.
- Measures to restart and rebalance the economy need to take account of the Social function of art and culture in securing both economic resilience and social provision. This may include an expanded role in social prescribing of arts for health, and mental health.

Great Place programme

The Great Place programme has been met with considerable enthusiasm locally, posing a challenge in terms of, *"managing expectations for what [a] three-year programme can do"*, and how to create long-lasting impact.¹ Its outputs include the first dedicated **10-year Cultural Strategy for Herefordshire 2019-2029**. This covers the whole county, highlighting its *"distinctive cultural identity"*, *"creative and entrepreneurial vibrancy"*, *"high quality of life"* and *"unique sense of place"* as key elements to build on. It formulates five outcomes to work towards, which echo those of the Museum Plan, HCP and Great Place

Programme in their focus on widening participation (particularly amongst on young people), economic development and profile-raising:

1. A sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality arts and heritage activity and experiences to all residents and visitors
2. Herefordshire's rural communities have opportunity to be fully engaged and proactive in shaping, participating, growing the county's cultural offer
3. All children and young people have access to high quality contemporary cultural education and career development opportunities
4. Culture and creative industries play a distinctive role in contributing to economic success of the county and region
5. County's cultural profile and offer attracts national and international audiences, visitors, new businesses

Visitor economy

A sustained focus on cross-agency initiatives to develop Herefordshire's visitor economy has resulted in £444k funding for visitor economy infrastructure (marketing and website), to be funded by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and to be delivered by Herefordshire Council and Herefordshire Business Board.

This will stress wayfinding, identifying heritage and cultural assets in Hereford as a "walk through the ages," and in the process emphasising the importance of the city's status as an Area of Archaeological Interest.

Conclusions and opportunities

'Cultural spaces' of many kinds represent the underpinnings of the local cultural infrastructure. Whilst Hereford has a significant number of regional and national assets, it also has weaknesses relating to those assets' size, visibility, and, in

¹ BOP Consulting (2019). Case Study of 'Hereford's a Great Place' for the Year 1 Evaluation Report of the Great Place Programme for Arts Council England & National Lottery Heritage Fund

some cases, physical condition, which require more or less significant improvement and investment.

The insights and analyses of the previous chapters offer up some conclusions and scenarios that Hereford could take up or investigate further, in its aim to, *"have a connected and sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality arts and heritage activity and experiences available to all residents and visitors."*

Any effective and viable future development of the local cultural infrastructure should rest on three principles:

6. The most fundamental of these is to identify strengths before trying to address weaknesses. Build on Hereford's distinctive collection of cultural and heritage assets, rather than trying to create an entirely new image. Invest in growth and use the proceeds of growth to address problems. This requires:
 - Better evidence, and sharing of evidence, about creative businesses, employment, students and workspace, retail, and visitor economy
 - Identifying a 'niche' (e.g. heritage, visual art, the town as a basis to explore the country) and using this as the main guiding principle.
7. The impact of combining cultural and creative assets can - through its increased offer, visibility, and reach and efficiency of shared marketing - be larger than the sum of its parts.
8. Developing interlinking elements across sectors - cultural assets, retail and visitor economy, infrastructure. - together, through communication and collaboration will have a multiplier effect on the impact of each on the other and on the identified specialism.

These three principles inform a set of tactical and strategic opportunities for cultural and heritage development.

The role of culture in post Covid-19 recovery and rebuilding

The research phase of this study took place before the emergency response which led to the closure of all cultural venues and cancellation of festivals and public events. The full impact of the virus on Hereford's cultural sector cannot yet be measured. However, it is likely to be profound – accentuated by structural factors, including an over-reliance on activities that rely on generating footfall as opposed to those which generate IP that can be exploited through broadcast or online, the absence of large-scale creative employers and the lack of creative workspaces to provide a focus for relief.

The response will need to draw upon the core values expressed in Herefordshire's Cultural Strategy, notably on the resourcefulness of its cultural organisations, creative individuals and communities:

“ We make the most of what we have, take pride in resilience and welcome innovation

One benefit of the emergency response is that the Great Place project, including its evaluation of the role of Herefordshire Cultural Partnership, has been extended to March 2021. The research points to the importance of a central coordinating function in drawing together and projecting Hereford's heritage and cultural assets, and in collating evidence and commissioning the new research needed to provide a baseline to inform renewal and growth plans, and bids for strategic funding, such as Towns Fund and the proposed Destination Business Improvement District.

Any attempt to simply 'wind back the clock' to the pre-COVID state of the cultural sector, and the places and spaces which are themselves an integral part of Hereford's offer, will fall short of what is needed to protect employment and rebuild the city and county economy. Recognition of this needs to reflect the importance of doing bold things now: pressing for investment and joint action which may have seemed unrealistic prior to the emergency, such as in creation of a major new museum venue, but now presents itself as essential to restoring the economic and social health and wellbeing of Hereford.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to and aim of the brief

In November 2019, BOP Consulting was commissioned by Rural Media on behalf of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP) to undertake research into the cultural places and spaces of Hereford.

The research project sits in the context of Hereford's participation in the Arts Council England Great Place programme (2017-2021), which focuses on providing local cultural investment to improve Hereford as a place to live and visit; boosting the local economy; improving the resilience, sustainability and collaboration of the local cultural and creative sector; and widening participation and inspiration through arts, culture and heritage. At the same time, after years of budget cuts, Herefordshire Council has renewed its focus at the social and economic value of culture, heritage and creativity, whilst a variety of local actors recognise the importance of the local cultural and heritage sector in their ambition to develop the local visitor economy.

The research comes at an exciting time for culture in Hereford. It aims to support and inform future developments and investments that are made to improve and build on the current local cultural provision, in order for it to be able to play its role in the social and economic life of the county. Specifically, its purpose is to provide both evidence for use in decision-making and advocacy, and strategic recommendations for action both on individual assets and for the cultural and creative sector as a whole.

A key output of the Great Place programme to date has been the development of the first Cultural Strategy for Hereford and the wider county. At this point, the priority for this research lies in providing evidence and options to drive forward the **first pillar of this Strategy**:

"By 2029, Herefordshire will have a connected and sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality

arts and heritage activity and experiences available to all residents and visitors."

In terms of this piece of research, this includes investigating:

- The gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the current local cultural offer
- Potential approaches to existing and new city centre spaces, including the Town Hall, and Museum & Art Gallery; the possibility of a cultural quarter, and the potential for a new creative workspace in the city
- The value of cultural/ creative activity to other local agendas and the county.

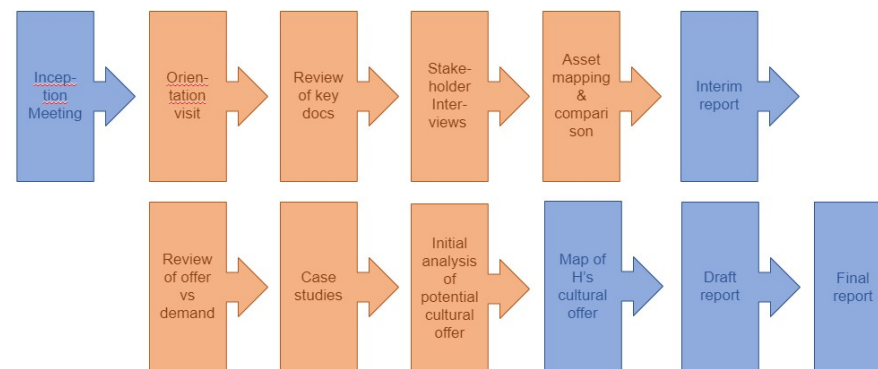
1.2 Methodology

To address these research aims, we have designed a research approach that provides robust evidence and meaningful insights into the potential for Hereford's cultural sector. This is based on a combination of detailed review of existing assets, as well as looking further afield to understand Hereford's comparative strengths and weaknesses and gain insight and inspiration from examples elsewhere. It includes some key steps as outlined in Figure 1 below, which encompass the following core elements:

- **an orientation visit** to Hereford by a member of the research team, to gain first-hand insights into and experience of the city
- **a review of relevant documentation** (e.g. council research and reports, local planning documents) to understand the wider economic and social context in which this research takes place and in which the development of Hereford's cultural assets sits (see Chapter 2)
- **a mapping of Hereford's existing cultural assets**, including its creative economy, based on desk research, and a comparison with five identified comparator cities, to better understand the relative strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of Hereford's offer. The five cities, chosen for their similar size and characteristics, included: Leamington Spa, Lincoln, Chester, Norwich, and Derby (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5)

- **in-depth interviews** with a range of identified key stakeholders to gain further insight into the context, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities through which Hereford's cultural and creative spaces and the wider sector can be developed (insights included across various Chapters, in particular see Chapter 6). Our thanks go to the following six interviewees:
 - Abigail Appleton, Principal, Hereford College of Art
 - Alan Anderson, Centre Manager, Old Market
 - Georgia Smith, Hereford BID
 - Karen Usher, Founding Trustee and Director, NMiTE
 - Ian Archer, Chief Executive and Artistic Director, Courtyard Hereford
 - Richard Ball, Director of Economy and Place, Herefordshire County Council
- the development of **three detailed case studies** of relevant sites/ organisations, in order to gain insights and inspiration which may inform the future development of Hereford's assets. These were based on desk research as well as interviews with one stakeholder for each case study, and include two creative workspaces and one community arts centre:
 - Krowji/ Creative Kernow: a rural creative workspace provider and regional creative sector support
 - SPACE @ Colchester Old Police Station: SPACE's first creative workspace provision outside London
 - Wem Town Hall: a community arts centre founded and run by a Community Trust

Figure 1 Project methodology



Source: BOP Consulting (2019)

1.3 Definition of culture

Throughout the report, we base our understanding of 'culture' on the wide understanding of the term expressed in Hereford's new cultural strategy:

"Culture is taken to be the broad framework that defines how people live and that which gives their lives value and meaning. It encompasses creativity, imagination, ambition, joy, and wonder, and is normally though not necessarily expressed through creative activities and institutions."

"The Herefordshire Cultural Strategy focuses on arts and heritage and includes a wide range of activity: performing arts, literature, music, crafts, visual and digital arts, photography, design, architecture, fashion along with our creative businesses, and the buildings and facilities where we access culture – museums, arts centres, theatres, churches, village halls, cinemas, libraries, archives, galleries. We include too our wonderful natural environment, gastronomy, and the creative activities that take place in our open spaces."

2. Hereford - setting the scene

This chapter aims to set the scene for this research, by summarising the journey that has led to the commissioning of this work; providing the context for Hereford's cultural and creative industries (CCI) in light of recent relevant local political, economic, infrastructure and demographic developments; and identifying any existing insight into the value of cultural activity in Hereford to other local agendas and the wider county.

Key chapter insights

- In recent years significant cuts have been made to the budget for local cultural activity; however, the Council is reviewing plans for further cuts with a view to revoking them
- At the same time, there has been a surge of activity dedicated to raising the level, visibility and quality of the local cultural offer, spurred on by a range of local actors via the Hereford Cultural Partnership and leading to the first dedicated Cultural Strategy for the county
- Recent strategies, stakeholders, and policies across fields including tourism, retail, and community development recognise the local CCI's contribution to wider local economic and social agendas
- The county has a relatively low economic output level and high employment levels in lower wage sectors, with a large small business economy and lack of available skilled workforce: the Council sees skills development and building on local assets - including the defence & security sector; heritage and culture assets; and others - as important to economic development
- The local visitor economy is underperforming, and its development is seen as key across various plans and strategies, highlighting a need to create a shared brand and raise awareness of the area's cultural and natural assets (i.e. recognising the role of cultural tourism): efforts are supported by a range of local actors

- Poor infrastructure poses a challenge to local and longer-distance travel; with a potential impact on attracting day visitors or enabling visitors/tourists to travel around: improvement plans are being reviewed; with the development of Hereford railway station and improvements to public spaces across the city - arguably relevant to ambitions to improve the visitor economy - likely to go ahead
- Significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve central Hereford's vibrancy and retail offer, led by developments such as Old Market and the work of the local BID: pre-COVID 19, these efforts were beginning to show results in a reduction of empty retail spaces and increase in footfall
- Various plans highlight the importance of community engagement and health. The County Council is launching the Talk Community initiative, which aims to 'help the community help each other' - this sees culture and creativity as, "part of resident's everyday lives"
- Whilst the city of Hereford's population age is comparable to the national average, the county has a comparatively old population; data and forecasts suggest this is an ongoing trend
- The urban population (Hereford and the surrounding market towns, all within 'day-trip' driving distance of each other) is growing proportionally faster than its rural population
- Natural environment, historic sites and films/ theatre are particularly popular cultural pastimes
- There is no current data on demographic variations in cultural engagement, but anecdotal evidence of a lack of activities for teenagers
- Surveys suggest a level of regular volunteering in the county that is significantly higher than the national average

2.1 The city and county: a brief overview

Hereford is the county town of Herefordshire and a cathedral city, with a population of around 60,000. Based on the river Wye, it is located around 16 miles east of the Welsh border in a highly rural area, close to two protected landscapes of national importance: the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The city is located at the 'hub' of five market towns – Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster, and Ross-on-Wye. Worcester, Cheltenham, and Gloucester are its closest larger urban neighbours.

Hereford is the administrative centre of Herefordshire Council ("the Council"), a unitary authority with duties in respect of the county's civil and ecclesiastical administration, health, education, and leisure facilities as well as shopping and employment. Hereford City Council, now reduced to status of a parish council, occupies the Town Hall.

Hereford's historic centre is a designated conservation area. It also has the distinction of being one of only five English cities designated as Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAI), recognised for its, "*historic significance and national importance*".² The city is famous for its cathedral and as location of the *Mappa Mundi*. As a destination for shopping and entertainment, it has in recent years struggled to compete with its larger neighbours. This has to a certain extent been addressed by new retail and leisure developments such as the Old Market (2014), which has, "*transformed an under-utilised area [...] [and strengthened Hereford's] role in the county and region*".³

Overall, the county and city suffer from a limited regional infrastructure, which in part has hindered its economic development. Historically, the county has a relatively low economic output, with a large proportion of employment within sectors that tend to attract lower wages. Almost half of the county's workers are employed in Hereford (42%). As elsewhere, the area has seen a continued widening of the gap between the most and least deprived in recent years, with

almost two-thirds of the county located within the 25% most deprived areas in England with regard to geographical barriers to services and average income. This has resulted in some pockets of severe deprivation in parts of Hereford.⁴

2.2 The journey leading to this research

A number of key steps in Hereford have led to and provided the impetus for this piece of research. In the past five years, Herefordshire Council has been forced to make significant **budget cuts to its three cultural services** (museums, libraries, and archives (MLA)). Funding from central government was reduced by a third in 2016/17, resulting in a loss of £9m from the Council's budget. Further savings of £17.4m are being implemented in the period from April 2017 to March 2020, leading the Council administration to consider further budget savings of £250,000 in the MLA services in 2020/21. In response, the Council sought new ways of supporting its services through the dual approach of enabling services to become increasingly **community led** as well as making **key investments** into existing cultural assets. The former was reflected in a policy of encouraging **community asset transfers**, for example in the transfer of the operation of the Courtyard Centre for the Arts to a Trust, the creation of the Halo Leisure Trust in 2002 to manage previously public sector-run leisure facilities; or, on a smaller scale, the handing over of the management of some smaller facilities to community groups.

The latter meanwhile manifested itself through investments in Hereford Library (£500,000 for refurbishment), the Black and White House (£80,000 to support its refurbishment, redisplay and branding) and the Herefordshire Archive and Record Centre (£7.9m to build new premises on the edge of the city) through the Council's own funds as well as external funding brought in by the Council.⁵ These aimed to improve the venues' financial sustainability and independence as well as generate savings through service redesign, staff restructure and the sharing of premises. A 2018 report reviewing the resilience of Herefordshire Council's Museum service, "*acknowledged positively the Council's actions by*

² Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ MLA Peer Challenge Herefordshire Council 2017

way of 'invest-to-save' support for income generating activities".⁶ Further developments are under consideration – the same report proposed, for example, the formation of a new subsidiary trust to take over management of the Council's museum service.

Within this challenging context, the ambition to provide access to quality cultural services has nevertheless remained. The **Council's Museum Plan for 2017-2020** retains the ambition to improve access to its services by, *"creating equality of access for everybody by minimising or eliminating barriers to access,"* as well as by *"developing and delivering museum services that allow people the freedom to explore, enjoy and participate in their heritage [...]"*.⁷ This ongoing ambition further manifested itself elsewhere, as for example in the City's 2017 bid to become the **UK City of Culture 2021** – a designation which was seen locally as an opportunity to, *"use arts and culture as a catalyst for economic and social regeneration"* as well as to raise the national and international profile of the area, thereby helping to attract larger numbers of visitors.⁸ Whilst initiated by the Council, the development of the bid led to the formation of the **Hereford Cultural Partnership (HCP)**, a consortium of local arts, cultural and heritage groups, local government and businesses. Based on a shared belief that arts, culture and creative engagement plays an essential role in people's wellbeing and contributes to local economic vitality, HCP's members share a vision to develop Herefordshire as a county which is, *"internationally recognised as a beacon for inspirational arts and culture that enhances wellbeing,"* with the more specific mission to:

- enrich the lives of all who live, work, and visit Herefordshire by building on existing arts and culture programming and generate new opportunities and engagement; and
- develop young people's pride in place, confidence, creativity, skills and opportunities through inspirational arts and culture.

Although Hereford's bid for UK City of Culture 2021 was unsuccessful, the members decided to retain the partnership. Its efforts catalysed the successful application in 2016 to the **Arts Council England Great Place Programme**, which provided locally adapted investment in arts and culture in 16 places across England. Reflecting HCP's vision and mission, the local programme, *Hereford's a Great Place*, managed by Rural Media Ltd on behalf of HCP (201 - 2020) focuses on four core strands:

1. Placemaking – making Herefordshire a better place to live, work, visit
2. Economic and policy development – boosting the county's local economy
3. Arts, culture, heritage, and creative sector development – helping the sector become more resilient, through encouraging sustainable partnerships with other sectors organisations and ensuring culture is incorporated in local plans and strategies
4. Community development – widening participation and inspiration through arts, culture, and heritage.

Key to this, among others, are the support of more partnership work between local agencies; a new online platform for the local cultural and creative sector (*The Shire*); an annual conference, in-depth consultation and co-creation with local communities in towns across the county; and the review of potential Community Asset Transfers (e.g. Hereford Town Hall). Several of these elements are part of the programme's 'Big Conversation' project, which aims to, *"enable everyone to shape, grow and celebrate our cultural identity."* As of February 2019, the delivery team felt that it had been particularly important to identify a shared vision that all partners can buy into, emphasising *"collaboration over competition."* To do so, it has been crucial to leverage the expertise of the wider HCP steering group, as well as to create 'hooks' to engage with new partners and audiences. Bespoke marketing campaigns have been particularly

⁶ Future Resilience of HC's Museum Service, 2018

⁷ Herefordshire Council Museum Plan 2017-2020

⁸ Hereford Area Plan - Issues and Options Consultation 2017

important to get the word out in a rural area with challenges around insularity and poor connectivity.

The programme has been met with considerably enthusiasm locally, posing a challenge in terms of, *“managing expectations for what [a] three-year programme can do”*, and how to create long-lasting impact.⁹ Its outputs include the first dedicated **10-year Cultural Strategy for Herefordshire 2019-2029**. This covers the whole county, highlighting its *“distinctive cultural identity”*, *“creative and entrepreneurial vibrancy”*, *“high quality of life”* and *“unique sense of place”* as key elements to build on. It formulates five outcomes to work towards, which echo those of the Museum Plan, HCP and Great Place Programme in their focus on widening participation (particularly amongst on young people), economic development and profile-raising:

1. A sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality arts and heritage activity and experiences to all residents and visitors
2. Herefordshire’s rural communities have opportunity to be fully engaged and proactive in shaping, participating, growing the county’s cultural offer
3. All children and young people have access to high quality contemporary cultural education and career development opportunities
4. Culture and creative industries play a distinctive role in contributing to economic success of the county and region
5. County’s cultural profile and offer attracts national and international audiences, visitors, new businesses

Across these five outcomes sit a number of cross-cutting themes, designed to align with local and national policies, such as partnership working; digital innovation; health and wellbeing; inclusion and diversity; and lifelong learning. This piece of prioritises the support of the first outcome– the creation of a sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a strong local creative

workforce – through the review of the current offer, gaps, challenges and opportunities in develop this infrastructure and workforce.

Several recent strategies have highlighted local CCI’s **contribution to wider economic and social agendas**, including:

- The current Museum Plan 2017-2020, which details how the museum service can deliver on Herefordshire Council’s priorities through supporting e.g. the growth of the local economy and improving locals’ quality of life
- The Cultural Strategy, which highlights that culture is, *“now recognised as an essential and powerful basis for the effective provision of enhancement”* of a variety of areas including health, education, and social welfare
- Hereford City Destination Management Plan 2018-2022, which highlights the role of culture in the increasing trend for ‘skills tourism’, recognising its role in supporting the visitor economy
- Hereford BID’s Business Plan 2015-2020, which highlights the value of new events which, *“showcase local culture, talent and style”* to create a *“happening city”* which attracts footfall
- Herefordshire Council’s County Plan 2020-2024, which, *“places art and culture at the centre of our plans for Herefordshire”*, recognising the economic and social value of heritage and creativity through supporting quality of life and tourism.

⁹ BOP Consulting (2019). Case Study of ‘Hereford’s a Great Place’ for the Year 1 Evaluation Report of the Great Place Programme for Arts Council England & National Lottery Heritage Fund

2.3 Relevant developments and plans

Local developments and plans across various areas relate to the ambitions for the local cultural sector, either by directly impacting on or reflecting mutual ambitions around increasing economic activity, visitor appeal, tourism and residents' wellbeing and attainment. These are outlined below.

2.3.1 Economy

Herefordshire is generally regarded as an affluent county with a comparatively high rate of economic activity, which may be explained by a relatively low unemployment level.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it has a relatively low economic output level compared to other authorities in the West Midlands and the rest of the UK, and is home to some severe pockets of deprivation. Its relatively large proportion of employment in lower wage sectors (e.g. wholesale, retail, agriculture) is reflected in the county's low GVA. In 2018, local average weekly median earnings (£461), were considerably lower than nationally (£575).¹¹ The county also has a significant small business economy, with around 87% of businesses employing 10 or fewer staff, and experiences a net outflow of people commuting beyond its boundaries. At the same time, as an economy approaching full employment, the lack of available skilled workforce makes it more difficult to attract inward investment from larger firms. This results in indigenous companies and start-ups assuming greater significance within the economy; with self-employment more common than nationally, particularly in sectors including agriculture, construction, entertainment, arts and recreation.¹² Related to this, limited higher education opportunities in the area mean that a large proportion of young people leave the county to study beyond A-level.¹³

Within the county, Hereford is an important sub-regional economic centre which, *"provides a significant focus for employment provision in the county"* – 42% of

all workers in the county are employed in Hereford.¹⁴ As detailed in the **Hereford Area Plan 2017**, it is considered key policy to ensure that Hereford will, *"continue to provide the focus for employment provision"* through developments such as the expansion of the city centre and Hereford Enterprise Zone, the provision of new employment land, and smaller-scale environmental and knowledge-based employment development opportunities.

Hereford Enterprise Zone is seen as a key element in developing the local economy. Building on the city's defence expertise and association with the UK special forces¹⁵, it is the only national Enterprise Zone with a defence and security focus. Already, more than 200 companies operate in the sector in Herefordshire. The Enterprise Zone is based at Skylon Park, a 72-hectare extension of Hereford's Rotherwas Industrial Estate, which continues to grow. Based on pre-COVID estimates, Skylon Park could become home to a further 110 new businesses, leading to the creation of around 4,200 new jobs by 2022.¹⁶

An important development is the **New Model in Technology & Engineering (NMiTE)**, launched in 2015 and working to be accredited as the UK's first new university in 40 years. With its focus on technology and engineering, it aims to *"transform engineering education"* and address a shortfall in graduate engineers in the region and across the UK in order to support Britain's future competitiveness. NMiTE is receiving £15m central government funding over three years, connected to its plans to drive growth in the Midlands through investment in skills and connectivity. Under current plans, it expects to attract around 5,000 students to Hereford by 2031, with a first small cohort of students in 2019, increased to around 1,000 students by 2021. It is hoped that this will raise Hereford's visibility as an, *"engineering centre of excellence in the West Midlands,"* as well as providing new opportunities for the city. The Hereford Area Plan suggests several potential positive outcomes to this development,

¹⁰ Herefordshire Council Intelligence unit bulletin, 2 January 2019

¹¹ Herefordshire Council Intelligence unit bulletin, 2 January 2019

¹² Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031 and The Population of Herefordshire 2018

¹³ County Plan 2020-2024 2020-2024

¹⁴ Hereford Area Plan 2017 and Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031

¹⁵ Hereford has since 1960 been home to the SAS

¹⁶ <https://enterprisezones.communities.gov.uk/enterprise-zone-finder/hereford-enterprise-zone/>

including the retention of young people in the area as well as growth in the local arts, cultural and entertainment sector. The new HE institution will work alongside local companies in the engineering and technology sector for the mutual benefit of both.¹⁷

The **Council's County Plan 2020-2024** expresses its economic ambition as one which, *"supports an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources,"* in order to address issues such as increasing the number of better paid jobs and encouraging inward movement of skilled workers. To do so, it aims to support local businesses, as well as attract new businesses, based on four key principles:

- Working with large local employers to improve local supply chains and investment in the local economy
- Skills development within the local workforce
- *"Sweating our assets"* through working with key organisations to, *"be more creative in how we use and share our collective assets"* - including the local heritage, culture and natural beauty, which it recognises as generating income, enhancing quality of life and supporting tourism
- Improving transparency and community engagement in shaping economic plans and local investment.

Herefordshire Cultural Partnership has a critical role to play here in translating the Council's corporate objectives, and those of the Cultural Strategy, into an evidence base and set of deliverable plans. This includes:

- Mapping creative industries: the importance of an accurate and up-to-date baseline for sector economy has been magnified by the Covid-19 pandemic. If they are to collaborate in recovery of the sector, and commence in its restructuring as a more resilient plank of the economy and locus of future growth, cultural organisations, creative businesses

and stakeholders will need a clear, shared understanding of the impact of the pandemic on employment and businesses.

