

We
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That

Wigan's Creative Industries Asset Strategy

Cultivating Creativity in Wigan Borough



Working with



Cover image:

Wigan Mural by Rosa Kusabbi

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Cultivating Creativity: Wigan's Creative Industries Asset Strategy

The borough of Wigan has been a source of creative inspiration, shaping and igniting creativity for centuries. Today, creative energy is thriving across the borough, with sparks of innovation lighting up in every community.

This Creative Industries Asset Strategy builds on 'The Fire Within' and outlines a blueprint for how Wigan can cultivate the spaces needed to support and sustain its cultural and creative activities over the next ten years. With thoughtful planning and investment, the energy can grow to drive enduring engines of cultural and creative activity positioning Wigan as a regional powerhouse of creative production.

From evidence to action

Wigan borough's creative industries boast a range of strengths, underpinned by its prime location, rich cultural heritage, and rapidly growing creative sector.

Strategically positioned between the major urban centres of Manchester and Liverpool, Wigan benefits from a large catchment population within a 30-minute travel time, making it

Wigan's creative and cultural business base has grown by 24% over the past decade, outpacing the national average.

an accessible and attractive hub for cultural and creative activities. This prime location, combined with an impressive array of underused heritage assets—such as Trencherfield Mill, Leigh Spinners Mill, and spaces on

King Street—presents a unique opportunity to create additional spaces for culture and creativity to thrive.

The creative sector in Wigan is already showing significant growth, with 495 businesses operating within the industry, representing 5.7% of the Greater Manchester business base. This growth, outpacing the national average with a 24% uplift over the past decade, is further supported by a favourable policy environment that encourages continued expansion.

Wigan also boasts diverse cultural clusters across areas such as Wigan, Leigh, Atherton, and Tyldesley, complemented by a strong grassroots live music scene, community centres, and libraries. These assets, combined with evident developer interest and a strong alignment between cultural offerings and audience preferences, position Wigan as a burgeoning powerhouse in the creative industries, ready to capitalise on its strengths and drive future growth.



The Early Doors Club provides live music events across the borough

However, the evidence also highlights key challenges that the Creative Assets Strategy aims to address. The creative and cultural sectors in Wigan are significantly underrepresented within the local employment landscape, with those employed in these industries making up only 1.5% of the town's total employment—well below the 4.1% in Greater Manchester and 5.1% nationally. Job density in these sectors underscores this disparity, with Wigan offering just 78 creative jobs per 10,000 working-age residents, compared to 320 in Greater Manchester and 394 across England.

A mapping of the borough's cultural infrastructure highlighted that Wigan faces a significant under supply of spaces for cultural production, with only a handful of adequately equipped facilities available.

Creatives report a severe shortage of production spaces, with waiting lists for the few that exist.



Trencherfield Mill in Wigan town centre



Turnpike Gallery showcases the art of local, regional and national artists

The structure of this document

This document builds on this foundation of data and evidence, which provide insights into the needs and opportunities for growing Wigan Borough's cultural and creative sector.

Based on this analysis, a set of strategic investment objectives, priority initiatives, and key assets have been identified that together form a blueprint and roadmap for fostering creative sector growth.

Strategic investment objectives that respond to gaps in Wigan's creative sector

Priority initiatives that address these gaps and guide investment activities.

Key assets that can be activated for creative use to meet the identified needs.

Wigan Borough is ideally positioned within the emerging Northern Creative Corridor and can drive regional growth by offering essential spaces for creative production.

Strategic Investment Objectives

Based on the strategic context, socio-economic evidence, and cultural infrastructure mapping, six strategic investment objective points have been identified to align creative industries' assets and infrastructure needs with the long-term aims of the borough.

These strategic objectives guide asset identification, investment, and action, ensuring a holistic approach to cultural development.

This framework allows for project assessments that extend beyond cost and economic considerations to include the social, wellbeing, and spatial justice-related potential of cultural interventions.

Priority initiatives

In response to the identified strategic needs and opportunities, this strategy recommends six priority initiatives aimed at addressing

Strategic Investment Objectives

- Creating new, permanent spaces for production
- Enhancing the borough's evening offer
- Developing spaces for collaboration
- Reducing heritage-at-risk
- Embedding culture in the every day
- Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors

gaps in creative space provision and achieving a range of outcomes for Wigan's creative industries.

These initiatives align directly with the strategic needs in Wigan, focusing on how physical assets in the borough can be activated to create value and support the creative sector.

Priority initiatives

1. Production and rehearsal spaces for music, dance and the performing arts
2. Creative production hubs and makerspaces
3. Flexible community and civic spaces
4. Cultural consumption on the high street
5. Multi-purpose cultural anchors in the town centres
6. Spaces for skills development

These initiatives should guide future investment and decision making.

Key assets

Each initiative is paired with a set of key assets. These assets were identified through the cultural infrastructure mapping exercise and long-listed using a Creative Assets Register assessment framework, a tool that collects key information about cultural and creative spaces and evaluates them against the strategic investment objectives and an identified set of critical success factors.

These assets are a combination of existing buildings that can be repurposed or better utilised for cultural and creative use, and other buildings which are vacant or larger in scale and may require more complex interventions.



Leigh Spinners Mill is home to a range of creative studios.

Key Assets

Production and rehearsal spaces:

1. Trencherfield Mill
2. Snug Coffeehouse
3. Vacant spaces in the town centres

Creative production hubs and makerspaces:

4. Leigh Spinners Mill
5. Wallpaper Supplies

Flexible community and civic spaces

6. Turnpike Gallery
7. Wigan Borough Libraries (borough wide)

8. Community Centres and Secondary Schools (borough wide)

Cultural consumption on the high street

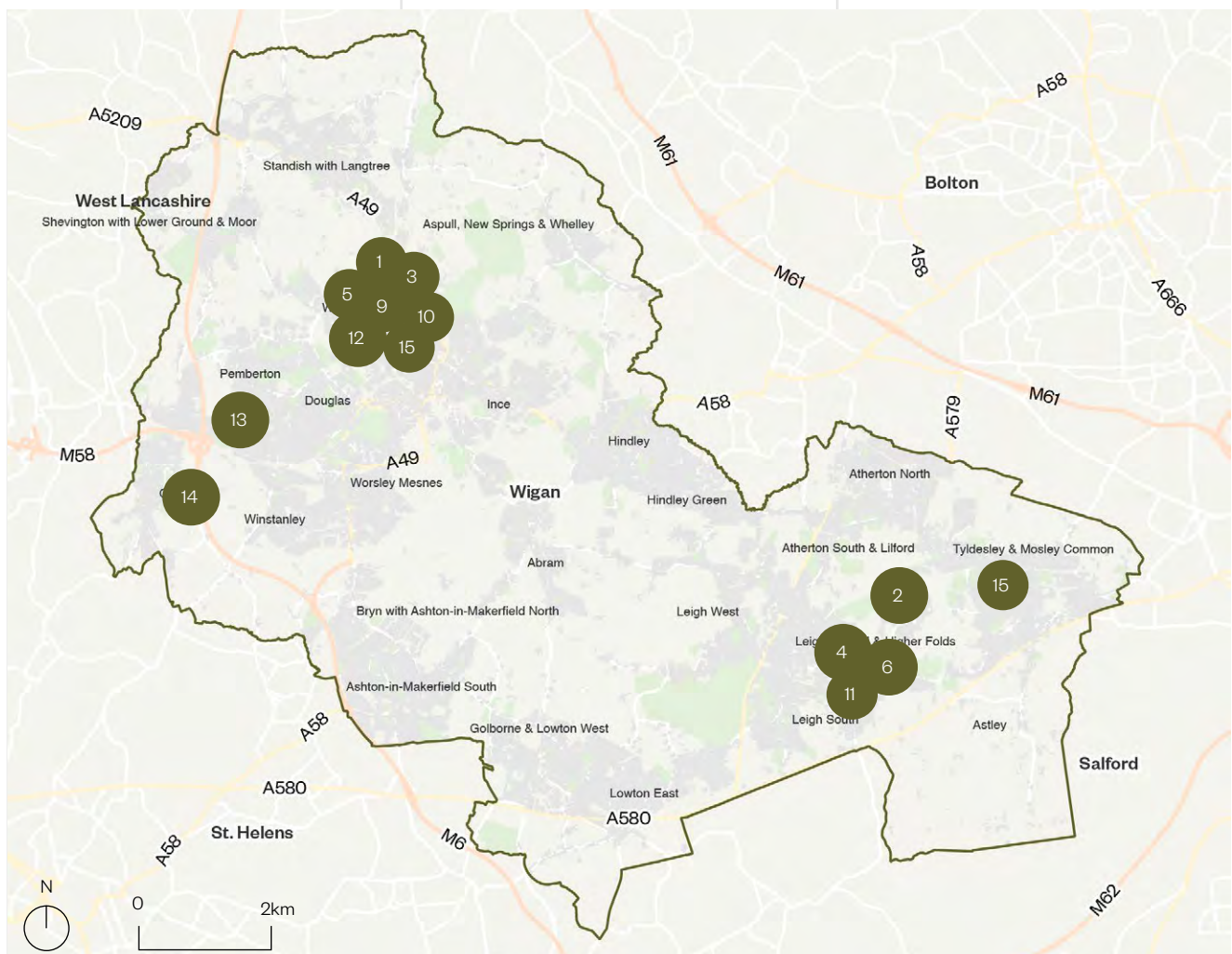
9. Museum of Wigan Life

Multi-purpose anchors in the town centres:

10. Royal Court Theatre
11. Assembly Rooms
12. Wigan Pier

Spaces for skills development

13. The Music Projects
14. Furthering Education Colleges
15. Wigan and Tyldesley Little Theatres



Pathways to delivery

To foster cultural and creative activity in the borough, Wigan Council, along with Wigan's creative and cultural communities, businesses, and key public and private stakeholders, must take a series of coordinated actions to ensure

successful delivery of the goals outlined in this strategy. These actions are broken up into short-, medium-, and long-term steps to ensure a phased approach to delivery.

Taking this coordinated set of actions will help Wigan realise its goal of becoming a production

hub for the northern region. Strategic investment in state-of-the-art facilities and resources for creative production will not only enhance Wigan's production capabilities but also foster a thriving creative ecosystem that encourages sustained growth, collaboration, and innovation.

