

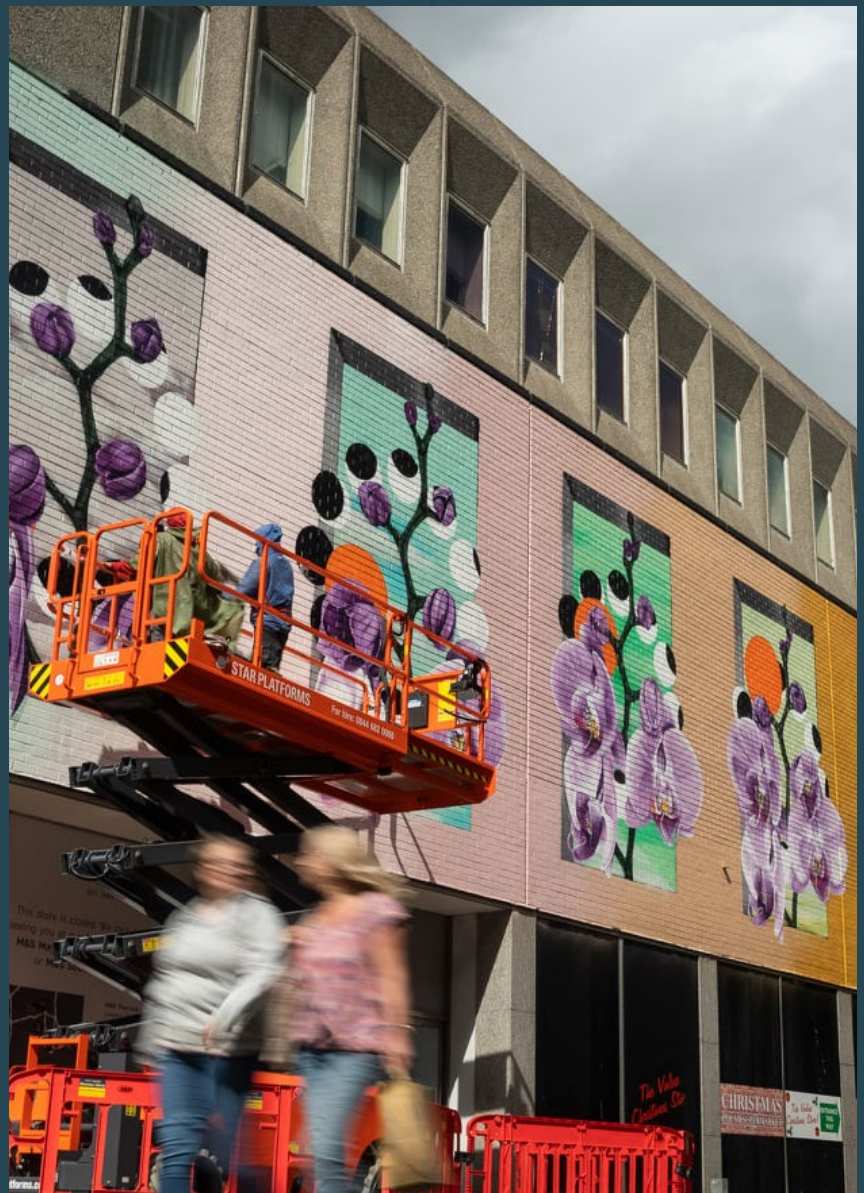
W M T Urban Research Unit

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SOUTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

Creative High Streets

January 2022



Working with



SOUTH EAST
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP



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ENGLAND**

Image credit

Basildon Town Centre Art Mural
(Credit: Creative Basildon)

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Forewords & Introduction

Forewords

‘Enabling and developing strategies for High Street recovery has never been more important. In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economies of our towns in the South East, the challenges facing our High Streets have accelerated. Yet we have seen new ways of working and innovative ideas led by the creative sector that have begun to change this story.

This report, jointly funded by SELEP and Arts Council England, presents a detailed evidence base and clear call to action for all stakeholders to take advantage of the growth opportunity for the creative sector in our High Streets.

Our ambition is for this report to be a starting point for sustained action, leading to further funding opportunities and projects, and promoting the wider strategic ambitions of SELEP as articulated in the SELEP Recovery & Renewal Strategy.’

Sarah Dance – Deputy Chair, South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)

‘We are excited to welcome this report, jointly commissioned by SELEP and Arts Council England. The role that the cultural sector is playing in High Street regeneration up and down the country is already significant.

This report helps to highlight some exciting and inspiring examples in the South East and is also invaluable in setting out strategies and practical steps which can be used to help facilitate regeneration through cultural activity.

The range of ideas, the innovative practices outlined and the scalability of the activity all underline the practical and action-based nature of the report and we look forward to engaging further with High Streets across the South East over the months and years to come.’

Hazel Edwards – South East Area Director (Arts Council England)

Introduction

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and Arts Council England commissioned We Made That and PRD to develop a better understanding of how cultural and creative organisations can be embedded in high streets and drive their reinvigoration and reinvention. The research has been informed by a series of high street case studies, exploring a range of innovative actions, strategies and methods that could better unlock positive and inclusive growth for the region and bring together the high street recovery and creative sector growth agendas.

The first part of the document is a call to action which articulates the opportunity for rejuvenating high streets through culture in the South East. It sets out how this can align with SELEP and Arts Council wider priorities, government agendas and funding opportunities.

The second part of the document sets out key learnings from the in-depth case study research and provides practical information on how to prioritise strategies, plans and actions for embedding creative and cultural uses in high streets to drive high street rejuvenation through creative sector growth.

Whilst the report is not intended as a replacement for the many cultural, economic or town centre development strategies that exist, it is intended to be at the forefront of new conversations around the role of the creative sector in high street rejuvenation, and to articulate the opportunity for further strategic partnerships and innovation which will enable the South East high streets to flourish.



Southend-On-Sea High Street



29 South Street, Eastbourne - Molly Stredwick / Hypha Studios

02

Call to action

Why now?

**Towards a shared
recovery agenda**

**Opportunities for
intervention**

Why now?

Now is the opportunity to join the dots between current high street issues, future cultural opportunities and potential solutions, including the way that cultural investment can act as a 'glue' in the mix, building a stronger, more sustainable and brighter future for the South East's high streets and its creative sector.

The big picture

It is now widely accepted that the dominant model of the high street is in decline, and that the Covid-19 pandemic has helped accelerate a number of trends already seen across the country. Overall, the combined impacts of increasing online digital retail, exacerbated by the sharp economic contraction caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and economic shocks of the lockdown added to the closure of hospitality venues and other drivers of footfall in high streets and town centres will require imaginative responses.

In the South East, some high streets and town centres have particularly suffered in recent years. However, the effect of the pandemic has been uneven, with high streets in different towns having dramatically contrasting experiences: across the region, touristic and retail hubs have overall been impacted much more than local and smaller high streets.

Whilst Covid-19 has sped up the process of change, even prior to the pandemic many high streets were already experiencing major and structural challenges due to both changes in shopping behaviour and weak underlying economic conditions. For example, with almost 20% of vacant shops, and retail jobs making up a significant proportion of the local employment, medium-size town centres such as Southend or Basildon, whilst recovering relatively well from the Covid-19 pandemic, will need long term greater

investment in local job creation, diversification and place-making.

In response to the challenges facing high streets, policy-makers have introduced a number of schemes with ambitions to 'renew and reshape town centres and high streets'. This aspiration to re-imagine is a step in the right direction and, in the South East, a number of local authorities and cultural and creative sector stakeholders are responding with a range of radical and ambitious projects. These include strategic and large-scale interventions by local authorities but also smaller scale and sector-led initiatives. Culture obviously has a key role to play in the transition to a more viable future for town centres.

The opportunity now

The current funding pipeline is unprecedented in terms of its priority for cultural infrastructure. The Government's Levelling Up Fund Prospectus (March 2021) identifies a total of £4.8 billion to be invested over the coming years to support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets across the country. The role that cultural infrastructure and cultural uses can play in rejuvenating places, leading to "positive economic and social outcomes at a local level" is explicitly acknowledged. Alongside the Treasury's review of the 'Green Book' and the evolving Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital framework from the DCMS, the dial seems to be shifting towards a more holistic understanding of the impact that cultural investment might have in the realisation of macro-level policies.

Arts Council England, through its new Let's Create vision, has also set out its commitment to villages, town and cities, including high streets, and is at the inception of a number of place-based cultural regeneration funding which can benefit high streets and cultural infrastructure (Creative People and Places, Cultural Recovery Fund, Cultural Investment Fund, Cultural Development Fund).

In addition, there are three key funding streams targeted to high streets and town centres, which have already seen a great deal of uptake across the South East:

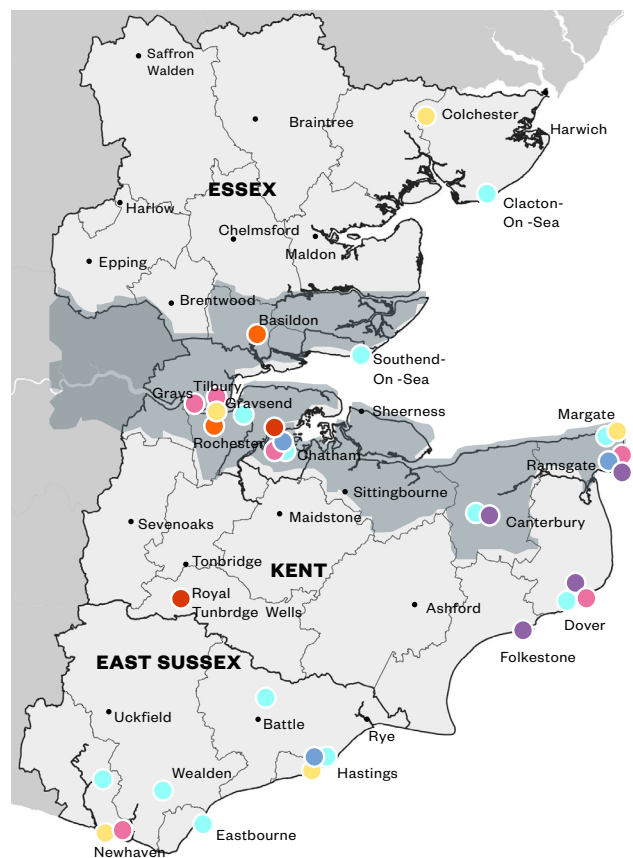
- Future High Streets Fund, which will see more than £63m of investment injected across 5 high streets to help deliver transformative changes (Newhaven, Chatham, Ramsgate, Dover and Tilbury);
- Towns Fund, which will see more than £120m of investment in at least 6 town centres to drive economic growth (Newhaven, Hastings, Margate, Colchester, Harlow, Tilbury and Grays);
- High Street Heritage Action Zones, which will see more than £5m of investment injected to transform high street heritage buildings to fuel economic, social and cultural recovery in 3 town centres (Hastings, Ramsgate, Chatham Intra).