- Creative workspace: field work suggested demand for more, and different types of, shared creative workspace. The Covid-19 emergency has highlighted the fragility of speculative new builds and 'property led' models, such as WeWork: plans to regenerate the city centre should emphasise the immediate opportunities for artists and creative businesses to occupy different kinds of voids and 'meanwhile' spaces in the retail and commercial estate. This is an area in which artists and creative businesses can most effectively shape spaces designed around their needs, and in some cases, managed cooperatively. Aggregating up these tactical opportunities would present a new model of resilience, reassurance, and restart for the city and the sector.
- Measures to restart and rebalance the economy need to take account of the Social function of art and culture in securing both economic resilience and social provision. This may include an expanded role in social prescribing of arts for health, and mental health.

2.3.2 Tourism

Tourism is already an important employment sector in the county - in 2015 it welcomed around 2.65m overnight and 4.21m day visitors who contributed £422m to the local economy, and the sector employs almost 7,000 people.¹⁸ However, by comparison, the visitor economy across the wider Marches area is, *"currently underperforming relative to its assets and location"*, with a relatively low volume of visits and below England average spend per head. This means that *"many of the economic and social opportunities"* that a more vibrant visitor economy could bring are currently being lost.¹⁹

¹⁷ Hereford Area Plan - Issues and Options Consultation 2017; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/11449486/NMITE-Britains-newest-university-all-you-need-to-know.html>

¹⁸ Rural Herefordshire Sustainable Destination Plan 2018-2022

¹⁹ Marches LEP, Visitor Economy Strategy, January 2020

The development of the visitor/ tourism economy in Hereford is therefore highlighted as key to its (economic) development across a wide range of strategies and plans. The **Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031** sets out the important role of tourism and its promotion - supported by the planned regeneration of the city - in supporting the local economy: *“opportunities to attract more tourists [...] will be supported where appropriate.”* Recent developments and plans suggest a role for cultural tourism in developing the local visitor economy.

The **Hereford City Destination Management Plan 2018-2022**, developed by Visit Herefordshire with support from Herefordshire Council, goes further, highlighting the core aim to grow Herefordshire as a ‘visitor destination’ and growing Hereford’s share of the visitor market. It points to the need to create a shared local brand, national advertising and the creating of *“unique experiences and memories”*, as well as improved infrastructure. The Plan suggests this could be achieved through the development of local assets, including Hereford’s surrounding countryside as well as city’s culture, rich heritage, and archaeology, which could be *“brought to life”* through digital means or visual arts. It identifies four elements in its vision: creating experience, raising the visibility of the city’s memories, enjoying the city’s culture, and engaging people.

The Plan highlights the lack of available local authority funding, suggesting a key role for the private sector, local businesses and organisations, *“if we are to raise the profile of the city both nationally and internationally”*, and suggests applying for a Tourism BID for Herefordshire.

The promotion of local tourism is indeed now an ambition supported by a range of local stakeholders, who are increasingly coming together to formalise their approach. Two key forums in which this is being played out are the **Marches Tourism Forum**, which includes the Marches LEP²⁰, and the **Herefordshire Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership (HSFTP)**, both of which bring together a range of local stakeholders including businesses, local tourism associations, organisations, and local authority representatives. There is a clear

cross-over with the retail sector, with Hereford BID and other stakeholders highlighting the link between an attractive streetscape and vibrant retail offer and an improved visitor economy.

The Marches Tourism Forum has published a **Marches-wide Visitor Economy Strategy**. This follows on from the Rural Herefordshire Sustainable Destination Plan 2018-2022 which aligns with the Hereford City Destination Plan over the same period and was developed by HSFTP. The new Visitor Economy Strategy highlights the value of coordinating steps to improve tourism across the wider Marches area by improving efficiency through developing strategic support and funding across a wider geography. The Strategy highlights tourism as an economic contributor and enabling sector in creating more vibrant towns and raising the profile of the area as a place to live, work and visit. Its key objectives include:

- Raising the profile of the counties as short-break destinations by showcasing their special quality and undertaking targeted promotion
- Growing the capacity of local businesses and organisations as local ambassadors
- Showing leadership and leveraging resources
- Bringing together public sector partners and businesses to jointly deliver a competitive visitor economy

HSFTP is currently working on plans to develop a **county-wide Destination BID**, which is now in its second application round. It is hoped that this could bring around £600,000 per annum to invest in strategic tourism development.

This wider recognition of the development of local tourism is reflected in current CCI-related plans/strategies. The **new Cultural Strategy** highlights the county’s, *“vastly unexploited potential for a visitor economy”*, given its abundant natural beauty and cultural heritage. The strategy sees the city of Hereford as the hub in a physical ‘hub and spoke’ model, with the county’s five historic

²⁰ covering Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin

market towns as the spokes, with opportunities moving out from the 'hub' into the 'spokes'. Similarly, the **2018 report on the future resilience of Hereford Council's Museum Service** highlighted the value of heritage in forming, *"an important part of the tourist offer and thus of the economic future and well-being of the county."*

The Council's **County Plan 2020-2024** aims to promote tourism more actively again, recognising its economic value - including cultural tourism. It includes, *"protecting and promoting our heritage, culture and natural beauty to enhance quality of life and support tourism"* as a key aspect in supporting the local economy, and states a, *"positive commitment to invest in the support and development of tourism and [the] visitor economy"*.²¹ For the first time, a tourism brief has been introduced for a cabinet member.²²

A sustained focus on cross-agency initiatives to develop Hereford's visitor economy has resulted in £444k funding for visitor economy infrastructure (marketing and website) , to be delivered by the Local Enterprise Partnership and Hereford BID.

This will stress wayfinding, identifying heritage and cultural assets in Hereford as a "walk through the ages," and in the process emphasising the importance of the city's status as an Area of Archaeological Interest.

2.3.3 Infrastructure

Poor transport infrastructure in Hereford and the wider county is seen as a key issue, and one that is, *"a principal barrier to business growth and diversification"*, particularly in more rural districts.²³ The county's road network is focused on Hereford city, and experiences regular congestion and unreliable journey times throughout the day, affecting local journeys as well as the wider

long-distance network. However, plans for a bypass/ relief road for Hereford, with government funding secured to build the first section²⁴; are undergoing further review.

Bus services have been reduced significantly in the past decade, further impacting connectivity between Hereford and the surrounding towns and area, particularly in the evening.²⁵ Access to the rail station is poor and in need of better integration with the bus and cycle network, and improvements to the pedestrian environment. Whilst cycling levels are relatively high, there are, *"ongoing problems providing continuous and attractive cycling routes"*.²⁶ Clearly, these challenges potentially impact on attracting day visitors and tourists, and constraining visitors' ability to travel around the city and county to different attractions.

The Council recognises the issue, highlighting in its plan the need to, *"rethink our investment in transport infrastructure"* and the ambition to develop *"environmentally sound infrastructure that attracts investment"* and supports local residents' wellbeing. These considerations are seen as central to a review of the plans for the Hereford bypass.²⁷ Other schemes, including plans to develop a high quality transport hub at Hereford railway station, and improvements to public spaces and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians across the city²⁸, are consistent with the city's ambitions to improve its visitor economy.

2.3.4 City centre/ retail development

Significant efforts have been made in the past years to improve the city centre's vibrancy, attractiveness to visitors, and retail offer; but further work is needed. **Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031** notes that whilst Hereford acts as sub-regional centre for shopping and services, it, *"lacks a wide range of*

²¹ Herefordshire Council County Plan 2020-2024

²² https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/822/leader_announces_changes_to_cabinet_member_portfolios

²³ Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031 and Herefordshire Council Local Transport Plan 2016-2031

²⁴ Invest Hereford

²⁵ Since 2010, there has been a 49% cut in funding for buses in Herefordshire, resulting in 13 routes being cut and reductions of 31 services. This has also meant bus use for travel to work is significantly below national and

regional averages. In response a group of local residents has started a 'Save our Buses' campaign. <https://bettertransport.org.uk/local-groups/save-our-buses-herefordshire>

²⁶ Herefordshire Council Local Transport Plan 2016-2031

²⁷ Herefordshire Council County Plan 2020-2024

²⁸ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/938/transport_strategy_review_for_hereford

*shopping and entertainment facilities, thereby struggling to compete with neighbouring centres outside the county.*²⁹ The plan aims to improve Hereford's status as shopping destination for the region by enhancing and improving existing facilities and integrating new developments into the historic centre.

A first major development was the **2010 refurbishment of Widemarsh Street** to create a more attractive link between the old and new parts of the city. This was extended through the **refurbishment of Commercial Street in 2019**, with the aim of, *"enhancing the city as an attractive and easily accessible destination for visitors and shippers"*, create space for pedestrians and cyclists, and *"ensure a clean, modern and clutter-free city centre."*³⁰

One of the most important developments of recent years has been the opening of the £90m **Old Market retail and leisure development** in 2014 on the site of Hereford's former livestock market, developed in partnership with British Land. This has brought a new multi-screen cinema, national brand name retailers including department stores (Debenhams) and high-end supermarkets (Waitrose), and a range of restaurant chains to the city. As well as transforming a previously under-utilised area, the development has played a crucial role in reinforcing the role of the city as retail destination³¹, helping to, *"regenerate the local economy and enhance the experiences offered by the city, strengthening its role in the county and region,"*³² Since its opening, vacant retail spaces in Widemarsh Street and the surrounding areas have started to fill up, and footfall to the city has increased. Around 75% of visitors to the Old Market at present are local residents and 13% tourists; recent surveys have, for the first time, shown a small proportion of students visiting (2%).³³

Since 2015, **Hereford BID** has been a crucial player in the city's town centre improvements. It has 480 levy-paying members and works towards the overall aim of, *"creating a brighter, better managed and more attractive City"* that draws

in more visitors/ shoppers and reverses the gradual decline over the past 20 years of Hereford as destination for consumers.³⁴ Members include independent businesses as well as national chains, banks and publicly owned buildings. Over the past five years, the BID has worked to deliver on five priorities³⁵:

- increasing footfall and dwell time, for example through the delivery of a series of events, themed trails, provision of free Wi-Fi, a monthly 'what's up' newsletter and Alive after Five, a programme of events to encourage shoppers and leisure users to stay in the city for longer.
- enhancing the 'Hereford experience' through improvements such as the provision of flowers, bins, and Christmas lights as well as a cleaning team and tidying up empty shop units
- improving visitor movement through new pedestrian signage and maps and lobbying on related issues such as parking and cycling
- improvements in safety and security, through working in partnership with the police and Council and campaigns to minimise anti-social behaviour
- support businesses in improving their profits, through improving the availability of footfall data, training courses and networking events etc.

The BID's plans for 2020-2025 are based on a £1.765m investment focused on increasing the appeal of the city by developing Hereford as a regional shopping, leisure and tourist destination with increased footfall. It is based on the vision, *"to enhance, develop and promote our truly distinctive city [...] for the benefit of our members."* Key elements include further improvements to the streetscape, the regional and national promotion of Hereford, the provision of new events (including cultural) to attract visitors, and supporting businesses in improving their performance.³⁶

²⁹ Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031

³⁰ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/252/developments_in_hereford/2

³¹ Invest Herefordshire

³² Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031

³³ Stakeholder interview; Hereford City Destination Management Plan 2018-2022

³⁴ <https://www.herefordbid.co.uk/about>

³⁵ Hereford BID Business Plan 2020-2025

³⁶ Hereford BID Business Plan 2020-2025

Figure 2 Proposed BID Area 2020-2025, including Widemarsh and Commercial Street, Old Market and the historic city centre



Source: Hereford BID Business Plan 2020-2025

Alongside retail and street-scape improvements, Hereford city centre is seeing new **city centre housing developments** in the form of the planned Urban Village outlined in the Housing Strategy 2012-15 and Local Plan 2011-2031 as well as the redevelopment of existing buildings across the city, which together will bring up to 800 new housing units to the city, 35% of which will be on affordable tenures.³⁷ Plans further include a new Link Road as well as re-design of existing streets to connect the development to the existing town centre and a range of related infrastructure improvements to support wider regeneration, support mixed-use development and enhance the existing historic environment. The plan highlights the benefits of city centre living to residents as well as to the town itself, including accessibility to services and facilities, encouraging walking/cycling, making use of existing properties (e.g. above retail units), as well as generally, *“contributing to the vitality of the city centre as its role is broadened*

*from mainly daytime shopping and business uses to create an inclusive ‘evening’ economy beyond normal working hours. This will make it a more attractive place to live, as well as boost the local economy.”*³⁸

2.3.5 Community

The ambition to increase community involvement through fostering a sense of place is clearly set out in the **Cultural Strategy**, which aims to ensure the county’s communities, *“have the opportunity to be fully engaged and proactive in shaping the county’s cultural offer”*, whilst **Herefordshire Council’s Museum Plan 2017-2020** similarly includes the priority to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives, including through broadening community engagement and thus experience, and strengthening a sense of place. Both documents emphasise the importance of engaging children and young people.

The **County Plan 2020-2024** sees the strengthening of the local community as a key tenet in ambitions for the county by, *“putting physical and mental health at the heart of everything we do.”* A new Council initiative, ‘Talk Community’, puts in place a network of hubs across the county to help people use their own and their community’s strengths to help each other, stay safe and maximise peoples’ independence. The Council is currently looking at what assets across the county may form the basis for up to 50 community hubs, which will aim to concentrate investment and connect people to their community and local support systems in a bid to develop a more sustainable service. This initiative specifically recognises the role of arts and culture alongside other sectors (e.g. technology, education) in supporting Council plans, aiming for, *“culture and creativity to be part of our residents’ everyday lives”*, and to this end reporting a commitment to working with HCP to ensure that the county *“builds on its strengths and successes”*.

³⁷ <http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=2425>

³⁸ Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031, p.54

2.3.6 Key population statistics

Numbers and demographics of local residents

In 2018, Herefordshire's population was 189,300, up from around 174,900 in 2001 (8%).³⁹ A 2019 forecast report assumes that the county's population is further expected to increase to 221,000 by 2031 (17% increase since 2016).⁴⁰

The county has the fourth lowest population density in England. Over half of the population (100,500, 53% in 2017) live in areas defined as 'rural', with 42% of these in very rural 'village and dispersed' areas. Just under a third of the population (60,800) live in the city of Hereford. The market towns surrounding Hereford, which are all within a 30-45 minute drive from the town centre, and as such home to potential commuters and day visitors to Hereford, account roughly for a further 57,000 inhabitants (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Population in market towns surrounding Hereford

Estimated population in main surrounding market towns (potential day visitors/ commuters)		Car journey to Hereford (up to 45 mins)
Leominster	12,200 (2017)	30 mins
Bromyard	4,500 (2011)	30 min
Ledbury	10,100 (2017)	30 mins
Ross on Wye	11,400 (2017)	30 mins
Kington	3,240 (2011)	40 mins
Hay on Wye	1,873 (2018)	40 mins
Abergavenny	13,476 (2018)	40 mins
56,789		

Source: BOP Consulting (2019)

Notably, the proportion of Hereford's population has grown since 2001 due to an 11% growth in the city's population over the years. Across the county, the built-up areas have grown more rapidly than the rural areas in the past two decades. As in Hereford, the populations of the surrounding market towns of Leominster, Ross and Ledbury have all grown by 10 to 13% since 2001, whilst the rural population has grown by 6%. The 2019 forecast expects this trend to continue.

In terms of the population's demographics, 2018 data suggests that while the age of Hereford's population is almost the same as the national average, the population of Herefordshire as a whole is slightly older than the national average, with smaller proportions of residents in the 0-44 age brackets, and higher proportions of residents in the 45-80+ age brackets (see

³⁹ Sources for data in this chapter: *The Population of Herefordshire 2018*; *Herefordshire Council Intelligence unit bulletin*, 2 January 2019; *Herefordshire Quality of Life Survey 2018*

⁴⁰ Based on the assumption that 18,000 new homes will be built in that period. *Herefordshire Council Intelligence Unit V1.0, The future population of Herefordshire, June 2019*

Figure 4). The proportions in the older age groups (45+) have increased since 2001.

This has been picked up by a range of local plans and was mentioned by several of the stakeholders interviewed for this report: *“Herefordshire’s age profile is markedly older than that of England and Wales as a whole, [...with a] large ‘gap’ between the numbers in their twenties and thirties in the county compared to nationally.”*⁴¹ It is however clearly an important trend that needs to be taken into account in considering any future developments and provisions for the area. As the 2019 forecast report projects, irrespective of whether new housing is built, the county’s population will remain an ageing one.

Figure 4 Age distribution of population in Hereford and Herefordshire compared with the national average

	Hereford (2018)	Herefordshire (2018)	National (mid 2018, ONS ⁴²)
0-15	11,500 (19%)	31,800 (17%)	19%
16-29	10,900 (18%)	27,800 (15%)	18%
30-44	12,200 (20%)	31,400 (17%)	19%
45-64	15,400 (25%)	53,500 (28%)	26%
65-79	7,600 (13%)	32,700 (17%)	13%
80+	3,200 (5%)	12,100 (6%)	4% (excludes 90+)
Total	60,800	189,300	

Source: *The Population of Herefordshire 2018*

Alongside the age distribution, 2018 demographic data shows Herefordshire’s population to be comparatively homogenous, with a slight trend towards increased ethnic diversity since 2011: in 2018, 90% identified as white British, compared with 94% at the 2011 Census and compared with 86% in the population of England and Wales as a whole.

2.3.7 Local population interaction with culture

A 2018 quality of life survey found that the majority of people living in Herefordshire were, *“satisfied with their local area and home as a place to live”* (80%), highlighting access to green space, health services, clean surroundings, traffic and broadband/ phone connectivity as most important in making somewhere a good place to live.⁴³ Life satisfaction and anxiety levels were in line with national levels, whilst happiness levels were slightly higher. However, the data suggested slightly lower levels of ‘how worthwhile residents

⁴¹ *The Population of Herefordshire 2018*

⁴² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2018>

⁴³ Sources for this chapter: *Herefordshire Quality of Life Survey 2018*, *Herefordshire Council Intelligence unit bulletin*, 2 January 2019

feel their life is' compared to the national average. Survey respondents felt that road pavement and traffic, affordable decent housing and broadband and phone connectivity were most in need of improvement. Interestingly, a further area highlighted as most in need of improvement was *"activities for teenagers."*

In terms of cultural engagement, the survey suggested that large proportions of residents had visited natural heritage places (78%), films or plays (77%) and historic places (68%) in the past year, with films or plays and natural heritage places being visited at least every few months (by 62% and 63% respectively), suggesting that these make for particularly popular local cultural activities.

Almost a third of respondents said they found it difficult to access museums, art galleries, cultural/ heritage centres (35%) and cinema, film, or theatre (31%). However, the same proportion of respondents found it easy to access museums, art galleries, cultural/ heritage centres, *"reflecting differences in experiences depending on the individual."* Based on these findings, it would be interesting to dig deeper and understand the differences in cultural engagement depending on age (in particular given the trend towards an aging population), as well as the reasons people may find it difficult to access some of the cultural services available - clearly, this may be for a variety of reasons such as finances, travel or family responsibilities.

Lastly, the survey showed that volunteering levels in the county are comparatively high by comparison, with 32% volunteering at least once a month (compared to 22% nationally in 2018/18⁴⁴) and 20% at least once a week. Overall, 45% volunteered at least once over the past year and 16% gave help as individuals (compared to 53% who informally volunteered at least once on a national level). The most common types of volunteering are for charity, community events, fund-raising and/ or campaigning in various areas.

⁴⁴ <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering/>

3. Mapping Hereford's cultural infrastructure

Investigating how Hereford and the county can develop a more connected and sustainable cultural infrastructure with a high-quality arts and heritage offer requires gaining a better understanding of the existing cultural infrastructure, its gaps, challenges, and opportunities. The following chapter maps the characteristics and locations of various assets located within the city of Hereford, and develops an overview of the cultural spaces currently in existence, their geographical relationship with each other and their key characteristics. It should be noted that this is a sample of the existing offer only, focusing on the main organisations located in the city. Assets have been grouped as follows:

- Museums (7 + 2 associated organisations)
- Heritage
- Visual arts (8)
- Performing arts (2)
- Cinemas (3)
- Libraries (2)
- Independent food sector

Key chapter insights

- Assets are spread out across the city, with a large number located in the historic centre within easy walking distance of High Town, the train station, and each other

- Compared to all mapped assets, there is a relative proliferation of museums and visual arts organisations

Museums

- Whilst Hereford is home to several museums, most are very small, open only sporadically or by appointment
- Most have a (local) heritage theme and are based in heritage buildings
- Several have had recent investment. But there are key questions around the future of two of the Council's main sites, MAG and Town Hall, both of which are felt to be in need of investment and change
- Hereford boasts modern, state of the art museum learning and archive facilities with recent considerable investment from the Council
- Very little data is currently available on visitor numbers

Heritage

- The cathedral and associated treasures are significant heritage assets, key visitor attractions and a 'geographical anchor' in the city centre
- The conservation area and AAI, which incorporate the city defences and castle foundations are also significant but have limited visibility on the ground. A 2011 Council conservation plan recognised the value of the defences to the city as visitor destination and suggested ways to increase their visibility

Visual arts

- Hereford is home to a range of visual arts organisations of different type and scale, including several smaller-scale galleries and studios. There are three existing, small artist studios, each with around 10 tenants
- Several galleries and studios have connections between themselves and the Hereford College of Arts, which highlights the service it offers

students in linking up with (local) partners. This suggests a degree of networking within the city's visual arts scene

- One of the studios offers a space to an HCA graduate each year for a year, reporting that most stayed on as tenants beyond the year. Whilst anecdotal, this indicates potential to retain graduates if they find the right environment to work in

Other

- Hereford is home to only two performing arts organisations, both of which appear to be successful and locally engaged (e.g. theatre's status as NPO and ability to largely self-finance; dance company securing tender to lead the local START programme)
- Hereford has a vibrant independent food sector. Complementing this is the Butter Market, currently undergoing regeneration, which includes proposals for a multi-purpose arts venue on the top floor
- Hereford boasts successful and long-standing recurring festivals and events which cover a range of themes from music and film to food and drink to an international blacksmithing festival. It also participates in Herefordshire Art Week, which provides an opportunity for local studios and galleries to open their doors to the public

3.1 Map of Hereford's cultural assets

Figure 5 below provides a map of central Hereford, highlighting the key cultural assets identified in our mapping exercise. The map is a useful tool to gain quick oversight over the type of assets in town and their geographical location and relationship with each other.

⁴⁵ Whilst the map shows only one heritage site, this is in some respects misleading: many of the museums could also be categorised as heritage sites and large parts of central Hereford are designated conservation areas and

- The use of colours to denote the different types of cultural organisations highlights the relative proliferation of museums and visual arts organisations, compared to performing arts organisations. The cathedral is a well-known and highly visible heritage asset at the heart of the city, acting as key draw into the historic centre and geographical anchor to the surrounding organisations⁴⁵
- Organisations are spread out across the city, with many located in the historic centre, within the city's Area of Archaeological Importance and conservation area (which roughly overlies that of the AAI)
- Most sites are in walking distance from the train station (up to 20 minutes' walk) and within a seven-minute walking radius from the city centre (High Town). This means most are also in easy walking distance from each other
- These insights suggest some questions about the relationship between the city's different cultural and heritage assets:
 - Given the easy walking distance between sites, where are the measures of the current visitor flow across city and from site to site? How is this flow enabled, managed, and encouraged, e.g. through wayfinding and signposting?
 - How are sites in the historic centre linked up with the train station and with those sites situated out of the historic centre (e.g. Courtyard Theatre)
 - Is there any obvious location in which to develop a 'cultural quarter' in the city, given the relatively wide spread of organisations, and would this lead to the exclusion of organisations outside the quarter?

area of special archaeological interest with a large number of 'minor' heritage sites which cannot all be highlighted here (e.g. listed buildings, the foundations of the castle and the medieval city walls)

Figure 5 Map of key cultural assets in central Hereford



Source: BOP Consulting/ Askeo (2020)

3.2 Museums

According to the 2018 report on the Future Resilience of Herefordshire Council's Museum Service, there are 18 museums across Herefordshire, of which, *"only two are owned and operated by the Council; the remainder are independent in the sense of being funded and either wholly or substantially volunteer-governed and operated."* The following chapter showcases nine museums and associated organisations located in Hereford.

3.2.1 Hereford Museum Service

Herefordshire Council's museum service has full Accreditation under the Arts Council Accreditation programme. Its collection includes over 180,000 pieces which largely focus on, *"understanding Herefordshire's social and natural history."*⁴⁶ The collection is housed across three sites.

Hereford's Museum & Art Gallery (MAG)

The largest museum in Hereford, the Museum & Art Gallery is located in a Victorian gothic building opposite Hereford Cathedral in the centre of town. It was opened as a free library and museum in 1874. Today, the building continues to house Hereford's central library on the ground floor, with the museum and art gallery above. MAG showcases a diverse range of historical artefacts covering archaeology, social history, costume and textiles, documents, armour, natural science and more, as well as fine and decorative art works (around 3,500), many of which are connected with the local area. The exhibits are largely owned by Herefordshire Council; only a few artefacts are on loan. It is open on a regular basis and admission remains free. Visitor figures have dropped in recent years: while the museum recorded 29,000 visitors in 2012-13, it has more recently attracted fewer than 10,000 visitors annually (this may in part be explained by the building's forced temporary closure due to an asbestos problem in 2017).⁴⁷

While MAG regularly holds changing exhibitions, *"funding for educational, touring and associated programmes [are] no longer available."*⁴⁸ £500,000 was made available by the Council for the refurbishment of the library in recent years, and there is a project underway to create a dedicated space for flexible desk-based working; however, the museum and art gallery have not seen recent investment. A 2016 review of Hereford's museums concluded that – whilst in an excellent location – *"the building has not been well maintained for several years and now shows signs of neglect."* The report referred to an unappealing entrance with *"no sense of arrival"*, the lack of shop and café, and the *"disconnected story line"* of the displays⁴⁹, which may go some way to explaining the dropping visitor numbers in recent years. A similar feeling was conveyed in interviews with local stakeholders, who referred to its *"poor quality"*, lack of *"user-friendly space"* and the *"off-putting"* nature of its first-floor location, preventing visitors from exploring. However, whilst a general sense prevails that the building is no longer fit for purpose, any renovations will require substantial investment and are complicated by the fact that the building has a covenant on its use and listed status. While significant parts of the building are currently not in use, the question remains as to whether the site would be large enough to house a modernised and expanded museum and gallery.