Short Term 1-2 years

- Create a Creative Space Activation Plan
- Appoint an advocate for culture
- Identify and secure partnerships and funding for project development
- Strengthen regional partnerships
- Consider operational arrangements for creative assets
- Commission and deliver Feasibility Assessments for new venues
- Community engagement to assess specific needs
- Conduct soft market testing

Medium Term 3-4 years

- Review the creative space delivery activation plan
- Establish a creative land trust
- Strengthen regional partnerships
- Develop a creative space directory

Long Term 5+ years

- Revise and reassess the Creative Industries Assets Strategy to ensure alignment with borough needs and priorities

Position and advocate for Wigan as a regional production hub in the Northern Creative Corridor

- What is the Creative Industries Asset Strategy?
- Wigan at-a-glance
- Understanding Wigan's creative sector
- Spaces for culture and creativity in Wigan
- The case for intervention



What is the Creative Industries Asset Strategy?

This Creative Industries Asset Strategy aims to harness opportunities and infrastructure to support a long-term blueprint for the borough of Wigan's cultural and creative sector growth. It is rooted in robust evidence and provides clear plans for delivery.

From Ashton to Tyldesley and Leigh to Standish, the borough of Wigan boasts a vibrant community of creatives. Building on "The Fire Within" cultural strategy, this asset strategy seeks to leverage the borough's physical assets to create a cohesive and dynamic landscape that drives economic growth while providing the right facilities for cultural practitioners and creative professionals to thrive. This blueprint ensures that Wigan's cultural and creative assets are resilient and positioned to deliver long-term benefits for communities across the borough and the region.

What do we mean by creative assets?

When we speak about cultural and creative spaces, we mean the spaces where culture and creativity is consumed (experienced, participated in, showcased, exhibited, and sometimes sold), spaces where culture and creativity is produced (usually by artists, performers, or makers), and workspaces catering specifically to creative disciplines and activities. This includes theatre, dance and music venues; museums, galleries and arts centres; cinemas and community centres; rehearsal and production spaces for dance, theatre, music and screen industries; and a whole range of other workspaces from artists' studios, to manufacturing workshops, to creative co-working spaces.

Creative assets play a vital role in supporting both cultural and creative industries. By providing the infrastructure needed for artistic production and exhibition, they enhance the cultural offerings of the borough while simultaneously fostering economic growth. This synergy not only enriches the cultural landscape but also stimulates the local economy through job creation and business development in creative sectors.

Understanding and structuring the evidence

This strategy was developed based off a desk review of economic and sector data, a strategic review of assets in the borough as well as conversations with sector representatives from Wigan Borough and the Greater Manchester region.

The research process, outlined further in the next chapters and included fully in the appendix, included mapping cultural and creative assets, conducting a SWOT analysis and undertaking a review of relevant policies, strategies and data to identify strategic opportunity locally as well as across the Greater Manchester area.

Throughout the process, sector representatives from Wigan and the Greater Manchester region were engaged through a series of structured engagement activities, including:

- 1x 'Co-Lab' event which invited the local cultural partnership board discuss priorities for the borough and help identify strategic gaps
- A series of 1:1 interviews with key industry stakeholders across the Greater Manchester region
- A series of discussions with Council representatives and potential operators to better understand strategic need and options for intervention

These activities ensured voices and priorities could be captured to shape recommendations.

Designing spaces for culture and creativity

In addition to identifying the strategic need for culture and creativity and proposing priority initiatives which aim to achieve these needs, this strategy shares the spatial requirements necessary to facilitate creative and cultural activities in these spaces. It borrows from the [Cultural Facilities Design Toolkit](#), which provides a suite of design guides for cultural infrastructure. It provides design guidance as a prompt for use before the planning process to help deliver successful cultural infrastructure.

A selection of spatial requirements which align with the proposed assets are located in the Appendix. These can be used to further interrogate different opportunities for activating the key assets for creative use.

The structure of this document

This document is structured around a foundation of data and evidence, which provide insights into the needs and opportunities for growing Wigan Borough's cultural and creative sector. Based on this analysis, we have identified strategic investment objectives, priority initiatives, and key assets that together form a blueprint and roadmap for fostering creative sector growth. The following sections outline the relationship between these objectives, initiatives, and assets.

Implementation considerations

While this Creative Industries Asset Strategy offers a comprehensive blueprint for growth, including a framework for identifying key assets and potential projects, further steps are necessary to bring these initiatives to life. Additional work will be required, such as market testing, developing and testing business cases, conducting feasibility studies, and engaging a wide range of partners. These steps are outlined in the final chapter of this document. Additionally, it will be essential to understand resources available in order to evaluate the number of projects to prioritise, assess staffing needs, and establish defined budgets to ensure successful implementation. A creative space activation plan should be created to aid in delivery and implementation.

The structure of this document

Strategic Investment Objectives

Based on the socio-economic evidence, cultural infrastructure mapping and wider regional context, six strategic investment objectives have been identified to ensure that the borough's creative assets align with the identified needs.

Priority initiatives

To meet the strategic investment objectives, this strategy outlines six priority initiatives. These initiatives are directly aligned with the borough's strategic objectives, focusing on how physical assets can be leveraged to create value and strengthen the creative sector.

Key assets

Each initiative is paired with key physical assets which were identified through cultural infrastructure mapping and using the Creative Assets Register assessment framework. These assets are a combination of existing buildings that can be re-purposed or better utilised for cultural and creative use, and other buildings which may require more complex interventions.

Wigan at-a-glance

334,110

people live in the borough of Wigan, representing 11.5% of the Greater Manchester (GM) population¹

5%

population growth in the last decade²

50%

of Wigan's residents participated in culture in the year to November 2022. This is below the GM and England average³

1.5%

of jobs are in the creative and cultural sector⁴

495

creative and cultural businesses, representing 5.7% of the GM businesses in the sector⁵

28%

of residents are economically inactive⁶

111,500

people are employed across Wigan, concentrated in health, manufacturing and construction sectors⁷

3.8%

unemployment. This is below the GM and national average⁸

17%

of LSOAs across Wigan are among the 10% most deprived areas nationally⁹

*Sources listed on page 15

Understanding the borough's creative sector

While the borough of Wigan's creative and cultural sectors currently under-perform relative to other areas in the region, there is considerable potential for growth.

In order to better understand and articulate the strategic opportunity to grow the borough's creative industry assets and infrastructure, a detailed analysis of existing evidence was conducted. This included

- a desk-based document review of policies, strategies and locally held research
- literature review of trends and drivers sparing the demand for creative industries to support a better understanding of broader market dynamics and how they could potentially impact or benefit the creative sectors in Wigan
- Data analysis of the composition of the creative industries in Wigan, providing insights into the scale, scope and characteristics of the local and creative and cultural sector
- Benchmarking performance of Wigan's creative and cultural sector against local comparator industries
- Desk based research of the local demand drivers.

This research indicates significant growth potential despite existing challenges. A summary snapshot of the findings is provided here, with a full report available in the Appendix.

Under-represented creative and cultural employment sector

The creative and cultural sectors in Wigan are notably under-represented within the local employment landscape. As of 2022, only 1,625 people were employed in these sectors, accounting for a mere 1.5% of the town's total employment. This is significantly lower than the 4.1% employment share across Greater Manchester (GM) and the 5.1% seen nationally. Job density in these sectors further highlights this disparity, with Wigan offering only 78 jobs per 10,000 of the working-age population, compared to 320 in GM and 394 across England.

Potential for sector growth

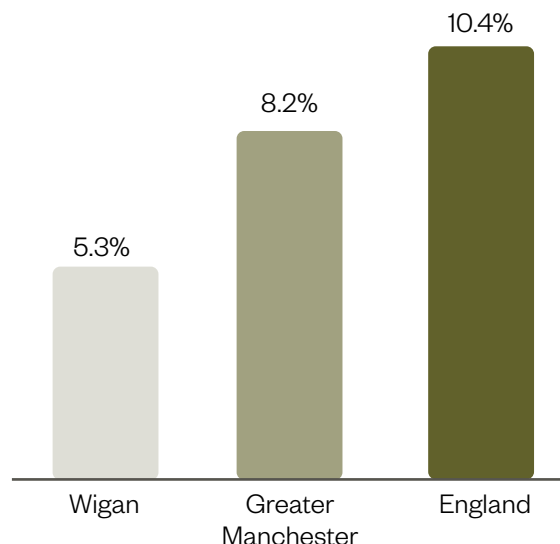
In 2023, 495 businesses in the cultural and creative sectors were operating in Wigan, representing 5.7% of GM's cultural and creative business base. Despite this, these businesses comprise only 5.3% of Wigan's total business landscape, trailing behind GM's 8.2% and England's 10.4%.

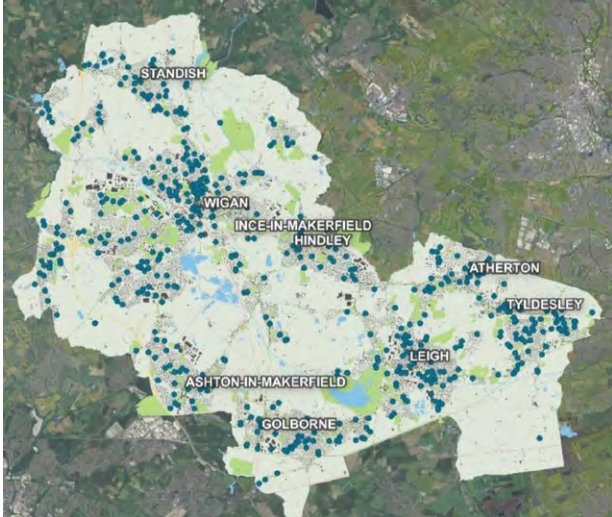
Notably, Wigan has been identified as having emerging potential for creative and cultural businesses, with clusters forming in Wigan Town Centre, Leigh, Atherton, and Tyldesley. However, the sector is dominated by micro and small businesses, with only five medium-sized enterprises and no large firms. According to the DCMS Creative Cluster Potential report, Wigan is classified as an 'incipient cluster,' characterised by high business and employment churn and low survival rates for creative businesses. In contrast, nearby Manchester is recognised as a 'Creative Capital.' Economic output of the sector

Economic output

Economic output for the sector can be measured using a broader cultural and creative sector definition which includes the arts, entertainments and recreation, professional scientific and technical activities and information and communication activities. Using this definition, the cultural and creative

Percent of Businesses in DCMS Defined Creative and Cultural Sector, 2023





Wigan Business Incorporations Creative and Cultural Sector
Source: HMRC Companies House Incorporations Data, 2024

related sectors in Wigan represented £239m of GVA output in 2021. This represented 4.3% of total economic output in Wigan for that year, and 3% of overall creative and cultural output across GM.