The sheer variety of projects and bids across the South East region illustrates both the scale of the challenge at hand, but also the range of innovative approaches adopted by public and private sector bodies in partnership. Across the region, our research shows that approximately £250 million in funding has been either confirmed or bid for, and culture is at the heart a large number of initiatives. Despite all the great work and abundant opportunities, the South East region is facing real challenges bringing the promise of these benefits to all places and residents. Public funding for culture has been hit especially hard in recent years; with many organisations facing an uncertain future. This underscores an important emerging role for public funders and strategic bodies such as LEPs; to bring partnerships and innovative thinking together, support cultural organisations and local authorities, help them overcome capacity and sustainability issues and build stronger long-term alliances and projects for the long-term benefit of the region. All of these factors together mean it has never been more important than now to make the most of culture and the creative sector development across the region's high streets.

Joining the dots

These unprecedented investment streams towards high streets and town centres are complemented by wider investments, place and sector support programme in the region. Through action and advocacy from the LEP, the South East Economy Network (SECEN) and the Sector Support Fund (SSF) works to create the right conditions for the creative sector to achieve sustainable growth in the region by championing place-making and advocating for sector-friendly local policies,

facilitating strategic planning of built cultural infrastructure and creative workspace, seeking cultural development investment opportunities and delivering sector-led business support and skills development programme. As part of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor programme, Creative Estuary, as a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations, is working to unite East London, the North Kent Coast and South Essex in creating a world-class centre for creative and cultural production, where high streets and town centres have also a key role to play.



- Key**
- Ongoing investment streams
 - Future High Street Fund (successful bids)
 - Town Deal (successful bids)
 - High Street Heritage Action Zone (successful bids)
 - Levelling Up Fund (pending decisions)
 - Other opportunities
 - Creative People and Places
 - Cultural Compact
 - Pioneering Places East Kent
 - Thames Estuary Production Corridor Programme

Towards a shared recovery agenda

The region's high streets and the creative sector are both emerging from the pandemic with great challenges to tackle, and with great uncertainties. There are also clear opportunities to be bold and imaginative when thinking and planning for the future. For example, new patterns of living and working could, over time, bolster new types of enterprise, as well as a more inclusive, localised economies and community-led regeneration efforts. This changing context could point to the revival of high streets, alongside traditional focal points, and there is huge potential for the creative sector to contribute to a re-imagined model for them.

Linking high street recovery...

The South East region is linked through a diverse network of towns centres and high streets, each shaped by its own history and community, and each participating in making the region a place where people want to live, work and visit. Across the area, no two high streets are the same. Each one serves a unique community and hinterland, some are highly successful, while others are struggling. They are also differentiated by the diverse communities, businesses and initiatives they accommodate as well as the role they play socially, culturally, economically and environmentally.

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the South East economy and is recognised as a fundamental moment for high streets and town centres. Whilst the breadth of these impacts

is widely debated, it is clear that it has and will continue to accelerate many of the structural changes seen within the sector prior to the pandemic. Vacancy rates have boomed across most of the region's high streets. Covid-19 has sharpened the focus on the role of town centres, and retail more generally, providing an important opportunity to reflect and recalibrate what high streets and town centres are used for.

In this new configuration, culture is a vital ingredient for successful high streets. High streets are now typically multi-functional. They do not exclusively depend upon their retail offers to secure footfall and spending. They offer a combination of experiences and amenities, including culture, to attract locals and those travelling from further afield. As we move towards new ways of living and working, the opportunity is now for high streets and town centres to re-imagine their assets and to embed new ways of thinking into the fabric of a place.

... to the South East creative sector growth agenda

In recent years there has been much positive economic change happening in the South East region, as evidenced by growing levels of investor confidence, rising levels of entrepreneurialism, and the increasing popularity of the region as a relocation hotspot out of London, particularly for young creative professionals.

Today, the cultural and creative sector is an important part of the South East region's overall economy. The South East has over 15,000 creative businesses, accounting for 9.6 percent of total businesses in the region. Culture plays a major role in attracting and retaining talent, encouraging inward investment and boosting the visitor economy, which records 139 million visitors annually, with nearly £9 billion spent by them.

As a key driver of placemaking, culture is identified as a key factor in the growth of the region, increasing the desire of citizens to live, work and study here and delivering long term quality of place and distinctiveness. Throughout the years, the South East region has demonstrated the value of culture-led regeneration and planning and the benefits of embedding culture into localities.

High streets, however, haven't been the object of a particular focus. In addition, the creative sector's growth trajectory currently lags behind other regions. Challenges in the region include lack of skills; poor productivity among experience economy sectors in comparison to other areas of UK and a high proportion of micro-businesses that lack access to workspaces and to wider networks to sustain innovation and growth. Added to which, the impact of the pandemic which may lead to a loss of jobs and a potential downturn across the sector, with concerns about the viability of a full recovery for many institutions, SMEs and freelancers.

With high streets and town centres being on the agenda at national level and the different funding opportunities already outlined, SELEP is ideally placed to bring together knowledge and capacity, and deliver leadership for high street rejuvenation through creative and cultural initiatives which will drive recovery, long-term growth and resilience in the South East.

In the UK¹

75% of Arts Council funded cultural infrastructure is either on or within a five-minute walk (500m) of a high street*

62% of UK adults agree that culture on the high street gives them a sense of pride in their local area*

50% of adults would like to see more cultural experiences on their high streets*

¹ A High Street Renaissance, Arts Council England, 2021

In the South East¹

4,600 creative businesses are located within 200m of a high streets

1/5 of the region's creative businesses are located within 200m of a high street.

10% of high street businesses are working within the creative and cultural sector on average

18% of SELEP high streets' start-ups/new businesses were creative in 2020

Tunbridge Wells, Southend and Rochford contribute the highest numbers of high street creative businesses.

In Brentwood, Tonbridge, Bexhill, Sevenoaks, Chatham, Hastings, Colchester, Canterbury, Folkestone and Lewes high streets, more than 15% of businesses are creative businesses.

¹ Analysis based on Companies House (2019) and BRES data (2020). Full evidence base can be found in Appendix.

Opportunities for intervention

High streets are the focus of so much of the region's social and economic activity, and a source of jobs, businesses and prosperity. However, they have faced a host of challenges ranging from major shifts in the economy and consumer behaviour to reduced public sector budgets. These challenges have been amplified and the pace of change accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. What this means is that high streets, and the creative sector, will have to be prepared to try new activities and interventions to see what works for businesses, community and each place, and review and adapt as we go.

These interventions should be underpinned by place-based evidence and respond to place-specific challenges. However, there are key opportunities and principles that could guide the future of creative high streets in the South East.



Responding to new technology and changing work and consumption patterns

Working culture and practices are changing and becoming increasingly decentralised, flexible and agile. As a result, there are increasing numbers of people working and wanting to spend time in less conventional environments: near home, in flexible workspaces, in 'third spaces' with a natural draw towards local high streets. There is a clear opportunity for high streets to become greater places for innovative, creative and sustainable businesses to locate themselves and to grow.

Supporting creation, collaboration and entrepreneurship

The creative sector is mainly composed of freelancers, micro-businesses and SMEs, who want to work in a shared space, network and may need access to specialist equipment, affordable and scalable workplaces. This provides a clear opportunity to reshape town centres and create culturally enriched and productive high streets, provide for existing and new businesses, as well as increase the role for innovative community partnerships, co-operatives and collectives that drives economic, social and environmental value.

Providing for flexibility, experimentation and prototyping

The process of experimentation and prototyping is key for all creative practices but can also be used as a tool to re-think high street rejuvenation. This involves making relatively low-cost, ambitious temporary interventions in order to test a hypothesis and build consensus amongst the wide range of stakeholders involved in the project. The key is to demonstrate, demystify and de-risk through prototyping and testing. The challenge is for landowners, planners and operators to provide the flexibility needed for this to happen: accommodating new types of spaces or store formats; incorporating greater adaptability in rents, lengths of lease and space configuration, new technology infrastructure such as 5G connectivity.



2 Diverse & vibrant

Boosting local economies and tourism

The way we engage with our high streets has changed, and high streets must adapt to the diverse new trends for shopping, which are increasingly driven by customer experience and perception. Culture is a vital way in which town centres can develop their 'brand' and become unique and attractive places. Such brands can bring in visitors from further afield as well as enhance the cultural offer available to local people. This in turn can deliver the footfall necessary to support a strong retail offer or other forms of economic activity.

Creating a distinctive sense of place

Properly embedded in the built environment and planned with place, community and ownership in mind, culture and creative uses bring vibrancy, experience and wealth. There is a clear opportunity for the creative sector to take a leading role in placemaking, with culture and heritage helping to shape the places where people want to live, work and play, and where people are brought together to create a real sense of community spirit.

Enhancing local historic character and the region's diverse identities

Heritage sites and buildings are often landmark buildings in high streets: they are highly distinctive, engrained in the local community and often a huge source of civic pride. There is a strong opportunity for the creative sector to be involved in restoring and bringing new uses to historic high street buildings, as well as more widely celebrate highlight of the region's diverse places and identities.

Tackling inequalities and disparities via encouraging participation

Large economic and regeneration interventions often fail to engage meaningfully with communities as part of broader efforts to address inequality. To deliver for all, it is imperative that cultural or creative-led interventions provide for the region's diverse communities and a variety of tastes, and make cultural equity a priority.



3 Inclusive & resilient

Improving skills and educational opportunities for local people

The region lacks a clear 'elevator' of opportunities for young people interested in working in the creative sector. In addition, there are shortages in creative skills and the creative workforce. Creative thinking and culture-led interventions can turn high streets into places where people are empowered to express themselves, to connect with one another, and to learn new skills.

Building employment opportunities that are resilient and of quality

Creative-led interventions in high streets should seek to provide good quality jobs and resilient employment opportunities. Jobs in the sector are often part-time, freelance and multi-faceted, therefore a nuanced understanding of employment and creatives' needs is required to ensure that high streets can provide the conditions for the sector to grow, develop and flourish through the provision of the right types of infrastructure and the right type of support.

Tackling climate change

The urgency of the climate crisis means we cannot afford to wait to integrate culture into global climate action. Technology, digital and creative industries have a clear role to play in developing cutting-edge and innovative solutions to global challenges, like climate change and creative placemaking strategies can be used to achieve more environmental resilience.

Supporting quality of life, healthy living and quality of place

There is clear evidence that arts and culture can be used to advance public health and wellbeing initiatives. By making the most of cultural and creative-led opportunities and improving the quality of the built environment, high streets should seek to improve the quality of life of local communities, their economic wellbeing.

03

**The creative and
cultural sectors as
a driver for high
street rejuvenation**




Overview

The adjoining map and following snapshot and in-depth case studies showcase and illustrate successful and ongoing initiatives to address one or more of the challenges facing high streets with a focus on culture and the creative sector.