Black & White House

The Black & White House occupies a prominent position on the High Street in the city centre. It is a well-preserved example of a timber-framed building. Built in 1621, it has been open to the public as a small, furnished museum since 1929, providing visitors with an insight into daily life in Jacobean times through its collection of furniture, costumes, etc. The museum provides hands-on activities for children as well as an accessible virtual tour on the ground floor.

In 2017, the Council invested £80,000 in the museum's refurbishment, redisplay and branding in a bid to support its financial independence and sustainability. At the same time, a small admission charge (£3 for adults and £2 for children) was

⁴⁶ Herefordshire Council, Museum Plan 2017-2020

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ P+P (2018), The Future Resilience of Herefordshire Council's Museum Service – FINAL REPORT

⁴⁹ McGowan, H. et al, 2016. *Herefordshire Council Review of Museums & Archives Services*

introduced. While a 2016 review of Herefordshire's museums and archives suggested that the Black & White House's, "*striking exterior means that tourists exploring the City are immediately drawn to it*", this museum has seen visitor numbers fall in recent years, from 34,762 in 2012/13 to 15,937 in 2015/16. Most are visitors to the city, with 70% coming from outside the county.⁵⁰

Figure 6 The Black & White House



Source: www.picturesofengland.com

Museum Resource and Learning Centre (MLRC)

MLRC is housed in a former Post Office/ BT telephone relay station just behind MAG. It was opened in 2007 after a £60k refurbishment supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Herefordshire Council. It houses most of the Council's museum collection which is not on display at the MAG - including art, archaeology, social history, and natural science items - in a stable and secure environment. It is open to the public by appointment for personal visits and independent study as well as for charged organised education sessions, behind-the-scenes tours, lectures, workshops and school visits.⁵¹ These events,

"offer the opportunity of close contact with some fascinating historical items"⁵² and "make good use of the collections".⁵³ MLRC has a number of learning and meeting rooms, which are also available for hire.

MLRC was described as a, "*superb store and one of the best in the country for care of collections and accessibility*" in the 2016 Review of Museums & Archives report.⁵⁴ However, the Centre has limited room for expansion; this could become a key issue, given its status as a recognised destination for new archaeological finds, which are likely to grow, or in the event of a major donation of objects to the service. The authors felt that as a consequence, "*the museum service may struggle to be able to display or exploit anything significant.*" To increase the Centre's visibility, the report recommended reconsidering a re-branding with a more memorable name, e.g. as part of a wider potential re-launch of the Museum Service.

The new Herefordshire Archives and Record Centre (HARC)

The new HARC building is in the Rotherwas Industrial Estate, around 10 minutes' drive to the South East of the city centre. Opened in 2015, it is the first passivhaus building in the UK, with its energy efficiency and low running costs ensuring that it will be affordable to run in the future. Its redevelopment, including a £7.9m investment by Herefordshire Council, was part of the Council's investment efforts to improve the efficiency and financial sustainability of its service. The building includes the archive and record centre (which includes over two miles of shelving and contains artefacts dating back to the 12th century), based on National Archive accreditation standards, a dedicated educational room, search room, a refreshment area and lockers for visitors using the site. It is home to the Council's Historic Environment Record (HER), Archaeology service and Biological Records Centre. According to the National Archives, the Council, "*created one of the most advanced local archival facilities in the country.*"⁵⁵ The 2016 Review of Museums & Archives report similarly

⁵⁰ McGowan, H. et al, 2016. *Herefordshire Council Review of Museums & Archives Services*

⁵¹ the HLF grant supported the creation of the MLRC in part due to its publicly accessible nature

⁵² Herefordshire Council/ Hereford Cathedral/ HARC. Spring Workshops 2020 leaflet

⁵³ McGowan, H. et al, 2016. *Herefordshire Council Review of Museums & Archives Services*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ McGowan, H. et al, 2016. *Herefordshire Council Review of Museums & Archives Services*

concluded that the Council should be proud of the building, suggested it should, *“use it as an asset to promote the heritage and history of the County.”*⁵⁶

HARC’s development aimed to provide improved facilities and access for the public. While the 2016 report highlighted the lack of an audience development budget and dedicated learning staff, it was felt that the Archive now has the dedicated space, facilities, and technologies to develop this. Notably, the Archive now does offer a social and outreach programme with a range of public training sessions, lectures, exhibitions and courses which can be booked for a fee.⁵⁷ The 2016 report also highlighted that digitisation of more parts of the archive would further increase its accessibility - noting the increasing popularity of e.g. family history research due to related TV programmes and suggesting that HARC, *“now has a good space in which to base a digitisation project.”*

In its first year of opening, the Archive’s Search Room attracted 1,617 visitors between August and December. The 2016 report cited a recent survey of visitors to the Archive, which suggested that it attracted visitors from all over the county as well as internationally, of whom 14% paid for overnight accommodation, 49% ate out locally and 72% made use of local shops. The report concluded that the, *“economic impact of the Archive Service is considerable”*, thus contributing to the economic regeneration aims of the County Plan 2020-2024.⁵⁸ The Archive also offers opportunities for volunteering - around 50 volunteers supported the move to the new premises, giving the Archive over 15,000 hours of their time in 2014.⁵⁹

3.2.2 Other museums

Hereford Town Hall and Civic Museum

Hereford Town Hall, a large late 19th century brick building in the city centre with historic features inside and out, is owned by Herefordshire Council. At

present it is home to Hereford City Council Offices, the local Register Office (including an oak panelled ceremony room), and a small Civic Museum. The museum houses the city’s ancient charters, historic silver and other artefacts linked to the city’s history. Previously locked away within the Hall’s vaults, the items were relocated to the Heritage Suite and opened to the public in March 2018. Adjacent lies the Mayor’s Parlour, the historic office of the Mayor of Hereford, which is furnished and can be visited.

Figure 7 Hereford Town Hall



Source : www.visitherefordshire.co.uk

Some remedial work was undertaken to the building’s façade and canopy in 2018; however there is a general sense that the Town Hall at present is not a welcoming space for visitors, and that ‘something would need to be done’ to turn it from its present under-used state into a more viable facility or attraction. While the Town Hall itself is open every day and the museum is free to access, the latter is currently open to the public part-time on Wednesdays only, although guided tours can be arranged on other days of the week.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/17126/harc_events_january_to_june_2020.pdf

⁵⁸ McGowan, H. et al, 2016. *Herefordshire Council Review of Museums & Archives Services*, p.19

⁵⁹ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200164/herfordshire_archive_and_records_centre/83/visit_herefordshire_archive_and_records_centre/6

⁶⁰ <https://herefordcitycouncil.gov.uk/your-city/herford-civic-museum/>

Stakeholders interviewed for this report pointed out that the museum is not at present professionally curated and lacks disabled access. It was felt that given the Town Hall's central location, attractive appearance and, *"useful meeting rooms and assembly hall"*, it had the potential to be a more significant attraction if, *"all of it were devoted to culture"* or a similar use, rather than the current variety of spaces: *"Repurposing the Town Hall for a coherent purpose would give that street a really strong anchor."*

A 2016 working document⁶¹ considers a range of options for the building's future, including a Community Asset Transfer, long term lease or special purpose vehicle run by a new/ existing charitable trust. For any of these options, it however highlights the challenge that City Council staff are likely to occupy some space within the building for the next 10 years and that Herefordshire Council is keen not to have full liability for the maintenance of the building in the future. It highlights the need for any viable solution to have a detailed business plan based on the premise that the space will be able to generate its own income.

There are a number of constraints to any possible repurposing of the Town Hall:

- The building (and its Listed status) does not present an opportunity for sustainable operation of creative workspace. Even if the County Council were able to secure the City Council's agreement to relocate itself and its collection, the accommodation presents neither the scale nor flexibility to be attractive to an operator. If only that part of the building not used by the City Council were to be available, the business case for any commercial use becomes even less tenable
- Any ambition for a self-sustaining business model would need to be accompanied by substantial refurbishment, updating (e.g., of disabled access) and repurposing, all of which would be challenged by its listed status and the significant investment required. It is extremely unlikely

that any commercial operator would be willing to assume liability for maintenance of the fabric of the building, meaning that Herefordshire Council would still have an open-ended and unlimited obligation to act as funder of last resort for maintenance and restoration

- It has neither the capacity, nor the necessary level of accessibility, to assume a more strategic role in considerations of a new home for some or all of the Museum and Gallery collection

Waterworks Museum

The Waterworks Museum is housed on the site of a Grade II* listed Victorian water pumping station, located on the river Wye around 20 minutes' walk from the city centre. Its oldest buildings date to 1856 and its exhibits include a working 19th century steam engine. It tells the story of the supply of water for public consumption from earliest habitation to the end of the 20th century. It also houses an exhibition on life and firefighting at a local munition's factory during World War II.

The museum is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity and receives no public funding. It is independently funded through admission fees, grant awards, membership subscriptions and donations from two key benefactors, without which it would not be able to operate at the same level: The Southall Trust and Drw Cymru Welsh Water, the former of which was re-confirmed for a further five years in 2018. In 2018, its total unrestricted income lay at £42,865. The museum is governed, managed, and operated exclusively by volunteers. The museum is open on Tuesdays and special 'family open-days' only (not more than 70 days open to the public a year), with an admission fee of £5/ £7 for adults. It also offers group tours and educational visits (14 in 2018) and opens for occasional special events (e.g. Hereford Steampunk Weekend). In 2018, it received over 5,000 visitors.⁶²

⁶¹ *Town Hall/ City Open Spaces Options Paper - Draft 10.10.16*

⁶² <https://www.waterworksmuseum.org.uk/about/> and Waterworks Museum - Hereford, Report of the Trustees and Unaudited Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31 December 2018 (http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends66/0000515866_AC_20181231_E_C.pdf)

Cider Museum

The Cider Museum is located around 12 minutes' walk to the West of the city Centre. Housed in the original Bulmers' factory, it was founded by the Bulmer family in 1973 to preserve the history of cider making worldwide and tell the story of cider making in Britain, as well as related local social history. It houses the Archive of Cider Pomology and has a tea room and gift shop. The museum organises a range of events each year, including the International Cider & Perry Competition in May and a Cidermaking Festival in October. It offers cider tasting, orchard visits, and guided tours as well as organised educational visits for schools/educators and showcases changing temporary exhibitions. The museum is open Monday-Saturday all year round and charges an admission fee of £5.50 for adults and £3.00 for children. In 2019, it welcomed 12,211 visitors.

The Cider Museum is an Arts Council England accredited museum and an independent charitable trust. In 2019, it registered an income of £369,410, made up of donations and legacies, charitable activities (admissions, shop, café, room hire) and investments. This included a signification donation from a Bulmer family member as well as several foundations.⁶³

St John's Medieval Museum and Coningsby Hospital + ruins of Blackfriars & Rosegarden

The museum is located about halfway down Widemarsh Street, about 10 minutes' walk from the city centre and close to Hereford Train Station. It is located on the site of the former Coningsby Red Coat Hospital, founded by the Hospitallers in around 1200, although the present alms houses were built in the early 17th century. The site also includes a 13th century Chapel, still used by the Order of St John today, and the museum explains the links between the Crusades, Knights Templar, and Hospitaller Knights. The Hospital is next to the site of the ruins of the Blackfriars Monastery, a Dominican Monastery,

surrounded by a rose garden which also includes a stone Preaching Cross, one of the last surviving examples of its kind.

Figure 8 Coningsby Hospital



Source: Gordon Taylor, www.coningsbyhospital.co.uk/

The museum is open half days on two days a week (Wednesdays and Saturdays) in the summer months only. Additional private visits can be booked. The museum does not receive public funding.

Herefordshire Light Infantry Museum

This is a small museum around 15 minutes' walk from the centre of town, based in Hereford's Suvla Barracks. It houses the regimental collection of Herefordshire's three military units, the Hereford Regiment, Hereford Rifle Volunteers and County Militia, and the Hereford Light Infantry; and aims to tell their history and, "*preserve the legacy of the most extraordinary soldiers*" within the light infantry. The museum has a Friends' group, which aims to support and improve the museum and create awareness of its presence and topic. It is open by appointment only. In 2018, it had a total income of £6,488.⁶⁴

⁶³ <https://www.cidermuseum.co.uk> and Hereford Cider Museum Trust Report and Financial Statement for the Year ended 30 September 2019 (http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends61/0001158061_AC_20190930_E_C.pdf)

⁶⁴ <https://herefordshirelightinfantrymuseum.com/> and Charity Commission entry for charity 272006 - The Herefordshire Light Infantry Museum Trust (<https://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/>)

3.3 Heritage

3.3.1 The Cathedral, Mappa Mundi and Chained Library

Hereford's Norman/ Romanesque cathedral sits within its own cathedral green in the city centre and is one of its main attractions. There has been a place of worship on the site since at least the 8th century, though the oldest parts of the present building date back to the 11th century (the Bishop's chapel). The cathedral is also home to the famous Mappa Mundi, created around 1300, and the only complete medieval world map of its kind to have survived. It is now one of the cathedral's greatest treasures and in 2007 became the UK's second entry on the UNESCO Memory of the World register. The Cathedral complex also houses the 17th century Chained Library.⁶⁵ Popular across Europe from the Middle Ages to the 18th century, it is now the largest Chained Library to survive intact and holds 229 manuscripts, including the 8th century Hereford Gospels.

Successive renovation and redevelopment works over the past decades have significantly improved the cathedral's visitor offer. In 1996, a new library building was opened, dedicated to housing and exhibiting the Mappa Mundi alongside 229 illuminated manuscripts and over 1200 early printed books. The building also includes a specially designed chamber which houses the Chained Library, both of which can be visited for a fee (£6 for adults). This new chamber means that the library can now be seen in its original arrangement as well as keeping its ancient books in a controlled environment.⁶⁶ In 2010/11, work was undertaken on the cathedral green, to improve its appearance through new pathways, seating and a gated entrance. Further landscaping and restoration to the cathedral were undertaken in 2015, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The cathedral is open daily to visitors, who can access the cathedral itself (including the tower), the Mappa Mundi exhibition which is housed in a dedicated

library building opened in 1996, the Chained Library, and Chapter House Garden. Tours are available for the cathedral, tower, and gardens.

The complex draws in around 300,000 visitors a year.⁶⁷ The 2016 Review of Museums & Archives report highlighted the success of the 2015 Magna Carta exhibition, calling it a *“major attraction for the City”*, and found that the Cathedral at that point was expanding its exhibition programme to aim at audiences interested in history, religion as well as art.⁶⁸ In 2018, the Cathedral saw 196,000 visitors come to visit the 6-week *Poppies: The Weeping Window* exhibition which toured the country to commemorate World War I.

The Cathedral also has a dedicated Friends group, formed in 1932 to help care for and preserve the Cathedral, and which has donated over £1m over the past

Figure 9 Hereford Cathedral and Cathedral Green



Source: www.herefordcathedral.org

⁶⁵ A library based on a security system in which a chain is attached at one end of the front cover of each book and the other attached to shelves, allowing books to be taken out of the shelf but not removed from the bookcase

⁶⁶ <https://www.herefordcathedral.org/chained-library>

⁶⁷ Destination Management Plan

⁶⁸ McGowan, H. et al, 2016. *Herefordshire Council Review of Museums & Archives Services*. For context, overall there has been a small increase in visitors to Cathedrals in the UK from 9.6m in 2008 to 9.8m in 2018 (Church of England Research & Statistics, Cathedral Statistics 2018)

decade. Support has included the re-development of the Chapter House Garden, funding to refurbish the College Hall and Cathedral Close.⁶⁹

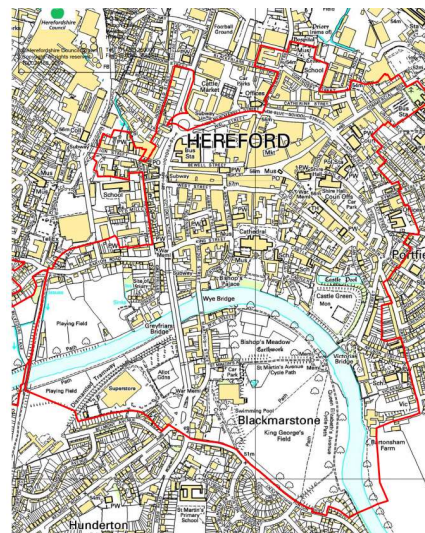
3.3.2 Conservation Area & Area of Archaeological Importance

Alongside the more 'tangible' heritage assets of the cathedral complex, Hereford is also the site of smaller and/or less visible heritage assets of nevertheless significant importance, as reflected in its 352 listed buildings⁷⁰, conservation areas, and status as one of only five designated Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAI) in the country. Across Herefordshire there are currently 64 conservation areas, including Central Hereford, which covers the whole of the old city, including most of the organisations listed in this section (see Figure 10 compared to Figure 5). The area of the AAI is almost the same as that of the Central Hereford conservation area (see Figure 11), including the whole zone within the medieval walls, some early suburbs and monastic precincts.⁷¹

The city was designated as AAI in 1983, “*due to the national significance of the historic core of Hereford.*” It is one of only five designated cities in the country⁷² The key aim of the designation is to help prevent archaeological sites from being damaged or destroyed without allowing for investigation and recording, highlighting the extent and importance of the archaeological features of the city.

Whilst it may be assumed that these sites in large part have not been (left) unearthed to date, it is nevertheless worth noting that little appears to have been done so far to raise the visibility of this important designation or of ‘what is/ might be under people’s feet’.

Figure 10 Central Hereford Conservation Area



Source : www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1370/central_area_hereford_conservation_area.pdf

This local archaeological relevance extends to the whole county, with a range of important sites in Hereford's vicinity, with the potential to reveal unexpected new finds and spur on popular interest, as demonstrated by the recent finding of the 'Herefordshire Hoard' near Leominster. *"A find of national importance from a key moment in the unification of England"*, it garnered considerable national press attention both due to its historical significance and the criminal activities of its finders, which led to large parts of the hoard being lost and the finders jailed.⁷³

⁶⁹ <https://www.herefordcathedral.org/the-friends-of-hereford-cathedral>

⁷⁰ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/>

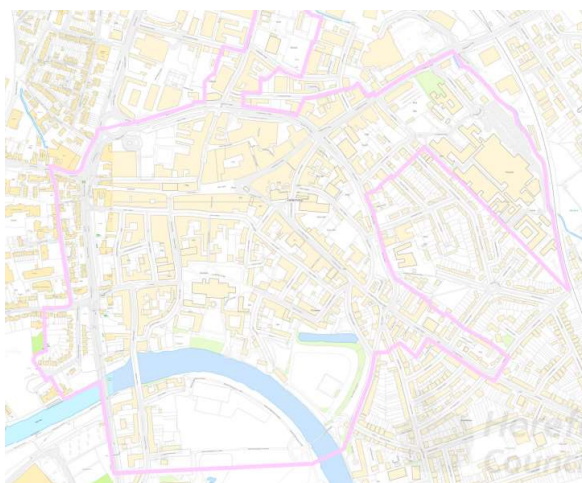
⁷¹ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200177/conservation/95/archaeology_and_the_historic_environment_advice_and_information/4

⁷² Canterbury, Chester, Exeter, Hereford, York

⁷³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-50461860>

Both the Central Hereford conservation area and AAI include two particularly important local heritage sites: the city's Saxon and medieval defences (wall, ditches, and Wye Bridge) and castle complex remains, all of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The city's defences include a *"complex series of urban defence monuments which are among the best preserved in the region and the most archaeologically significant in England"*⁷⁴, of which the most visible remains today are the mainly 13th century city wall.

Figure 11 Hereford's Area of Archaeological Importance



Source: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2145/map_of_hereford_area_of_archaeological_importance_aai.pdf

While physical public access to the city defence monuments is possible in many places, it is *"however almost entirely limited to the outer face of the city wall"*, and, as highlighted in the 2011 conservation report, *"the monuments are neither signposted or interpreted, and their setting is frequently discouraging or even dangerous."* At that point, *"the last known leaflet describing the remains and offering a guided route was published in 1988 and is long out of print."* The 2011 conservation plan included proposals to improve both the preservation and visibility of the walls. It suggested that the external promotion of Hereford as visitor destination should take account of the city defences, with improved interpretation, signage, leaflets, and public access to key sections. It is unclear how much of this has been put into effect. Some preservation efforts have clearly been made: the city walls were removed from English Heritage's *Heritage at Risk Register* in 2017 following conservation efforts.⁷⁵ However, it is less clear if and to what extent visibility and interpretation have been improved: the walls still do not seem to feature (obviously) on the Visit Herefordshire site, nor can any information aimed at tourists be found elsewhere online.

Similarly, only a few elements remain visible of Hereford Castle, which may have dated to pre-Conquest times and was almost entirely been destroyed in the 1650s. This important site, known as Castle Green, is now, *"a recreation area with little of its history still visible"*⁷⁶, and little seems to have been done to date to raise the former Castle's visibility.

One organisation that appears to be working to highlight the historic features of Hereford to its visitors is the Hereford Guild of Guides⁷⁷, which offers guided tours by trained volunteers to, *"see Hereford's interesting and historic buildings and other structures, hear about the history of the city through the ages from Saxon times, its role in the Civil War and its famous people."* Tickets can be bought from the Cathedral shop, whilst a small leaflet is available from the Tourist Information Centre for those who would prefer to investigate by themselves. Herefordshire Council's Archaeology department also offers

⁷⁴ Herefordshire Council, 2011, Hereford city defences, a conservation management plan, Part one

⁷⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2017-regional-summaries/har-2017-wm-regional-leaflet/>

⁷⁶ <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshires-past/the-medieval-period/castles/gazetteer-of-herefordshire-castles/parishes-h/hereford-castle/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.herefordguidedwalks.org.uk/index.html>

'Historic Landscape Walks' across the county, but whilst the 2020 programme includes 12 walks, none of these take place within the city of Hereford. The walks are free but appear to draw such large numbers who regularly attend that a booking procedure has been implemented, indicating a certain level of interest in local archaeology.⁷⁸

3.4 Visual Arts

3.4.1 Hereford College of Arts (HCA)

HCA was founded in 1851 and offers courses in fine and visual art and design, and music and the performing arts. These are offered at a range of levels to, *"deliver the full range of arts education"*, from undergraduate and postgraduate study to short courses, further education courses and college-level courses for students aged 16-19. Whilst it has grown substantially over the past century from a local art school to its present state as the only specialist art college in the West Midlands⁷⁹, it is a small college, with around 400 undergraduate students.⁸⁰ According to a review in 2013, it is, *"one of an increasingly rare breed – a specialist art college, offering practice-based creative courses [...] where students have plenty of contact with staff."*⁸¹

The college prides itself on being able to offer close support and flexibility to students, celebrating individual success and encouraging students to *"discover alternative ways of looking at things"*, including through collaboration with partners and bringing in speakers to run masterclasses and give lectures. It offers students opportunities to collaborate with other students as well as with external partners (e.g. live briefs from real clients, working on projects with external partners) as well as the freedom to, *"experiment using HCA's great range of facilities."* For example, students recently unveiled an exhibition of diverse craft works in the Crypt of Hereford Cathedral.

Courses are delivered across two campuses in walking distance from the City. The Folly Lane site features lecture theatres, theatre, student services and other administrative offices as well as workshops and is used for university-level and college-level courses. In 2012, a new Art Space and main entrance with social, café and exhibition space were opened. The College Road Campus is the main base for the university-level community, including halls of residence. The building (a former College) was refurbished to include studios, workshops, dark rooms, IT facilities, and social space.

The college recently opened new purpose-built accommodation for its students in central Hereford near the train station, involving staff and students in the design concepts and decision making. It is hoped that *"this gives easy access to all social and cultural resources of the City as well as connections with the wider community"*, and the space includes social space on the ground floor for exhibitions, performances, and socialising.