The share of economic output generated across Wigan that came from the Cultural and creative sectors has significantly decreased since 2011, dropping from 6.5% to 4.3%. This significant drop was also seen in absolute terms, with economic output from the sector dropping from £252m to £239m. In comparison, output from the creative and cultural sector represented 14.8% of overall output in GM, and 16.6% of output for England in 2021. Looking at the change in this share over time, GM saw a rise in this figure from 14% to 14.8% between 2011 and 2021. On the other hand, England saw a decrease from 17.3% to 16.6% in this time.

Cultural participation

The Arts England Cultural participation survey found that 50% of respondents in Wigan had attended an arts event, museum or gallery or spent time doing an arts activity in the previous 12 months from November 2021-2022. Breaking this down, 21.3% of overall respondents had attended a museum or gallery in the previous 12 months from November 2021-2022 in Wigan. This was a 13.1% increase on the previous year, following considerable downturn due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This bounce back is identical with that of Greater Manchester, also 13.1% improvement, however both were below the recovery experienced across England (15.4%).

Implications for culture and creative activity

The under-representation of Wigan's creative and cultural sectors in both employment and economic output suggests significant opportunities for growth within the industry. By investing in the development of this creative ecosystem—supporting emerging clusters, enhancing the skills pipeline, and improving cultural infrastructure—Wigan could unlock its potential as an 'incipient creative cluster.' Additionally, boosting participation in cultural activities could have wider benefits, including enhanced community wellbeing, greater social cohesion, and strengthened place-making efforts.

Sources on Page 13

1. ONS Population Estimates, 2022
2. ONS Population Estimates, 2022
3. Sport England and Arts Council England Active Lives Survey
4. ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2022
5. ONS UK Business Counts, 2023
6. ONS Annual Population Survey, 2023
7. ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2022
8. Claimant Count, 2024
9. Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019

Spaces for culture and creativity in Wigan

Cultural Infrastructure

Cultural infrastructure refers to the spaces and buildings in which cultural activities take place. This includes spaces for the production (making) of culture, the consumption (showcasing) of culture, and the supply chain activities which support both production and consumption.

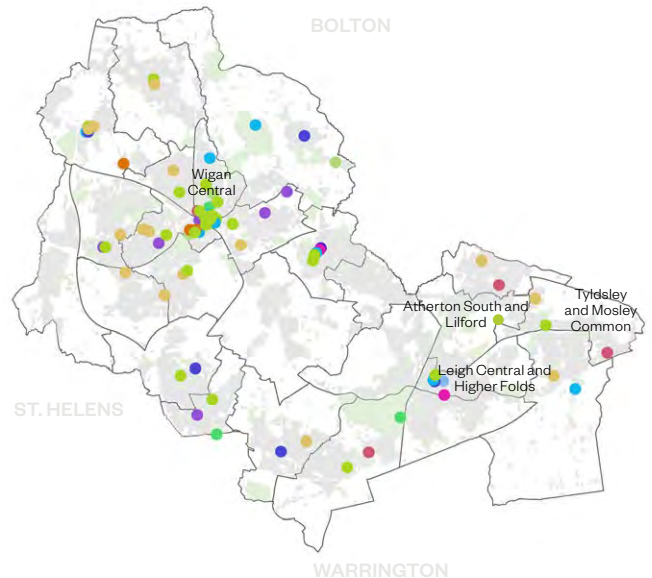
Places of consumption and production are defined in this document as follows, with examples overleaf:

Consumption: Places where culture is experienced, participated in, showcased, exhibited or sold. For example, museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas, libraries, record stores and historic cultural sites.

Production: Places of creative production, where creative work is made, usually by artists, performers, makers, manufacturers or digital processes. For example creative workspaces, performing arts rehearsal spaces, music recording studios, film and television studios and industrial and light industrial units used by creative and cultural businesses. An important element of cultural production is the supply-chain sub-strata which provide the supporting materials and services for cultural production.

Dedicated faith spaces do not form part of the scope of this study. However, they were considered in some of the project recommendations in recognition of their important community functions. In addition, some of the community halls included in the mapping are also regularly used by faith groups, both for worship and for other community purposes. Pubs and other night time infrastructure also play an important role in Wigan's cultural ecosystem, especially those which provide settings for a grassroots music scene.

It is important to note the limits of cultural infrastructure mapping. In addition to types of spaces not captured in this view, timing of mapping means that some newer spaces may not be captured. Future sector surveying could provide a more granular picture of provision across the borough.



Wigan's spaces for cultural production and consumption

Key

- Artists' studios
- Arts centre
- Cinema
- Community-focused space
- Concert hall
- Creative education space
- Creative incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces
- Creative-led hub
- Drama and dance theatre
- Heritage and environmental attraction
- Large entertainment venue
- Library and archive
- Live music venue
- Makerspace
- Multi-purpose and arts centre
- Museum and gallery
- Outdoor event space
- Specialist production and rehearsal facilities
- Workspace with creative facilities

Cultural consumption



Galleries: Cross Street Arts



Theatres: Wigan Little Theatre



Live Music Venues: The Boulevard

Cultural production



Creative workspace: The Old Courts



Dance rehearsal studio: WigLe



Music recording studios: The Lounge

Supply chain sub-strata



Instrument repair: Thomson Guitars



Equipment hire: Leisuretec



Metal supply: Intrametal

Examples of cultural infrastructure across Wigan's value chain

Cultural infrastructure in Wigan

There were 124 spaces for culture mapped across Wigan borough. This includes 105 spaces for consuming culture and 13 spaces for producing culture.

Wigan's cultural consumption facilities provide spaces for artistic expression, experimentation, and innovation. Examples of Wigan's existing cultural consumption facilities include Cross Street Arts Gallery, Wigan and Tyldesley Little Theatres and live music venues such as The Boulevard and the Snug Coffeehouse. Cultural production facilities, such as studios, galleries and recording and rehearsal facilities are where Wigan's artists and cultural producers generate content. This includes creative workspaces, such as the Old Courts, rehearsal studios including WigLe dance and music recording studios such as The Lounge. The borough is also home to spaces like The Beehive Community Centre, Turnpike Gallery and Leigh Spinners Mill which feature mixed production, education and community spaces that demonstrates

how production, consumption and ancillary space can be blended to deliver dynamic places.

Wigan is also home to a varied and healthy 'sub-strata' of businesses which are part of the creative supply chain. These are not captured in the cultural infrastructure mapping, but are critical components of Wigan's economic role within the wider region.

Wigan's cultural infrastructure mapping identified that there are clusters of creative and cultural spaces in Wigan, Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley, but that these are mostly dominated by grassroots live music venues. There is a notable lack of cultural production spaces, including full range of artist studio space, co-working space, rehearsal and recording facilities and film/digital production space.

The case for intervention

Wigan's creative assets present a compelling case for targeted investment, highlighting numerous strengths and opportunities for development. The borough's strategic positioning, along with the alignment of local initiatives with national policy and a robust development pipeline, creates an ideal environment for nurturing potential creative clusters and leveraging its rich heritage. The potential to use culture as a catalyst for regeneration and to enhance health and wellbeing further underscores the importance of intervention. Collectively, these factors provide a strong rationale for focused investment and tailored support for Wigan's creative ecosystem.

Wigan benefits from its strategic location with a large and growing population and catchment area. This along with the favourable policy environment, significant development pipeline, and existing cultural and heritage assets provide a solid foundation for growth. By leveraging its heritage, fostering creative clusters, and utilising culture as a tool for regeneration and improved wellbeing, Wigan has the opportunity to strengthen its cultural identity; drive growth, creativity and wellbeing; and realise its ambition to become a regional creative production hub.

Wigan's strategic location

The metropolitan borough of Wigan sits within the Greater Manchester City Region and is ideally situated between two major urban centres: Manchester to

the east and Liverpool to the west. The borough's strategic location extends beyond these cities and city regions, bordering Lancashire to the north and Cheshire and Warrington to the south. This central location within the North West of England offers access to a large catchment population within a 30-minute travel time and provides Wigan with good connectivity to key economic hubs and diverse regions.

Strong policy alignment

The favourable national and local policy environment recognises the cultural and creative industry as a driver of regeneration, economic growth and quality of life. There is often a focus on place-based and localised interventions and emphasises the need to address regional disparities. This presents opportunities for Wigan to support growth of its creative industries.

Wigan is well placed to capitalise on and support Greater Manchester's development as one of the UK's fastest growing creative clusters, and initiatives such as The Northern Creative Corridor offer the opportunity to for Wigan to become a regional creative production hub. As an Arts Council England Priority Place, Wigan is home to a diverse range of National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), which can drive further investment and change.

The following initiatives highlight the appetite to support cultural and creative activities and activation in Wigan:



Haigh Hall © Wigan Council

- £20m of levelling up funding had been awarded to restore Haigh Hall as a key visitor and cultural destination for Wigan to include a programme of art exhibitions, a new restaurant, a revamp of the derelict gateway lodges and new event spaces;;
- UKSPF funded Early Doors Club has delivered a programme of creative and cultural activities designed to support the local night-time economy;
- Historic England funded King Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) programme delivering heritage led interventions with the aim to support King Street to become a vibrant place for residents and visitors to engage in cultural and leisure activities; and
- Arts Council England funded Down to Earth project which aims to engage with Wigan residents to shape and create art & culture, focusing on the borough's green spaces as sites for cultural engagement.

There is an opportunity to build on recent activity and attract investment to drive change in Wigan's creative ecosystem contributing to national and local policy priorities. Looking forward, programmes such as UKSPF, Arts Council England's Cultural Development Fund, Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Nesta's Arts & Culture Impact Fund, provide a range of opportunities for investment.

Capitalising on the significant development pipeline

Wigan is undergoing a period of transformation with significant development in the pipeline, demonstrating strong developer appetite, and presenting opportunities to improve Wigan's cultural and creative infrastructure and ecosystem.

Wigan Town Centre is the focal point for the much of the planned development, supporting a step change through the creation of new town centre neighbourhoods and communities. The redevelopment of the Galleries shopping centre is now underway which will deliver a new retail, leisure, commercial and residential destination in the town centre. The vast 15-acre derelict Eckersley Mill complex will be redeveloped creating a new neighbourhood including a significant number of new homes, office space, a food hall, microbrewery and leisure complex.