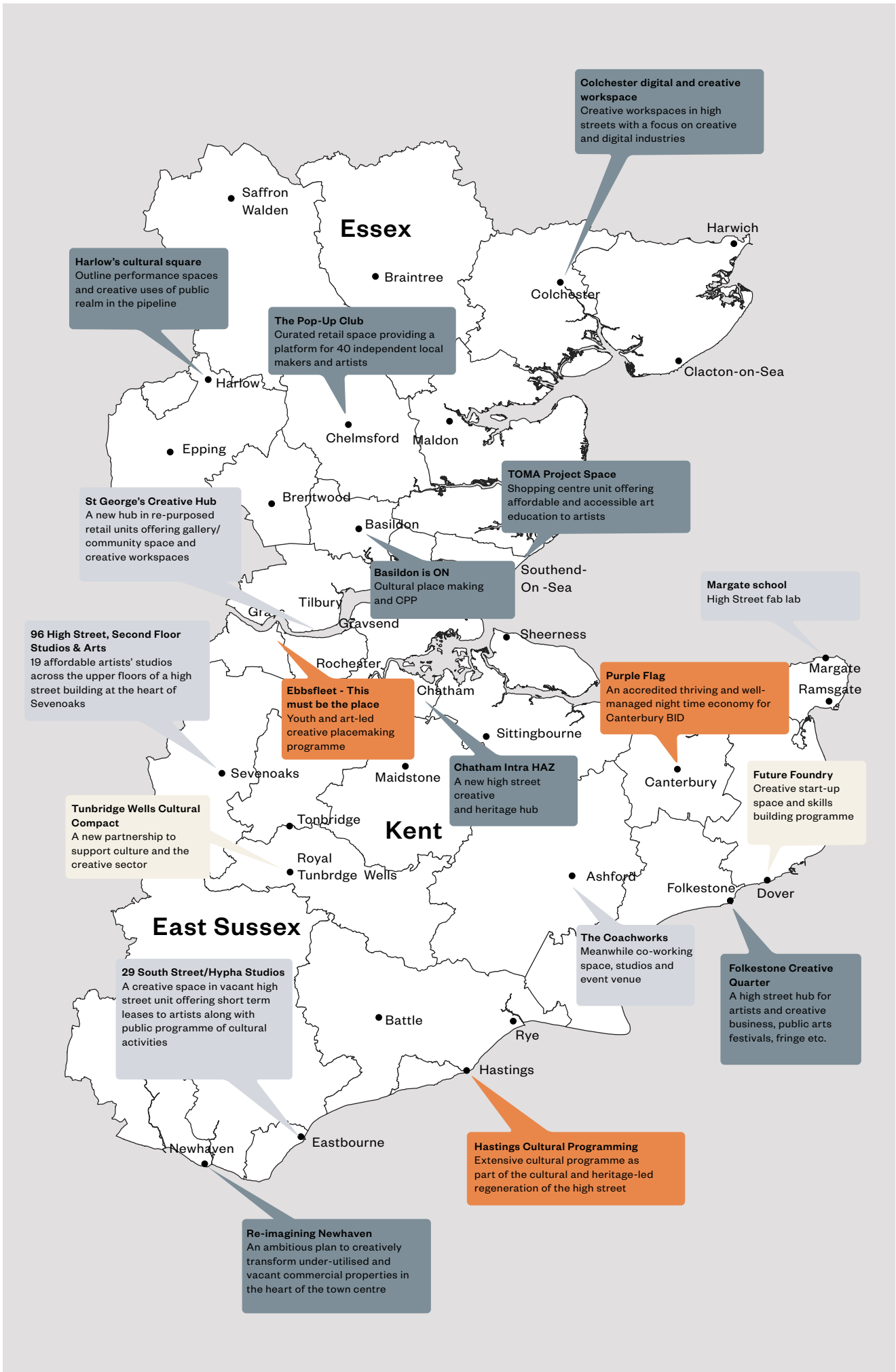
This ranges from supporting local creative and start-up businesses to transforming old buildings or shopping centre retail units into new creative spaces, developing pioneering ownership models or implementing creative placemaking programmes, providing space for cultural education and events, or creating long-term participatory creative structures to steer sustainable and inclusive changes.

Key

Snapshot case studies

-  Adaptive and supportive
-  Diverse and vibrant
-  Inclusive and resilient

In-depth case studies



03. The creative and cultural sectors as a driver for high street rejuvenation

Case studies

1 Adaptive & Supportive

Creative uses in vacant or under-used spaces

St George's Creative Hub, Gravesend

The St George's Creative Hub will be a new arts facility in Gravesend town centre with 2,200 sq ft flexible ground floor gallery space, a 800 sq ft ground floor café area, and 761 sq ft of creative co working space on the first floor. The creative hub is being delivered through the redevelopment of two adjacent retail units in a prominent location in St. George's Shopping Centre. The units are owned by Gravesham Borough Council and were previously vacant. The transformation is part funded from the Government's Getting Building Fund, SELEP and Section 106 contributions.

<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/10/St-Georges-Hub-Full-Business-Case-v.4-Redacted.pdf>

- Re-purposing of council-owned asset
- Use of planning contributions
- Council-run and managed creative hub

96 High Street, Second Floor Studios & Arts, Sevenoaks

19 affordable artists' studios across the 1st and 2nd floors of a high street building in the heart of Sevenoaks. The studios opened in 2018 as a joint venture between Second Floor Studios & Arts and Sevenoaks District Council as part of the Council's town centre masterplan. The studios are fully occupied and there is an ambition to deliver

further creative workspace with focus on artists' and makers' studios.

<https://www.secondfloor.co.uk/studios/sevenoaks>

- Use of established artist studio provider
- Incorporating creative production uses within
- High streets and in upper floors



96 High Street, Sevenoaks © Realla

29 South Street/Hypha Studios, Eastbourne

Hypha Studios is a charity that matches creatives with empty spaces to regenerate the high street through the formation of cultural hubs with programming to engage local communities. Every placement includes a mentoring session for the selected artist and the creation of a public program that directly engages with local communities, generating new footfall. 29 South Street in Eastbourne in spring 2021 was Hypha Studio's first project. The artist, Molly Stredwick, was selected by the Towner Gallery.

<https://hyphastudios.com>

- Brokering relationship between private landowners and creative practitioners
- Empty retail units working as an incubator for artistic talents

The Margate School, Margate

The independent art school Margate School has turned the old department store Woolworth's in Margate High Street into a theatre, exhibition room, fablab and classrooms. A rolling programme of exhibitions, events and workshops is on offer. Facilities available include darkroom, studio, exhibition walls, photographic studio, makerspace and window display space.

<https://fr.themargateschool.com/>

- Re-purposing of large scale department store
- Enhancement of heritage assets



The Margate School, Margate © MS

Creative meanwhile uses

The Coachworks, Ashford

The Coachworks is a 'meanwhile' development reviving disused industrial buildings in Ashford. The site includes a co-working space, individual studio spaces, and flexible indoors and outdoors event space with food stalls. The Council purchased the site in 2014 and put out a call for 'open ideas' for an interim use. The anticipated lifespan of the current project is 5 years.

<https://turner.works/works/view/coachworks/>

- Interim use of council assets to reinject life in the town centre and provide affordable workspaces and community spaces.
- The Council who invested the construction and owns the land, receives a part of the profit



The Coachworks, Asford ©GG Archard

Space for makers and independent creative retailers

The Pop-Up Club, Chelmsford

The Pop-Up Club is a social enterprise providing independent local makers, artists, and designers a platform to access the high street and grow. Having started as a monthly pop-up marketplace in Chelmsford, the Pop-Up Club opened a permanent store in Chelmsford in 2020 and is now expanding to Brighton and Manchester. The store in Chelmsford sells ethically-sourced gifts, homeware, arts and fashion from local businesses.

<http://popupclub.co/property-portfolio/>

- Support the installation of retailers with roots in the surrounding area and local communities;
- Providing showcasing space for freelancers and micro-businesses
- Flexible store formats providing for greater adaptability



High street cultural programming

Hastings HAZ Cultural Programming, Hastings

As part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme led by Historic England, a consortium of creative organisations is leading a programme of cultural activities aimed at breathing new life into the town centre. The Cultural Programme features new digital and physical artworks inspired by the nation's high streets as well as a podcast series inspired by them, recording local legends and working with local people to capture the everyday magic of high streets. Commissioned artists are also working with local communities on high streets across England to co-produce artworks that respond to, document the changing high street.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/highstreets-heritage-action-zones-cultural-programmelaunch/>

- Cultural programming to revive high streets
- Consortium of organisations leading rejuvenation

Culture and night time economy

Canterbury Purple Flag

Purple Flag is a night-time economy accreditation, showing the town centre meets the standards of excellence in managing its night-time economy. The scheme takes into consideration safety, movement including transport and pedestrian routes, diversity of the night-time offer, placemaking, and local policy. In Canterbury, the Purple Flag accreditation process is managed by the Canterbury BID. The city has been accredited with the Purple Flag every year since 2011 and received special praise for its thriving and well managed night-time economy.

<https://www.canterburybid.co.uk/evening-night-timeeconomy>

Creative place-making



© Creative Estuary

This must be the place, Ebsfleet

A three year programme exploring how radical, youth and art-led creativity can have an impact on public spaces to make them the heart of the community.

The plans for Ebsfleet Garden City include creating up to 15,000 new homes and 30,000 jobs by 2035. Connected to the development, Cement Fields and Ebsfleet Development Corporation announced a three-year placemaking programme of research, artists' residencies and co-commissions, created collaboratively with young people from Ebsfleet Garden City.

The aim of the programme is to explore the opportunities and challenges presented by the new town, and how these can be re-examined and countered through youth and art-led creative placemaking. The project is supported by National Lottery funding and Ebsfleet Development Corporation

<https://cementfields.org/projects/this-must-be-theplace/>

- Providing spaces with and for young people
- Create opportunities for temporary small projects allowing a 'test and learn' approach to new ideas



© Canterbury Christ Church University

Creative education

TOMA Project Space

The Other MA (TOMA) is a 12-month artist-run education model based in Southend-on-Sea. It was set up in 2016 to offer responsive, affordable, accessible art education to artists and is currently the only postgraduate level art programme in Essex. TOMA puts emphasis on welcoming those from communities under-represented in the

contemporary art world and challenging hidden obstacles and hierarchies.

TOMA Project Space is TOMA's primary space, located in a retail unit in the Royals Shopping Centre. The Project Space also hosts public exhibitions and events. Other facilities include The Old Works and Metal in Southend.

<https://www.toma-art.com>

- Innovative approach to test new uses within shopping centre
- Providing and developing creative sector capacity



TOMA Project Space © VisitSouthend

Creative skills building

Future Foundry, Dover

Future Foundry is a Dover-based community interest company which stands behind markets and other projects focused on removing barriers to progression for young people in the creative industries and supporting the transition from education to a career or further training.

Future Foundry's projects include Student Makers' Market, a popular pop-up market which provides real life, street-based business training for young creatives across Kent.