3.4.2 Art Galleries

Hereford Museum and Art Gallery (see above) functions as the main public art gallery in town. Alongside this, central Hereford also has three smaller independent galleries which predominantly showcase new/ contemporary works of art and craft in temporary exhibitions, including works for sale:

- **Apple Store Gallery:** Opened in 2015, the Gallery is located in an industrial unit near Hereford Station. It is open throughout the year to showcase exhibitions by local artists, including visual art, poetry, and music. It offers a framing service and has attached artist studios available for rent (ASG Studios, see below). The Gallery is particularly keen to support young artists who live or have studied locally, and sponsors Hereford Young Open, which forms part of the End of the Year show for the BA Fine Art Degree at HCA. The owners aim to, *"work more closely with the wider community"* in future through

⁷⁸ <https://ht.herefordshire.gov.uk/events-projects-publications/events/>

⁷⁹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/0/herford-college-of-arts-guide/>

⁸⁰ 397 in 2019-2020 (2019-20 Access and Participation Plan [Hereford College of Arts, https://www.hca.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/HerefordCollegeOfArts_APP_2019-20_V1_10003022.pdf])

⁸¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/student/into-university/az-uni-colleges/herford-college-of-arts-458946.html>

promoting links between artists and the wider public, providing access to a range of exhibition venues, sponsoring Framework Heritage, a new company to act as a Support Network for local emerging artists, and more⁸²

- **Timothy Hawkins Gallery:** The Gallery was opened by furniture maker Timothy Hawkins in 2014 in a rural location and moved to Church Street in central Hereford in 2017. Alongside Hawkins' own products, it showcases a range of artworks by predominantly local artists and artisans, including glass ware, ceramics, woodwork, metalwork, textiles, jewellery and books, which can be bought on site⁸³
- **The Craft Gallery:** The Craft Gallery is located on the first floor of a heritage building located on Church Street in central Hereford, the Old Mayor's Parlour. It holds four exhibitions each year showcasing, *"unique and original works of art and craft, [thereby] allowing the first floor of the building to be open Tuesday to Saturday."* The Gallery is owned by the Church Street Charitable Trust, set up by a member of the Bulmer family in 1997 with the aim of preserving the character of the shops and craft outlets located in Church Street. The trust's key aim for the Craft Gallery venue is to, *"provide a permanent exhibition space in the City of Hereford for visual arts"*⁸⁴

3.4.3 Artist Studios

Hereford is home to three small-scale independent studios providing workspace for local artists and designers:

- **ASG Creative Studios:** These studios are part of Apple Store Gallery and located in the same building. ASG offers a range of flexible creative studios, ranging from 4.5m² to 10m². It also offers a shared exhibition space, communal area, and library. Its spaces are, *"ideal for artists,*

photographers, printers, designers and an array of small creative start-ups including creative technology, software and web design." Tenants can rent studio space on a monthly basis or undertake projects on site for an agreed period of time, offering flexibility. In addition to studio space, tenants can, *"take advantage of exhibition opportunities, artists' workshops, participation in Herefordshire Art Week and membership to Framework Herefordshire"*⁸⁵

- **Artsite3 Studios:** Artsite3 is a not for profit unit of studios for professional artists and designers, located on the same road as ASG near Hereford Station. It was founded in 2008 by a co-operative of artists, designers, and crafts people. It offers a variety of single and shared studios for ten tenants starting at £40 per month and houses creatives working across a range of specialisms including illustration, textile design, ceramics, and print making. Since opening, it has, *"become a sought-after working environment."* Artsite3 maintains close links with HCA, including offering an annual award to a graduate of free studio space for a year, allowing the student to, *"develop their professional career alongside a community of artists and designers."* Most winners have gone on to take up a permanent space at the Studio⁸⁶
- **Market Arts Studios:** MAS was founded by a group of graduates from HCA in 2018 and is located on the first floor of the Butter Market in the historic centre of Hereford. It provides a home for eight artists working across a range of disciplines including painting, photography, and community-based work. The founders' key aim is to provide dedicated studio facilities in the region which enable professional career progression for practicing artists, and there is, *"potential to increase"* – MAS has two vacant studios with the capacity to be used as shared spaces. They also aim to offer links and residencies to international

⁸² <https://www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/thedms.aspx?dms=3&venue=1400597>

⁸³ <https://timothyhawkingallery.co.uk/about/#top>

⁸⁴ <https://www.oldmayorsparlour.com/>

⁸⁵ <http://asgcreativestudios.com/>

⁸⁶ <http://www.artsite3.com/>

artists, including a studio exchange programme, as well as regular artist talks, lunches and exhibitions in collaboration with local galleries, “to raise the profile of artists working within the county.” MAS is also planning to offer participatory activities for the local community, and to encourage ongoing dialogue with HCA⁸⁷

3.4.4 Rural Media

Rural Media was formed by CEO Nic Millington in 1992 as a production, education and development charity that uses creative and digital arts to support community engagement and social change. It comprises of two divisions, a media charity which undertakes digital projects and productions, “*engaging people of all ages and abilities*”; and a production company, which helps to generate funds for the charity through making films, videos and apps on a commercial basis⁸⁸:

- Rural Media Charity works with communities, schools, groups, and individuals to create films and digital arts projects, “*that raise awareness, influence change and celebrate rural life*”
- Rural Media Productions produces a variety of products such as music and commercial videos, corporate films and broadcast television and has worked for clients including BBC, BFI, Channel 4, the Welsh Assembly as well as a range of trusts, foundations, and local authorities

The organisation is based in central Hereford and operates the only dedicated professional production facility in the county.⁸⁹ Rural Media has also taken a leading role in the Hereford Cultural Partnership, including leading on the delivery of the Great Place Programme.

3.5 Performing Arts

3.5.1 Courtyard Theatre

The Courtyard Hereford opened in 1998 to replace the outdated New Hereford Theatre. The glass-and-wood-building was the first major new build funded by the Arts Council National Lottery capital fund, with additional support from Hereford City Council. It was later incorporated into Herefordshire Council before becoming an Arts Council RFO in 2003.

The centre contains a 400-seat main auditorium, a 120-seat studio theatre, rehearsal rooms, a gallery, meeting spaces and a café bar and is currently undergoing an extension. The *Transform the Yard* capital project, part-funded by a grant from Arts Council and supported by Herefordshire Council, will: improve the accessibility of the entrance and box office; create a new space to allow more workshops and meeting hires; and develop a retail space for local arts and crafts. The café bar area is also being extended to include a terrace.⁹⁰ This, and the addition of another room for the theatre’s own use and rental to other organisations, will further help to make the theatre more financially sustainable.

The theatre employs 60 staff members and engages 170 volunteers, attracting audiences of around 300,000 people per year. Programming includes films, theatre and dance productions, art exhibitions and learning and participation programmes from early years to people with dementia. It is a major host venue of the *Borderlines* film festival.

Total income for the Courtyard in 2019 was £2,986,955. It is mainly self-financing, having lost its funding from Herefordshire Council in April 2016. As an NPO, the Courtyard Trust receives an annual grant from Arts Council England of £212,000, representing 7% of the theatre’s total income.⁹¹ This funding is secure until 2022. Admission fees are the primary source of funding, while the

⁸⁷ <https://marketartsstudios.com/market-arts-studio-manifesto/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXK9D7d7ReOzDRvTsZitFrg/about>

⁸⁹ <https://www.ruralmedia.co.uk/>

⁹⁰ <https://www.courtyard.org.uk/transformtheyard/>

⁹¹ http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends69/0001067869_AC_20190331_E_C.PDF

high-quality bar and catering offer also significantly contributes to the Courtyard's income.

3.5.2 2Faced Dance

2FacedDance is a professional dance company based which tours nationally and internationally. Formerly located at the Courtyard Theatre, the company has recently relocated to a new home in the former Magistrates Court on Gaol Street, in the city centre.

Alongside touring, the company also delivers local talent development and learning and participation programmes. Last year, it secured a three-year tender from Children and The Arts and Arts Connect to lead the Herefordshire START programme, which included cultural visits, professional development opportunities and education work across Herefordshire.

In 2018/19, the company put on a total of 83 performances and further events with audiences totalling 6,930. They also hosted 324 learning and participation events, including workshops, courses, post-show discussions. In total, there were 3,790 session attendances.⁹² Income for the same period was £360,261. The company employs five dance artists and five operational staff.

3.6 Other

3.6.1 Cinemas

Hereford is home to three cinemas, including two independent cinemas and one commercial multiplex. All are located within the city centre:

- **The Courtyard Cinema:** Part of The Courtyard Arts centre, the cinema has two screens: a smaller, 120-seater screen and the larger Main Stage screen. The cinema screens four films a day, charged at £7 for

adults and £5 for children. There are discounts for Courtyard members. The cinema is one of the host venues of the *Borderlines* film festival

- **The Loft Cinema:** Opened in 2018, the Loft is a small independent cinema, bar, and restaurant in the town centre, with sofa seating and table service. It has one screen and seats around 35 people with 1-2 screenings per day. Tickets are between £12-£18 per sofa, which seat 2-3 people. During the *Borderlines* film festival, the Loft offers some 'pay as much as you can' tickets which are priced between £2 - £5
- **Odeon Hereford:** Located in Hereford's Old Market, it has six screens

3.6.2 Libraries

Hereford has two public libraries, including a large library in the city centre and a smaller one in the residential Belmont area to the south west of the centre:

- **Hereford Library:** Hereford Library is the county's largest and holds 30% of its active library stock. It also houses the county's local studies and special collections. Based in the same building as the MAG opposite Hereford Cathedral, it is managed by Herefordshire Council and open five days a week. Around half of loans from the library are from borrowers under the age of 18, reflecting the library's popularity with families and young readers.⁹³
- **Belmont Library:** Belmont Library is located in a community centre in the middle of a large residential development. It is jointly funded by Herefordshire Council and the parish council. It houses around 5% of the active library stock in the county.⁹⁴ The library is open four days a week

⁹² http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends96/0001178796_AC_20190331_E_C.PDF

⁹³ <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/5043398/herfordshire-libraries-and-market-town-overview-facts-and-figures-201.pdf>

⁹⁴ <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/5043398/herfordshire-libraries-and-market-town-overview-facts-and-figures-201.pdf>

3.6.3 Independent food sector

Hereford has a vibrant independent food sector, which in recent years has experienced significant development through the emergence of new ventures. For example, the mid-19th century Butter Market in the historic city centre, which was damaged by fire in 1923 but, now owned by a private investor, is undergoing modernisation to bring it back to life as an independent retail site. Its ground floor is currently home to a market including range of bespoke artisan food makers, fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh bread, cheese stalls, cider and gin stall, fishmonger, and butcher as well as sweet, cake and delicatessen providers and, “*non-traditional stalls selling ‘cooked to order’ Turkish and Korean food.*” Alongside this, it houses a range of independent businesses selling non-consumables such as a cobbler, florist, jewellery, clothes shop, barbers, etc.

The first floor has been converted into artist studios (Market Art Studios, see chapter 3.4), with current proposals for a multi-purpose arts venue on the top floor. With a space of 60x35 feet, it, “*has the potential for outside agencies to hire as an events venue, such as film screening, live music performances, private hire and a unique central gallery space.*”⁹⁵

Other local developments which have added to the city’s food and drink scene include the Green Dragon Hotel’s new, “*flagship dining experience The Hereford*” and local brothers Edwin and Dorian Kirk’s venture A Rule of Tum, which began in 2013 to, “*bring about change in Herefordshire’s food culture*” and has recently opened a new restaurant in central Hereford focusing on ‘modern ethical eating’. “*Both operations are led by independent entrepreneurs making a significant investment in the area as both seek to put Herefordshire on the UK food and tourism map.*”⁹⁶ Further indicators of the growing independent food and drink scene are the relatively recent addition to the festival scene of two food festivals - the Hereford Indie Food Festival and the Hereford Food

Festival, both of which have been successfully taking place in the city since 2016 (see chapter 3.6.4).

3.6.4 Festivals & recurring events

According to the current Hereford City Destination Management Plan, Herefordshire is home to a, “*number of large-scale events and festivals [...]. As a city however, we host relatively few major events and festivals given that almost a third of the population is concentrated here.*”⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the document lists a number of festivals/ events taking place in the city. Complimented by an online search, this suggests at least eight recurring festivals/ events that take place largely in Hereford itself, covering a range of themes, from music and film, to food and drink and an international blacksmithing festival. Several have been going on for several years and draw significant crowds. (Please note: due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these festivals will not take place in 2020. Additional work may be needed to assess the immediate and long-term impact of this disruption on revenues, sustainability, and audience numbers.)

- **Three Choirs Festival** is the oldest non-competitive classical music festival in the world, celebrating its 300th anniversary in 2015. It takes place annually at the end of July, and hosting is shared on rotation among the cathedrals of the Three Counties (Hereford, Gloucester, and Worcester). It is funded by The Three Choirs Festival Association Ltd⁹⁸
- **Hereford Mayfair** is a tradition dating back over 900 years.⁹⁹ The fair is officially opened by a ceremonial offering of 12-and-a-half bushels of wheat by the Mayor to the Lord Bishop as payment for allowing the fair to proceed. Attractions include rides, sideshows, and food stalls. It takes place in May

⁹⁵ <https://marketartsstudios.com/market-arts-studio-menifesto/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.herefordtimes.com/news/17832310.openings-will-boost-hereford-39-s-independent-food-scene/>

⁹⁷ Hereford City Destination Management Plan 2018-2022

⁹⁸ <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?subid=0®id=204609>

⁹⁹ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200137/things_to_do/189/markets_in_high_town_hereford/2

- **Borderlines Film Festival** is an annual two-week long film festival hosted across Herefordshire, Shropshire, Malvern, and the Welsh Borders. It is funded by National Lottery funding, the BFI, the Elmley Foundation and Hereford City Council. Host venues in Hereford include the Courtyard, All Saint's Church, the Loft Cinema, and Left Bank. It is the UK's largest rural film festival
- **Ferrous Festival of Artist Blacksmithing** was launched in 2017 by Hereford Business Improvement District and Hereford College of Arts. It brings blacksmiths' hot metal forges to Hereford city centre, alongside the opportunity for members of the public to try forging for themselves. The festival has a wraparound programme of exhibitions, talks, film and blacksmithing demonstrations over three days
- **Hereford River Carnival** was first celebrated in the 1960s with locals bringing a flotilla down to Victoria Bridge. However, the tradition stopped in 1973 and was not restarted until 2014 by a group of volunteers. It includes floats, boats, a foot procession through the city centre led by the carnival arts group and a performance stage at the Courtyard. It takes place over a weekend in May
- **Hereford Indie Food Festival** begun in 2016. It describes itself as a, *"community driven project celebrating the independent food scene, chefs, producers and makers in Herefordshire."* It takes places over August bank holiday weekend and this year's festival will have food and drink stalls plus live music and DJs. The event usually attracts over 7,500 people¹⁰⁰
- **The Hereford Food Festival** is a weekend festival that takes place in mid-June at Hereford racecourse. Alongside 100+ food and drink stands, the festival offers live music, craft, and children's activities. Founded in 2016, 9,000 people attended in 2019¹⁰¹

- **Beer on the Wye** is an annual, three-day festival in its sixteenth year. In 2019, over 6,550 people attended.¹⁰² It is hosted at Hereford Rowing Club and attendees are offered over 130 different cider and perries to try
- Hereford is also one of the locations of the county-wide **Herefordshire Art Week**, an annual nine-day art trail that has been running since 2002. It is organised by h.Artists Ltd, an independent organisation led by Mel Potter, and supported by an Advisory Group. The event is an opportunity for artists, craft makers and creative businesses to open studios, galleries, and group exhibitions to raise their profile and sell artwork. MAG is a participating venue.

As pointed out in the Destination Management Plan, a wider range of festivals and events take place across Herefordshire. These include Bromyard Folk Festival, Nozstock and Lakefest music festivals, Ledbury Poetry Festival, Kington Walking Festival, and the famous Hay on Wye Literary festival.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed Hereford's reliance on live events and festivals as both a strength and a potential threat to its future sustainability. In common with many other international, national, and regional hubs, partners need to consider how plans to re-open the city include support for cultural and creative organisations to translate more of their content into fungible IPR, and to exploit this through a range of broadcast and online channels.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.yourherefordshire.co.uk/all/news/hereford-indie-food-festival-cancelled/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.theherefordfoodfestival.co.uk/>

¹⁰² <https://beeronthewye.wixsite.com/beeronthewye>

4. Hereford's creative economy

It is the city's ambition to develop its creative workforce and build on existing assets including in the heritage and cultural sector, in order to support a sustainable cultural infrastructure, generate income, enhance the local quality of life and drive tourism (see Priority 1 of the Cultural Strategy and County Plan 2024). One of the approaches to achieving that is under consideration is the improved provision of dedicated workspace for creative start-ups, freelancers and (small) businesses in the city.

To gain a better understanding of exiting activity and potential demand for such a space, this chapter therefore aims to provide a brief overview over the current level of the creative economy in Hereford.

Key chapter insights

- There is little current available data on the creative economy specific to Hereford
- Available data suggests a small creative sector with a relatively high proportion of musicians, performing and visual artists
- Data also suggests that local creative employment has been growing at a substantial rate, above national average, and that there may be a pool of CI talent resident in Hereford but working elsewhere.
- At present there is no dedicated communal workspace specifically for creative industries workers in Hereford, beyond the three small artist studios included in the mapping in chapter 3

Number of local Creative Industries businesses

A review of data from Companies House, BRES, ONS and LinkedIn can provide some indication of the Herefordshire creative economy and its development over the past years; but provides little insight into the extent of the creative economy in Hereford or any observable strengths or trends.

Using DueDil to drill into Companies House data, and using the DCMS definition of the Creative Industries by Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC codes)¹⁰³ suggests a total of 670 creative industries businesses in Herefordshire in 2020, of which the largest proportion (41.5%) are active in IT, software and computer services. The next biggest group at 14.3% is film, TV, video, radio, and photography, with music, performing and visual arts at 14%.

DueDil provides us with a more accurate count of extant, 'live' businesses¹⁰⁴, than the sample-based approach taken by ONS. It includes active registered businesses which are not registered for VAT, but does not include freelancers or sole traders, or indeed companies that operate within the CIs but are registered under a different SIC code.¹⁰⁵ The actual number of creative enterprises is thus likely to be higher than the numbers presented in Figure 12.

¹⁰³ i.e. of businesses whose SIC code comes within the DCMS definition of the Creative Industries

¹⁰⁴ i.e. those which are up to date with their annual returns

¹⁰⁵ e.g. Head Office operations, charities, consultants, education (other than cultural education), manufacturing (other than jewellery)

Figure 12 Creative Industries businesses in Herefordshire (2020)

DCMS CI Sub sector	Number	Proportion
Advertising and marketing	69	10.3%
Architecture	30	4.5%
Crafts ¹⁰⁶	4	0.6%
Design (fashion, product, graphic design)	40	6%
Film, TV, video, radio, photography	96	14.3%
IT, software, computer services	278	41.5%
Publishing	55	8.2%
Music, performing and visual arts ¹⁰⁷	94	14%
Museums, libraries, galleries ¹⁰⁸	4	6%
Total	670	100%

Source: BOP Consulting/ City Curator analysis of Companies House data parsed via DueDil (6 February 2020)

These figures are similar to the numbers indicated by the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) in 2019, which show a total of 600 CI businesses in the county.

Comparing the BRES data from 2019 with that of 2015 suggests an increase in the number of CI businesses from 525 to 600 (14%), suggesting that this is a growth sector for the local economy (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 Change in CI business population in Herefordshire (2015-2019)

DCMS CI Sub sector	2015	2019
Advertising and marketing	45	50
Architecture	45	45
Crafts	5	5
Design (fashion, product, graphic design)	50	50
Film, TV, video, radio, photography	20	60
IT, software, computer services	225	250
Publishing	40	40
Music, performing and visual arts	75	85
Museums, libraries, galleries	20	15
Total	525	600

Source: BOP analysis of BRES (6 February 2020)

DueDil further allows narrowing down the search to companies with a trading address in Hereford. This suggests a total of 334 CI businesses in Hereford (again excluding sole traders, freelancers, and those CI businesses with different SIC codes). Again, the largest number of businesses are within the IT, software, and computer service sector (40%), followed by film, TV, video, radio, and photography (17%). A further 14.4% are in the music, performing and visual arts sectors, 9% in advertising/ marketing and 7% in design, suggesting a mix of local CI businesses.

¹⁰⁶ DCMS counts on manufacture of jewellery as crafts. There will be more companies who define themselves as crafts businesses.

¹⁰⁷ This includes businesses in 'operation of arts facilities' – of which there are 6 in Hereford

¹⁰⁸ This does not include individual Council-owned museums and libraries, nor 'arms-length' bodies or those listed as charities

Figure 14 Creative Industries businesses in Hereford (2020)¹⁰⁹

DCMS CI Sub sector	Number	Proportion
Advertising and marketing	31	9.3%
Architecture	22	6.6%
Crafts	1	0.3%
Design (fashion, product, graphic design)	23	6.9%
Film, TV, video, radio, photography	57	17%
IT, software, computer services	135	40.4%
Publishing	15	4.5%
Music, performing and visual arts	48	14.4%
Museums, libraries, galleries	2	0.6%
Total	334	100%

Source: BOP Consulting/ City Curator analysis of Companies House data parsed via DueDil (6 February 2020)

Creative Industries employees

Too few companies provide the number of employees on their Companies House return to be able to use this to estimate employment and check against the numbers on the Business Register and Employment Survey. BRES data on employment in the CIs meanwhile is only available up to 2015. What data exists suggests employment growth (pre-covid-19) in the CI sector in Herefordshire (17%) and Hereford and South Herefordshire (20%), which lies above the average for England over the same period (15%).

Analysis of BRES data up to 2019 on the number of companies in the sector suggests that CI employment in the region has continued to grow since 2015, with increases in the fields of architecture, design (for Herefordshire) and museums, libraries, and galleries.

Figure 15 Change in CI employment in Herefordshire (2010-2015)¹¹⁰

DCMS CI Sub sector	Hereford-shire (2010)	Hereford-shire (2015)	Hereford & South Hereford-shire (2010)	Hereford & South Hereford-shire (2015)
Advertising & Marketing	55	80	35	50
Architecture	175	350	150	300
Crafts	10	10	0	0
Design	50	150	20	35
Film, TV, video, radio, and photography	270	160	200	125
Publishing	140	145	95	100
IT, software, and computer services	655	655	350	350
Music, visual and performing arts	175	205	135	135
Museums, libraries, and galleries	130	180	80	180
Total DCMS CI Sectors	1,660	1,935	1,065	1,275

Source: BOP Consulting analysis of BRES via NOMIS (6 February 2020)

The film, TV, video, radio, and photography sector was the only one recording a significant drop in employees during that time – although this fluctuation may relate to the mobile nature of film and television production, rather than a systemic decline.

¹⁰⁹ Same footnotes apply as for the table on creative industries businesses in Herefordshire

¹¹⁰ Includes freelancers who are registered companies.

Creative workspace provision in Hereford

LinkedIn provides a much larger sample – 26m registered users in the UK – on which to base estimates of employment. It also has the advantage of allowing individuals to identify their own specialisms and sectors more closely than the DCMS definitions and provides up-to-the-minute data. A search of LinkedIn using 'Hereford' and 19 creative industry descriptors as keywords comes up with 3,060 entries - far more than the BRES data highlighted in Figure 15. This is likely to include freelancers, sole traders, and a wider range of businesses (as the search is not based on SIC codes). Whilst it would require further investigation and analysis to be able to draw any firm conclusions, this finding suggests there may be a pool of CI talent resident in Hereford but working elsewhere.

Despite the data suggesting a pool of CI businesses and employees active in Herefordshire and Hereford specifically, it is interesting to note that at present there are no creative workspaces available in the city targeted at workers in the sector, apart from the three small artist studios which largely focus on providing space for practicing artists. Meanwhile, according to one of the stakeholders interviewed for this report, *“there’s a shortage of short-term office space and a lot of freelance workers”*. Whilst not conclusive, the above findings suggest there is an existing pool of CI workers who may be interested in moving to a more collaborative working environment than is available in Hereford at present. In addition, they pose the question as to whether such provision may attract more CI workers who live locally but work elsewhere to set up their business in Hereford itself.

5. Hereford's CCI assets by comparison

The following section provides further reflection of Hereford's CCI assets by undertaking a comparison of the number and characteristics of its main assets in comparison to the level and type of provision in other towns of similar size and character, in order to highlight the relative strengths and weaknesses of Hereford's offer. It considers the overall offer, followed by a more detailed look at comparative artist studio and creative workspace provision.

5.1 Comparative strengths and weaknesses

Following the mapping undertaken above, the table in Figure 16 provides an overview of the cultural provision in Hereford, looking at the number of assets across different types of provision and undertaking a comparison with the comparator towns based on total numbers as well as per 10,000 residents. This highlights the following insights, strengths, and weaknesses in Hereford:

- Average cultural participation levels in Hereford are similar to those in the comparator towns. Although it is not possible to break this down by age, the data suggests that Hereford in this regard is not at any particular advantage or disadvantage over other cities

In terms of demographics, Hereford has a very low student population compared to the comparator towns. Although this figure may increase with the opening of the new NMiTE, figures are not expected to reach those of the comparator towns (any time soon). Inevitably, larger student populations are likely to have an impact on these locations, bringing both economic and social boosts to towns: *“university cities have a vitality and youthful atmosphere not seen in other areas, where the UK’s ageing population dominates”*¹¹¹

Key chapter insights

- Hereford's strength lies in a relatively high provision of museums and a comparatively flourishing visual arts sector
- The city's weakness lies in the low provision of performing arts venues (including theatres as well as larger-scale flexible music venues)
- Cultural participation levels in Hereford are similar to those in the comparator towns
- Hereford is the only city without any workspace provision for creative tenants, but it has a comparatively high number of (small) artist studios
- Across all locations, artist studios and creative workspaces tend to be located in city centres, often in converted buildings and of varying sizes, indicating a certain degree of flexibility possible in converting spaces to their new use and in the viability of spaces in terms of size
- One studio has several locations, opened over a number of years, with a central administration, suggesting the possibility of a 'trialling' approach
- Artist studios often include other public spaces such as cafes, workshop space, gallery/ exhibition space. Several locations have a mix of studios for 'clean' and 'dirty' creative use

¹¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2011/apr/18/university-cities-students>, see also e.g. <http://theconversation.com/seven-ways-universities-benefit-society-81072>

- In terms of Hereford's **strengths** (highlighted in green in the table):
- The city has a comparatively high provision of museums (although several are small and only sporadically open). It is home to 1.2 museums per 10,000 population compared to Lincoln as the next highest at 0.64
- Hereford has by comparison a good level of arts galleries and artist studios, suggesting a relatively flourishing visual arts sector

Its **weaknesses** (highlighted in orange) include:

- Hereford has a comparatively low provision of theatre (seats) per 10,000 population and is the only city without any larger-scale flexible concert hall/ music venue
- Hereford is the only location amongst out comparator cities without any workspace for creative tenants

Figure 16 Comparator analysis: overview table

	Hereford	Leamington Spa	Lincoln	Chester	Norwich	Derby
Demographics						
Population (2011 census)	58,896	55,733	93,541	118,200	213,166	248,700
Students ¹¹²	400 (2019/2020)	0 (around 24k at Warwick University)	13,770	15,410	20,170	18,490
Annual visitors ¹¹³	5m	?	4m	35m	12.3m	7.6m
Local cultural participation levels ¹¹⁴	45%	51%	45%	48%	53%	40%
Museums						
Museums	7 (several sporadically open, by appt)	1	6	5	7	5 (1 weekend only)
No. of museums per 10,000 population	1.2	0.18	0.64	0.42	0.33	0.2
Visual Arts						
Art Galleries	5 (including MAG)	5	6	5	10	4
No. of art galleries per 10,000 population	0.85	0.90	0.64	0.42	0.47	0.16
Artist Studios	3	1	2	1	5	2
No. of artist studios per 10,000 population	0.51	0.18	0.21	0.08	0.23	0.08
Performing Arts						
Theatres	1	2	3	2	5	3

¹¹² Higher Education Statistics Agency, Academic year 2017/18

¹¹³ Based on STEAM model. Hereford = Herefordshire, 2015; Chester = Chester and Cheshire West, 2017; Derby = City of Derby, 2013; Norwich = City of Norwich, 2017; Lincoln = City of Lincoln city, 2017

¹¹⁴ attended/ participated in arts activity at least three times in past 12 months - ACE Active People Survey 2016. Hereford = Herefordshire UA; Chester = City of Chester; Derby = Derby UA; Norwich = City of Norwich; Lincoln = City of Lincoln; Leamington Spa = Warwick

No. of theatre seats (total)	520	917	1286	1100	2130	1154
Theatre seats per 10,000 population	88	165	137	93	100	46
Concert halls/ music venues	0	1	2	1	3	2
No. of concert halls and music venues per 10,000 population	0	0.18	0.21	0.08	0.14	0.08
Other						
Cinemas	3 (2 independent, incl. Courtyard)	2 (1 independent)	2 (1 independent)	2 (2 independent)	3 (1 independent)	4 (1 independent)
No. of screens (total)	9 (Courtyard main stage)	7	10	2	11	36
Screens per 10,000 population	1.5	1.26	1.07	0.17	0.52	1.45
Libraries	2	3	4	7	7	14
No. of libraries per 10,000 population	0.34	0.54	0.43	0.59	0.33	0.56
Workspaces for creative tenants	0	2	3	2	6	3

Source: BOP Consulting (2020)

5.2 Artist studio and creative workspace provision

As seen above and in chapter 4, there is a lack of creative workspace provision but relatively strong provision of artist studios in Hereford: it is the only city compared to the comparators that does not have any creative workspace at present. Moreover, whilst it has more artist studios than all comparators except Norwich, these are all comparatively small (see Figure 17). Given this and the stated interest in developing a strong local creative workforce as a key element in creating a sustainable local cultural infrastructure (Cultural Strategy Priority 1), it is instructive to take a closer look at the artist and creative workspace provision (which to a certain degree overlap in their nature) in Hereford and the comparator towns, to identify key characteristics which may be instructive in the planning of future provision in Hereford.