Leigh has benefited from Levelling Up Fund and UKSPF funding to improve the town centre including investment to refurbish Leigh Market and establish the Civic Square as a space for community and cultural events. Leigh is currently developing plans as part of the Long Term Towns Fund, which will deliver £20m investment over the next decade.

The strength of the development pipeline combined with a growing population provides a key opportunity to drive demand, through driving footfall and spend to support growth and providing commercial space to stimulate growth in the creative industries.

Nurturing cultural and creative clusters

Cultural and creative clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected creative businesses, institutions, and individuals, which have proven to be drivers of cultural vibrancy and economic growth. The benefits of such clusters, including knowledge sharing, collaboration, and skills development, have been widely acknowledged. Vibrant creative clusters can support talent retention and attraction and add to the identity of place and positive perceptions which can help to leverage further funding and investment.

In Wigan, the potential for clusters is evident and promising. Existing pockets of creative and cultural activity are present in the borough, including in Wigan Town Centre and Leigh, offering potential to contribute to further clustering in these locations.

The DCMS commissioned report by Frontier Economics – Understanding the growth potential of creative clusters – identifies Wigan as an 'incipient cluster', defined as a younger and less stable cluster, experiencing high levels of business and employment churn and low creative business survival rates. While this classification signals certain challenges, it highlights significant potential for growth and development of Wigan's creative sector.

The proximity of Wigan to Manchester, which is categorised a 'Creative Capital', provides opportunities for collaboration and knowledge spillover as well as attracting overflow talent and businesses from Manchester. In this context, Wigan can strengthen its position as a complementary creative destination amplifying its own distinctive creative identity.

Recent trends in further underscore Wigan's potential. The scale of development and rising property costs in Manchester city centre and surrounding areas has led to the closure of some creative workspaces and creatives being priced out. In response, there has been re-provision and expansion of more affordable creative workspaces in adjacent boroughs such as Salford. Wigan is well placed to capitalise on this

trend, leveraging lower rents and strategic location to attract and nurture creative businesses priced out of Manchester's city core.

Regeneration and placemaking

Culture plays a pivotal role in place-making and can act as a catalyst for regeneration. Numerous examples across the UK and further afield demonstrate the transformative potential for culture-led regeneration, including in deprived and former industrial areas of the country. Creative assets can spearhead change in localities, amplify local identity and create more attractive and vibrant places to live, work, and visit.

A growing preference for localised cultural consumption is emerging alongside shift in retail spending towards online consumption as well as preference for local and independent retailers. This provides an opportunity for arts culture to respond to re-purpose and reanimate high streets and town centres.



Heritage Action Zone at King Street

While Wigan boasts a rich cultural history, including its musical legacy and industrial heritage, there are untapped opportunities to leverage culture as a driving force for change and revitalisation. Currently, the towns in Wigan face the challenges of low day-time and evening footfall, and few spaces for young people to gather. This presents an opportunity to develop creative assets, spaces and cultural programming that attract residents and visitors throughout the day and into the night.

Leveraging heritage

Wigan's rich industrial heritage, characterised by its historic mill buildings and connection to the Leeds Liverpool Canal, presents a unique opportunity for heritage-led regeneration.

Heritage has a prominent role within the borough and could play a key role in supporting culture - in terms of place shaping, cultural consumption and skills development. This approach creates a sustainable cycle of preservation, quality of place, economic opportunity and education.

The strong presence of large, under-used attractive heritage assets provide the potential to host creative and cultural activities and raise profile of local social and economic history, as well as creating the opportunities to attract heritage-related funding streams for restoration and regeneration projects.



Wigan Pier © Wigan Today

This approach has already shown some success with the High Street Heritage Action Zone at King Street.

The role of culture and built heritage are key factors in sustainable urban development. By revitalising the town's historic fabric rather than opting for new-build development, Wigan can connect its vision for the future with its past, fostering a stronger sense of identity and potential for growth in the present.

Improving health and wellbeing

Wigan performs poorly on indicators of health and wellbeing compared to the national average, with lower life expectancy alongside higher under 75 mortality rates, prevalence of mental disorders and rates of obesity and smoking.¹²

The health and wellbeing benefits of cultural participation and engagement are well documented. This includes facilitating reduced stress levels; improved life satisfaction; lower levels of loneliness; improving the mental health of mothers; encouraging the emotional, social, and cognitive development of children; and promoting healthy ageing and counteracting loneliness within older people. ^{13,14}

Initiatives like the SHAPER study by King's College London and UCL explore the impact of arts interventions at scale, addressing rising health concerns like obesity and diabetes. The creative sector can play a role in delivering innovative approaches to tackle public health challenges effectively.

In recent years, the use of creative approaches to closing the gap between disparities in health and wellbeing has gained popularity. 'Creative health' recognises the relationship between arts, culture, heritage, health and wellbeing, and includes activities such as visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, as well as health-promoting activities in museums and galleries. This is driving the creative and cultural industry to contribute to the pursuit of maintaining and enhancing wellbeing.

- Mapping strengths and challenges
- The strategic need for creative spaces
- Critical Success Factors and Strategic Investment Objectives
- Unlocking creativity at different scales



Strengths and challenges

SWOT analysis

The borough is well-equipped with the necessary spaces, support systems, and strategic location to foster the growth of its cultural and creative industries; however, there are still barriers to overcome.

Strengths

- Prime location and catchment population
- Heritage assets and infrastructure
- Supportive policy environment for creative industries
- Incipient cultural and creative cluster
- Diverse cultural clusters and developer interest

Weaknesses

- Challenges in evening economy, diversity of offer and evening footfall
- Slow employment growth and low job density
- Under-representation in creative economy
- Decline in economic output and cultural spaces
- Accessibility and heritage asset integration

Opportunities

- Role of creative sector in quality of life, population and economic growth
- Platform for growth from regional initiatives
- Commercial space provision for cultural growth
- Opportunities in planned developments
- Strengthening music infrastructure to support the development of a full music ecosystem
- Heritage Assets for funding and regeneration

Threats

- Other Northern Creative Corridor areas have a better defined offer
- Absence of prominent advocates for culture
- Lack of established and mature production infrastructure
- External factors impacting growth and changing consumer behaviour
- Demographic changes, gentrification, and rising property costs
- Lack of investor appetite in creative end uses

Strengths

Wigan has many strengths, supported by its prime location, rich cultural heritage and growing cultural and creative sector

Prime location and catchment population

- Strategic location between the major urban centres of Manchester and Liverpool with large catchment population within a 30 minute travel time

Heritage assets and infrastructure

- Proof-of concept of large multi-use arts venues activating heritage assets (Leigh Spinner's Mill)
- Large, under-used attractive heritage assets and blue infrastructure assets with potential to both host creative and cultural activities and raise profile of local social and economic history

Supportive policy environment for creative industries

- Favourable policy environment to support growth in the creative industries sector

Incipient cultural and creative cluster

- 1,625 people are currently employed within the cultural and creative sector in Wigan.
- 495 businesses operate within the cultural and creative sector in Wigan representing 5.7% of the GM business base. The creative and cultural business base has grown strongly over the past decade in Wigan, with an uplift of 24%, above the national growth rate for the sector

Diverse cultural clusters and developer interest

- There are clusters of creative and cultural businesses in Wigan, Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley
- Evidence of developer appetite in Wigan
- Strong presence of grassroots live music venues, providing critical space for new artists to grow
- Strong alignment between cultural consumption offer and broad preferences of existing audiences (live music, heritage)
- Strong presence of community centres, libraries, working men's clubs, local charities

Weaknesses

Wigan's weaknesses are primarily due to its poor intra-borough connectivity, below average employment growth in the creative sector, and lack of production spaces

Challenges in evening economy, diversity of offer and evening footfall

- Lack of an evening/after-work economy, diversity of offer and footfall
- Limited disposable income/spending power of existing cultural audiences

Slow employment growth and low job density

- Below average employment growth over time relative to benchmarks and low job density

Under-representation in creative economy

- Below average proportion of businesses in the creative economy relative to benchmarks
- Creative and cultural employment is currently low and under-represented in Wigan relative to comparator geographies
- Businesses in the creative and cultural sector are under-represented in Wigan relative to benchmarks.

Decline in economic output and cultural spaces

- Economic output in the sector represents £239m (4.3% of total output) but this has significantly reduced over time
- Notable lack of cultural production spaces, including full range of artist studio space, co-working space, rehearsal and recording facilities and film/digital production space means that residents within creative industries are likely going elsewhere to produce culture

Accessibility and heritage asset integration

- Poor connectivity within the borough by public transport.
- Heritage assets currently disparate, without strong public realm link

Opportunities

Opportunities are supported by a strong regional ecosystem, provision of space for cultural use, and existing audiences

Role of creative sector in quality of life, population and economic growth

- Growing population and the cultural and creative economy can play a role in supporting quality of life and providing local employment opportunities

Platform for growth from regional initiatives

- Creative economy initiatives and major projects in the Northern Creative Corridor provide a platform for growth in the sector in Wigan

Commercial space provision for cultural growth

- The provision of commercial space identified in the Places for Everyone Plan can respond to cultural and creative workspace requirements and can provide a stimulus to grow the sector

Opportunities in planned developments

- Planned developments across Wigan will support population growth and regeneration, providing opportunities to drive footfall and local spend

Strengthening music infrastructure to support the development of a full music ecosystem

- Existing grassroots music scene combined with potential new audiences create opportunity to develop more mature spectrum of music infrastructure to turn Wigan into a 'Music Town'
 - encompassing the infrastructure needed to support a full ecosystem of music production and consumption

Heritage Assets for funding and regeneration

- Strong presence of built heritage creates opportunity to attract heritage-related funding streams for culture-led restoration/regeneration projects

Threats

Threats includes changing consumer behaviour, rising property costs, and the impact on accessibility of creative workspaces

Other Northern Creative Corridor areas have a better defined offer

- Other towns and cities in the Northern Creative Corridor have a better defined offer in terms of culture and creative industries

Absence of prominent advocates for culture

- Absence of prominent leading advocates for culture who can help to catalyse activity at scale

Lack of established and mature production infrastructure

- Much of the benefits of the creative supply chain are going elsewhere, threatening long-term potential to capture the value of culture

External factors impacting growth and changing consumer behaviour

- Exposure to external factors such as the pandemic, cost of living crisis, energy crisis, and EU exit influencing employment and productivity growth in the sector as well as disposable income

Demographic changes, gentrification, and rising property costs

- Demographic change including forecast reduction in working age population and increase in 65+ population tightening labour supply and disposable income
- Gentrification and rising property costs impacting access and availability of creative workspace

Lack of investor appetite in creative end uses compared to residential

- Residential real estate typically has lower barriers to entry, more leverage, and steadier cash flow.