The Makers' Market offers young creatives free stalls to test products and business ideas, alongside training sessions on market trading, presentation, production, business modelling, finance, or sign writing.

<https://futurefoundry.org.uk>

- Creative industries' support programme



Future Foundry © University of Kent

Creative sector capacity

Tunbridge Wells Cultural Compact

Tunbridge Wells is developing a Cultural Compact for its town. It is a partnership designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority. Tunbridge Wells have an ambition to unlock transformational cultural investment aligned to the economic development and town centre regeneration agenda.

- Development of a shared ambition among project partners for culture's contribution to local development
- Increase capacity and strategic planning for the development and delivery of joint initiatives that strengthen the local cultural ecosystem and leverage resources.



© Kent Online

Case study - Basildon Cultural Placemaking & CPP

Key figures on Basildon town centre:

- 19% of ground floor units vacant
- 3% of Basildon's creative businesses based in and around the high street
- 6% of high streets businesses are creative
- 6% of high street starts up are creative

Source: Companies House, 2020

Background

Basildon was one of the first of the post-war 'New Towns', noted for plentiful green space and bold modernist architecture. The town centre is undergoing a period of change, prompted by the development of a regeneration strategy that will diversify and bring new uses to the high street. The town centre is overseen by BTCM, a consortium of landowners including the owners of the Eastgate shopping centre, and Basildon Borough Council.

The challenges

Basildon Town Centre is the major retail centre in the borough. It is a relatively busy and well-used town centre with an important social function. However, Basildon has a high vacancy rate of nearly 19% and it is recognised that there is currently an over-provision of retail space and an under-provision of other uses such as culture, leisure and food and drink to bring diversity to the town centre.

The story so far

In 2017, BTCM commissioned Futurecity to develop a new narrative to lead the rejuvenation of the town centre. Immediate priorities included activating the public realm to drive footfall and kick-starting the town centre's fledgling evening economy. A strategy was needed that would draw together key town stakeholders through an incremental, deliverable programme that would complement and support the 'big moves' of the masterplan.

The cultural research identified sector strengths in the creative digital economy within the borough. These were combined with Basildon's utopian heritage to form a vision for the town centre as a culturally democratic digital creative district. A provisional brand 'BasildON' was developed to signify how a new cultural energy would be 'switching on' the town centre. A team of artists and cultural entrepreneurs were introduced to stakeholders who could take the vision, principles and proposals of the cultural strategy and enact them

from day one. A governance structure to oversee this drew upon the strengths of civic, commercial and cultural partners with recommendations for funding sources that could help seed cultural activity.

An 8-year programme of projects and partnerships provided a roadmap for stakeholders to incrementally grow cultural activation, attract creative enterprise, and improve the public realm of the town centre. Following the completion of the cultural place-making strategy, the BasildON Consortium was established bringing together key town centre's stakeholders, local artists and creative businesses, local cultural institutions. The consortium then prepared a successful application to Arts Council England for the Creative People and Places (CPP) funding.

The BasildON Creative People and Place is running until 2023 and is composed of 7 core projects:

- Community voices: a virtual and physical network acting as a vehicle by which the community can drive the direction of the CPP programme;
- Cultivate: a network of creative producers, supporting and encouraging local people to come together and co-produce an innovative programme of events, activities and interventions.;
- Connect: A business support programme, creating a bridge between commercial businesses and cultural practice;
- Open Lab: Hands over the keys of vacant shops to creative individuals and organisations for them to use the town centre fabric as a cultural canvas. Open Lab allows for a curated programme of ever-changing activity.
- Beyond boundaries: a number of street art and digital art commissions throughout the town centre, cultivating the Basildon's cultural brand and transforming the town centre in an open air gallery.
- DigiCult: A vibrant centre of culture, digital technology and creative enterprise providing workspaces and spaces for collaboration.
- Future Festival: A programme of innovative activity including installations, exhibitions, performances and workshops that make creative use of space in and around the town.

'The test and learn aspect is really meaningful (...) that helped us grow, and reflect, and go again'

Key learning and successes

- Reducing barriers and engaging with all residents: Bringing culture to the high street, in and on the public realm reduces barriers and engage people: a number of people stop by when they go to the shops or to work.



© BasildON Creative People and Places

- Complex landowners' landscape: managing and agreeing on a clear direction of travel with the consortium of town centre's landowners. Bringing a third party (i.e. consultant) to the discussions has helped.
- Demonstrating impacts: Cultural interventions have been tested during 2018-2019 and the project team was able to evidence the cultural impact of these looking at social media influence and impacts on nearby eateries/bars/restaurants. This has helped in preparing the CPP submission.
- Strong community engagement and involvement: the programme was developed by a consortium of stakeholders but street-conversations and survey were also used to gather opinions and ideas.
- A large-scale celebration to galvanise ideas and ambitions: Basildon 70th anniversary and its year-long celebration gave ideas to local stakeholders and officers who wanted to sustain this.
- Testing and prototyping: Before finalising the programme and CPP application, the consortium tested ideas and uses for 3-4 months in a vacant unit on the high street. This was also used to collect information and gather opinions on what people wanted to see. 'Test and learn aspect is really meaningful. We have been keen to test things, understand what we are testing and what we need to know to create right conditions for things to flourish, that's helped us grow and reflect and go again.'

Timeline

- 2018**
 Basildon Cultural Placemaking Strategy commissioned by BTCM

 Testing and prototyping new uses, collaborations and interventions in the town centre
- 2019**
 Testing and prototyping new uses, collaborations and interventions in the town centre

 Basildon 70th Birthday year-long celebrations

 Basildon awarded £1,282,002 from ACE as part of BasildON Creative People and Place (2019-2023) to deliver a programme based on the cultural placemaking strategy
- Launch of Open Lab

Case study - Chatham Intra High Street Heritage Action Zone

Key figures on Chatham Intra high street:

- 18% of ground floor units vacant
- 29% of Chatham's creative businesses based in and around the high street
- 13% of high streets businesses are creative
- 5% of high street starts up are creative

Background

Chatham Intra High Street, which is located within the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area between Rochester and Chatham, has a rich and important place in Medway's history with its development closely linked to the growth of the Royal Dockyard at Chatham from the 17th century onwards. Historically the area between the High Street and the river was occupied by industry. The narrow lanes and industrial buildings help to make up the area's unique character.

The challenges

Chatham Intra and surroundings neighbourhoods also concentrate high levels of deprivation. The High Street has a wealth of very fine historic and industrial buildings but is suffering from lack of investment and high vacancy rates. In addition, the growing creative community reported a lack of workspaces in the area.

'Artists, creatives and community organisations coming together as agents of change'

The story so far

Since 2004, Medway Council, supported by different funds, has invested significantly in Chatham Intra to restore a number of historic buildings and bring them back into use. However, it had not been successful in ensuring a sense of ownership of a shared ambition or collective vision for the place and the cultural sector was isolated and suffered from a lack of collective voice.

In 2020, the local authority was awarded up to £1.6 million of Historic England funding to revitalise a section of Chatham and Rochester High Streets within the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area. Established as a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ), the project aims to bring the history and

heritage of the area back to life, and boost the local economy by 2024. From regenerating historic buildings to helping to engage local communities through art and cultural projects, the project works with local people and partners to help unlock the potential of the local area and make it more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors through the following focus areas:

- Creating a development framework to guide future development in the area in a way which protects heritage and character whilst enabling sensitive sustainable growth and regeneration.
- Creating a re-use and re-vitalise buildings programme to offer business support, grants and help promote vacant building opportunities, This is expected to increase economic activity in the area as well as offer employment opportunities, co-working spaces, boosting the local economy. This will focus on bringing two large highlight buildings back in to use alongside improvements to other key buildings in the High Street.
- Developing a cultural heritage and engagement programme to animate the area's heritage story. This will include community events which aim to increase footfall in the area, and help provide an economically sustainable legacy of the area as a destination in its own right.

Following the funding award, a Cultural Consortium made up of arts organisations, community groups, local businesses, and residents from the local area was formed, and successfully bid for an additional funding opportunity to deliver a three year cultural programme.

The HSHAZ project is part of a wider borough investment in culture and cultural placemaking. Medway Council has the ambition to embed culture within all its priorities, developing a consistent cross-council approach and working collaboratively with stakeholders and partners to understand, promote and secure Medway's cultural and creative landscape for present and for future generations.

The Council has established a Cultural Compact in order to co-create and co-deliver a holistic vision for culture and to work together with broader partners (e.g. health agencies, business, universities) to provide leadership, strategic capacity and provide a step change in the sustainability and impact of culture in Medway. Whilst Medway has not been selected to participate to next stage of the UK City of Culture 2025 bidding process, the bid development process has also assisted in creating new partnerships and collaborations, and has generated a strong momentum around culture and creativity in Medway.



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Key learning and successes

- Understand the broader value of culture and the creative industries: Medway Council is a strong advocate for culture. The regeneration agenda, the economic agenda, the health and wellbeing agenda and the environmental agenda are all looked through the eye of culture. In Chatham Intra, culture is used not only as a lever for regeneration but it is also seen as a way to commercially support diversification of the high street at a more viable level.
- The Cultural Strategy as a game changer and the importance of community ownership: In 2020, with support from ACE, Medway Cultural Partnership and Medway Council began the development of a Compact and Cultural Strategy for Medway. Consultation laid at heart of the strategy development and put artists, makers, storytellers and cultural influencers at its centre as the agents of change. Through this process, the creative community have taken more ownership and are the gatekeepers of culture. The levels of interest, commitment and excitement around the strategy led to a number of successful funding bids and initiatives across the local authorities.
- Linking heritage, culture and placemaking: The HSHAZ programme is looking at creative approaches to improve the public realm, create better transport links and enhance heritage assets. It is looking holistically at the place and through different lenses: historic, economic, social, environmental etc.

Timeline

- 2019**
A series of funding bids which have started to connect Chatham town centre as a viable opportunity area
- 2020**
Awarded up to £1.6 million of government funding to revitalise a section of Chatham high street, (Historic England's HSHAZ programme)

Awarded £10,000 pilot funding to implement the HSHAZ cultural programme.

Nearby Chatham town centre awarded £9.5m provisional funding through Future High Street Fund
- 2021**
Levelling Up and Community Renewal fund bid focusing on cultural infrastructure.

Cultural Consortium awarded £80k to deliver a 3 year Cultural Programme

Case study - Colchester: digital and creative workspaces

Key figures on Colchester town centre:

- 10% of ground floor units vacant
- 16% of Colchester's creative businesses based in and around the high street
- 10% of high streets businesses are creative
- 7% of high street starts up are creative

Source: Companies House, 2020

Background

Colchester is a historic town and is Britain's oldest recorded town. Its growth is bringing with it new housing, an enriched cultural and leisure offer, as well as new opportunities for business and, critically, better skilled and higher-paying jobs.