Figure 17 below provides a comparison of existing artist studios/ workspaces across the six towns, looking at their features, locations and size; while Figure

18 considers the same elements for the existing workspace provision. The tables highlight a number of noteworthy characteristics.

Looking first at **artist studio provision**:

- Most studios across the comparator towns are located in city centres, with a few located in industrial areas
- Several of the larger studios are located in converted historic buildings (e.g. shops, office blocks, mills), while a couple of smaller studios make use of former ground-floor retail units - e.g. a studio in Leamington Spa, which actively encourages passers-by to come in to view artists and their work
- One large new-built space in Lincoln actively mixes artist studios with 'regular' office and workshop space, several offer 'clean and dirty' workspaces to a range of artists including e.g. creative tech

- Most studios are linked to a range of public spaces for use by tenants and/or the general public, e.g. cafés, workshop space, gallery/ exhibition space
- Three studios appear to have strategic partners or funders in local universities, Arts Council England or the local Council; several are artist-run
- Sizes vary considerably, from studios with 4 to 80 tenants, suggesting the potential feasibility of a range of sizes for such spaces

Next, in terms of **workspace provision for creative tenants**:

- Again, workspaces are largely located in town centre locations
- Many are located in various refurbished existing buildings (e.g. office blocks, mills, factories, railway arches, churches), indicating that a wide range of existing spaces may lend themselves to being converted into creative workspace
- Types of spaces and size vary considerably, ranging from the inclusion of flexible desk spaces or use of one floor within existing larger companies/ buildings to large purpose-built workspaces for a large number of tenants/ businesses
- One provider, in Derby, offers workspaces of different sizes located across the town but with central administration, which were opened gradually over the course of seven years
- As with the studios, many have university involvement, from being founded by universities, heavily used by students, to being located on campus. Several receive(d) funding from ERDF and local councils
- Many provide active business support features alongside studio space and meeting/ event spaces.

Figure 17 Comparator analysis: artist studios/ workspaces

	Hereford	Leamington Spa	Lincoln	Chester	Norwich	Derby
Number	3	1	2	1	5	2
Features	<p>Not for profit studio (mixed art)</p> <p>For profit studios (mixed art, incl. creative tech), part of gallery</p> <p>HCA Graduate provision (mixed art)</p>	<p>Not for profit, amateur & professional, with gallery (visual arts)</p>	<p>Artist collective (mixed art). Offers classes</p> <p>Serviced studios, workshop & offices including (art/non-art), with café</p>	<p>Studios for mixed art use; adjoining commercial art gallery & exhibition space</p>	<p>Open plan (mixed art)</p> <p>Artist-run studio (contemp. art)</p> <p>Artist studio + event space (artist/ designers)</p> <p>Studios initially set up for postgrads</p> <p>Temporary space for daily hire (mixed art + other). Exhibitions & pop-ups</p>	<p>Clean/ dirty workspace & business support (mixed art, incl. creative tech), linked to university. With gallery</p> <p>Clean/ dirty workspace</p>
Location	<p>Industrial unit (2)</p> <p>Town centre (1)</p>	<p>Town centre, location with "passing public" that can come in</p>	<p>Former retail unit in city centre</p> <p>New built in city centre</p>	<p>Nearby Storyhouse theatre in town centre. Former retail unit?</p>	<p>In converted historic building/ office block/ derelict stockroom/ former mill/ former retail unit in town centre</p>	<p>Converted Mill building in city centre</p> <p>In industrial unit</p>
Number of residents	11 + 10 + 8	?	10 + 50	4	30 + 80 + 21 + 20 + 12	38 + 7

Source: BOP Consulting (2020)

Figure 18 Comparator analysis: workspaces with creative tenants

	Leamington Spa	Lincoln	Chester	Norwich	Derby
Number	2	3	2	6	3
Features	Desk hire in serviced office Co-working space and meeting areas/ event space	Workspace, mentor support Co-working & serviced office Digital hub with co-working space	Not for profit social enterprise Incubation space, support service	Regional business hub Workspace and event space, business support Co-working & private offices Office units Co-working space Office and co-working	Workspace with business support across 6 locations, opened between 2007-14 Clean & dirty spaces, business support, connected to university Incubation centre
Location	In branding agency in town centre Railway arch in town centre	Town centre, 1st floor University location Refurbished office block, town centre	City centre University campus	University location, new built Refurbished, city centre Over 4 floors in creative quarter, former factory Creative district, refurbished offices In former church building Listed town centre building	Across town in refurbished buildings in/ outside centre Former mill, town centre Business park location
No of offices / businesses	8 (desks) + ?	50 + ? + ?	? + 26	80 + ? + 36 + ? + 15 + 7	36 + 41 + 25 + ? + 42 + 22 + 38 + ?
Users	Creatives Freelancers, creative businesses, by and for games industry	Creative and tech businesses/ start-ups Freelancers, SMEs	freelancers, graduates Start-ups, digital, branding, IT	Commercial tenants & students Creative, digital businesses SMEs Marketing, digital, tech SMEs Creative freelancers SMEs	Digital/ desk-based start-up to established, charities, community groups Creative industries students, graduates and entrepreneurs Business, tech, engineering. SMEs

Source: BOP Consulting (2020)

6. Review and analysis of Hereford's offer: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats

Based on the template of a SWOT Analysis, the following chapter reviews and analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to Hereford's current cultural offer and the ambition to develop a *"connected and sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality arts and heritage activity and experiences [for] residents and visitors"* (Priority 1 of the Cultural Strategy).

In doing so, it draws on the insights gained in the preceding chapters, as well as on the six stakeholder interviews undertaken for this piece of research.

Key chapter insights

Strengths

Proliferation of heritage assets
 Area of Archaeological Importance designation
 A relatively strong visual arts sector
 Emerging independent food sector; a variety of flourishing festivals/ events themes
 Increasing cooperation between local organisations and businesses to develop new ventures
 Many cultural assets centrally located and close together
 Dedication and willingness to engage among organisations, businesses, and individuals

Weaknesses

Transport infrastructure: poor connections to neighbouring towns and to the scattered rural population
 Lack of vibrancy and animation in the town centre; in particular the disconnect between different parts of town and the '5pm to 7/8pm gap'
 Small HE population, and limited 'younger audience' numbers
 Regarding cultural infrastructure: need for investment/ improvement of key sites
 Overall lack of scale, visibility, coherence of assets
 Limited communication between and coordinated marketing/ promotion of different segments of cultural, creative and heritage sectors
 Lack of distinctive brand / identity, resulting in underperforming visitor economy
 Lack of visitor/ audience data, resulting in:

- Lack of understanding of what audiences want
- Inability to communicate the offer successfully
- Lack of data on creative sector and employment, making it harder to make a business case for capital or revenues investment

7.

Opportunities

- Making more of existing cultural assets and thereby developing a clearer and more distinctive identity for the city to make more of existing cultural assets, based on (potential) opportunities around:
 - raising the quality and visibility of Hereford's 'heritage strength'
 - raising awareness of AAI status
 - creating a new 'anchor' venue, based on careful prior assessment
- 'Attract and disperse strategy' to identify the city as the base from which to explore the county, building on the success of existing cultural attractions in attracting (return) visitors
- Wayfinding strategy to build on existing efforts to improve signage and navigation into and around the city
- Establish strategic and business case to create a new 'anchor' venue
- Incorporate space for a new cultural facility (or trial pop-up / meanwhile uses) in other city centre developments
- Planned developments that have potential improve the offer for younger and more affluent potential audiences for culture (e.g. NMiTE, town centre housing, new hotel)
- The success of existing cultural attractions in attracting (return) visitors
Building on the emerging appetite for more joined-up working
- Identify structures to support further cooperation across retail, culture, and visitor economy
- Further investigation of the value of CCI to other agendas - visitor economy, retail, community wellbeing, inclusive growth
- COVID-19 recovery – which may unlock funding from those areas.
- Tapping into new funding for place-based regeneration through culture: Towns Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Creating shared workspace to support the creative economy, given the growing local creative sector, similar activities in comparator cities, the (future) requirements of the local HE institutions and existing spaces which would lend themselves to trialling such a development

Threats

- COVID-19 response and Brexit likely to increase demands on an already stretched council budget
- Lack of certainty about any external outside funding opportunities; and ability / willingness of key actors (in both public and private sectors) to take on board significant financial risk at this time

Coupled with:

- Significant financial requirements to convert MAG, Town Hall or create a significant new space
- required willingness from key actors to actively fundraise and take significant financial risk
- Capital costs of new developments or refurbishments to extend capacity of cultural spaces (eg, MAG, Town Hall, new museum, creative workspace)
- Availability of revenue funding to meet the need for ongoing financial support needs of the above
- Sourcing of experienced staff for the above for new institutions
- Inability to identify capacity to sustain the momentum of increasing partnership work e.g. once the Great Place programme ends in March 2021
- Stakeholders not recognising existing opportunities and losing the chance to band-waggon on to these to incorporate cultural provision within new development
- Competition for any (new) cultural activity from surrounding larger towns, exacerbated by lacking visitor/ audience data, resulting in:
 - Lack of understanding of what audiences want
 - Inability to communicate the offer successfully

6.1 Strengths

The first section considers what Hereford does well, and what resources it is able to draw on in developing its cultural infrastructure.

Hereford's core strengths lie in its existing physical cultural assets, the **proliferation of heritage assets** and its **relatively strong visual arts sector**.

Mapping also highlighted the convenient **central locations of many of these assets**, with most located within the historic centre, in easy walking distance of each other and of the train station.

Hereford (and surrounding towns) are home to a **diverse range of cultural festivals and events**, which are successful in drawing in visitors, but are not yet linked through any strategic branding or marketing activity

The cultural offer is complemented by a vibrant, **emerging independent food sector** which includes two successful annual food festivals that draw in visitors as well as new ventures by a range of independent entrepreneurs. *"The food culture is evolving rapidly - it has moved a lot and will continue to move very strongly".*

Alongside its tangible assets, a key strength for the city also appears to lie in the capacity, **dedication and willingness of local organisations, businesses, and individuals to work together to support local development**. This manifests itself in a number of ways, including:

- The work of the HCP and Rural Media in bringing the Great Place Programme to the city, developing its first Cultural Strategy and engaging with other local and regional actors in building the local visitor economy
- Work undertaken by local businesses, in particular via the BID, to improve the central retail area and visitor economy
- Cooperation between the BID and HCA to set up the annual Blacksmithing festival, which is already attracting an international audience

- High levels of regular volunteering compared to the national average, including the work of the Hereford Museum Service Support Group (HMSSG), a registered charity which has shown itself to be highly engaged in its aim to support the local museum service
- The Courtyard Theatre prides itself in the high level of community engagement as the heart of its programme

6.2 Weaknesses

This section highlights areas where Hereford's cultural infrastructure requires improvement and lacks resources in comparison to other places.

6.2.1 Transport infrastructure

Our research and interviews highlighted weaknesses in wider city infrastructure elements. Interviewees made repeated reference to the inadequacy of the **wider road and public transport infrastructure**, both within the city and to the outlying towns, bluntly summarised by one stakeholder: *"the roads and transport are awful, the trains limited"*.

This constrains local cultural venues' ability to draw in audiences/ visitors. Limited car parking, including in the vicinity of venues such as the Courtyard Theatre, was identified as a particular issue given the **scattered rural population** surrounding Hereford. There is limited public transport, *"at a time that things are going on"*, which make it impossible for those who do not like driving in the dark to attend evening activities. Taxi services in the outlying towns were reportedly reluctant to take fares to and from Hereford at night, exacerbating the situation for those without access to a private car. Whilst the Council is aiming to address some of these challenges, *"some of the things that would support the cultural offer may not be prioritised over more fundamental needs"* such as commuting or access for the elderly. This is reflected in the fact that night buses were one of the first aspects of public transport to be cut. At the same time as helping to bring visitors and audiences to Hereford, a more connected transport system would also serve to provide better **physical**

connections with the regional market towns surrounding Hereford, thereby improving, *“their opportunity to contribute”* to the wider cultural and visitor offer.

6.2.2 City centre offer

Interviewees reported an **ongoing lack of vibrancy in the city centre**, connected to Hereford’s limited range of shopping and entertainment facilities. Whilst this has improved in recent years with the refurbishment of Widemarsh Street and the opening of the Old Market, it is felt that the latter is bringing in people but, *“has not drawn them [further] into the historic centre”*, and that more needs to be done to **connect up the various parts of the city** and encourage visitors to explore.

The lack of animation and vibrancy during the **‘5pm to 7/8pm gap’**, between shops closing and other entertainment venues (e.g. bars, restaurants) opening, means that more visitors are likely to go home after 5pm, *“making late-night re-animation more challenging.”* However, there are few forums that could bring different actors in this sector together to jointly address these issues. One respondent pointed out that the infrastructure communications board, *“which was such a good information sharing platform,”* had not met for nine months.¹¹⁵

Although cultural participation levels in the area appear similar to elsewhere, the area’s demographic trends, with an increasingly aging population and lack of larger university population, result in a **perceived lack of ‘younger audiences’**. According to one stakeholder, *“Herefordshire is a complex place - the demographics are skewed towards the older population and miss the 16-30 age bracket. Families and older/ retiree audiences predominate.”* Limited public transport infrastructure further exacerbates the difficulty of attracting younger audiences, in particular for evening events. There is an expectation that NMiTE will bring new, younger audiences into the city; but these will still form a relatively small proportion of the population and potential audience, particularly in the first years.

6.2.3 Cultural infrastructure

Key sites within the **city’s cultural infrastructure** face fundamental problems:

- **Fabric:** According to one interviewee, *“some of the buildings are in various states of decay.”* These include the **Town Hall and MAG**, which are currently seen as particularly problematic and not, *“fit for purpose”*. The Town Hall was described as, *“not very welcoming as a space.”* MAG is well located, but various stakeholders referred to its age and *“poor quality”, “lack of user-friendly spaces”,* and the *“off-putting”* nature of its first-floor location. Other sites, such as the historic defences, are **in need of improvement and investment** and are not at present in an ideal state to function as cultural assets.
- **Lack of scale and scalability:** Many of Hereford’s key sites, including the museums, are modest in size, not well advertised and only sporadically open (often being largely volunteer-run), meaning that, *“very little other than the Cathedral and the Black and White House are in evidence - other things are hidden away and should be more visibly on show in the city centre.”* Stakeholders referred to a, *“lack of good multi-use spaces that you can transform”* to accommodate different kinds of activities or larger audiences, limiting what can be shown in the city (e.g. larger music performances).
- Lack of facilities for **business visitors**, including conferencing and exhibition space
- **Undersupply of flexible spaces** that could be used by community groups and participatory activity - or at the least, a lack of promotion and awareness of available spaces.

¹¹⁵ This finding comes from consultation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Public health measures, such as social distancing, may place further constraints on the hospitality sector; but also present an opportunity to re-imagine the city centre offer.

6.2.4 Visibility and coherence of cultural offer

The **visibility and coherence of Hereford's offer** is poorly coordinated, poorly communicated, and weaker than nearby competitors. There is a lack of clarity about the **function of key sites**:

- The Town Hall lacks current **clear ideas about its future purpose**. As one stakeholder said, *"the existing 'mish mash' of uses does not help and it. While it is felt that it could be, 'a good space if all of it were devoted to culture'"* and/or may lend itself as a flexible space for community usage given its location and sizeable and attractive rooms, there are some key challenges to this. These come in the shape of the Council's ongoing use of part of the space, lack of clarity around who might take liability for its maintenance, and the significant difficulties and costs involved in converting and repurposing a historic building.
- MAG: whilst the library acts as a draw for visitors, is unclear how many of these convert to visitors to the museum and gallery. Whilst significant parts of the building are currently unused, it is felt that the space as a whole may not be enough to house the library as well as provide a quality, welcoming museum and gallery experience that can show off the collection to its full effect. Not least, any developments would again require significant financial investment and encounter difficulties around converting a historic building.
- **Navigation**: the lack of scale of many of Hereford's cultural assets is exacerbated by the **lack of joined-upness between them both in physical and 'virtual' terms**: Although most cultural sites are located within the city centre, the lack of a clear wayfinding strategy and a *"missed opportunity to link things up"* at a geographical level (e.g. bringing people from the Old Market area into the historic centre) has led to a, *"geographically disjointed cultural offer lacking a 'cultural network of buildings'."*¹¹⁶ One stakeholder questioned how many people

would visit the Town Hall, even if a new use were found, as long as the various parts of the city are not better connected.

6.2.5 Data and communications

Lack of visitor and audience data at many local venues leads to a lack of clarity around who local audiences are (e.g. in terms of demographics), and divergent views about the nature of market demand (e.g. "no interest in high art" vs "looking for quality").

Several interviewees pointed to limited "coherence and communication across local sector actors" across the city and county. Stakeholders stressed that communication and information sharing was, "amongst the worst they had ever seen", including a, "lack of coordinated marketing, promotion and booking processes"¹¹⁷, making it more difficult for venues, providers and audiences to engage and, "participate in the life of the county". This is exacerbated by the nature of the county: "rurality [means] that many people aren't aware of offers elsewhere", leading them to, "look towards the core city centres."

6.2.6 Lack of a distinctive identity

- These weaknesses combine to result in a **"lack of a distinctive identity"** of Hereford's cultural offer. This correlates with a **currently underperforming local visitor economy**, with a comparatively low volume of visits and average spend per head, and lost economic and social opportunities the city and its people. Stakeholders identified a need for a clear story and vision, *"about what sort of place Herefordshire wants to be."* This vision, and improved coordination between various actors responsible for its promotion, needs to precede any new marketing investment: *"It would be a good idea to identify a specialism and push it harder, the current offer is too much about [the area's rurality]"*.

¹¹⁶ The Courtyard here being particularly mentioned as being *"out on a limb"* though it is felt that the new shopping developments at Widemarsh Street and Old Market have brought it closer to the city.

¹¹⁷ such as e.g. Sheffield Theatres' booking site

6.3 Opportunities

The next section considers what opportunities are or may be open to Hereford, what trends it could take advantage of in developing the local cultural infrastructure and creative workforce, and, in the process, how the identified strengths could be turned into opportunities; and weaknesses addressed.

Desk research and interviews with local stakeholders identified a range of encouraging opportunities worth consideration in building Hereford's cultural sector, improving it as an asset both for the local population and economy as well as for visitors to the area.

6.3.1 Raising the quality, visibility, and awareness of Hereford's existing heritage assets

The key to these opportunities is to **build on the range of assets that Hereford already has at its disposal**. One stakeholder called Hereford an *"undiscovered gem."* Future strategies and plans need to build on local strengths and existing popularity of historic and heritage places, in the wider population as well as internationally (heritage tourism).¹¹⁸ Better coordination would help to develop a clearer and more distinctive identity for the city and form a stronger base for any new developments as well as providing the opportunity, "to tell a different story about Hereford":

- The cathedral is one of the city's main visitor attractions and is located as a convenient geographical anchor in the historic city centre.
- Is the Herefordshire Hoard, *"of sufficient scale to be an opportunity"* to enhance Hereford's heritage offer and potentially act as anchor for a significant new museum?
- A report on the future resilience of the Museum Service furthermore pointed out that Herefordshire has a range of assets in terms of its situation, natural history, heritage and, *"all are available for*

interpretation by a refreshed museum service. [...] What is needed [...] are ways to deliver it to a public who [...] presented in the right way, will come to see it, enjoy it and tell others about it".¹¹⁹

- The high quality of the county's new archive building suggest it may be a facility, *"that could potentially be used more."*

6.3.2 Joining the dots

Smaller venues that are currently only sporadically open, badly advertised and poorly connected with each other, were identified as, *"bits and pieces, [which] are good in themselves but not enough to build a core."*

- Connecting the local heritage sector with Hereford's relatively strong visual arts sector as a way of finding creative ways to improving the visibility of the city's heritage assets. There may for example be a potentially interesting link emerging between the AAI status and a new MA in Fine Art and Curation at HCA (currently being validated), which would work in partnership with the National Trust and Historic England on placing art in the environment.

Whilst stakeholders perceived an ongoing lack of coordination between sector actors, it was also felt that *"things had improved over the past two years."* There is evidence for this in the engagement of local actors within groups such as the HCP, BID, and new tourism forum. Existing connections between HCA and local visual arts studios and galleries will be enhanced by potential new connections between HCA and the heritage sector if the new MA¹²⁰ comes to fruition. Another stakeholder suggested potential for the theatre and MAG to work together on joint exhibitions and related programming through which they could *"piggy-back off each other"*, if MAG had a more *"user-friendly space"* to work with. Such statements suggest a clear **opportunity to build on the emerging appetite for a more joint-up approach to working, which has**

¹¹⁸ See e.g. Heritage Counts (2018). *Heritage and the Economy: "Heritage is an important part of the tourism industry in England, attracting millions of domestic and international tourists each year. Some tourists visit England primarily to visit heritage attractions, while others take part in heritage activities during visits that are made for other purposes. This in turn supports millions of jobs and contributes to national and local economic growth."*

¹¹⁹ P+P (2018), The Future Resilience of Herefordshire Council's Museum Service – FINAL REPORT

¹²⁰ MA in Fine Art and Curation at HCA (currently getting validated), which would work in partnership with the National Trust and Historic England on placing art in the environment

developed in the past years and is visible across efforts to develop the local retail, cultural and visitor economy.

6.3.4 Building on existing audiences

- Available data, although limited, suggests that cultural participation levels in Hereford are comparable to those in other places. This highlights the potential to **develop (potential) audience groups that are already existent in the area** alongside any attempts to draw in new visitors. One stakeholder pointed out that whilst the aging population is seen as a challenge, it is at the same time, *“a potentially significant audience with disposable income and time”*, whilst another pointed (in the context of a new venue) to a need for facilities for teenagers and young adults. As a 2018 report on the Council Museum Service’s future resilience highlights that Herefordshire attracts some 7 million day visitors each year, which is not reflected in current cultural facility visitor numbers. As the report asks, *“what do they do? Clearly, they don’t go to the recognised museums run by the Council’s Museum Service or others in their present location.”*¹²¹

This potential is borne out by evidence that **existing developments in the town centre are drawing in more visitors to the city centre**. Footfall has returned to areas around Widemarsh Street, and visitor data for the Old Market shows that leisure and catering trips to the site are currently above British Land average. Hereford has gone up in the CACI survey rankings and, anecdotally, links between the Old Market and historic town centre are improving. Old Market has also begun to register more younger/ student visitors and hopes this trend will continue with the arrival of more students and people living in the city centre. Demographic data suggests that the urban populations of Hereford as well as surrounding market towns, who have easiest access to facilities located

in central Hereford, are growing, and this **trend is likely to be further encouraged by several developments:**

- The opening of NMITE - bringing in new students, even if numbers are modest at first
- New town centre housing that is currently being built or planned: *“there are a lot more planning applications for residential in the city centre, which will increase demand later in the day”*
- An expanded hotel offer, through the opening of the new Premier Inn Hotel, *“means people can translate day visits into overnight stays.”*

These and other improvements would **help to attract more visitors to cultural facilities, too, and importantly, encourage them to return**. Evidence for this comes from *“high quality distinctive events”*, such as the Three Choirs Festival, Blacksmithing Festival or the Poppies and Mappa Mundi exhibition¹²² at the cathedral, which offer ‘proof of concept’ of the city’s ability to attract visitors, including international audiences. As one stakeholder found, it may be, *“difficult to attract people first, but [we get] a relatively high level of return visitors”*, suggesting that once people know about Hereford’s attractions, they are keen to see more.

There may also be **opportunities to tap into a range of (new) national funds** that support improvements in areas that align or connect with cultural development. These include the Towns Fund (for which Hereford has been shortlisted¹²³); the UK Shared Prosperity Fund¹²⁴; the West Midlands Sector Deal for Creative Industries¹²⁵ or the Cultural Development Fund.

6.3.5 Creating an anchor venue

Creating an ‘anchor’ venue, e.g. by repurposing the Town Hall or MAG and/or developing a new venue, was seen as a priority. Stakeholders generally felt that

¹²¹ Future Resilience of HC’s Museum Service 2018

¹²² Which according to a stakeholder attracts around 30,000 paying visitors a year.

¹²³ with grants supporting economic regeneration through urban regeneration, skills and infrastructure development and improved connectivity - one interviewee suggested it may be an opportunity to gain funds to improve the service of the MAG.

¹²⁴ replacement for past ERDF and ESF funding, to be launched in January 2021 with the possibility of being administered regionally

¹²⁵ which includes a creative business scale-up programme

more could be made out of either existing site if a coherent use were found to which more space was given over. One stakeholder suggested, “repurposing the Town Hall for a coherent purpose would give that street a really strong anchor”. Another felt there were, “huge opportunities to bring new kinds of venues”. However, most expressed scepticism as to the viability of such plans, given the significant amount of investment required, challenges in repurposing heritage sites and extending sites in inner city locations, and issues around Council use of the Town Hall. Any proposals would need detailed options appraisal, feasibility study and business planning and, not least, successful fundraising.