The strategic need for creative spaces

Based on the strategic context, socio-economic evidence, and cultural infrastructure mapping, six strategic investment objectives points have been identified to align creative industries' assets and infrastructure needs with the long-term aims of the borough.

These strategic objectives guide asset identification, investment, and action, ensuring a holistic approach to cultural development.

This framework allows for project assessments that extend beyond cost and economic considerations to include the social, wellbeing, and spatial justice-related potential of cultural interventions.

Creating new, permanent spaces for production

Reducing heritage-at-risk

Enhancing the borough's evening offer

Embedding culture in the every-day

Developing spaces for collaboration

Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors

Creating new, permanent spaces for production

What is it

Rentable rehearsal space and production space for music, dance and the performing arts

Why its needed

Wigan has a strong demand for live music, dance, and performing arts, as demonstrated by the borough's 67 performance and exhibition spaces and 42 live music venues and concert halls. However, the borough only has 12 venues dedicated to cultural production, many of which are grassroots or community-based and lack necessary equipment and appropriate technical specifications.

There are multiple organisations within the performing arts sector and the music sector in particular who have reported a needed for rehearsal and ancillary space to support production. Moreover, local organisations are currently already using and sharing space in a highly collaborative manner and many smaller organisations describe the pitfalls of hiring external premises for some of their activities, which has limitations and creates reliance on space availability.

What this will achieve

Rentable, bookable production space could satisfy the ongoing needs of the existing creative communities as well as unlock opportunities for creative growth in the region. These spaces can also contribute towards Wigan's ambitions of becoming a creative production hub in the region. Moreover, permanent spaces for production can support students and young talent to develop the skills necessary to enter into the creative workforce.

Case Study

Talent House, Stratford, London

Talent House in Stratford is an example of re-purposing historical assets to create shared rehearsal and production spaces specific to local artistic needs. Supported by funding from the Mayor of London, East London Dance and UD Music Foundation formed a joint venture to create a hub aimed at creating opportunities for dance and music artists to connect and create with each other.

Talent House provides spacious rehearsal studios, soundproof production suites, and versatile workshop areas. These adaptable spaces accommodate theatre troupes, musicians, dancers, and filmmakers, fostering a collaborative environment where different artistic disciplines intersect.

State-of-the-art equipment and facilities enhance the creative process and enable high-quality productions.



Talent House ©UD Music

Enhancing the borough's evening offer

What is it

Creating cultural experiences for residents (and visitors) in the area as a way to increase footfall, economy activity and opportunity in Wigan

Why its needed

Data shows that Wigan has low evening footfall, with much of the entertainment and cultural engagement after dark limited to events in clubs or pubs, which do not cater to a diverse audience.

Furthermore, new mixed-use developments driven by substantial housing targets will increase the town centre's population, necessitating creative spaces and associated infrastructure to accommodate new audiences, artists, and visitors. This includes a diverse range of food and beverage options, hotels, and other supporting night-time infrastructure. There is a particular demand to support residencies and flexible opportunities for artists and creatives to spend time in the city.

What this will achieve

Improving Wigan's evening cultural and creative offer will make it a more vibrant and attractive place to live, work, and visit. Increased evening footfall will boost the local economy by supporting businesses and creating jobs. The presence of diverse cultural activities and amenities will foster a lively, inclusive community atmosphere, encouraging social interaction and cultural exchange. Additionally, by attracting artists and creatives, Wigan can build a dynamic cultural scene, enhancing its reputation and appeal as a cultural destination.

Case Study

Green Rooms, Wood Green, London

Located in a re-purposed former Council office, Green Rooms provides affordable accommodation for artists and travellers, fostering a cross-pollination of ideas while boosting local tourism

The collaboration between the Council and a local entrepreneur enriches London's cultural offerings by providing not only lodging but also on-site workspaces, event venues, and exhibition areas. This integration of artistic space with hospitality facilities encourages cultural exchange and supports emerging artists, contributing to the area's creative vibrancy.

Green Rooms' success demonstrates how the public and private sectors can synergise to create unique, multifunctional spaces that cater to diverse needs. The collaboration's impact extends beyond art and culture, invigorating the local economy and positioning Wood Green as a hub for creativity.



The Green Rooms ©SODA Studio

Developing spaces for collaboration

What is it

Open, flexible, and rentable studio space for artists and small businesses

Why its needed

There is a clear gap in provision of open, flexible, and rentable workspace catering to creative practitioners and small creative businesses to work and collaborate with one another. A robust creative sector is supported by freelancers, micro-businesses and SMEs. In Wigan, this ecosystem is nascent and opportunities to collaborate and share skills in affordable and scalable workspace is needed to support them.

There is also specific under-supply of affordable artist studio space in Wigan. Those spaces that do exist report being oversubscribed with long waiting lists and/or not having the appropriate technical specifications needed, indicating scope and potential for additional provision.

What this will achieve

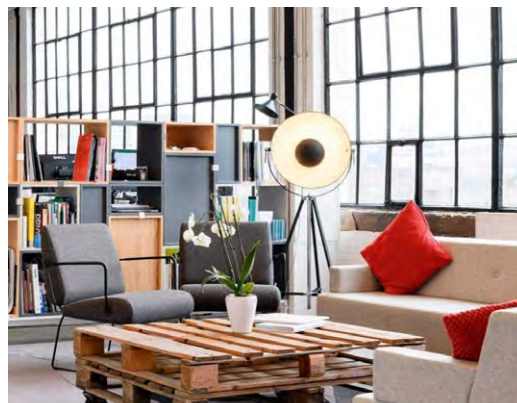
Providing open, flexible, and rentable workspaces will stimulate the growth of Wigan's creative sector by offering essential infrastructure for freelancers, micro-businesses, and SMEs. This will foster a collaborative environment, enhancing skill-sharing and innovation. Affordable artist studio spaces will attract and retain talent, reducing waiting lists and meeting the high demand for professional production spaces.

Case Study

The Custard Factory, Digbeth, Birmingham

The Custard Factory, located in Digbeth, Birmingham's creative quarter, is example of a creative workspace that has revitalised a historic industrial area into a thriving hub for artistic and entrepreneurial endeavours. Originally a custard factory in the 19th century, it was transformed in the 1990s into a multifunctional base for creative talent catering to a diverse range of creative industries.

This complex houses art studios, galleries, offices, shops, restaurants, and event spaces, which fosters a collaborative environment for artists, designers, tech innovators, and other creative professionals. The Custard Factory's success as a creative workspace is attributed to its ability to nurture innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship. Regular art exhibitions, performances, and workshops contribute to a sense of community engagement, while its location within Birmingham's creative quarter amplifies its role in supporting local culture and economy. The Custard Factory is an example of how re-purposing historical spaces can catalyse creative and economic growth, offering a blueprint for transforming former industrial areas into thriving centres of innovation and expression.



The Custard Factory ©Digbeth Digest

Reducing heritage at-risk

What is it

Bringing large scale vacant assets into use through cultural activities

Why its needed

The Heritage Risk Register indicates that as of November 2023, nine historic sites in Wigan were listed as at risk of neglect, decay, or inappropriate development, with many more not on the register but still underutilised. Without intervention, these buildings face an immediate risk of further deterioration or loss.

Heritage spaces, places, organisations and intangible cultural heritage underpin the creative industries. They provide the inspiration, space, material, and support for creative production. Re purposing historic buildings for cultural and creative use can rescue and reinvigorate them, transforming them into vibrant community assets. These buildings can also create experiences that engage visitors, tell heritage stories in new ways and give new life to old buildings.

What this will achieve

Revitalising heritage buildings through cultural activities will preserve Wigan's architectural legacy and prevent the loss of historically significant structures. These efforts will also stimulate local economic growth by attracting tourists and creative businesses, creating job opportunities, and enhancing the town's cultural appeal. Moreover, re purposed heritage sites will foster community pride and engagement, offering residents and visitors unique spaces to experience and interact with Wigan's rich history.

Case Study Printworks, Manchester

Printworks in Manchester is a large entertainment complex located in the heart of the city. Originally built in 1873, the building served as a printing house for newspapers, including the Manchester Evening Chronicle. The historic structure has undergone significant redevelopment to transform it into a modern hub of leisure and entertainment. Today, Printworks offers a variety of attractions, including a multi-screen cinema, a gym, numerous restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. This vibrant mix of amenities makes it a popular destination for both locals and tourists seeking diverse entertainment options under one roof.

The redevelopment of Printworks serves as a notable example of addressing the issue of heritage buildings at risk. By repurposing the old printing house, the project has preserved an important piece of Manchester's industrial history while adapting it to contemporary uses. This approach not only safeguards the architectural integrity of the historic structure but also breathes new life into it, ensuring its continued relevance and utility.



Printworks Manchester © Visit Manchester

Embedding culture in the every-day

What is it

Making culture a part of the every-day experience so that young people can seek careers in the creative and cultural sectors

Why its needed

In Wigan Borough, the arts are recognised as a vital means of bringing connection and meaning to the lives of residents. To support this, spaces are needed to foster community, cultivate aspirations around careers in the creative and cultural industries, and provide opportunities for engagement.

Dedicated spaces where culture and creativity can be explored informally will help people understand and experience the value of these industries.

What this will achieve

Embedding culture in everyday life will create a vibrant community where cultural engagement is accessible to all. By providing dedicated spaces for informal exploration of the arts, we can inspire young people to pursue careers in the creative and cultural sectors, fostering a new generation of talent. These spaces will enhance community cohesion, promote lifelong learning, and support mental well-being by making the arts an integral part of daily life.

Case Study Altogether Otherwise, Manchester

Altogether Otherwise is an innovative organisation based in Manchester, dedicated to fostering a vibrant cultural landscape within the city. The organisation focuses on integrating arts, creativity, and cultural activities into the daily lives of the community. By offering a diverse range of programmes, workshops, and events, Altogether Otherwise seeks to make culture accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or experience. Their initiatives often include collaborative projects with local artists, pop-up exhibitions, public art installations, and interactive performances that invite community participation and engagement.