In particular, the town centre is home to expanding creative, cultural and digital sectors as well as highly regarded and established leading arts organisations such as the Mercury Theatre, Firstsite, Colchester Arts Centre and Signals Media Arts. It is recognised as a growing creative cluster and appears in the government's Industrial Strategy Sector Deal for the Creative Industries. In 2021, Colchester was awarded £19.2m of Town Deal funding which will boost a range of projects including the creation of digital work and skills hubs, the accelerated introduction of 5G, the restoration of iconic buildings and wider public realm improvements across the town centre.

The challenges

In common with town centres and high streets around the country, Colchester's town centre is facing an array of challenges with the decline of retail, the volume of hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses and the current skills and staff shortages. There is a need to innovate and to incorporate new uses in the town centre to remain competitive.

The story so far

Colchester has a strong digital agenda. Underpinned by its Digital Strategy, Colchester intends to become the best-connected place in the Eastern region making it a magnet for creative, digital, technology and IT businesses. The Strategy builds upon the deployment of ultra-fast broadband across the town centre and the opening of SPACE Colchester at 37 Queen Street ("the Creative Business Centre") in 2017.

Set in Colchester Old Police Station, a listed building in the heart the town centre, SPACE Colchester provides

the local community with 12,000 sq ft of creative space, co-working desk space, workshops and training programmes, and showcasing facilities for the creative and digital industries. It runs SPACE Toolkit, a monthly professional development programme for creative businesses, and a Graduate & Creative Practitioner support programme with monthly peer-peer feedback sessions.

In 2018, the borough council commissioned a study into demands for further workspace for the creative and digital sector in Colchester. The study revealed a burgeoning creative scene typified by the huge demand for space at SPACE Colchester as well as the need for grow-on space.

With funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and Government's Town Fund, Colchester Council is now planning to create new grow-on workspaces for the digital and creative industries in the town centre's former bus depot. It is expected that this new development will provide an opportunity for growing creative and digital businesses to remain in Colchester but also that it will make the town centre and townscape more attractive. The new workspace hub will be managed by an operator which will be asked to provide some form of community engagement and learning programme. It will also be home of a cafe and meeting venue.

Colchester is currently developing a new Cultural Strategy. Drawing on the wide spectrum of the borough's cultural landscape it will include the arts, creative industries, heritage and the public realm and will also take into consideration links to green spaces, tourism and events. Against the backdrop of the recent investment from the Town Deal Fund which will deliver long-term economic growth for Colchester, and in particular its town centre, the strategy provides an opportunity to feed the planning for this into the re-opening and long-term success of the thriving cultural sector and the town centre.

'Council investment in assets and in the provision of creative spaces in the town centre has stimulated regeneration and private investment'

Key learning and successes

- Evidencing needs and demand: The feasibility study for the old bus depot showed that there were more digital creative businesses in Colchester than thought and revealed a clear shift towards more digital practices. Evidencing this has helped with making the case, securing funding and making it happen.
- Strategic public purchasing of assets: Both 37



© SPACE Studios

- Queens Street and the bus depot building were bought by the council for strategic purposes in 2010 and 2013 when the town centre struggled to attract private investment following the 2008 economic crash.
- Digital infrastructure and connectivity: Colchester town centre has ultra fast fibre broadband connectivity which make it a great place to attract digital and tech businesses, but will also allow for an increased use of connected devices which will help Colchester Council, businesses and the BID to better plan for future and the challenges of traffic congestion, rise of online retailing and changing consumer demand and expectations, protecting air quality etc.
 - Relying on sector expertise for workspace development: Getting a sector operator/workspace provider on board at the early stage of creative workspace development is key so they can inform the design and spec.
 - Leveraging and encouraging private sector investment: The delivery of SPACE Colchester has stimulated regeneration and private investment. The owner of the nearby derelict shopping centre was waiting for the workspace to open to submit a planning application for the renovation of the building.
 - The role of creative and culture in place shaping and place making. Both ends of the town centre have significant offerings and are linked by the Roman Wall, one of the town's major historic assets.

Timeline

- **2010**
Council purchased old police station building (37 Queen Street)
- **2011**
Firstsite gallery completed
- **2013**
Council purchased old bus depot (currently being redeveloped as grow-on creative workspaces)
- **2016**
37 Queen Street creative workspace (Space Studios) opens
- **2017**
Colchester Digital Strategy (2017-2022)
- **2021**
Colchester town centre awarded £19.2 m of Town Deal funding

Case study - Folkestone Creative Quarter

Key figures on Folkestone town centre:

- 13% of ground floor units vacant
- 25% of Folkestone creative businesses based in and around the high street
- 12% of high streets businesses are creative
- 13% of high street starts up are creative

Source: Companies House, 2020

Background

Folkestone has a long history and has expanded over many centuries eventually developing into a fashionable seaside resort. However, the town faced difficulties from 1990s when the British seaside holiday industry declined and ferry services from Folkestone Harbour closed with the opening of the channel tunnel. The town entered a period of decline which greatly affected the seafront area and Old Town, leaving many buildings abandoned and becoming derelict. In 2002, Sir Roger de Haan founded Creative Foundation, a charitable organisation with the aim of developing a new 'Creative Quarter' at the heart of the Old Town district, regenerating the town centre through culture and cultural production, and boosting the economy by providing for the creative industries.

The challenges

In the early 2000s, a combination of factors including unemployment, poor educational achievement and anti-social behaviour led to concern about community cohesion and social regeneration. These factors expressed themselves spatially, with the prosperity of Folkestone drifting westwards and deepening cycles of deprivation occurring in the centre and east of the town.

The story so far

In 2002, with the help of founding funder The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust, the Creative Foundation (today Creative Folkestone) was formed. The trust acquired a large number of buildings in the area immediately surrounding Folkestone's harbour and combined a traditional approach to physical regeneration through property redevelopment with innovations in the way that these properties are then supported and let to individual artists and creative organisations. The ambition was for the trust to control enough properties to reach a tipping point – a critical mass of creative activity which would be sufficient to attract private investors to move into the area

By leasing spaces and high street units at very affordable rents, a number of creative professionals, artists and small businesses moved into the quarter over the years. Folkestone Creative Quarter is today home to more than 150 creative production businesses (designers, filmmakers, musicians, web-developers etc.) and 60 artists. Over the years, Creative Folkestone have restored 90 buildings and today looks after 80 flats, 115 studios and offices and over 50 shops. With the exception of premises providing food, drink or educational facilities, the majority are rented out to creatives, and a small percentage are offered at subsidised rents to encourage arts graduates setting up fledgling businesses, while the majority are rented out at commercial rates. The local council is supporting the venture by keeping business rates reasonable for start-ups and small concerns.

'The approach to rejuvenate the Old Town was "production-led" (...) it was about making a destination for creatives to settle but more crucially to work'

Creative Folkestone is also committed to delivering both environmental and socio-economic regeneration and has funded significant education and community initiatives to bring young people and adult learning into the Quarter. It also initiated the Folkestone Triennial, first established in 2008, which is now the largest exhibition of newly-commissioned work presented in the UK. Site-specific artworks are commissioned for what are often unusual locations around the town and along Folkestone's coastline. The Triennial's contribution to building critical mass for Folkestone's cultural tourism has been crucial for driving visitor numbers, spending and length of stay in the destination, in addition to communicating a renewed sense of place.

In 2020, The Independent included Folkestone on its 2020 list of the best UK destinations for public art. Recent anecdotal evidence suggests that more creatives have relocated to Folkestone since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, boosting demand for the work and living spaces that Creative Folkestone manages.

Key learning and successes

- Starting small and thinking long term: Creative Folkestone has benefited from important private investment to build up its portfolio but it took a long time for the model to become self-sustaining. Starting with one or two units, testing uses, and trialling a model specific to a place is important to build up long term resilience and progressive capacity and critical mass.



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- Building critical mass and synergies: The cultural and creative sectors benefit from agglomeration economies. In the Creative Quarter, synergy is building between the various businesses; for example, a local web designer builds websites for up-and-coming local businesses.
- Addressing hardware, software and branding: The success of the Creative Quarter addressed these three interlinked issues: the building environment (resuscitating Folkestone's Old Town through physical interventions to improve the public realm and the sense of place), cultural engagement (transforming the area into a great place to live, study, work, visit through cultural engagement opportunities), Folkestone's image (turning the town's negative image, both internal and external, into a new positive sense of identity).
- Using the town as a 'canvas': The Folkestone Triennial represents the flagship visual arts element of a major regeneration project. Artists are invited to use the town as their 'canvas', utilising public spaces to create striking new pieces that reflect issues affecting both the town and the wider world.
- Providing for cultural consumption and cultural production activities: The Creative Quarter is successful and resilient as its essential outcome is making it a good destination for creatives to settle and work. The approach taken to rejuvenate the Old Town was 'production-led' in contrast to what a more 'consumption-led' approach which would just provide for cultural activities, entertainment and tourism.

Timeline

- 2002**
Creative Foundation was established in order to regenerate Folkestone through creative activity
- 2008**
First Folkestone Triennial
- 2012**
Successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid and creation of the Folkestone Townscape Heritage Initiative to improve the built historic environment of the quarter
- 2018**
Creative Foundation announced as Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation
- 2019**
Creative Foundation becomes Creative Folkestone

Case study - Re-Imagining Newhaven

Key figures on Newhaven town centre:

- 19% of ground floor units vacant
- 45% of Newhaven's creative businesses based in and around the high street
- 12% of high streets businesses are creative
- 19% of high street starts up are creative

Source: Companies House, 2020

Background

Rich in history, nestled in nature and close to culture, Newhaven is an industrial coastal town situated between Brighton, Lewes and Eastbourne. In June 2020, Lewes District Council submitted a bid to benefit from the Government's Future High Streets Fund to help transform Newhaven town centre and high street, creating up to 200 jobs by 2024. In Spring 2021, Government confirmed Newhaven would receive just over £5m to deliver a package of interventions to transform underutilised and vacant commercial properties in the heart of the Town Centre by March 2024.

The challenges

The closure of the Bevan Funnell factory and the Parker Pen factory combined with wider economic change, has led to hundreds of job losses and gradual economic decline. These wider economic challenges and changes in consumer shopping and leisure expectations have reduced the town centre to a shell of its former self. There are high levels of vacant units, with an increasingly limited retail offer. The high street suffers from poor commercial premises occupied by low value uses that have served to accelerate the decline in property assets, as well as a lack of diversity among activities taking place.

The story so far

In 2017, Coast to Capital LEP and Lewes District Council launched Newhaven Enterprise Zone, which aims to facilitate the delivery of sustainable regeneration and a shift towards a higher value economy in the next 25 years by offering a range of incentives to businesses, unlocking key development sites, consolidating infrastructure and attracting new businesses.