6.3.6 Creating new space for culture within new developments

Stakeholders pointed to potential opportunities in considering a number of current or future developments in the city (apart from Town Hall and MAG), which the cultural sector could bandwagon onto to create space for a new cultural facility or to trial activities through temporary or pop-up events. These developments include:

- The car park near the Courtyard Theatre, which may be, “bucked up” by the Premier Inn Hotel being built in the vicinity. Whilst the council is currently in discussions with Waitrose, other or additional purposes may be possible.
- Current proposals for a new multi-purpose arts venue on the top floor of the Butter Market, which is already hosting a range of market stalls as well as a fine arts studio, thus potentially housing a mixed-use facility in the future with the potential to draw in a wide range of customers to its different uses.¹²⁶
- Temporary/ pop-up spaces in smaller British Land (Old Market) kiosks/voids (with the possibility of arranging for waived/ split business

rates) and empty retail units in the city centre; in order to animate the town centre, encourage flow of visitors between existing sites and trial new ventures. One stakeholder highlighted past successful schemes of putting exhibitions in an empty shop unit in town which successfully attracted visitors, and the BID appears to recognise the value in, “*animated ground floor uses [that have the potential to] create movement around the city*”.¹²⁷

- British Land is looking into extending the Old Market into the car park to create a town square and pagoda for events. Although this is 3-4 years away, it might provide space for temporary or pop-up activities that help to encourage visitor movement.
- The council is looking to develop Hereford Railway Station into a new transport hub – might this provide new opportunities for creative spaces?

6.3.7 Wayfinding and public realm improvements

- **Using cultural spaces to anchor a more cohesive wayfinding strategy**, building on work begun by the local BID and Old Market, with a focus on the retail offer. Newly installed colour-coded signage, designed in partnership with HCA students, has reportedly received good feedback.
- **Introducing pop-up exhibitions and trials** to get people to move around the city.
- **Better connected single surface pathways** have already begun to “*diminish the perception of roads as a barrier*”. Council plans to introduce further improvements to path-and cycleways present a clear opportunity to extend these benefits to include more of the city’s cultural assets.

¹²⁶ For similar ventures, see Wrexham’s new arts centre Ty Pawb, housed in a former public market and multi-storey car park and including an ongoing market with various stalls, café, gallery as well as facilities for community

activity; or Wem Town Hall (see case study below), which houses a gallery, cinema, café as well as weekly market.

¹²⁷ See also the Krowji case study below for new similar activity taking place in Redruth

6.3.8 Capitalising on the socio-economic potential of CCI

- The county's economy is approaching full employment, making it difficult to attract large new firms. One stakeholder suggested that, *"the growth of indigenous companies and start-ups assumes greater significance; and CCI jobs in companies of that type typically have higher GVA than other sectors,"* relative to other sectors with a strong local presence, e.g. agriculture and independent retail. Both points thus suggest an opportunity for Hereford to develop its economy through promoting its growing CCI sector.¹²⁸

The value of the cultural and creative sector to other local agendas - including the economy, visitor economy, retail and community wellbeing - is being increasingly understood by various actors, which may unlock funding opportunities for the cultural sector for developments that address the interests of both. The Council supports an agenda of, *"how arts, culture and libraries support the economy and how best to deliver that with communities and partners"*.¹²⁹ If the Council is set to engage more again, this could support efforts to improve collaboration and potentially unlock funding. However, as one stakeholder warned, funds remain limited nevertheless: whilst the, *"cultural offer is in the forefront of members' minds, it is only £25m and there are other calls for the same money"*. Other willing partners include the BID and actors in the visitor economy, which may also unlock funding from e.g. the Central Hereford BID or the planned new Marches Tourism/ Destination BID.

6.3.9 Developing new creative workspace

- Desk research and stakeholder interviews suggest **potential opportunity and demand for new shared creative workspace in the city** Comparison with other cities indicates that Hereford is unusual in

currently not providing any significant workspace provision for a (mix) of creative tenants, beyond a few small artist studios.

Whilst there is little data on the creative economy in Hereford, that which is available suggests an **existent small creative sector that has been growing faster than the national average**. The local economy has a high level of freelance workers, who are more likely to be looking for flexible small office space. Various stakeholders anecdotally pointed to the many, *"artists and [...] makers sprinkled around the county [...] who would probably want workshop space"*; *"the shortage of short-term office space and a lot of freelance workers"*; awareness of a, *"huge market for space in Herefordshire"* and other examples of, *"demand for smaller units and managed workspace."*

- Comparator cities demonstrate a role for universities in managing and driving demand for creative workspace. Whilst Hereford's tertiary sector is small, *"[HCA] graduates are quite entrepreneurial and have [already] created shared studio spaces"¹³⁰ that are used by fine art students in a central, collective space"*. and NMiTE has been established with an express ambition to retain more students in Hereford upon graduation. **Activities in both HE institutions are likely to generate demand for more workspace**. As one interviewee pointed out, graduate entrepreneurs, *"need both studio space and the kind of supported environment for those working in digital creativity [in order] to scaffold development of those businesses"*.¹³¹ Meanwhile, NMiTE is already putting together an incubation space in Rotherwas and is fundraising for more; and part of the course will consist of providing students with time to develop their own businesses. It estimates that, *"by 2023, 25-50 young people will need industry placements or incubator space"*.
- Comparator cities demonstrate the viability of a 'distributed' model of city centre workspace, where a single operator manages multiple spaces of various types

¹²⁸ Since 2011, the number of CI jobs in the UK have increased by 28.6%, double the average UK job growth, whilst in the period of 2010-2016, the GVA of the CIs increased in every region of the UK. The GVA of the CIs is now bigger than that of various other industries such as automotive, life science, aerospace and oil and gas combined. Meanwhile, a significantly larger proportion of creative workers (35%) are self-employed compared to the workforce as a whole (15%). See: Creative Industries Federation (2018). *Growing the UK's Creative Industries. What creative enterprises need to thrive and grow*. The report e.g. highlights a Cluster development in Yorkshire which grew by 247% in GVA compared to the UK average growth of 115% between 2009-

¹²⁹ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/940/full_council_approves_budget_and_four-year_county_plan//https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1/medium_term_financial_strategy_201920_-_202122.pdf

¹³⁰ e.g. in the Butter Market

¹³¹ such as e.g. Northern School of Art working with Hartlepool Council around shared space; the spaces provided by Norwich University of the Arts to students on a tenancy that goes from peppercorn to commercial over three years.

and sizes to reflect the variety of demand. Given this, there may be **existing spaces within Hereford town centre that could be used for new creative workspace**, coupled with a willingness among various actors to trial such spaces. The Council is already, *“doing studies into small starter units and managed workspace”*, citing an increased demand in particular for local crafts and food; whilst the BID is keen to fill vacant spaces with, *“anything that creates movement around the city”*, in first-floor locations as well as - if combined with, *“active use in the window spaces”* - in vacant ground floor retail units.¹³² This approach also offers scope for ‘meanwhile’ uses of spaces earmarked for redevelopment. Similarly, whilst British Land feels the need for further evidence of demand, it sees potential for a flexible working operator tenant on the first floor of Old Market, based on a partnership approach.¹³³

6.3.10 Attract and disperse strategy

- Hereford’s proximity to the heritage and natural heritage assets located across the county, including several protected landscapes, historic market towns and designated heritage sites, make a strong case for partners to consider the merits of an ‘attract and disperse’ strategy which defines Hereford as the, *“jewel in the crown from which activity radiates out”*, encouraging visitors to, *“use the city as a basis to explore the county”*. This would focus investment on Hereford, accompanied by active measures to disperse audiences into the market towns, rather than trying to spread out limited funding too thinly between locations. Some interviewees here particularly pointed to, *“the countryside and outdoor sports [as] a big opportunity not currently exploited”*.

6.4 Threats

The final section considers what threats could harm Hereford and its ambitions, including what threats the identified weaknesses could expose it to.

Financial constraints present the overriding threat to Hereford’s cultural ambitions. **These will almost certainly be exacerbated by COVID-19 and Brexit.** Whilst the Council is hoping not to implement further budget cuts, its budget nevertheless remains very stretched. EU funding which has in the past provided support to many developments in the regions via ERDF and ESF will no longer be available; the terms of its replacement are not yet published. Whilst new funding opportunities are appearing, it is not yet clear whether Hereford will win some of these, how much money they will make available or indeed if it can be used for the required purposes. At the same time, two of the spaces that are seen as priorities for redevelopment with potential to significantly impact the local cultural scene - the Town Hall and MAG - would **require substantial funding from multiple sources** in order to transform their use; and even then, may not have the scale needed to present a distinctive and high quality offer.

Even if developed with sustainability in mind, new institutions would require not only ongoing financial support but the sourcing of professional permanent staff with the **high levels of expertise to run such premises successfully**: *“Without a core budget, it’s hard to do it well. You need permanent staff to keep information updated and sell it.”*

Whilst actors across the cultural sector and related areas appear to be starting to work more closely together across various groups, with some momentum provided by the current Great Place programme or plans for the Destination BID, a key threat lies in **to the lack of capacity to sustain the momentum of increasing partnership work** once funding for these and similar programmes ends. Actors across the board need to recognise the value of joint activity and communication, and demonstrate their willingness and ability to engage.

¹³² The Butter Market was cited as an example of this, mixing traditional and new businesses across two storeys.

¹³³ Citing the success of its Storey Club flexible workspace brand e.g. in London Paddington

Related to this is the **threat of key stakeholders not recognising existing opportunities and losing the chance to incorporate culture** within those.¹³⁴

Hereford will always face **competition from larger towns and cities in its immediate vicinity and the wider region**, and their “*metropolitan draw*”. Substantial efforts will need to be made to convince audiences (particularly younger people) of the comparative merit of Hereford’s offer.¹³⁵ This means both **understanding what audiences want and communicating the offer successfully**. This threat is thus compounded both by the region’s rurality which, “*means that many people are not aware of offers elsewhere, with those who are aware looking to core city centres.*”

¹³⁴ One interviewee for example referred to the success of the Poppies at the Cathedral exhibition, regretting that “the city did not put any budget towards the highly successful event to expand on what the Poppies generated.

¹³⁵ One stakeholder referred anecdotally to a group of young people in Hereford - “*they go to Birmingham, Cardiff, Bristol, London to attend museums and bigger concerts*”

7. Case Studies

The following chapter includes three in-depth case studies of heritage buildings that have been repurposed as new cultural and creative spaces with different development, usage, management, and lease models. The case studies aim to provide inspiration and understanding as to the different options that may be available for some of Hereford's existing buildings, and the factors that need to be born in mind in undertaking such a conversion.

The three case studies include two creative workspaces, Krowji in Cornwall, and SPACE in Colchester: and one community arts facility, Wem Town Hall.

Key chapter insights

Development and provision of creative workspace

- In both case studies, the city/ county councils were involved in driving and funding the developments. Funding came from a range of sources including regional development funding and bank loans.
- It is difficult to establish demand (or find tenants) conclusively prior to offering the space. If possible, start small, and scale up if successful. However, approach any existing groups to discuss their needs.
- Workspaces do not need to be sophisticated or glamorous (from the start) - hire spaces out as soon as they are available. Tenants may be happy to take up 'rough' spaces they can adapt as required.
- Flexibility is key: different tenants require different sized and spec'd spaces. Enable fast turn-around of tenants and easy adaptability of spaces.
- Inviting and diverse communal spaces are important - they may be the primary reason tenants wish to take up residency. Programmes and activities can further support this.

- If tendering out management of the space, try to bring the managing company on board during the design/ development process to ensure you design/ build what they need.
- A mix of different tenants, including those working at the 'clean' and 'messier' ends of the market, is attractive (to tenants).
- Consider including income-generating spaces, e.g. café, meeting rooms for hire, space for public programmes (e.g. gallery, performance space, workshop space). Ensure 'lean years' can be tided over.
- Link up with local universities and introduce new graduates to the offer - both case studies aimed to support student/ talent retainment.
- Consider ways to engage the space and tenants with the wider local community. If situated in the town centre, consider option of combining creative workspace with small retail units/ opportunities to create footfall, vibrancy, income.

Development and provision of community arts facilities

- Consider a wide range of funding including Councils, regional development, and Lottery. Are any local cultural or educational facilities interested in a partnership to help draw in funding and split costs?
- Provide a range of spaces and programme including cultural and community-focused activity (e.g. health, educational, retail), which draw in different audiences. Are there possibilities to host national programmes?
- Offer activities organised by the venue as well as by hiring space out to 'externals' who provide e.g. sports, arts and other classes; to diversify the offer and income opportunities. Profit margins and audience draw differ substantially: cinemas can be key in driving income and need less independent marketing; live gigs can draw in visitors from further afield to see specific events not available elsewhere.

- How can spaces be made flexible and attractive to enable hire for business or private events (i.e. size space and specs required?).
- Create a welcoming, stand-alone café space that could be used for activities. Differentiate from other local cafés - for example, appeal to parents with young children/ pushchairs who may find it difficult to find space in other (smaller) cafés. Consider a play area!
- Create a Board of Trustees with a diverse set of experiences and skills sets. Finding the right trustees can be challenging. Recruit a sizeable group of volunteers - there will always be some churn.
- Ensure the local community understands it is *their* facility. Regularly engage the community through questionnaires, surveys and other means (e.g. using volunteers as 'ambassadors in the community') to understand community interests/ demands; and highlight your independence.

7.1 Krowji/ Creative Kernow¹³⁶

Krowji is Cornwall's largest creative hub, based on the outskirts of Redruth, and managed by Creative Kernow. Creative Kernow is a not for profit charity with nine local projects, which together support the production, promotion, and distribution of work by creative practitioners in Cornwall. They include skills development and business support for the creative sector, arts marketing, and investment support as well as theatre touring and a film and music network. As part of this, Krowji is a separate for-profit trading company dedicated to providing a variety of studios for creative businesses and practitioners. .

Setting up

Creative Kernow was initially set up by arts activists in the 1980s as the Cornwall Arts Centre Trust. At that point, the key aim of the campaign was to

save the City Hall in Truro, a large Victorian venue, and turn it into an arts centre - now the Hall for Cornwall, opened in 1997. Following the success of the initial campaign, the Arts Centre Trust was asked by its funders to concentrate on its arts development and sector support role, by running events, building a local creative sector network, etc. In response, the trust started running a theatre touring scheme, skills and cultural tourism programmes and various other activities, working across Cornwall but based in rented offices in Truro. At that point, Cornwall was receiving significant EU funding through the ESF and ERDF, and the strategic decision was made to develop a local creative hub to act as a focal point for these activities. This would enable the Trust to, *"work more efficiently on behalf of the sector"* by locating all activities in one place.

The Trust began looking for a space in the area, and rapidly found that ambitions could be increased to a larger site which could also house creative practitioners. The overall aim of the development thus turned to, *"creating a nationally significant cluster of businesses and practitioners on site who [would] raise Cornwall's reputation for creative excellence and work together to maximise knowledge exchange and innovative collaboration"*. At the time, a new campus was under development, transforming Falmouth Arts School into a full-scale university, resulting in an expected increase in graduates. As graduate retention at that time was extremely poor, Cornwall Council was keen to change this and encourage graduates to remain in Cornwall - it was felt that a new creative hub offering flexible workspace could help with this.

Eventually, the Trust decided upon a former Grammar School building in Redruth, which they had to buy in 2005 at an open market price (£300,000). It was hoped that Krowji's location in Cornwall's former industrial heartland would additionally act as a magnet to attract more businesses and contribute to the regeneration of Redruth. Cornwall Council provided a third of the funding, whilst the remaining £200,000 was borrowed from the Charity Bank, with the Trustees taking the considerable step to carry the amount. Only small building works were undertaken initially to make two buildings habitable in order for the Trust to be able to move to the premises. The Trust then applied for further funding from

¹³⁶ Source: interview with Krowji/ Creative Kernow CEO Ross Williams; www.krowji.org.uk

the local Regional Development Agency and ERDF to support the development of a masterplan to help gain planning approval and commission an architect, which would set out the gradual redevelopment of the site, creating space for more and more tenants iteratively. Whilst the funders required demand and feasibility studies, CEO Ross Williams feels that at the time these were, *“almost pointless, as it is very hard to establish demand before you have an offer in place”*. The RDA also expected the trust to see anchor tenants who would guarantee renting some of the spaces, which again were difficult to find at such an early stage in the development.

“ It was very much a ‘give it a go and see what happens’ situation. We established demand by ‘doing it’. Ross Williams

Ongoing development

The trust gradually renovated rooms, *“on a shoestring”* and hired them out to artists as they became available. The first spaces were let within around half a year and by the second or third year, around 100 spaces (2,000 m²) had been let; by 2007, the space had been rebranded as ‘Krowji’ (‘shed’ or ‘cottage’ in the Cornish language). Since the initial set-up, there have been two further redevelopment and enlargement phases. Phase 1 involved the opening of a new building - the Percy Williams Building in 2015, including 50 new studios of 25 or 50m² each, which effectively doubled Krowji’s capacity to provide a home for 200 people on site. This cost £3.7 million, *“with the investment justified by our success and popularity among tenants”*. Phase 2 is currently under way, with the aim of creating a further 21 new studios in a new extension. These will be purpose-built BREEAM excellent spaces, adding space for a further 40 tenants to Krowji’s current community. Whilst the economic climate in 2015 made them unsure of gaining funding for Phase 2 of the development, *“the overwhelmingly positive reaction to this space, from day one, has given us – and our funders – the confidence to move ahead and complete this next stage in our project.”*

Both building phases received funding from the England ERDF (Phase 2 is receiving up to £1,452,743 from ERDF via the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020). According to Williams, it was more challenging to find the match funding, which for Phase 1 had to be non-public funding. The Trust needed to borrow £1.25m for Phase 1, but as this was undertaken during the financial crisis, banks at the time were very cautious, requesting anchor tenants, upfront long-term leases etc., which, *“is not the way it works”*. The Trust eventually borrowed the amount from Triodos Bank, a social enterprise which, *“got it, they understood our business plan”*, based on a 6% interest rate during construction followed by a 20-year 5% interest rate.

Figure 19 Krowji: the old school site and adjacent Percy Williams building



Source: Anthony Greenwood Photography, www.krowji.org.uk

Krowji’s spaces and services

Krowji now has 120 studios on site, with a further 21 currently being built. Around half of those new ones are 25m² with the other half twice the size. The studios are purposely designed to be simple and relatively cheaply built, so that, *“people can do what they want inside the studios”*, turning them either into offices or ‘messy’ creative workspaces. While the smaller studios tend to go like, *“hot cakes”*, all current spaces were full within 15 months of opening the Percy Williams Building, and have been so ever since. Small tea rooms/ wash areas are available on the corridors between the studios, providing open friendly public spaces whilst the studios are private workspaces.

Alongside the studios, Krowji also has three meeting rooms of different sizes and specs, which are available for hire during office hours:

- Studio 13 provides space for up to 25 people and can be hired for “smart or board room style workshops, seminars and events”.
- Studio 15 has space for up to 8 people and is designed to be used for smaller informal meetings and one-to-ones.
- The Art Room is a flexible space that can accommodate up to 15 people depending on activity; it is particularly aimed at ‘messier’ activities and art groups/ classes but can also be used for regular meetings in a less corporate-looking environment.

There is also a public café on site, the only space that is permanently open to the public, which Williams feels is a, “*vital bit of the jigsaw*”, providing a space for tenants, staff and other visitors to bump into each other and chat.. At present, the café has around 50 users a day, with half coming from outside.¹³⁷

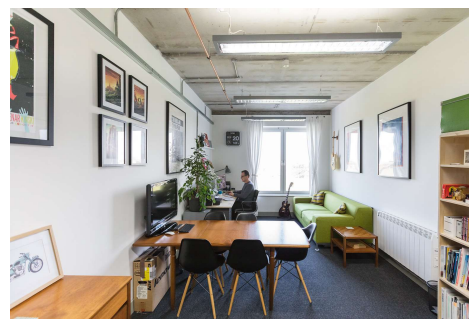
In terms of the services offered, Williams feels that the public would not (and do not need to) necessarily see the difference between Krowji and Creative Kernow. The latter’s skills and business support programmes for the creative sector and community arts investment team¹³⁸ are based at Krowji, and though not part of Krowji, Williams sees a big overlap between the two. The offer is taken up by Krowji tenants as well as others, with delivery taking place across the wider region.

“ Having all those things based at Krowji adds critical mass - it is a place that everyone comes for advice and guidance, and a hub for the sector in Cornwall - a place to come. Ross Williams

¹³⁷ Williams feels that the fact that people can park easily here to access the café makes it more popular as a meeting or socialising place for visitors from the local area.

Williams feels that it is key how you manage the tenants on site, part of which is having an active and engaged reception team which, “*doesn’t just hand over the key, but which understands what the tenants are doing*” - many are former arts graduates themselves

Figure 20 Various office spaces at Krowji



Source : www.krowji.org.uk

Krowji’s tenants

Once Phase 2 is completed, the 150 studios on site will provide space for around 240 residents. As a guiding principle, Krowji, “*welcomes all those*

¹³⁸ Also funded by European programmes (e.g. growth funding programme)

involved in cultural work, from creative practitioners to organisations that provide a service to creative businesses". It offers spaces for start-ups as well as highly established businesses and has by now provided workspace for hundreds of creative businesses.

At the 'start-up' end, Krowji is regularly home to new graduates from Falmouth University. Krowji staff regularly visit Falmouth to introduce the offer to 3rd year students and Krowji experiences a, "*bit of a boost*" each year when the new cohort graduates.¹³⁹ Many of the students are from outside Cornwall, and there is a keen desire to retain more graduates in the county long-term. Krowji's tenancy model is core to encouraging tenants at this level, based as it is on an, "*easy in easy out*" concept which allows tenants to take one-year tenancies but leave with one month's notice. It is a, "*very relaxed*" system with limited financial risk for the tenants, meaning that many graduates come for 6 months, "*to see whether it works out – there is a relatively high rate of churn*". At the more 'established' end, Krowji is home to the Cornwall Museums Partnership and WildWorks Theatre (both National Portfolio Organisations) as well as several of Cornwall's main creative sector agencies, many of which are part of the Creative Kernow umbrella organisation.¹⁴⁰

Williams reckons that at present, around 40% of the spaces are occupied by tenants operating at the, "*cleaner end of the market*", such as marketing, graphic/ web design, illustration and photography companies as well as charities, culture and heritage, theatre, dance and poetry organisations. The remaining 60% are occupied by tenants working at the, "*messier end of the market*" – a range of artists and craft people including painters, jewellers, furniture makers, ceramicists, textile artists, sculptures etc. There is no differentiation in terms of rent levels for different types of tenants, but the mix does mean that they need to monitor the type of activity that can take place within the studios to some extent to limit noise levels.

Over the years, the balance has changed slightly to a higher proportion of 'clean' businesses. Initially there was no good broadband coverage, so they had

only few digital businesses, and most spaces were taken over by artists and craft people – Williams recalls that, "*artists were not too worried about the conditions of the building*". However, the current occupancy still provides, "*a good mix*", which he feels is important: Krowji is keen, "*not to turn into a digital innovation centre that is very clean, corporate, shiny*", but aims to retain this mix and slightly 'rougher' and more flexible style of space. Overall, "*the clean end of the market likes having the messier end there, too*", with both seeing the value in working alongside different types of creative people. "*Having a painter next door*" not only makes for a more interesting workplace; Williams also estimates that around 45% of tenants have in some shape or form worked together with or for each other. There have been a variety of instances of e.g. a web designer developing a home page for one of the artists; a resident photographer doing catalogue shots for another tenant, etc.

Whilst the largest proportion of tenants already resided in Cornwall prior to joining Krowji (including Falmouth University graduates who originally came from outside Cornwall), Krowji has seen a recent increase in creatives from London asking for studio space, who are in search of lower-cost living and working space.

Creating a commercially sustainable business

Whilst Krowji operates as a separate company to Creative Kernow, there are clear commercial synergies between them, and Williams believes that although, "*Krowji could probably operate as a studio space on its own, there is value to being part of a broader network*". Whilst the freehold for the building is owned by the Creative Kernow charity, Krowji has a 100-year lease on the building, for which it pays a peppercorn rent. In return, "*Krowji drives income for Creative Kernow*" by handing back its profits to the charity, alongside some other subsidiary companies¹⁴¹, designed to provide an income for the charity. A key aim of setting Krowji up as a separate limited company was to remove the financial risk of the building to the charity, as well as VAT reasons.

¹³⁹ Around 40% of tenants are linked to Falmouth University, "*in one way or another*".

¹⁴⁰ such as Cultivator & Creative Skills, FEAST, Carn to Cove, Cornwall Music Network, Cornwall 365 and Cornwall 365 What's On

¹⁴¹ e.g. Screen Cornwall, Cornwall Arts Marketing Ltd.

Krowji, “*does not make much of a profit yet*”, due in part to the fact that it is carrying forward some losses related to its capital development projects. However, it is, “*effectively commercially sustainable*” and Williams expects it to make a profit of up to £40,000 per year in the future, based on its £350,000 gross annual rental income. From the start, all spaces have been let out as soon as they were habitable, and spaces are offered at commercial rent levels rather than lower rates. This is crucial given that the Trust has never received revenue funding for Krowji, with the full financial risk sitting with the trustees. Despite this,

“ There are lean years and good years, but the demand is always there, so we know that when the new building is finished, it will fill up and we will be able to derive a proper profit. Ross Williams

The rental income – along with that made through leasing the café and renting the meeting rooms – covers the reception team and part of the director’s salaries, building maintenance, the mortgage and capital repayments, with the remainder going to Creative Kernow.¹⁴²

Involvement with and links to the local area

Krowji is involved in a number of activities that link it up further with the surrounding area. These include:

- Krowji Christmas Open Studios , an open weekend where the studios open for the public and artists sell their ware. A “jolly” event which has seen several hundred people attend each day, which led to one tenant making a year’s rent back in a single day.
- Open Studios Cornwall’s annual one-week event. Similar in concept to London’s Open House or Open Garden events, this event is managed

by Creative Kernow. Artist studios across Cornwall sign up to join in, including Krowji tenants, with Krowji acting as one of the key hubs for the event. Artists pay to join, meaning they get included in a booklet and website listing all studios open for the event as well as posters and other marketing material, provided by Creative Kernow. In return, the increase in visitors generates sales for the artists, as well as “giving a sense of place, creativeness” more widely to Cornwall. Open Studios Cornwall originated as a small scheme in Falmouth, based on a similar event in Dorset; now, around 350 studios take part across the county and the event is commercially viable. The event is free for the public to attend and draws around 20,000 visitors (including return visitors), with artists making sales worth on average £600-700 over the week. Last year, the event partnered up with Brittany, including via an artist exchange.