Altogether Otherwise serves as a prime example of embedding culture into the everyday fabric of urban life. Through its varied offerings, the organisation not only provides platforms for artists and creatives but also encourages active involvement from the public. This approach helps to break down barriers between art and community, making cultural experiences a regular part of people's routines rather than occasional events.



Altogether Otherwise © Visit Manchester

Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors

What is it

Space and equipment to support talent

Why its needed

The creative and cultural business base in Wigan Borough has grown significantly over the past decade, with 95 new businesses established, representing a 24% increase, which is above the national growth rate for the sector. Despite this growth, job density in Wigan's creative and cultural sector remains low, at 78 jobs per 10,000 working-age residents, compared to the Greater Manchester average of 320 and the England average of 394.

To bridge this gap, appropriate spaces are needed to support and connect every member of Wigan's creative workforce. These spaces are essential for providing access to training, career development, and fair employment opportunities, ensuring that talent can thrive locally.

What this will achieve

Creating dedicated spaces for education and industry support will provide opportunities for young people to develop the necessary skills to work in the cultural and creative industries and enhance the sustainability of local creative organisations, expanding their capacity to offer stable jobs and fostering a vibrant, interconnected creative sector. This will not only increase job density but also ensure that Wigan becomes a nurturing ground for creative talent. Additionally, these efforts will attract more businesses and professionals to the area, contributing to economic growth and elevating Wigan's reputation as a hub for creativity and innovation.

Case Study

The Backstage Centre, Purfleet, Thurrock

The Backstage Centre is a £13 million rehearsal and training centre, located in High House Production Park in Purfleet. It is a multifunctional hub dedicated to nurturing talent and innovation within the performing arts and creative industries. The centre provides state-of-the-art rehearsal studios, sound stages, workshops, and production spaces that cater to various arms of the entertainment sector, including theatre, film, music, and events. These facilities offer a realistic environment for artists, technicians, and creators to develop their skills, collaborate on projects, and refine their craft.

The Backstage Centre collaborates with local educational institutions South Essex College and University College Essex to offer specialised courses and training programs. These programs cover an array of disciplines, from technical production and stage management to lighting design and audio engineering. Students and participants gain hands-on experience using industry-standard equipment, learning from seasoned professionals and experts in their fields.



The Backstage Centre ©The Backstage Centre

Identifying and prioritising opportunities

To help identify and prioritise the development of key assets across the borough, a Creative Assets Register was developed. This register compiles key information about cultural and creative spaces in the borough, providing a structured approach to evaluate potential assets for investment.

By assessing these assets against clearly defined Critical Success Factors, which derive from the strategic needs for culture identified in the previous chapter, the register enables us to identify which projects should be prioritised for action and investment.

The cultural infrastructure mapping identified 124 places for cultural consumption and production in the borough. Further sites were identified through in-depth conversations with council officers and local community stakeholders, capturing local insights and uncovering additional assets that may not have been initially documented.

To systematically assess and prioritise these assets, a Creative Assets Register was developed. This register serves as a comprehensive tool for gathering essential information on each site, such as occupancy status, heritage value, location, and scale. It also facilitates the evaluation of each asset's alignment with the Critical Success Factors (CSF) and investment objectives (IO) outlined on the following page.

The investment objectives define Wigan's ambitions through the implementation of this strategy and serve as a guide for prioritisation and investment decisions.

This approach enables an objective and transparent identification of the most viable assets for prioritisation, ultimately highlighting key sites that can be leveraged to enhance the borough's cultural and creative infrastructure.

The full Creative Assets Register, along with the detailed criteria and scoring methodology, can be found in the accompanying appendix, providing a clear and replicable framework for future evaluations.

Information collected in the register includes:

- Space name
- Occupancy status
- Heritage
- Ownership
- Postcode
- Town
- Core-typology
- Sub-typology
- Potential uses
- Sub-sector
- Scale of asset
- Indicative cost

Critical Success Factors

CSF1 - Strategic Fit How does this project align with the investment objectives and wider policies and strategies such as 'The Fire Within'?	IO1 - Sector growth and clustering Foster growth and resilience of Wigan's creative sector, supporting cluster development and creating a supportive ecosystem for creative industries to flourish
	IO2 - Contribution to production hub/performing arts, music, visual arts Position Wigan as a production hub for the Northern Creative Corridor, building specialisms in the areas of performing arts, music and visual arts
	IO3 - Alignment of initiatives to support place-making Strategically align initiatives to support Wigan's regeneration and placemaking ambitions, amplifying Wigan's distinct cultural identity and supporting pride of place
	IO4 - Engagement, participation and wellbeing Promote greater creative and cultural engagement to boost community participation and wellbeing
	IO5 - Heritage Safeguard and leverage Wigan's heritage assets as cultural anchors and economic drivers
	IO6 - Skills development Contribute to skills development within the creative industries, nurturing and retaining talent and supporting artistic empowerment and entrepreneurship
CFS2 - Economic, cultural, social and environmental impact How can the site can improve accessibility of the cultural offer and attract investment?	Economics and place
	Cultural and social
	Environmental
CSF3 - Affordability What type of funding is needed to progress development and is there a commercially sustainable model?	Capital assessment: Total project costs Low: <£1 million Medium: £1 million - £5 million High: £5 million +
	Revenue assessment
CSF4 - Deliverability/potential route to project What are the viable operating models for this site?	Feasibility and potential operator Feasibility and existing or future ideas on programming. Clarity and experience of end operator.

Prioritising assets and opportunities

Strengthening Wigan's cultural and creative ecosystem is a long-term commitment that requires strategic planning and patience, as not all assets can be activated simultaneously. To build momentum, it is essential to advance projects that are ready for immediate implementation while also laying the groundwork for larger, more complex initiatives that require additional time and resources.

Prioritising which assets to advance first requires careful differentiation between those that can be activated quickly and those that need more time due to their complexity or scale.

The Creative Assets Register provides a valuable framework for this process. By evaluating potential projects against defined Critical Success Factors, including consideration of affordability (CSF3) and deliverability (CSF4) factors, the Register facilitates the prioritisation process, enabling the identification of quick wins while also flagging projects that be realised in the longer term.

In the strategy, each asset is identified as either an 'immediate' or 'complex' opportunity based on the affordability (CSF3) and deliverability (CSF4) scores.

Immediate opportunities “Quick wins”

Immediate opportunities are often “quick wins” or “low-hanging fruit”— these are assets that can be utilised quickly because they already have existing partnerships, planning permissions, or secured funding. These might also include assets that need only minor adaptations or enhanced use of existing spaces, making them easier and faster to activate.

Complex opportunities “Longer-term initiatives”

Complex opportunities involve assets that require more time, effort and potentially resources to develop. These may need significant investment, face higher risks, or involve complex ownership or operator challenges. Because of these factors, they require a more strategic approach, with a focus on careful planning, securing funding, and overcoming potential obstacles. As such, the potential of these assets is likely to be realised in the longer term.

Unlocking creativity at different scales

In addition to addressing the strategic need for culture in Wigan, any interventions must also seek to address cultural needs and catalyse cultural and creative activity at various scales.

The identification and development of creative assets in Wigan must be carefully aligned with needs at the neighbourhood, borough, and regional levels. This multilevel approach ensures that local communities are engaged and supported, while also contributing to the broader cultural and economic goals of the borough and the region.



Early Doors Club at St. George's Church in Tyldesley © Ryan Bowen

Neighbourhood

Unlocking culture and creativity for all

This strategy aims to highlight opportunities to unlock creative assets at a neighbourhood scale. This will help embed culture and creativity at a hyper-local level in places like Wigan, Leigh, Atherton, Standish and Tyldesley town centres, providing free or affordable spaces for cultural production and consumption. These projects will foster community engagement, support local artists, and enhance the cultural vibrancy of Wigan's places. By creating accessible cultural and creative hubs, they will encourage residents to participate in and contribute to their local cultural scene, strengthening community ties and promoting inclusivity.



Light Night Wigan © Zarah Hussain

Borough

Promoting growth and widening participation

At the borough level, this strategy looks to identify assets which can help build a robust cultural ecosystem within Wigan Borough. This involves leveraging existing heritage buildings and underutilised spaces to create hubs for creative industries. For instance, transforming vacant historic sites into multifunctional cultural centres can provide essential infrastructure for artists, creative practitioners, and cultural organisations. These borough-wide initiatives should aim to connect different neighbourhoods, facilitating collaboration and resource sharing among local creatives. Moreover, aligning borough-level projects with Wigan's broader economic and social goals can help drive sustainable growth and development, ensuring that the creative sector contributes significantly to the overall prosperity of the area.



Artist studio at Leigh Spinners Mill

Region

Contributing to regional growth of the Northern Creative Corridor

The Northern Creative Corridor aims to connect creative clusters and activities across Northern England to drive regional growth in the creative industries. Wigan is uniquely positioned to contribute to this growth by enhancing its cultural and creative offerings, thereby attracting talent and investment. This strategy seeks to identify opportunities to harness creative assets that can stimulate this growth, particularly in areas related to careers in the creative sectors, spaces for technical education and research and development, and venues for creative production.

- The impact on the wider creative ecosystem



Priority initiatives and key assets

To meet the strategic investment objectives, this strategy outlines six priority initiatives - areas of intervention which focus on how physical assets can be leveraged to create value, address the identified needs, and strengthen the creative sector.

Key assets

Each initiative is paired with key assets identified through the cultural infrastructure mapping exercise and long-listed using the Creative Assets Register assessment framework. These assets include existing buildings that can be repurposed or better utilized for cultural and creative use, along with vacant or larger buildings requiring more complex interventions.

The map highlights the assets' distribution across the borough, with clusters in Wigan and Leigh town centres. All projects will involve engagement with the Council, local stakeholders, and the public for feedback and to test the approach.

The key assets listed here are not exhaustive. Places like Haigh Hall, Gerard Winstanley House, and Cross



1. Production and rehearsal spaces for music, dance and the performing arts



2. Creative production hubs and makerspaces



3. Flexible community and civic spaces



4. Cultural consumption on the high street



5. Multi-purpose cultural anchors in the town centres



6. Spaces for skills development

Street Arts, for example, significantly enrich the borough's cultural and creative scene. The assets identified are those that can be further activated to enhance the borough's creative ecology.