In 2019, Lewes District Council, Locate East Sussex

and the Enterprise Zone joined forces to develop a step-by-step plan for Newhaven Town Centre and High Street – 'Re-imagining Newhaven' – and to develop a business case for Newhaven's bid for the Future High Street Fund. Residents, businesses, key local public sector partners, regional strategic partnerships and political representatives have been engaged throughout the Re-imagining Newhaven programme. The bid was successful and Newhaven received more than 5 million of funding. Re-imagining Newhaven envisages an integrated and strengthened town centre that brings new and diversified uses to serve business communities and provides for the growing Newhaven's creative community. The plan presents a compelling series of interventions for the transformation of underutilised and disused spaces in the heart of Newhaven Town Centre, as well as essential improvements to wayfinding and access. This includes creating new opportunities for local entrepreneurs in the Greater Brighton City Region's fast-growing creative sector. Key planned interventions include:

- The Creative Hub and Urban Living Room Community Healthy Living & Sustainability Hub: Re-purposing a disused supermarket space, responding to a demand for creative industries by providing co-working spaces, small studios, meeting space, café and retail area. The ground floor will be home to a Community Supermarket and Community Kitchen.
- Urban Living Rooms: Transforming the upper levels of the underutilised Dacre Road car park into a social and experiential meeting space.
- Wayfinding & Access: Connecting the town centre with key residential and business areas, increasing footfall and dwell time whilst reducing traffic and improving air quality by creating clear, legible and engaging wayfaring routes that bring a sense of care, pride and place ownership.

Key learning and successes

- Joint delivery of infrastructure/land use development and wider business support packages. In the context of the Enterprise Zone and the regeneration of the town centre, successful outcomes require that the actions of a significant number of local agencies, developers, investors, businesses and local organisations are coordinated and integrated in a way that allows the area to achieve their economic potential. These actions cover the full range of infrastructure provision, business support services, skills and training, zone marketing and promotion. The challenge is to find a governance structure that can bring together the relevant agents of change in a timely and effective manner.
- Finding a Unique Selling Point (USP) and think about how culture and the creative sector can link with other sectors and specialisms: Newhaven's strong fishing tradition and bustling fish market have the potential to support local culinary tourism and cater for the ever-increasing popularity of fresh,



© John Fielding

locally sourced produce. The Future High Street bid articulates how Newhaven can creatively build on the existing marine-based industries, supported by a rejuvenated High Street and Town Centre fuelled by new leisure and culture opportunities and entrepreneurship.

‘The focus on place-making is critical to ensuring the town’s wider regeneration, to attract additional commercial investment and help build community wealth.’

Timeline

- **2017**
Key Enterprise Zone sites purchased
- Newhaven’s Enterprise Zone launched
- **2018**
Launch of Newhaven’s Enterprise Zone strategic framework
- Newhaven’s Community Fund launched
- **2019**
New strategic relationship between SELEP/Coast to Capital for Newhaven Enterprise Zone
- **2020**
Newhaven’s place story launch
- **2021**
More than £5m secured through FHSF

04

Delivering for high streets and the creative sector

Lessons learned and relevance

The case studies collected here demonstrate the broad range of economic and social benefits that can arise from putting the creative sector at the heart of high street transformation, as well as the enormous energy and resource existing in communities, local organisations and the private sector to support this. Opposite are the shared learnings and key messages from the case study research:

Vision, approach and commitment

Embracing risk and creativity, and the test-and-learn approach:

The case studies show the importance of risk-taking and creativity to try new things and test ideas, problem solve and respond to local needs imaginatively. Creative activity emerged as a key tool used by high street and sector stakeholders to inspire change and grow projects and highlighted the opportunity of “creativity” in its wider sense; innovative thinking, imagination, outside of traditional engagement. Creative activity is important, especially in the early stages of a project when it is crucial to actively explore the relevance and context of an idea. Testing and prototyping can be meaningfully connected to strategic development agendas. This involves making relatively low-cost, ambitious temporary interventions that address the strategic goals, in order to test a hypothesis and build consensus amongst the wide range of stakeholders involved in high streets and town centres. To be effective, the process should involve baseline evaluation, against which changes are measured in order to build consensus and the investment case for more permanent or longer-term interventions which may ensue.

The importance of a shared vision:

Projects that are embedded and thriving within their communities often present a values-based approach underpinning their work. A shared aim being part of, and for the benefit of their local community. This holistic thinking informs their decision-making to consider wider community issues outside of more traditional models based on bottom-line and profit only criteria. In addition, contribution of the creative sector has long been under-represented in traditional growth measures. Movements towards a greater role for social value in procurement and investment, and a greater recognition of the need for co-production represent important shifts towards a meaningful approach.

High street stakeholders and partners may need to commit to cultural investment over the long term

Many of the case studies demonstrate that significant impacts have only followed on from long-term planning and commitment by high street stakeholders.

Collaboration, relationships and networks of support emerged as particularly significant in terms of shared learning, accessing relevant support and expertise and growing a vision. They were highlighted in the early stages of groups in growing the right structure, framework, for their community and once established in working sustainably. However, meaningful collaboration takes time and commitment allowing for those involved to work together in an open and creative process to shape the direction of the work towards a shared goal.

Operational considerations

There are a large number of operational models for high street stakeholders to consider:

Local authorities can play a range of different roles in rejuvenating high streets through culture, which require different levels of resource investment, and which equally offer different levels of control or influence.

- St George's Creative Hub s is being directly delivered by the council, in collaboration with other external partners.
- Ashford Borough Council owns and has participated in the construction costs of The Coachworks. It is not involved in day-to- day operations of the space, but captures some profits and retains the ability to influence the development of the facility.

Positive outcomes can be achieved with limited budgets and resources:

In a challenging funding climate, a number of the case studies have demonstrated that positive impacts can be achieved with very limited initial budgets.

Careful design and delivery can help to maximise impacts:

In several of the case studies, it can be seen that the careful design and delivery of projects and activities has sought to maximise the local economic and social benefits delivered, highlighting that it is not just where the investment is made, but the details of how it is implemented that can affect the impacts achieved.

Assets can be used innovatively:

Significant public land and property holdings on and around high streets can be an important resource. Management involves control over who the occupants are, what they do and the standards by which the tenant organisations operate – all of which can either create or extract public value from the high street. The coordination and alignment of asset / property management, short- and long- term, with spatial regeneration goals is critical to unlocking this potential. Defining a clear framework, which enables the benefits of each occupancy to be balanced relative to commercial, social, environmental or economic goals, is key.

Evidencing, monitoring, evaluating

The importance of evidencing and evaluating:

Evidence and reflection are invaluable in the process of managing change, and it takes time to support this. Recording baseline and tracking impact over longer periods of time will help to establish what works. Critically, this will guide more effective use of public funds and allow preconceptions to be challenged to help achieve buy-in. Monitoring and evaluation should not be overly bureaucratic, but rather built into existing processes, making more effective use of good evidence and, where it adds value, new forms of data. The potential cross-cutting benefits of data insight to evaluate the high street and create a robust feedback loop of action and evidence should be recognised.

Nimble data usage:

Case studies have found that for the Covid recovery phase their traditional sources offer data that is too old – not reflecting the multiple Covid impacts on society and therefore not doing what they need it to do. This challenge has prompted more openness to using new, less traditional sources of data that give a clearer picture of the current context, often provided through the local knowledge of the sector working with communities on the ground. This openness to being more flexible with data gives places a more nimble approach. As long as there is a clear and transparent recognition of its limitations, this can work.

Developing a clear roadmap

For high street stakeholders seeking to embed creative and cultural uses in high streets, there are key questions that should be considered to support strategy, intervention or process development.

Define what success looks like: what is to be achieved and which economic, social impacts or environmental impacts are highest priority?

The case studies demonstrate the broad range of impacts that can be achieved embedding cultural and creative uses in high streets. Identifying which are the greatest priorities is important in considering the most appropriate strategic approach to investing in high streets and the cultural and creative sector. Identifying priorities and impacts also matter when it comes to defining indicators to measure how successful the intervention is in terms of its implementation.

The list below summarises those key impact types:

- Creating jobs and employment opportunities;
- Stimulating high street footfall, boosting tourism and attracting visitors;
- Supporting creative sector ecosystems and grow creative businesses;
- Enhancing sense of place and local historic character, and supporting quality of place;
- Fostering skills and building knowledge and confidence of residents;
- Shaping inclusiveness and accessibility to culture, and developing community cohesion and pride;
- Encouraging participation and bringing enjoyment for residents.

Identify assets and needs: What are the strengths to be built on and where is the potential? What are the weaknesses to be addressed?

No one high street is the same and each of them starts from a different base in terms of cultural infrastructure, creative business base and existing activities, so the most appropriate approach will depend on a baseline understanding of these strengths and weaknesses. This diagnostic phase might consider factors such as:

- The make-up of the existing creative and cultural sector business base and of the voluntary and third / community sector;
- Existing cultural infrastructures, institutions, attractions as well as key community spaces, social infrastructures and green assets;
- Existing 'intangible' assets (local or community traditions, local knowledge, traditional skills);
- Existing levels of cultural and community engagement and participation as well as volunteering opportunities;
- Existing partnerships or networks which could be built upon;
- Existing investment in cultural activity, cultural programming such as festivals and events;
- Vacant or under-used buildings/infrastructure, including publicly-owned assets, which could house or be used for creative/cultural uses.

Responding to the challenges and building upon existing strengths: Which approaches might be most effective?

The case studies present different approaches and intervention types. For some high streets, a single intervention type may be suitable; for other areas, two or more may be employed together. By having clarity about the most important impacts to be achieved in the area and an understanding of the existing relevant strengths and weaknesses, it may be easier to develop and deliver approaches that can bring together all high street and sector stakeholders towards a shared goal.

Any approach will require the input and buy-in of a wide range of public, private and third sector partners. Development of a shared vision and shared goals with partners are often critical to realising ambitions. If partners are to be supported in developing and delivering more innovative and creative approaches to high streets, good evidence, evaluation and proper reflection will play a critical role. It will help debunk myths and challenge accepted norms. It will also help build the case for action and empower people to think and act differently.

How to connect the dots with other strategies and policies?

Helping to reframe and align goals locally is one of areas where local authorities leaders and officers can add the most value. This is the key up front work required to 'connect the dots' – as well as later down the line continuing to join up different activities in delivery.

Supporting and funding culture is often seen as having predominantly intrinsic 'cultural impacts'. However, there is now a strong and growing evidence base which highlight the key extrinsic social, economic and environmental benefits resulting from cultural interventions or interventions in the creative and cultural economy. Mapping out the potential benefits of the interventions to other local or strategic agendas (such as health and wellbeing, climate change, social integration, place-making, education) and linking cultural development and the creative sector growth to all these other local agendas will help enable to secure community and political support, funding from other budgets and sources and resources and assets from new partners.

How to measure success?