- Krowji has also on several occasions negotiated with local landlords and estate agents to use empty shop premises, “in order to facilitate window displays and exhibitions by local schools, community groups and artists”. For example, Krowji held a peppercorn lease on a former Boots shop in central Redruth for several years, regularly hosting the Redruth Pasty Festival there as well as an artist-led Christmas Grotto, which attracted over 1,200 visitors in 2014.
- Krowji also gets involved in various local festivals¹⁴³, through coordinating the use of empty shops and volunteering time to help with building relationships between events committees and resident artists and makers, to enable the provision of workshops and commissions.

A new project: “a town-centre Krowji, but more open”

On a larger scale, Ross Williams is also involved in a new project in central Redruth – a small new workspace and shop provision in central Redruth, “a town-centre Krowji, but more open”. This is led by Redruth Revival CIC, a local

¹⁴² Creative Kernow itself is an Arts Council NPO in receipt of £215,000pa from the Arts Council and £90,000pa from Cornwall Council. The group’s combined turnover this year is £2.3m, with around 14% stemming from Arts Council and Cornwall Council funding

¹⁴³ St Piran’s Day, Murdoch Day, The Redruth Mining & Pasty Festival, Redruth Christmas Events and Lights

community interest company which aims to, *“shape the town centre of Redruth with a 21st century feel”*. While separate from Krowji and Creative Kernow, Williams sits across both and feels that there is the possibility they might merge in the future.

When the new Cornwall National Archive and Record Office (Kresen Kernow) recently opened on the site of the former Redruth Brewery, Redruth Revival CIC was keen to maximise the impact of the development and create more spaces of interest in the town centre to attract those visiting the record office. A clear aim lay in, *“way finding, creating an interesting walk through town, encouraging people to walk rather than take a taxi”*.

The decision was taken to create a new, characterful, and unique retail space on the site of the former Butter Market in the town centre. This has now developed into a mixed retail and workspace provision: the ground floor offers lock-up units of 5-75m², open onto a courtyard and public facing, that are occupied by a variety of tenants including artists, dress makers, a hair dresser, café, vaping shop and banjo maker. The courtyard regularly hosts a farmers' market with live music and other events such as theatre evenings. On the first floor surrounding the courtyard are a range of closed studio/ office space, which, when completed, will offer space for around 40 people to work in 15 units of varying size (total space of 600 m²). These are currently cheaper than those on offer at Krowji, given their lower spec, but post-refurb they will be at similar rates. Whilst the site is not a tourist destination, it is on a pedestrian route, *“so people are increasingly coming in to have a look”*. In this, the farmers market has helped, with stalls spilling out into the adjacent street. Williams feels, *“it would be buzzing if it were in a tourist area”*.

Figure 21 New vegetarian and vegan café Beats & Roots at the Butter Market



Source : www.redruth-revival.org

The demand for both the office and retail units is certainly there; the offices currently available are at 95% occupancy with a waiting list and the shop units have shown themselves to be more or less permanently occupied. However, a key challenge lies in their size – they are, *“almost too small to be economically viable”* and have a high degree of churn. However, many are used as mixed-use spaces and rent is exceptionally low, at £20 per week all in – *“you are part of a community, that’s what people like”*. At present, the site has a £30,000 turnover, which is spent on maintenance and development; there are at present no permanent staff. Williams says that capital funds will need to be raised from public sources to complete the building work. The plan is to employ a site manager once completed, with projected rental income post renovation work lying at £75,000 – enough to fund a caretaker/ building manager and cover the mortgage.

Redruth Town Council has been very supportive of the development, and Williams says, is itself very entrepreneurial, having bought property next door to relocate the town library and council offices. Cornwall Council has also been encouraging, offering a route for small scale local funding, with some Heritage Action Zone scheme funding earmarked for the Butter Market renovation.

Impact on the local area

Given its wide spectrum of work created and provided by its tenants, it is felt that *“Krowji has a powerful collective impact, [...] driving forward the exciting evolution of the Cornish arts and cultural sectors”*.

Williams feels that it has had a noticeable impact on the Redruth area – an area which is not very touristy and has suffered from the ‘depression’ of former mining towns, with high levels of long-term poverty and lack of aspiration. This is, *“partly why [we] came here – to assist with regeneration”*. With Falmouth becoming increasingly expensive, there has been a noticeable increase of creative practitioners moving closer to Redruth, which is having a gradual effect on the town. Several new galleries and studios have recently opened, a craft market has started, and this is having an impact on the character and prosperity of the town. Williams feels that bringing the various cultural players together is key to supporting this development. The local main cultural institutions are only just starting to work together effectively and, *“Krowji impacted that”*, by working closely with the Council, Chamber of Commerce as well as the local creative sector and other community activity (e.g. local festivals, schools, the artist in empty shops programmes etc). All these things have a, *“trickle-down effect”* and are helping the area to regain its pride and local cohesion, according to Williams.

Perhaps as testament to Krowji’s success, they are now in talks with Cornwall Council about developing ‘new Krowji clusters’ in Penzance and Liskeard and then other towns in Cornwall. These would be located in more central locations, with the aim to provide attractive public spaces at street level with studio spaces above. Furthermore, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP has stated that creative economy is one of four ‘principles of design and metrics’ in its Local Industrial Strategy.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.cioslep.com/assets/file/Final%20CioS%20DRAFT%20Industrial%20Strategy%20-%202009.03.20.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ source: various websites as indicated and telephone interview with project architect Robert Sakula (Ash Sakula Architects)

7.2 SPACE @ Colchester Old Police Station¹⁴⁵

The SPACE studio in Colchester is a creative workspace offering offices and artist studios, co-working desk spaces and networking facilities for creative digital businesses, artists and makers.¹⁴⁶ It is located in a Grade II listed building which has gone through a series of uses over the centuries, situated in central Colchester’s conservation area on Queen Street, close to the train station, Firstsite Gallery and Colchester Castle. It opened in 2016.

Bringing creative workspace to Colchester

The local Council initiated a project to develop creative workspace as part of a wider masterplan to develop a Creative/ Cultural Quarter in the St Botolph’s area of Colchester. Architects Ash Sakula won the competition to design the masterplan in the early 2000s, which focused on the development of the new Firstsite Gallery and envisioned a range of creative spaces. However, following the initial proposals, little progress was made throughout the years of the economic crisis in 2008. In 2014, some of the elements of the plan were revisited as part of the Council’s extensive regeneration strategy, including the development of the Old Police Station into a creative workspace.

At that point, research¹⁴⁷ had shown that Colchester had the largest creative economy in Essex, with a bias towards arts, crafts, architecture, performing arts and music. Market testing undertaken by the local Council at the time suggested significant untapped demand for such a space, indicating that, *“all the signs were there that [the new spaces] would fill up three times over”*, according to project architect Robert Sakula.

This was also indicated by the success of a smaller nearby space which had already been turned into a creative centre, 15 Queen Street. Whilst the Council originally envisaged knocking the Georgian building down as part of the St Botolph’s Quarter masterplan, architects Ash Sakula suggested retaining it for

¹⁴⁶ <https://spacestudios.org.uk/news/space-to-launch-creative-workspace-facility-at-old-police-station-in-colchester-essex/>

¹⁴⁷ Haven Gateway Creative Industries Mapping

use by creative businesses and it was turned into a 'creative members hub' by a collaboration of Firstsite Gallery, Arts Council and The Creative Coop offering studio as well as meeting space, with studios for 2 to 12 people. The space filled up immediately, providing a home in particular for brand, PR, design, and internet companies as well as organisations with a social mission. According to the architect brief for the Old Police Station, *"some of [the residents] report that they are out-growing the space and services provided at 15 Queen Street and ideally their feedback and requirements will be fed into the work."*

Figure 22 SPACE Colchester



Source : <http://spacestudios.org.uk/studios/space-colchester-37-queen-street/>

In bringing a new, sizeable, creative workspace to Colchester, the Council was pursuing several key aims. These mainly focused on:

- Developing a creative business centre offering flexible workspace in particular for start-ups in the creative industries, as part of a push to develop employment opportunities for local people in the area and support the emergence and expansion of new creative businesses

which, *"can work together and develop an even bigger economic contribution to Colchester and the East of England"*¹⁴⁸

- Encouraging graduates from the local universities to remain in Colchester upon graduation, with a bid to retaining talent locally
- Supporting the regeneration of a largely derelict building and the wider area. According to Robert Sakula, the town centre at that point tended to, *"close down at 5pm and was then taken over by young people – groups of students and soldiers, which sometimes had to be kept apart by the police"*. The original St Botolph's masterplan aimed to create an evening economy in the centre, including diversifying the activity offered on Queen Street, which at that point was, *"home to the kebab shops, taxi shops – it was where everyone finished off their evening"*

Funding the project

The Old Police Station building is owned by Colchester Borough Council, and the redevelopment was carried out by the Borough Council together with Essex County Council. The cost of conversion came to £2.3m, including professional and legal fees, fit out, furniture and equipment.¹⁴⁹ The total project costs including the value of the asset and design as well as preliminary research activities came to £3.3m.

To fund the project, Colchester Council successfully applied for funding from the European Union (regional development funding) to help the Council in its, *"aspirations of making [the] area a thriving, prosperous hub for the creative sector"*. The Council also secured £500,000 from the Haven Gateway Partnership and East of England Development Agency to buy the building. Further funds were unlocked through the sale of two properties on Queen's Street to a developer to build a new hotel with ground floor shopping units.¹⁵⁰

The Haven Gateway Partnership was created in 2001 as a public private partnership with partners across North Essex and South Suffolk with the aim of promoting the area as, *"a distinct economic sub region"* by supporting both the

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/colchester-plans-to-transform-old-police-station-into-creative-business-hub-set-for-green-light-1-1933575>

¹⁴⁹ Architect Ash Sakula's plan

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/8931332.225000-euro-grant-for-cultural-quarter-centre/>

local port and logistics activity as well as “drive economic growth more widely”. In providing funding for this project, Haven Gateway acknowledged the importance of Colchester as a site to develop the knowledge-based economy given existing local organisations such as the University of Essex Knowledge Gateway campus and the proliferation of local digital, tech and computing companies (3,000 companies in the Borough, over half of which are in the digital, tech and computing sector) as well as the wider growth of the creative and digital economy across the Haven Gateway area between 2009 and 2015 (21% growth).¹⁵¹

SPACE in Colchester

According to the project architect Robert Sakula, they strongly suggested to the Council that management of the creative workspace at the Old Police Station be taken over by a group of artists and creative businesses already active in Colchester. However, “the Council was very risk averse and tendered the opportunity out”, with the result that well-known visual arts organisation SPACE took over the management.

SPACE was founded in 1968 by a group of artists. The organisation is based in East London and runs 18 artist studio buildings across several London Boroughs with the aim of providing affordable creative workspace and support programmes to, “support artists in a changing urban environment”. Taking over management of the Old Police Station in Colchester was a considerable step for the organisation as their first out-of-London studio, which they saw as a “key part in [their] long-term strategy to develop a creative industries production corridor linking East London with Essex.”¹⁵²

Whilst not sure of Space’s precise reasons for venturing out to Colchester, architect Robert Sakula suggests that it may have been part of a wider push to look beyond London’s borders, given the increase in London property prices which are making it increasingly difficult to, “charge reasonable rents that

people can afford. More and more we are seeing the idea that there is a market for this kind of thing outside London, too”.¹⁵³

From heritage building to creative workspace

Over the years, the Old Police Station building went through a number of uses, starting off as a Soldiers’ Institution set in attractive gardens in the mid-eighteenth century, before it was converted in 1940 into Colchester’s Police Station. Most recently, it was the home of sports pub the Chicago Rock Café. As Robert Sakula points out: “it’s interesting how adaptable such a building is”. Whilst large parts of the gardens were built over at some point, the building still boasted a, “sunny courtyard” as well as various annexes. According to the architectural brief, the Council wished for the converted space to include:

- Space for hot desking as well as studio space of different sizes for start-up companies, ‘grow-on space’ as well as anchor tenants
- Flexible layouts to, “accommodate companies as they expand and contract as well as to allow for flexible re-use of the building and facilities over time”
- Space to exhibit, showcase and present work as well as network, providing a, “professional but creative interface with clients and the public”
- A ground floor restaurant, café and flexible performance and exhibition space allowing for public programming

The Council was keen for the architects to collect the views and requirements of local established and growing creative SME’s as part of the design process, and in developing the spaces, Ash Sakula thus spoke to both the residents of 15 Queen Street as well as an artist collective located on a farm outside town (Cuckoo Farm) to understand their needs and requirements in the provision of new creative workspace in town.

¹⁵¹ <https://www.haven-gateway.org/sectors/digital-cultural-and-creative/>

¹⁵² <https://spacestudios.org.uk/about/>. The decision was aided by Colchester’s strategic position close to the M11 innovation corridor and less than an hour’s train ride from London Liverpool Street.

¹⁵³ Sakula for example mentioned Thomas Heatherwick’s new creative units for arts businesses in Aberystwyth as well as the maker and artist studios opened in 2016 in one of the buildings on the Dartington estate near Totnes in South Devon.

Following its redevelopment, SPACE Colchester opened in early 2017, offering 37 studios; workspace facilities/ co-working desk space; space for cultural programming, showcasing, workshops and training; event and meeting room spaces for hire; a café bar; a reception as well as outdoor workspaces. Overall, the gross internal area of the building is 18,084 sq ft, including 12,000 sq ft of lettable space. The architects also suggested the inclusion of a fabrication laboratory (FabLab), but this was turned into hot desking space instead; in effect, *“one very large studio where you can rent desk space at the reception”*. To keep overheads low, the site’s studios, meeting rooms, café, events space, and courtyard were designed to be easily managed by a minimal core team of staff.

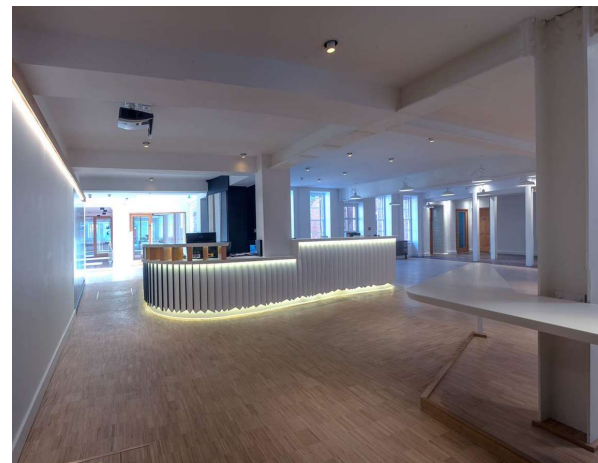
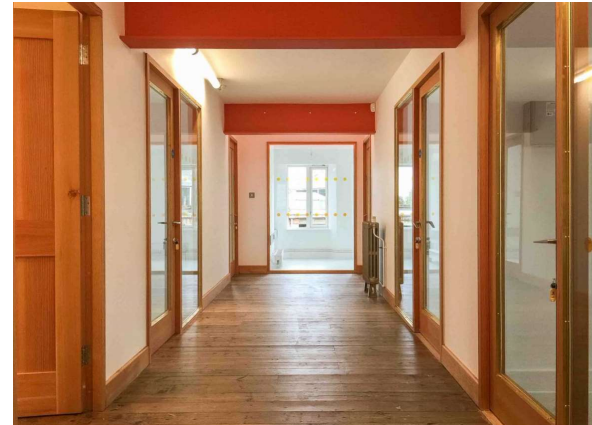
The studios on offer are of varying sizes and characteristics. As architect Robert Sakula explains:

“Almost anything goes – you design a series of different sized spaces, which can range from 8 to 200 sqm if you have the space. In Colchester, studios range from around 10 to 30-40 sqm. Then, some people want lots of natural light, some – like photographers – don’t want any. Some need delivery access and lots of storage space, others don’t. So you need to create spaces of an inherently flexible use and can make use of different spaces – you can put some spaces in the attic where there is little access, whilst some go down in the basement with direct outside access.”

Alongside the actual studio space, Sakula points out that it is crucial to get the community/ common spaces right and provide them with a *“certain minimum size to get a bit of a cluster”*. The entrance area, corridors and smaller communal spaces need to provide community focus rather than being simply functional, as, *“they are crucial; the social aspect is why people like joining places like this. They may not desperately need the space but are keen to be able to shut themselves away in their studios, as well as to bump into other practitioners in the communal areas for both social and business reasons.”* To this end, the building has been designed to nurture connectivity, interaction and exchange, through the inclusion of its landscaped courtyard, a “convivial, free-flowing reception area” that also functions as event space and café bar as well as smaller-scale shared facilities (e.g. water boilers, seating areas) throughout

the building to, *“introduce a feeling of friendly informality”*. Whilst the studios are closed off, they too have been designed in aid of a communicative environment through the help of fully glazed doors and screen walls.

Figure 23 Inside the new SPACE offices



Source: Ash Sakula Architects

Interestingly, Sakula highlights that a key difficulty in designing the space lay in the fact that the space was designed and developed before an operator had been found – i.e. SPACE was not involved at the point of design, and only came onboard once the building was complete. Whilst he feels this is a bit of a ‘chicken and egg situation’ where studio managers are primarily interested in the space once complete, this meant that it was at some points difficult for the architects to know or understand what would be wanted from the spaces. Given this,

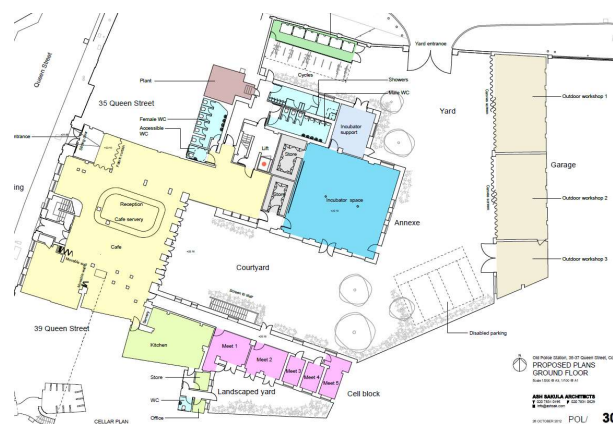
“ I would recommend getting a studio operator in early and getting them to help develop the brief and be involved in the development, rather than the Council second-guessing what the operator will need. Robert Sakula

This situation led to some feeling that the architects – in using the money that was available - had made the space too fancy, having spent too much money on it. Sakula feels that, “*if SPACE had been involved earlier on, we might have known that they required less, but at the time we didn’t know which market we were appealing for; who we were designing for*”. For example, the use of more expensive glass screens and inclusion of a ‘fancy reception desk’ could have been replaced with cheaper plaster board or plywood. As it was, the choices made meant that, “*the costs were higher than might be typical for such creative workspace, but not necessarily higher than for a creative business set-up*”.

SPACE Colchester’s users

SPACE Colchester was, “*designed with the freelance economy in mind*”, with the aim of providing project-based and freelance creatives with high quality facilities, desk space, a flexible work environment and “*plenty of social networking opportunities*”.¹⁵⁴ At the point of opening, it was expected to host a mix of tenants including illustrators, designers and makers as well as

Figure 24 SPACE Colchester proposed plan ground floor¹⁵⁵



Source: Ash Sakula Architects (2012)

Figure 25 SPACE Colchester proposed plan first floor showing studios of varying sizes



Source: Ash Sakula Architects (2012)

¹⁵⁴ <https://spacestudios.org.uk/news/space-to-launch-creative-workspace-facility-at-old-police-station-in-colchester-essex/>

¹⁵⁵ With yellow: reception/café in main building; blue: incubator space; green: kitchen; purple: meeting rooms; grey: outdoor workshops; white: courtyard

programmers, digital media creatives and technology start-ups. According to the architect, the studios were, “full before we had even finished” and occupancy has been close to 100% ever since.

The project has created a reason for creative and entrepreneurial people, particularly graduates of the University of East Anglia and Colchester Institute of the Arts, to stay in the town by providing the affordable, flexible workspace they need to establish new practices and start-ups.

The impact of the development

As part of the larger masterplan for the St Botolph's area, SPACE was envisaged and acts as a key local creative player, working in partnership with other local creative sites like the Firstsite Gallery, the new adjacent Curzon cinema, Colchester Institute (which includes the Colchester School of Art) and others. According to SPACE, a key aim in doing so was to create an, “*alternative ecosystem for creative businesses, including artists, who may otherwise gravitate to London.*”¹⁵⁶

The success of the scheme has evidenced itself in a range of ways since opening: its high occupancy rate, recognised success in supporting local regeneration, as well as showing itself as a potential location for further investment.¹⁵⁷

In terms of the success of the space itself, this is for example highlighted by an interested expressed by SPACE CEP Anna Harding in 2018 in supporting the development of new studio spaces on the ground floor of a proposed new student and hotel development in the town centre, stating that, “*this is welcomed given our facility at 37 Queen Street is in high demand*” and expressing a desire for SPACE to “*extend [their] long term investment in Colchester and further enhance and diversify [their] offer*”. Although controversial due to the large amount of student accommodation it would bring

to the area, the plans were given the go-ahead by the local planning inspector in late 2019.¹⁵⁸

In terms of its regeneration effect, recognition of the site's regeneration efforts came in 2017 in the form of winning the top prize in the Regeneration category at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) East of England awards, after being shortlisted for its impact on regeneration and economic growth, “*which revitalised the former dilapidated Grade II listed building in the St. Botolph's Regeneration Area of Colchester Town Centre into a 21st century incubation and collaboration space – offering ultrafast broadband connectivity for up to 40 new and developing SMEs in the Creative and Digital Sector.*”¹⁵⁹ It also gained a ‘highly commended’ in The Planning Award¹⁶⁰ for Promoting Economic Growth (Placemaking Category) in 2017.¹⁶¹

Lastly, in terms of attracting future investment, although not ultimately successful, investment promotion agency Invest ESSEX announced that it would support Colchester's bid to house a new Channel 4 Creative Hub, highlighting, “*Colchester's facilities for nurturing creative talent such as the SPACE Studios and East 15 acting school [...] [as] indicators of what the East of England's most forward-thinking location has to offer the creative scene*”.¹⁶² Despite the support, Channel 4 eventually decided upon locations in other areas of the country.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/17238871.space-studios-support-colchester-cultural-quarter-plans/>

¹⁵⁸ https://www.clactonandfrintongazette.co.uk/news/north_essex_news/18115473.mps-last-ditch-bid-block-alumno-student-plan/

¹⁵⁹ <https://spacestudios.org.uk/news/major-award-success-for-37-queen-street-colchester/>

¹⁶⁰ run by Planning magazine, in conjunction with Planning Resource and Placemaking Resource

¹⁶¹ <https://www.planningawards.com/results-2019/results-2017/> and <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/15192336.new-creative-hub-at-37-queen-street-colchester-shortlisted-for-national-and-local-awards/>

¹⁶² <https://www.investessex.co.uk/invest-essex-backs-colchester-bid-for-channel-4-creative-hub/>

7.3 Wem Town Hall¹⁶³

Wem is a small market town in Shropshire, England, nine miles north of Shrewsbury with around 5,000 inhabitants. Its Town Hall lies on the main road in the centre of town, a short walk from Wem station. It is today a multi-purpose arts and community centre with an offer including cinema, music, exhibitions, workshops and classes and café. Its different spaces host a wide range of live events and activities and can be hired by individuals, businesses, and organisations for private or public use.

Figure 26 Wem Town Hall



Source : www.facebook.com/WemTownHall

How it started

Wem Town Hall is a red brick building with a Victorian façade, built in 1905. Home to the town council for many years, it was also used for community events for many years, before large parts of the Hall were destroyed in a fire in 1995.

It was rebuilt shortly after, partly funded by both the district and town council, and continued to be used by the town council for offices as well as a weekly community market. However, when North Shropshire Council pulled its funding support for the venue, Wem Council was unable to continue running the space on its own. The Hall was closed, opening only for the market once a week. Various options were put forward as to the future of the Hall; at one point including the option of turning it into a carpet shop.

In response, in 2006 a group of local residents set up Wem Town Hall Community Trust, with the aim of lobbying to save the hall and re-open it as a vibrant centre for the benefit of the local community and economy. The group included local businesses as well as individuals who were keen not to see the facility lost to the community. At the same time, a local secondary school, Thomas Adams School, had received some additional funding to extend its media arts programme beyond school-based learning, and was looking for additional local space to deliver lessons from. It had already, *“earned respect for its outward looking and innovative approach to the delivery of its community and specialist arts programme”*, and so in 2006, Wem Town Hall Trust and Thomas Adams School formed a partnership, jointly seeking funding to restore the Town Hall.

Support was gained for the restoration of the Hall from Advantage West Midlands in the shape of a Rural Regeneration Zone Grant, the Town, District and County Councils as well as Lottery Fund. This required in-depth feasibility studies and the development of a business plan, as well as agreement that the newly opened venue would provide local jobs, local services, and training opportunities. The Town Hall finally re-opened to the public in 2009 as a community arts centre. The extent of the fire damage meant that the architects were in effect only able to save the original façade of the building, with the remainder replaced with a new building.

The partnership agreement between the Trust and School was initially for four years, during which time the school held classes on the upper floors, whilst the ground floor spaces were home to a café, film screenings funded by the UK

¹⁶³ Sources: <http://www.wemtownhall.co.uk/> and telephone interview with Director Rose Homer

Film Council, community events and private hire. Much of this was based on a survey the Trust had distributed among the town and local schools as part of developing the Hall's business plan, to gain feedback from the local community as to what kind of events and facilities they wished to see at the Town Hall once it re-opened.

The partnership with Thomas Adams School ended following the initial four years due to a change in government education policy and school funding for media/ arts education. This meant that in 2010, the Trust took over the sole running of the Town Hall.

Facilities and programme provided today

Today, Wem Town Hall's main spaces include a large foyer which includes the reception and café, a main ground floor hall and a range of smaller spaces on the ground and first floor. Across these, it offers a wide range of facilities and services for the community as part of its regular programme. These include:

- **A permanent café:** The Café Bar is open Mondays-Saturdays 9am-4pm (3pm Saturdays) as well as for evening and weekend events and hires. It offers a menu of simple homecooked food and sandwiches and allows cinema customers to take their drinks into the cinema hall. According to Director Rose Horner, the café is, *"extremely important to the Town Hall - without it we would not have people coming through the door regularly; it is a huge part of our success: it creates a welcome atmosphere and adds vibrancy to the venue."*
- **A reception, 'shop front' and gallery:** As part of its offer, the reception team is able to help any visitors with information on local services and attractions. The foyer also houses a 'shop front'; a series of show cabinets where local artists and crafts people can display their ware (e.g. craft items, cards, jewellery). The Town Hall takes a small commission from any sales. A small gallery space for temporary exhibitions is located just off the reception.