Production and rehearsal spaces:

1. Trencherfield Mill
2. Snug Coffeehouse
3. Vacant spaces in the town centres

Creative production hubs and makerspaces:

4. Leigh Spinners Mill
5. Wallpaper Supplies

Flexible community and civic spaces

6. Turnpike Gallery
7. Wigan Borough Libraries (borough wide)

8. Community Centres and Secondary Schools (borough wide)

Cultural consumption on the high street

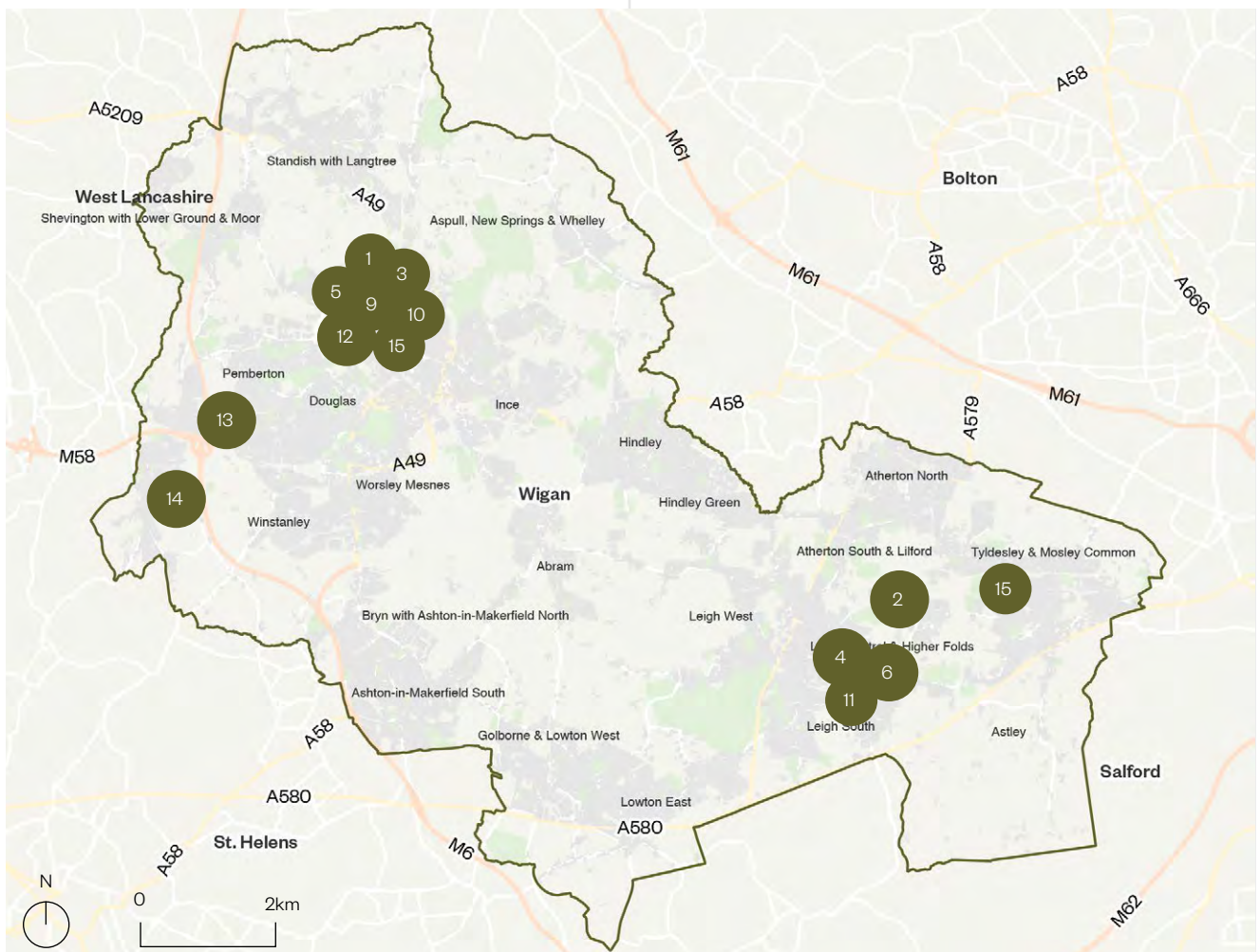
9. Museum of Wigan Life

Multi-purpose anchors in the town centre:

10. Royal Court Theatre
11. Assembly Rooms
12. Wigan Pier

Spaces for skills development

13. The Music Projects
14. Furthering Education Colleges
15. Wigan and Tyldesley Little Theatres



1. Production and rehearsal spaces for music, dance and the performing arts

Why is it needed?

Wigan has a strong demand for live music, dance, and performing arts, as demonstrated by the borough's 67 performance and exhibition spaces and 42 live music venues and concert halls. However, the borough only has 12 venues dedicated to cultural production, many of which are grassroots or community-based and lack necessary equipment and appropriate technical specifications.

There is a clear need for more permanent, rentable, and well-equipped production and rehearsal spaces to support these sectors. Providing access to such resources and dedicated spaces will not only bolster the industry but also serve as incubators for talent. These spaces allow emerging artists to hone their skills alongside established professionals, creating a dynamic ecosystem that nurtures creativity and excellence. This will foster local talent and help transform Wigan into a regional production hub.

These types of spaces will also contribute to Wigan's role in the Northern Creative Corridor by providing a strong local offer of production that other creatives from across the region can access and use.

Types of spaces

Cultural production spaces range in scale from modest artists' workspaces through to large scale sound stages and rehearsal studios.

Most creative disciplines require some form of production space prior to engagement with a wider audience in whatever form that may take.

This includes everything from art and design to fashion, music, film, dance and theatre.

These production and rehearsal spaces need to accommodate the materials, processes and access requirements necessary for large-scale or complex physical works. Additionally, some non-physical cultural production like film or motion capture for games design also needs industrial scale space for extensive equipment rigs and lighting.

Cultural production spaces include everything from small creative studios to large industrial spaces within strategic industrial land.

Alignment to strategic need

1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production
● ● ● ● ●
2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer
● ○ ○ ○ ○
3. Developing spaces for collaboration
● ● ● ○ ○
4. Reducing heritage-at-risk
● ● ● ○ ○
5. Embedding culture in the everyday
● ○ ○ ○ ○
6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors
● ● ● ○ ○

Scale of influence

- Neighbourhood
- Borough
- Region

Key assets

- Trencherfield Mill
- Snug Coffeehouse
- Vacant spaces in the town centres

Trencherfield Mill Wigan Town Centre

Trencherfield Mill was built in 1907 for cotton production, with a steam engine to power the mill. It is now a multi-programme building, with some occupied ground floor units, including the Steam Engine Museum open to the public a few times a year, and Rose Bruford College for theatre.

Strategic Fit:

There is an opportunity to expand the use of the Steam Engine Room, create new permanent spaces dedicated to creative production with a focus on the theatre sector, and enhance opportunities for cultural engagement and participation.

Opportunity:

Complex



Snug Coffeehouse Atherton

During the day, The Snug is a community-based coffee shop offering hot drinks, light meals, and a safe space that residents of the community can use to work, meet with friends and meet new people in their area. By night, The Snug transforms into an 80-capacity grassroots music venue, hosting original music and providing new and emerging artists with valuable opportunities to hone their craft and progress in their careers.

Strategic Fit:

The Snug already supports grassroots musicians, and there is an opportunity to expand this by increasing both the quantity and quality of its production spaces.

Opportunity:

Immediate



Vacant and underused spaces Borough-wide

Across the borough, there are several vacant or underutilised spaces, often concentrated in town centres. Notable examples include the former Wilko and Marks & Spencer buildings in Wigan town centre, as well as St. Thomas Church in Leigh and the Palace Picture House in Platt Bridge.

Strategic Fit:

These buildings, particularly the scale of some of them, present a significant opportunity to create additional spaces for creative production and consumption.

Opportunity:

Immediate



Vacant Wilko in Wigan Town Centre
© Wigan Today

2. Creative production hubs and makerspaces

Why is it needed?

A creative production hub and makerspace is a shared facility that provides artists, designers, and makers with the tools, resources, and collaborative spaces needed to develop and produce innovative projects, fostering creativity and community engagement across various disciplines.

These spaces support micro and small businesses by offering affordable access to essential equipment and expertise. This is particularly relevant in Wigan, where micro and small businesses dominate the creative and cultural sector. Ensuring these spaces are flexible allows each hub to meet the specific needs of their local contexts, which may vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

Creative production hubs and makerspaces can also act as nodes within a broader creative ecosystem, facilitating collaboration, experimentation, and innovation, which in turn can fuel creative and business development and boost productivity. This is especially important in towns where the natural co-location of creative businesses is less likely, presenting a valuable opportunity to anchor Wigan as a production hub for the region.

Types of spaces

Creative production hubs and makerspaces can range in scale from modest artists' workspaces through to large scale sound stages and rehearsal studios. The requirements of affordability and spatial or environmental needs can limit where such spaces are located. They include however rundown buildings, at the rear of high streets, in industrial areas or incorporated within the consumption spaces they serve.

It is becoming more common to co-locate production spaces. This may be either with spaces of cultural consumption or with other uses, such as residential. In such instances each use can benefit from the other: creative workspace may offer additional revenue for a small-scale gallery. It may also be possible to offer affordable studios as part of a mixed-use, or wider housing development. In such cases, it is essential to clearly understand the business case for the production spaces.

Characteristics of creative studios are that they can exist on any floor, with lower ceilings being manageable, but with higher preferred. Creative workspaces require occasional servicing/deliveries related to production materials, which may be of a large scale.

Alignment to strategic need

1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production
● ● ● ● ●
2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
3. Developing spaces for collaboration
● ● ● ● ●
4. Reducing heritage-at-risk
● ● ● ○ ○
5. Embedding culture in the everyday
● ● ○ ○ ○
6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors
● ● ○ ○ ○

Scale of influence

- Neighbourhood
- Borough
- Region

Key assets

- Leigh Spinners Mill
- Wallpaper Supplies

Leigh Spinners Mill Leigh Town Centre

This Grade II* listed early 20th-century building hosts over 60 independent and community-focused businesses, including Leigh Film Factory, Northwest Computer Museum, and Leigh Hackspace. Half of the building has been re-developed while the other half remains underutilised.