Critically, the approach taken, and how success will be measured, should be relevant to the function and status of a high street or town centre. Whereas the HM Treasury Green Book guidance leads to project and development case-making that is based on financial return and commercial value, measures of high street

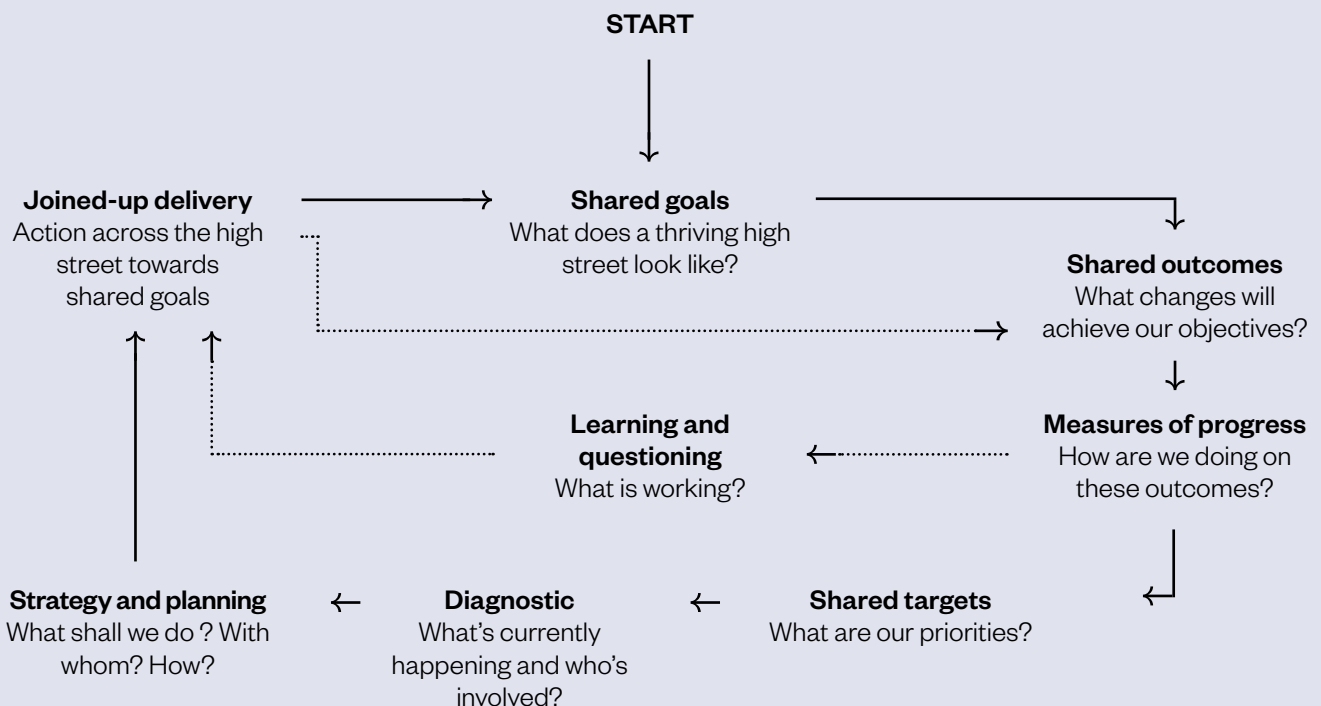
success may better relate to social, environmental or economic (the local economy) values. Items to consider or include when developing an approach:

- Consider bold new scenarios for the future of the high street, based around the creation of maximum public value.
- Describe the ambition, agreed in collaboration with project stakeholders.
- Describe achievable and measurable targets from a baseline position.
- Create cross-departmental teams.
- Closely involve the sector and the community and other stakeholders through strong participatory structures.

Developing an iterative approach

Developing culture and responding to high streets' challenges require an iterative approach to changes and to developing priorities and testing with key stakeholders. This is helpful to develop the thinking about these issues as well as increase buy-in for the final strategy. The below process roadmap could be used.

Process roadmap



Re-imagining vacant and under-used spaces on high streets

The changing economies for the retail sector, alongside the shifting patterns of how and where people choose to work, highlight significant opportunities to bring back into use vacant retail spaces, while providing creative spaces and uses closer to where people live.

The Government's changes to the Use Classes Order which came into effect in September 2020, have significant impacts in terms of granting new flexibility for landlords to change between retail and other uses, and the abilities of councils to plan the activity mix on high streets.

Levers of action

There are a number of levers that local authorities and high street stakeholders can use to tackle vacancy in high streets. This includes:

- The planning framework: Robust and locally-specific town centre/high street strategy and policy can be essential tool allowing high streets to meet their potential. Vacancy can be addressed and the type of use desired can be identified through such process.
- Control of existing and retained public assets: High street stakeholders can innovatively use their assets to deliver creative uses and workspaces.
- Acquisition of long-term vacant assets or assets with 'absent landlords': Local authorities can use of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to obtain a property without the consent of the owner.
- Secure funding: The current funding pipeline is unprecedented in terms of its priority for cultural infrastructure.
- Soft powers: Local authorities, BIDs, or landowners can set up clear strategic priorities and take a leadership role to influence policy making or facilitate the development of projects.

Tactics

There are a number of tactics demonstrating some of the innovations in re-purposing and letting of spaces for cultural and creative uses and that could support greater flexibility, risk mitigation, and collaboration between stakeholders:

- Meanwhile activation: This should be a window of opportunity to test, prototype and capacity build a future use or activity.
- Services contracts: Owners, including local

authorities, can negotiate terms which form part of the lease and outline the social value, services and programming that the operator or end tenant will provide.

- Business Rates strategy: Discretionary Business Rates relief for creative spaces and meanwhile uses in pre-development sites can be implemented.
- Multi-use and hybrid spaces: multi-use buildings allow for cross-subsidy between different uses and enable hybrid and innovate business models.
- Flexible lease length: Low risk leases for tenants, allowing start-up creative businesses or organisations to fail and grow.
- Turnover rents: Rent agreement between landlord and tenant based on turnover of tenant.
- Consortium asset management: a vehicle by which multiple landowners can partner with an operator to manage their vacant assets.
- Empty property tax: a taxation system for empty properties, which could be combined with business grants to allow for tenants to move in.

Useful resources

- **Dealing with empty shops** (LGA, 2020): good practice guidance that can be used by councils to help enact change and tackle vacancy on high streets and in town centres.
- **Flexible Workspaces on our High Streets** (LEAP/OO, 2021): propositional guidance on how new flexible workspace can be brought forward through re-purposing of existing high street buildings.
- **Creating public value: How buildings can better serve our communities** (Future of London, 2021). A guide for local authorities and their partners that makes the case for a more effective use of public assets to strengthen communities in recovery from the pandemic and for decades to come.
- **High Streets and Town Centres Adaptive Strategies** (GLA, 2020): Showcasing innovative approaches and proposing a range of principles and practice to support the development of adaptive strategies for high streets' renewal.

Re-imagining the role of the sector in re-inventing the high street

High streets and town centres can benefit from increased strategic leadership and coordinated action to enhance culture's contribution to recovery and renewal and its role in 'levelling up' opportunities across places.

It is clear that strategic investment in culture and a more efficient use of existing assets can increase places' ability to stimulate and capture future economic growth opportunities, as well as social and environmental values.

Building strategic partnerships

A co-ordinated approach from key high street stakeholders (local authority, BID, landowners, businesses, education institutions, social services, cultural and community organisations) can significantly raise levels of ambition, and align investment and resource towards common goals. Following the Cultural Compact model, there is a clear opportunity to connect the different sectors that benefit from culture and could gain more through closer strategic partnership, as well as embed culture in all strategies. This journey has already started in some places with an increasing range of leadership forums, consortium groups and a recognition that collaboration and innovation go hand in hand, but there is a long way to go.

Building cultural development capacity at high street level

There is a clear relationship between development capacity and the ability of a sector to progress, transform and realise its potential. There is also a clear recognition that building stronger ecosystems and clusters are key factors in enabling organisations to overcome the barriers that so many of them face. Cultural capacity within the sector was traditionally the responsibility of local government in close partnership with government departments such as DCMS, but reductions in public funding have significantly reduced this provision and the model now needs reinventing. It is recognised that 'capacity building' needs may vary considerably between different organisations, groups and places. Sometimes this work might be very much a 'first step', bringing a group of organisations together around a shared objective. At other times it may be building on considerable previous effort and resources where plans are well developed. It is clear that success for cultural organisations in the future does depend on them thinking in new ways, being more commercial,

more collaborative with partners and taking a place-centred approach. In that sense, the Creative People and Places model should be extrapolated and build upon.

Empowering the creative sector to curate the high street and developing cultural sector ownership

There are a number of key steps that high streets' stakeholders can take to give ownership and support the creative sector in driving rejuvenation. This includes:

- Community Asset Transfer (CAT): Councils should develop, embed, and regularly update a CAT policy that is understood across the council. Community asset ownership can harnesses the creativity and commitment of local stakeholders.
- Developing a capacity support offer for the community: Often, groups have ideas and routes for new uses for under-used spaces. High Street stakeholders can help turn these ideas into reality by providing early-stage business planning support and small grants.
- Brokerage: Local authorities and BIDs can play a critical brokerage role in connecting community organisations with landlords of vacant properties.

Useful resources

- **Take back the high street** (Power to Change, 2021): Sets out the benefits of community involvement in rebuilding High Streets and successful approaches.
- **Review of the Cultural Compact Initiatives** (BOP/Arts Council England, 2020): A review of the Compacts programme, highlighting key successes, challenges and value added of such approach.
- **Culture-led regeneration case studies** (LGA and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019): best practice example of cultural-led regeneration across England.
- **Creative places, supporting your local creative economy** (LGA and Audience Agency, 2021)

Key take-aways

Across the region, high streets will have to be reconfigured to respond to a new reality and a different use of space. This will require a step change in the involvement between high streets and creative stakeholders – landowners, businesses, BIDs, public sector, third sector organisations – and communities. It will require all to be active agents of change, sources of information, and to come together in a way that complements and plugs into the other agencies and agendas at play, including the critical investments of Arts Council England, the historic and emerging agendas of local governments, and the strategies of the creative and cultural sector itself.

The LEP has also a key role to play in the creation of innovative approaches to cultural development in the region, by using its leadership voice, and its investment capabilities, in a way that aligned with its core economic development purpose.

A vision for creative and cultural uses to save the South East's high streets

High streets in the South East are extremely diverse. They are also complex in their nature and in the challenges they face, which means there is no easy fix. However, by developing an understanding of the current and emerging structural and more localised challenges that the region's high streets face, and by learning from exemplar adaptive and creative responses, this report shows that there is an opportunity for their evolution to be shaped and steered towards shared and common positive outcomes that will benefit the whole region and its growing creative ecosystems.

The time is now to rethink the role that the creative and cultural sector can play in high street rejuvenation. Recent data and figures are telling: whilst UK-wide 75% of Arts Council funded projects are within 5 minutes of a high street, only 10% high street businesses in the South East are in the creative sector. But there is a renaissance underway, with 18% of new businesses on the region's high streets being creative.