- **The cinema:** the cinema screen is located in the main hall on the ground floor. It shows both British and international commercial films as well as screenings of live stage performances. It is a '2nd tier cinema', meaning it has access to films only from week six of their initial release. Whilst often asked to screen more films for younger audiences (i.e. blockbusters such as the Marvel films), Horner explains that they have struggled with this, as their ability to screen films only 1.5 months after the initial release means that they struggle to attract a young audience who is keen to see films immediately upon release and therefore prefers visiting the local multi-screen venues. The staff team develops the film programme themselves and will bring back films *"that worked really well"*. The Town Hall is currently working together with the rural touring project Flicks in the Sticks¹⁶⁴ and Kinokulture¹⁶⁵ on a new initiative supported by the BFI Programme Development Fund which aims to improve the breadth of film on offer at local cinema venues through joint marketing and other methods.
- **The weekly market:** The Town Hall continues to host the weekly market which has taken place in the town centre (and Town Hall) for centuries. The Trust took over operation of the market from Shropshire Council - whilst the town council continues to have the rights over the market, the Town Hall is operating under a 10-year contract to deliver the market. It takes place every Thursday and hosts a range of traders selling local produce including fruit and vegetables, fish, meat, and plants as well as clothing, crafts, gifts etc. Stalls are located in the main hall as well as outside (the latter including a burger van).
- **Community classes:** The Town Hall hosts a range of classes, including exercise classes such as Tai Chi and Yoga as well as drama classes and exercise classes for the elderly. According to Horner, the latter do very well, given the relatively large proportion of local elderly residents. These classes are largely run by external people who hire the rooms out for their classes, rather than by the Town Hall team itself.

¹⁶⁴ a project which uses digital technology to take films to local venues throughout Shropshire and Herefordshire

¹⁶⁵ a community cinema in Oswestry

- **Community health and support events:** In addition, spaces are also hired out to the Council and other service providers such as businesses and charities (e.g. University of the Third Age, Macular Society) for a range of community health events, including signing for people with dementia, information sessions about diabetes and other community intervention services designed to help people live longer at home. As part of this, the Trust is also running the local arm of national employment programme *Building Better Opportunities* which is designed to help unemployed people find a way back into work and is part funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and European Social Fund. Running until 2022, *Wem into Work* provides one to one support to job seekers to provide them with required skills, CV development, job seeking, confidence building, interview techniques etc. It also provides access to the internet and quiet spaces to work, to support individuals with the tools and space to job search independently. From April onwards, the Town Hall will also offer weekly 'Talking Table sessions' at the café, funded by the National Lottery Fund Community Fund, designed to get, "*Wem talking to each other*", for people to meet each other and make new friends.
- **MediaActive:** the Town Hall provides a permanent home to media company MediaActive, which came out of the school programme that originally took place on site, and which offers film projects for young people, including managing the local arm of the BFI Film Academy.

According to Director Rose Horner, there is an important overlap between the café and market and the cultural offer, with both drawing in visitors who might then be encouraged to take up other offers on site, too.

In terms of the spaces at the Hall's disposal, Horner says that they would be keen to have a more dedicated space for the café rather than it effectively being located in the café which visitors have to pass to access other areas of the Hall. Many other local cafes are in very small older buildings, making access with wheelchair and prams difficult - the Town Hall's café in contrast is much more accessible, making it a popular spot for wheelchair users and parents. However, without being in a more dedicated and closed-off space they are unable to

provide a more engaging offer (e.g. with play/ family area for children). They provided a temporary children's play area in the gallery space during half term, which went down very well, but had to take this down again to make space for exhibitions during term time and, "*people got upset when we took that away*".

Figure 27 The Main Hall set up with Theatre style rake & set up for a Formal dinner



Source : www.wemtownhall.co.uk/venue-hire/

Who uses the Town Hall?

According to Horner, most of the Town Hall's visitors are local. However, they will sometimes get visitors from further afield in particular for certain live music events (e.g. folk music). Last autumn they for example hosted a folk music event that drew people from, *"quite far away"*, as the band in question was playing only two gigs in London and Wem. The cinema in contract tends to attract a more local audience.

Horner says it is also easier to attract older than younger audiences - *"quite a lot of people come to Wem to retire, and they have available money and time"*. With the small staff group that they have, they are unable to devote much staff time to audience development, although Horner says they would like to do more. They have started offering more activities for younger people around holiday times such as ballet and drama classes but, *"find [they] need to be more focused"* in offering these and are keen to offer more themselves rather than just hiring out to other providers.

In a bid to make the Town Hall more accessible to hall, they are also participating in a new project that aims to make cinema accessible for people with dementia. They are also hoping to replace the large dark glass entrance doors, which due to their mirroring effect are confusing for those suffering from dementia (as well as being unwelcoming and making the Hall look to passers-by as if it were closed).

Engaging with the community

The Town Hall is managed by a small staff team, who report to the Board of Trustees of the Wem Town Hall Community Trust. Whilst the staff *"get on with the day to day"*, the Trust, *"provides the focus"*. The full Trust meets four times a year, with a dedicated finance and personnel group made up of four trustees meeting on a more regular basis. The Trust works with the staff and volunteers, *"on all aspects of the day to day operation"* of the Centre, contributing to the management, running of the building, policy and programme development as well as recruitment, fundraising, finance, marketing, box office and stewarding.

The Trust continues to be made up entirely of volunteers, who are, *"invested for different reasons"*. Trustees are recruited to ensure they bring a breath of

experience, expertise, and interest, *"reflecting the diversity of the local community"*. They currently include a retired chartered accountant who oversees the Hall's finances and meets with the staff team on a monthly basis; and a partially retired architect and building contractor who support the maintenance of the building. They are currently looking for a new trustee with fundraising experience, but this is not easy.

The Trust and management staff take their ambition to engage with the local community very seriously. Horner says this can be difficult - *"it's difficult to please all people all the time. Sometimes, what we can do is different to what we would like to do"*. A key element in the Town Hall's engagement with the community is the continuation of the initial resident survey that was undertaken as part of the business planning to first establish what local people wanted to see in their new community/ art centre. They now try to undertake a similar survey every three years or so, to gain new insight from local residents as to what they would like to see more or less of at the Town Hall. According to Horner, *"it's a lot of work, but informs our business planning and focus on the following years"*.

Overall, she says, it is key to, *"grow steadily and take the community with you - if you go in all guns blazing, doing something you think is right, it might not be"*. Instead, it is crucial to bring the community along through feedback, surveys, sessions with volunteers etc, to ensure it is invested in your space and, *"wants you to do well"*. The Town Hall's volunteers play a big role in this, effectively acting as ambassadors for the venue as well as having an 'ear to the ground' and being able to report back what people would like to see.

At present, the venue has a team of 68 volunteers, who get involved in various aspects of the venue's offer, from setting up to ushering, manning the reception, box office and café. *"Without the volunteers, the venue would not exist"*. Most are local retired people. When the Hall first opened, they ran some outreach/ volunteer information sessions to showcase the available volunteering opportunities, but now have an established team and advertise largely through the website and brochures. However, Horner says there is a natural cycle, they go through peaks and troughs where they are short of people. She feels this is

natural when working with volunteers; some will only take up the role for a short period of time.

Making an income

The Town Hall itself, which is not listed, is owned by Shropshire Council. The Trust (a charity) pays a peppercorn rent to the Council but is responsible for the cost of any repairs. Although technically a heritage building, most of the building is relatively newly built following the fire.

Wem Town Hall receives a, “*significant grant*” from the Town Council - “*we couldn’t do it without them*”. It also until recently had a service level agreement with Shropshire Council, but this has just been terminated.

Alongside this, the Hall’s key sources of income are the income from ticketed events and the hire of the various spaces, which has greater profit margins than live events. In terms of the former, the cinema programme tends to be the most profit-creating, given it has significantly lower overheads than live events such as gigs. As part of this, as Horner points out, films also have the added advantage of already being widely marketed by other agencies whilst the marketing for live events are, “*all down to us to market, so the overheads are greater*”. To benefit from this, they try to bring out a brochure with around three months’ film programming - many patrons will know which film they wish to see, and will wait until it is screened at Wem Town Hall as they prefer to see the film locally/ at an independent venue rather than at a multiplex/ further away, even if it means waiting a few weeks. Ticket prices are on a par with other local community cinemas. Whilst they are cheaper than the local Cineworld, they are unable to match offers such as Odeon’s £5 tickets.

The Town Hall offers a variety of flexible spaces for events that can be hired both by members of the community and local businesses and organisations. This means the Hall hosts meetings, workshops, conferences, fundraisers as well as private parties and weddings. They have stopped making the spaces available for ‘teenage birthday parties’ as these tended to be too disruptive and

difficult to police to be worth it. The Hall also offers use of the café area and event catering¹⁶⁶ as well as technical staff and specialist audio-visual equipment. Horner feels that the spaces available aren’t entirely ideal in terms of venue hire, with the main hall being almost too big and many of the other rooms on the small side. The Hall has one attractive room with attractive windows and, “*an airy feel*” on the first floor which is, “*the right size to hire out - I wish we had more of those*”. The Town Hall is trying to prioritise availability for hire at weekends to increase income, with films largely shown on Tuesday and Thursday nights, but “*we might need to revisit this in the future*”.

The café, which is run by the Town Hall but under a separate company, also makes an income, with all profits ploughed back into the charity.

The weekly market however is, “*not a massive money-making exercise*”: while it takes up significant staff time to coordinate, it faces competition from other nearby markets in neighbouring towns and is therefore very localised in terms of both its offer and visitors.

Likewise, donations and income from the ‘Friends’ group also do not at present provide significant income. Again, both take significant time to administer, and Horner feels that “it would have been better to take the time and get it right from the start - we’re a bit stuck with what we have at the moment”. She feels that most friends largely want to be members to get discounts rather because they are keen to help, which means that the number of friends is strongly tied up with having an, “*attractive programme*”. This is not always easy - Horner says the latter to a certain extent is reliant on the market: they will sometimes have a glut of good films, then will have to show films, “*we’d rather not show*” as there is nothing else on offer.

In addition, Horner says it is important to get the message across that they are an independent charity rather than part of Shropshire Council, which many assume - “*you need to get the name right, it affects how people use and support you*”.

¹⁶⁶ They market the fact that, “*one of the distinct advantages to using Wem Town Hall as a venue for your event or function is the freedom to choose whatever catering you would like.*”

8. Conclusions and opportunities

'Cultural spaces' of many kinds represent the underpinnings of the local cultural infrastructure. Whilst Hereford has a significant number of regional and national assets, it also has weaknesses relating to those assets' size, visibility, and, in some cases, physical condition, which require more or less significant improvement and investment.

The insights and analyses of the previous chapters offer up some conclusions and scenarios that Hereford could take up or investigate further, in its aim to, *"have a connected and sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality arts and heritage activity and experiences available to all residents and visitors."*

Any effective and viable future development of the local cultural infrastructure should rest on three principles:

1. The most fundamental of these is to identify strengths before trying to address weaknesses. Build on Hereford's distinctive collection of cultural and heritage assets, rather than trying to create an entirely new image. Invest in growth, and use the proceeds of growth to address problems. This requires:
 - Better evidence, and sharing of evidence, about creative businesses, employment, students and workspace, retail, and visitor economy
 - Identifying a 'niche' (e.g. heritage, visual art, the town as a basis to explore the country) and using this as the main guiding principle.
2. The impact of combining cultural and creative assets can - through its increased offer, visibility, and reach and efficiency of shared marketing - be larger than the sum of its parts.
3. Developing interlinking elements across sectors - cultural assets, retail and visitor economy, infrastructure. - together, through communication and collaboration will have a multiplier effect on the impact of each on the other and on the identified specialism.

These three principles inform a set of tactical and strategic opportunities for cultural and heritage development.

8.1 Build on existing strengths

8.1.1 Build on your heritage assets

Hereford already possesses a range of attractive assets - its wide-ranging heritage, visual arts scene, and the social capital evident in the many actors who are coming together to progress and support its cultural and visitor economy. Hereford demonstrates an exceptional proliferation of more and less visible heritage assets. Along with the existing interest in heritage among locals and tourists, this makes 'Heritage in Hereford' an obvious specialism for further development. There is potential to do this iteratively, bring together smaller, tactical activities to animate the city centre whilst planning and fundraising for larger capital developments. The former could include:

- Create a visible heritage route as part of a new wayfinding strategy, connecting many small heritage sites, encouraging visitors to explore the city, and increasing the reach and effectiveness of shared marketing
- Raise the visibility of Hereford's AAI and conservation area as well as individual assets such as the town's defences and castle foundations, for example with support of the new MA being developed by HCA, or other local visual artists
- Expand the existing guided tour offer, through creating more creative or unusual tours, using Augmented Reality to bring the hidden archaeological heritage to life, or creating online experiences to entice 'nervous' visitors to consider visiting the city once lockdown restrictions are lifted
- Make more out of Hereford's state-of-the-art Archive and Research and Learning centre
- Identify Hereford more clearly with the heritage assets of the surrounding county, styling Hereford as the centre from which to explore as the hub of an 'attract and disperse' strategy

8.1.2 Develop the evidence base

The research has highlighted a lack of available data on audiences and visitors. It would be advisable to address before undertaking any major steps in investing in the local cultural infrastructure. Key gaps include:

- Lack of visitor data for many of the existing sites, including numbers of visitors as well as demographics and drivers/ interests,
- Limited evidence of overlap between retail, cultural and visitor economy
- Limited data and knowledge of the local creative economy and demand for workspace

Getting these sectors to work together, and coming up with a joint plan to optimise marketing and delivery, needs evidence. For a city of Hereford's scale, that means more than scraping national statistics; signals about the strengths of Hereford's unique offer will get lost in the noise of a much larger region with a very differently structured cultural and heritage sector.

There are pockets of existing local data – CACI surveys of footfall in Old Market, for example – that need to be expanded to cover the whole city, and brought together in a single, accessible dashboard with other sources, including:

- Audience Finder data on cultural footfall and spend, to understand the local audience profile
- Collaborate with British Land to extend their annual market demand survey (carried out via CACI) to cover the whole city centre
- Surveys of HCA's current students and alumni to establish aspirations and patterns of employment and business creation
- More localised mapping of creative employment and businesses through a more dedicated study of the local sector, including data analysis, interviews with sector representatives and review of further comparators

8.1.3 Explore new funding opportunities

Once these data exist, they can be used to inform business cases for investment in marketing, regeneration and new developments. The combined data set would offer Hereford an opportunity to benchmark its growth against other places (whether comparator towns or others) in competitive bidding situations (eg, Towns fund and Destination BID.) In that sense, the Covid-19 pandemic presents Hereford with an opportunity to restart and relaunch its cultural and heritage economy from a consistent baseline.

8.2 More than the sum of its parts

8.2.1 Build on your social capital

The three pillars identified above build on what is there, draw assets together so they are more than the sum of their parts, and connect new developments across various interconnected sectors. It is an ambitious agenda, in which it will be crucial to ensure that currently existing momentum in terms of engagement among individuals, organisations and businesses is not lost, but further built on. To do so will require actors across the board to:

- Continue to feel involved in new developments
- Be provided with opportunities to communicate and collaborate through existing and new forums
- Be made aware of new opportunities
- Clearly, this will require leadership from some institutions, including Herefordshire Council (with its renewed focus on culture and community), HCP and Rural Media (given their track record), and the BID (as an existing group representing the interests of many actors.)

8.2.2 Develop new cultural/ heritage anchor sites

- Alongside the 'tactical measures described above there may also be considerable potential to create a new key cultural and heritage site. One option would be to explore the potential for a **new museum**

building that could both house the Herefordshire Hoard, and offer significant space for improved and expanded curation and display of the MAG's collection. Clearly, any such option would have to be subjected to stringent appraisal (e.g. where should it be located), feasibility studies and a robust business plan. The question that thus needs to be considered is that of whether there is sufficient potential to go ahead with further research in this direction.

- If agreed, such a scheme could have a transformational impact on the future role and sustainability of MAG, which is currently considered as requiring a re-think and reinvestment. Moving the museum and gallery content to a new site would provide the opportunity to find a more coherent purpose for the existing MAG site, optimising the use of the existing space. Given its central location opposite Hereford's key tourist magnet - the cathedral - it suggests itself as an ideal location for a more substantial and modernised Tourist Information Centre. This would tie in more 'logically' with the building's other current use as Hereford's main library: both would be free spaces offering (among other things) information about Hereford. It would create additional opportunities for the Broad Street building to act as a 'satellite' of the Archive and Research Centre, housing temporary exhibitions to raise its visibility in the city centre.

Potential for new museum site could be a catalyst not just for the city but the wider county, emphasising the cultural and heritage offer of the market towns, notably Leominster, where the Hoard was discovered.

8.2.3 Redefine the role of the Town Hall

- Alongside MAG, **Hereford Town Hall** represents the other key site in Hereford that is considered in urgent need of repurposing and redevelopment. As with MAG, it seems there is general agreement that 'something' could be made of this site, if all devoted to one purpose - be that culture and/or community use. This could tap into the County Council's TalkCommunity Hub ambitions, or the suggested need for more flexible spaces for a range of community uses. Wem Town Hall

might offer some guidance in this, being as it is a home not only for cultural use, but also for a wide array of social and community uses, from a market to fitness classes, to a home for national employment and upskilling programmes, to simply acting as a (more and less curated) 'meeting place' for different groups of the population.

- A detailed feasibility study would be needed to establish:
 - Whether the space is appropriate for the suggested purpose
 - Whether the changes needed would be compatible with the building's listed status
 - How local stakeholders could come together for a bigger conversation
 - A plan to address the City Council's requirements for this, or another space, to accommodate both office space and the civic museum
 - Business plan and operating model

This all points to a case for treating the Town Hall as a social, rather than a commercial, asset. BOP's research into potential uses of Urban Built Heritage for National Trust (2019) sets out 'five elements' of a process that could be used to unlock the heritage and social value of the Town Hall and point the way to a more sustainable future that presents at least a social return on the continuing investment the building is likely to need:

- Identification
- Ownership/management
- Restoration
- Reuse
- Sustainability

Applied to the Town Hall, this could transform its popular perception from that of 'council offices' to its being viewed as a significant part of the city's built heritage, and one with an important role in the contemporary and demotic life of local communities in the present and future. This would emphasise engagement,

ownership, use and sustainability of heritage by a range of artistic, cultural, social, and civic users.

There are some things that could be done immediately to begin to address this.

- First, there needs to be an acceptance of the principle of clearer separation of function between maintenance of the building, its governance, and operation of the space to allow its civic role to be better expressed as a heritage asset and social enterprise, rather than a set of offices.
- The City Council collection could be better curated and presented, and opened on a more accessible basis. With support of the County's museums and libraries service, as part of a city- and county-wide strategy, it represents a potentially significant part of the narrative around Hereford and its historic importance. In this context, the Town Hall, and the City Council collection, could have greater significance within the new visitor economy infrastructure, and within a wayfinding strategy of the kind we recommend in the report.
- There are event spaces in the building which could form a valuable part of a 'mixed economy' of cultural, social, and commercial activity, along lines suggested by the Wern Town Hall case study. In order to achieve this, there would need to be a commitment on part of both County and City Councils to address potential uses through further community consultation, and to act on the findings by supporting development of a business case as part of the Towns Fund.

8.2.4 Creative workspace

The research has underlined the opportunity to support the local creative sector through the creation of more shared creative workspace. Hereford has far fewer such spaces (in both number, size and sector specialisation) than comparator cities. There is unrealised potential to work with HE partners and the private sector to grow local creative industries and inward investment.

Whilst any significant investment in this area would require further research into demand and feasibility, the comparators and case studies suggest that the

development of creative workspace lends itself well to being piloted on a small scale, and possibly in a distributed model involving 'meanwhile' use of existing spaces, before requiring major investment. One comparator has a workspace model of several smaller sites scattered across the city that were opened over several years; whilst the case study of Krowji in Cornwall shows the potential of starting with smaller (and with less sophisticated) spaces and 'seeing how it goes'.

Hereford has several spaces that could be used as 'testing grounds', including vacant spaces across the city: these 'meanwhile' spaces could play an important role in the reimagining and restart of the retail sector post-COVID, as well as contributing to city centre animation. Any such developments should collaborate with existing providers of similar spaces (the artist studios) and potential users (creative businesses/ freelancers, and the HE providers, which have both expressed a future need for such spaces). Lastly, whilst a 'pilot approach seems the most obvious route to take, it should be accompanied by further research into demand for, and different kinds of models of creative workspace and incubation sites, in order to ensure that Hereford is prepared to quickly respond with additional provision should the pilot prove successful.

8.3 Cross-sectoral initiatives

8.3.1 Cross-sectoral promotion

It is neither possible nor efficient to consider the 'cultural sector' as a standalone sector. The previous chapters have shown how closely its actions and development tie in with resilient economic growth - in particular, in the retail and visitor economy; local infrastructure and other factors. As with the evidence base, promotion of culture and heritage has a symbiotic relationship with other sectors

- It connects to emerging specialisms in local higher education, notably the new MA in Fine Art and Curation at HCA (currently being validated), which would work in partnership with the National Trust and Historic England on placing art in the environment

- Prior to Covid-19, the city centre was becoming more vibrant: support to re-establish the retail sector and the independent food offer should integrate culture and heritage
- Emerging infrastructure projects, from wayfinding to a new station hub
- Combining cultural and heritage marketing with that for the variety of live events and festivals taking place across the county
- New city centre living, using the cultural offer as part of the marketing mix to attract a younger, family demographic.
- Identifying 'Heritage in Hereford' as a specialism would set down a marker for private sector investors and potential funders, enabling both groups to more easily identify new opportunities that could be catalysed by culture, and to avoid missing out on opportunities, as (according to one stakeholder) previously happened with the Poppies exhibition in Hereford,. It would also give a clear framework for investment and allocation of increasingly stretched public funds.

8.3.2 Wayfinding rather than 'cultural quarter'

This study was asked to consider the potential for a new cultural quarter in the city centre as a way to improve visibility and connection between smaller and less noticeable cultural assets in town. The insights gained from our research suggest that improved wayfinding across the whole city would be cheaper, less disruptive and would have benefits which would outweigh those of a clearly defined 'cultural quarter'. Many of Hereford's assets are centrally located, but they are spread out across the whole city centre, rather than concentrated in a few streets. A specifically marked out 'cultural quarter' would be likely to cover a relatively small area, excluding all assets outside the defined area, and risking reducing their visibility in comparison to a highly marketed 'cultural quarter'.

A wider wayfinding strategy across the whole city centre (and potentially beyond), may be more effective in helping to connect assets and thereby improve their overall visibility - based on the 'more than the sum of their parts' principle. This has the potential to include all available assets and to support

visitor flow across the city. Several approaches could be taken to implement this, including:

- Building on the successes of the recently implemented wayfinding in the retail centre designed by HCA students.
- Engaging the Council to build this into planned infrastructure improvements around pedestrian and cycle paths, and the railway station
- Using the new Library, Tourist Information Centre, and anchor sites such as the cathedral, as starting points
- Creating new marketing material and maps for visitors and encouraging all assets to point visitors to other destinations
- Another key element in improving visitor flow lies in finding further ways to animate the town centre, both during the day and in particular during the early evening to 'bridge the gap' between the day time and evening economy and encourage day time visitors to stay into the evening. The BID has already made considerable efforts in this regard, harnessing other elements to build on including the independent food sector and range of festivals that take place regularly. Further opportunities may lie in:
 - Using currently vacant retail or street scape spaces as pop-ups to provide interesting activity as well as to 'test the market' for more permanent provisions (in collaboration with the BID and British Land)
 - Raising the visibility of existing local visual arts activity to help animate the city centre by working with e.g. HCA and local studios and galleries.
 - Using local heritage (more or less visible) as cues to animate the city centre and create interest

9. Postscript

The role of Hereford's cultural places and spaces in post Covid-19 recovery and rebuilding

The research phase of this study took place before the emergency response which led to the closure of all cultural venues and cancellation of festivals and public events. At time of writing, the date at which venues may reopen remains unknown, and therefore the full impact of the virus on Hereford's cultural sector cannot be measured. However, it is likely to be profound – accentuated by structural factors, including an over-reliance on activities that rely on generating footfall as opposed to those which generate IP that can be exploited through broadcast or online, the absence of large-scale creative employers and the lack of creative workspaces to provide a focus for relief.

The response will need to draw upon the core values expressed in Herefordshire's Cultural Strategy, notably on the resourcefulness of its cultural organisations, creative individuals, and communities:

“ We make the most of what we have, take pride in resilience and welcome innovation

One benefit of the emergency response is that the Great Place project, including its evaluation of the role of Herefordshire Cultural Partnership, has been extended to March 2021. The research points to the importance of a central coordinating function in drawing together and projecting Hereford's heritage and cultural assets, and in collating evidence and commissioning the new research needed to provide a baseline to inform renewal and growth plans, and bids for strategic funding, such as Towns Fund.

- Any attempt to simply 'wind back the clock' to the pre-COVID state of the cultural sector, and the places and spaces which are themselves an integral part of Hereford's offer, will fall short of what is needed to protect employment and rebuild the city and county economy. Recognition of this needs to reflect the importance of doing bold things now: pressing for investment and joint action which may have seemed unrealistic prior to the emergency, such as in creation of a major new museum venue, but now presents itself as essential to restoring the economic and social health and wellbeing of Hereford.

BOP Consulting

BOP Consulting is an international consultancy specialising in culture and the creative economy.

BOP convenes the **World Cities Culture Forum** (WCCF), an international network of more than 35 cities. www.worldcitiescultureforum.com

London

The Office Group, 2 Riding House Street, London, W1W 7FA

Edinburgh

16 Young Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4JB

Shanghai

213 – 214, No. 585 Fuxing Middle Road,
Shanghai 200025, China

Web

www.bop.co.uk

Twitter

@BOP_Consulting

Blog

www.bop.co.uk/articles