In light of the challenges faced by high streets, cultural and creative uses are uniquely placed to step in, because:

- They can make high streets more **diverse and vibrant**: They give people a reason to visit. We've all learned that we value opportunities to get together. Festivals, parades, events and music give us the perfect reason to do that. Importantly, high streets and markets also offer outdoor gathering places.
- They can participate in making the high street more **adaptive and supportive**: 'Creative' thinking can be more than a catch phrase. Creative uses can use their innovative approaches to make opportunities out of challenges - a long-term vacant shop can become a studio complex, creating employment opportunities, footfall and animation.
- They can make high streets more **inclusive and resilient**. High streets are inherently inclusive places and cultural uses are great at inviting people in. As we 'level up' post pandemic, culture can be a conduit for bridging between communities and bonding within groups.

Curating and making the most of existing assets

“We don’t have creative spaces, but we do have empty shops”.

There has never been a more appropriate time for high street stakeholders to take a leading role in curating high streets and think creatively about physical assets. Government legislation is not a barrier, funding mechanisms are available and there are already examples of good practice to learn from that are achieving sustainable growth and value. Whilst strategic convenors such as the LEP and local authorities have a key role to play in helping to de-mystify risks and breed stakeholder confidence through leadership and long-term vision, all parties can make things happen:

- High street property stakeholders – public sector, landowners, BIDs – can become ‘market makers’. An approach that nurtures local talent (creative start-ups, local artists, cultural organisations) can create vibrant and diverse places that in turn will attract private-sector investment that will benefit them and the wider community;
- The challenge and opportunity for both public and private partners and investors is to recognise the long-term value that can be gained by innovative and creative uses of assets. This does not necessarily mean a reduction in commercial return: revenue and social impact are not mutually exclusive and virtuous cycles can be developed between these key drivers.
- There is currently a range of resources for creative and cultural groups seeking to embed culture in the physical fabric of high streets. At the time of writing these include in-kind support from the High Streets Task Force, financial support from the High Streets Action Fund (through local authorities), Heritage Action Zones, the Towns Fund, the Levelling Up Fund, and the SELEP Sector Support Fund (SSF).
- In places where they are partners, BIDs and local businesses may be able to provide funding for creative and community groups – particularly where they can show that their activity is likely to provide commercial benefit for the private sector by increasing footfall. Data shows that BIDs are involved in almost half of the projects in England receiving funding for high streets, towns or city centre.

Working together

As Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has advocated: **“we cannot take advantage of opportunities if we do not have capabilities”.**

It is clear that collaboration and partnerships to address high street challenges are vital in securing their future. High street initiatives work best when all the key local partners are involved. This includes all relevant public agencies, landowners, private businesses, anchor institutions, traders, community groups and civil society organisations. Having a broad coalition of public and private partners who are committed to the vision and outcomes will be important. Ultimately, implementing a vision will often require significant funding – so diverse sources of finance will also be needed.

There is also a clear relationship between development capacity and the ability of a sector to progress, transform and realise its potential. Cultural capacity within the sector was traditionally the responsibility of local government but reductions in public funding have significantly reduced this provision and the model now needs reinventing. Building capacity amongst the creative sector and high street stakeholders should be a key objective and it is clear that success for the sector in the future depends on them thinking in new ways, being more commercial, more collaborative with partners and taking a sector led and often place-centred approach.

With high streets and town centres being on the agenda at national level and the different funding opportunities available, SELEP is ideally placed to act as a strategic convenor, to bring together knowledge and capacity, and deliver leadership for high street rejuvenation through creative and cultural initiatives which will drive recovery, long-term growth and resilience in the South East. It is also in a unique position to bring together sector and strategic stakeholders across the region to consider shared issues and create multi-agency platforms around common issues and opportunities.

Appendix

High Streets x Creative Sector Evidence Base

The table below presents some key figures from the baseline data analysis undertaken as part of this commission and to provide an understanding of the role of the creative industries within the South East largest towns and their high streets.

The analysis focused on the South East region's largest 50 towns – effectively all places with a population of more than 15,000. Town high streets were mapped using GIS and Companies House data (2020) was used to identify creative activity.

For the purpose of this exercise, the DCMS creative industries SIC code definition has been used.

Creative businesses in the South East High Streets (top 25)

	High Street	Creative Businesses on the High Street	% of High Street Businesses Creative	% of all SELEP Creative Businesses
1	Royal Tunbridge Wells	331	15%	1.40%
2	Southend	272	7%	1.20%
3	Rochford	216	24%	0.90%
4	Brentwood	184	11%	0.80%
5	Maidstone	160	8%	0.70%
6	Eastbourne	155	6%	0.70%
7	Loughton	154	7%	0.70%
8	Saffron Walden	153	13%	0.70%
9	Tonbridge	152	12%	0.70%
10	Waltham Abbey	138	19%	0.60%
11	Bexhill	132	10%	0.60%
12	Margate	132	9%	0.60%
13	Sevenoaks	111	10%	0.50%
14	Chatham and Rochester	109	13%	0.50%
15	Gravesend	109	6%	0.50%
16	Hastings	108	10%	0.50%
17	Colchester	105	10%	0.50%
18	Billericay	103	9%	0.50%
19	Hailsham	100	5%	0.40%
20	Canterbury	98	11%	0.40%
21	Herne Bay	96	12%	0.40%
22	Dartford	92	7%	0.40%
23	Lewes	89	15%	0.40%
24	Ashford	82	7%	0.40%
25	Folkestone	82	12%	0.40%
SELEP High Streets		4,616	9%	20%

Source: Companies House (2020)

Creative start-ups in the South East High Streets (top 20)

High Street		New Creative Businesses on the High Street - 2020	% of all SELEP Creative Start Ups
1	Royal Tunbridge Wells	45	1.50%
2	Southend	31	1.10%
3	Maidstone	26	0.90%
4	Margate	23	0.80%
5	Eastbourne	21	0.70%
6	Bexhill	20	0.70%
7	Brentwood	20	0.70%
8	Loughton	17	0.60%
9	Gravesend	16	0.50%
10	Folkestone	15	0.50%
11	Tonbridge	14	0.50%
12	Canterbury	13	0.40%
13	Chatham and Rochester	13	0.40%
14	Hastings	13	0.40%
15	Ashford	11	0.40%
16	Chelmsford	11	0.40%
17	Herne Bay	11	0.40%
18	Rochford	11	0.40%
19	Hailsham	10	0.30%
20	Sevenoaks	10	0.30%
SELEP High Streets		517	17.50%

Source: Companies House (2020)

Glossary

Arts Council England (ACE) : Arts Council England is a non-departmental public body of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. It champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences to enrich people's lives. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk>

Community Asset Transfer: Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is a process that allows a community organisation to take over publicly-owned land or buildings in a way that recognises the public benefits that the transfer will bring.

Creative Estuary: Creative Estuary is a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations, working together to support the Thames Estuary Production Corridor. They include the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent and Essex County Councils, the Greater London Authority, 11 local authority areas represented by Thames Gateway Kent Partnership and Opportunity South Essex, South East Creative Economy Network (SEOEN), University of Kent, University of Essex, Locate in Kent, and cultural organisations Metal, and Cement Fields. <https://www.creativeestuary.com>

Creative People and Places (CPP): Creative People & Places is Arts Council England's major national investment in engaging new people and communities in the arts. Developed by Arts Council England with an initial investment from the National Lottery, the first phase of the programme ran between 2013 and 2016 and the second phase of the programme started in 2016. In 2021, Arts Council England announced that Creative People and Places had become part of the National Portfolio for the period 2022-2025. <https://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk>

Cultural Compact: Cultural Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority. It is in 2019 that the Arts Council and the DCMS supported the creation of 20 Cultural Compacts across the UK. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/review-cultural-compacts-initiative>

Cultural Development Fund (CDF): As part of the Cultural Investment Fund (CIF), the fund supports capital investment in transformative place-based creative and cultural initiatives. It is a Department for

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) programme administered by Arts Council England. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/cultural-development-fund-round-two#section-1>

Cultural Investment Fund (CIF): The Cultural Investment Fund is a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) programme administered by Arts Council England. It is a package of the three capital funds made up of the Cultural Development Fund (CDF), Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) and Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF). The Cultural Investment Fund is designed to seed fund cultural initiatives through an open call, grant making process. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-open-funds/cultural-investment-fund>

Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF): Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and the unprecedented challenges it brought to culture and creativity across the UK, the Culture Recovery Fund has been created as a rescue package by the government to tackle the crisis faced cultural organisations and heritage sites. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/CRFgrants>

DCMS: The British government department responsible for government policy for Culture, Media, and Sport. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport>

Future High Street Fund (FHSF): A governmental competitive fund launched in 2018. It is supporting 72 areas in England to enhance their local economy and deliver ambitious high street regeneration plans. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/future-high-streets-fund>

Green Book: The Green Book is guidance issued by HM Treasury on how to appraise policies, programmes and projects. It also provides guidance on the design and use of monitoring and evaluation before, during and after implementation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ): High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) are a heritage-led regeneration initiative led by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve the quality of life in historic high streets. It

is funded by DCMS, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities's Future High Street Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/regenerating-historic-high-streets/>

Levelling Up Fund (LUF): The Levelling Up Fund is a governmental competitive fund, with funding distributed to places across the UK on the basis of successful project selection. The Fund will set aside at least £800 million across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland over four years from 2021-2022 to 2024-2025. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966138/Levelling_Up_prospectus.pdf

National Lottery Heritage Fund: The National Lottery Heritage Fund distributes a share of National Lottery funding, supporting a wide range of heritage projects across the United Kingdom. <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk>

South East LEP (SELEP): The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is one of 38 LEPs, established to provide the clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area. <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=South+East+LEP&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN) : The South East Creative Economy Network works to accelerate growth in the digital, creative and cultural sector. A sub-group of the South East LEP, it is a working partnership between creative businesses, education bodies and local authorities across the SELEP area. <https://www.southeastlep.com/good-governance/working-groups/south-east-creative-economy-network/>

Sector Support Fund: The Sector Support Fund (SSF) is SELEP current funding vehicle and supports one-off discrete pieces of work which are of a pan-LEP nature with a sector focus that brings demonstrable benefit. These are predominantly led by the established SELEP working Groups. These currently include: Coastal Communities; Enterprise Zones; Housing; Rural; Social Enterprises; South East Creative Economy Network; Tourism; Transport Officers; U9 Universities; Growth Hub; and Clean Growth/Energy. <https://www.southeastlep.com/opportunities/sector-support-fund/>

Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC):

The Thames Estuary Production Corridor is an ambitious long-term project that will make the Thames Estuary the world's largest creative corridor; a world leader for the creative and cultural industries. The bold industrial vision was launched by the Mayor of London in 2017 in partnership with the London Economic Action Partnership, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and the South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN). The potential of the corridor has already unlocked over £4.6million investment from central government into the estuary, including £4.3 million for the bold Creative Estuary programme using culture as the catalyst for growth. <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/current-culture-projects/thames-estuary-production-corridor>

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