Strategic Fit:

The developed portion of the building serves as a successful model for housing multiple creative businesses. Redeveloping the remaining half in a similar fashion presents an opportunity to expand the available floorspace, further supporting the growth of cultural and creative enterprises.

Opportunity:

Complex



© Mills Transformed

Wallpaper Supplies Wigan Town Centre

Located on 33-53 Library Street, this now vacant building was once the home of Timberlakes Car Showrooms and Garages and Wallpaper Supplies.

Strategic Fit:

There is opportunity to redevelop the building into a creative industries hub, providing creative workspaces, and a weekend or evening market offer in the outdoor space of Arcade Square adjacent to the building. It's location in the town centre and proximity to other cultural assets and to King Street via Grimes Arcade presents an opportunity to contribute to an emergent creative cluster in Wigan Town Centre.

Opportunity:

Complex



3. Flexible community and civic spaces

Why is it needed?

Engagement with local creatives in Wigan highlighted that cultural and creative activities across the borough should not only be available to all residents, but also be a mechanism to bring communities together. For a wide range of people to be able to participate in cultural activity, there needs to be more locally accessible opportunities and spaces to facilitate these encounters.

Community and civic spaces are becoming increasingly important not only to but to also improving to health and wellbeing and offering opportunities for locals to connect with one another.

Types of spaces

Flexible community and civic spaces will often occupy a generic cultural venue, or a place where something happens, especially an organised event such as a concert, a conference, or educational creative practice. Giving extra capacity to community venues for cultural consumption makes opportunities and a 'way-in' to expand both the audience and the practitioner's ambitions within the creative industries.

These spaces can be purpose built or co-located within other buildings.

Alignment to strategic need

- 1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
- 2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer
● ○ ○ ○ ○
- 3. Developing spaces for collaboration
● ● ● ● ○
- 4. Reducing heritage-at-risk
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
- 5. Embedding culture in the everyday
● ● ● ● ●
- 6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors
● ● ○ ○ ○

Scale of influence

- Neighbourhood

Key assets

- Turnpike Gallery
- Wigan Borough Libraries
- Community Centres and Secondary Schools

Turnpike Gallery Leigh Town Centre

This arts venue and culture hub in Leigh town centre offers exhibitions, workshops and events. Situated within Leigh's Civic Square's core, the centre fulfils an important role in the community, engaging with schools and residents through its programme of support and activities.

Strategic Fit:

While the Turnpike Gallery already provides valuable community space, there is significant potential to enhance its facilities. By equipping its spaces to host multi-functional uses, the gallery can expand its role, accommodating a wider range of events and activities.

Opportunity:

Complex



Wigan Borough Libraries Borough-wide

The borough's 15 libraries each offer a wealth of resources, services, and programmes to residents and serving as vital hubs for learning, connection, and community engagement.

Strategic Fit:

There is potential to activate Wigan's libraries through enhanced cultural and creative initiatives, including establishing small maker spaces, introducing diverse cultural programming, and expanding educational opportunities, bringing culture into everyday life and inspiring creative activity throughout the borough.

Opportunity:

Immediate



Wigan Life © Wigan Today

Community Centres and Secondary Schools Borough-wide

The borough's 11 community centres and more than 20 secondary schools serve as vital hubs for local residents. While many of these facilities are equipped with resources that could support cultural initiatives, their current offerings are often limited in scope and accessibility.

Strategic Fit:

Building stronger partnerships with these spaces can enhance their role as venues for cultural and creative activities, transforming these underutilised spaces for workshops, exhibitions, and performances.

Opportunity:

Immediate



4. Cultural consumption on the high street

Why is it needed?

Research has demonstrated the significant impact cultural spaces can have on high streets including increasing footfall, enhancing civic pride, and promoting diverse street use. Wigan's town centres lack varied cultural consumption spaces. Ensuring a diversity of cultural venues on the high street can boost Wigan's appeal, increase evening foot traffic, and stimulate the local economy.

These cultural spaces can contribute to a broader cultural ecosystem by serving as active hubs for events, festivals, and performances. Such initiatives create valuable opportunities for community members to engage with, influence, and participate in cultural and creative activities, fostering a sense of local ownership and identity.

Furthermore, there's a timely opportunity to capitalise on Wigan's new residential and mixed-use developments. These can generate additional footfall and spending to support cultural spaces, creating a symbiotic relationship between urban growth and cultural vitality. Strategically placed cultural venues can also catalyse the formation of creative clusters, particularly in Wigan and Leigh town centres.

Types of spaces

Cultural consumption spaces are venues where audiences and participants can view, join in and enjoy arts and culture activities. They include galleries, museums, archives, music venues, dance performance spaces and theatres. They may also include multi-use venues like community centres, school halls and pubs.

Places where culture is consumed require room for their audience and participants first and foremost. These are the public spaces and are often called 'front of house'. Equally, you must consider preparing these cultural products (for example a performance), the need to engage the community, service the building and bring in revenue beyond the core cultural offer.

These additional spatial requirements may include offices, rehearsal spaces, delivery spaces, foyers, box office, cloakrooms, catering, retail, dressing rooms, meeting rooms and education spaces.

Alongside standard functional requirements, audio-visual technology and lighting create specific needs you should think about and address.

Alignment to strategic need

1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer

● ● ● ● ●

3. Developing spaces for collaboration

● ○ ○ ○ ○

4. Reducing heritage-at-risk

● ● ○ ○ ○

5. Embedding culture in the everyday

● ● ● ● ○

6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Scale of influence

- Neighbourhood
- Borough

Key assets

- Museum of Wigan Life

Museum of Wigan Life

Wigan Town Centre

The Museum of Wigan Life is located within Wigan town centre and is a public museum and local history resource centre.

Strategic Fit:

There is a valuable opportunity for the Museum to expand its cultural offerings by introducing a wider range of engaging activities designed to cater to diverse audiences. Additionally, its central location in Wigan town centre positions it ideally to contribute to the creative clustering in the area and the development of a wider creative ecosystem.

Opportunity:

Immediate



5. Multi-purpose cultural anchors in the town centres

Why is it needed?

Cultural anchors can serve as creative engines, generating positive economic and social impact locally. These spaces contribute to community revitalisation, act as catalysts for collaboration and economic growth, and support placemaking efforts. Furthermore, they can function as focal points within clusters of smaller businesses, which benefit from proximity to higher concentrations of creative sector enterprises.

Currently, Wigan has been identified as an 'incipient cluster' - a younger, less stable creative ecosystem experiencing high levels of business and employment churn, coupled with low creative business survival rates. Investing in spaces that can act as cultural anchors in the town centres can strengthen the appeal for creative businesses and professionals, fostering a more robust and sustainable creative economy. These spaces can also enhance Wigan's cultural offer, attracting visitors and bolstering the local tourism economy.

Moreover, strategically placed cultural anchors can help regenerate underutilised areas of the town centres, encouraging footfall and engagement. This, in turn, can stimulate additional

investment in surrounding businesses and services, contributing to the development of a wider creative ecosystem.

Types of spaces

Spaces should be larger and offer a variety of uses. They may include a mixture of cultural consumption and small scale production spaces, and some community and civic space as well.

Their location should be in or near to the town centre to help catalyse surrounding activity and they should be accessible via footfall.

The programming of the space and the exact spatial requirements should be dictated by community need and soft market testing.

See spatial requirements of:

- Production and rehearsal spaces for music, dance and the performing arts
- Creative production hubs and makerspaces
- Flexible community and civic spaces
- Cultural consumption on the high street

Alignment to strategic need

1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer

● ● ● ○ ○

3. Developing spaces for collaboration

● ● ○ ○ ○

4. Reducing heritage-at-risk

● ● ● ● ●

5. Embedding culture in the everyday

● ● ● ● ○

6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Scale of influence

- Neighbourhood
- Borough

Key assets

- The Royal Court Theatre
- Assembly Rooms
- Wigan Pier

The Royal Court Theatre Wigan Town Centre

Built in 1886, the Grade II Listed Royal Court Theatre once showcased opera, music and theatre performances. After having undergone various transformations throughout its history, the building closed in 2016 and remains vacant.

Strategic Fit:

There is potential to host a professional production facility with performance spaces, boosting evening footfall to the town centre. Positioned on King Street, the theatre is ideally situated to support creative clustering in Wigan town centre.

Opportunity:

Complex



Assembly Rooms Leigh Town Centre

The Assembly Rooms is a key cultural asset which has fallen into disrepair. Opened in 1879 as a music hall, then a communal events venue, and in 1908 as the first picture house, it has strong historical ties to the performing arts.

Strategic Fit:

There is an opportunity to provide a new cafe and social gathering space at the front of house, provide a space for the public to view theatrical productions, an events space for hire in a desirable location in the town and appropriate space and equipment, for young people to learn vital skills based around theatrical productions.

Opportunity:

Complex



Wigan Pier

Wigan Town Centre

The Wigan Pier comprises a number of key landmark buildings, including the Trencherfield and Eckersley Mill complexes, waterway assets including the Leeds and Liverpool canal and the River Douglas, along with a number of vacant and underutilised sites.

Strategic Fit:

The Wigan Pier can act as a catalyst to activate the waterfront as a hub of cultural and creative activity. The nature of the buildings and the site's location would support a range of creative businesses within a wider mix of uses.

Opportunity:

Complex



6. Spaces for creative skills development

Why is it needed?

High-quality, employer-led skills provision is vital for the creative industries' growth, productivity and competitiveness. Young people, in particular, need to start acquiring the specialist skills critical for creative roles. To facilitate this, appropriate spaces and equipment are essential to support talent development.

In Wigan, the creative and cultural business base has grown significantly over the past decade, demonstrating the appetite for creative jobs. However, contrary to this expanding business landscape, there has been no corresponding employment growth in the sector during the same period.

Deliberately creating spaces for creative skills development can help establish a robust skills and careers pathway, generating a workforce that meets the industry's evolving needs. These spaces are crucial for fostering regional creative growth within the Northern Creative Corridor. By investing in facilities dedicated to creative skills development, Wigan can position itself as a hub for nurturing new talent and innovation. This approach will not only address local industry demands but also contribute to the wider regional economy.

Types of spaces

Creating spaces dedicated to skills development is essential for bolstering Wigan's creative and cultural economy. These spaces, varying from modest artists' workspaces to large-scale sound stages and rehearsal studios, cater to a wide array of creative disciplines such as art and design, fashion, music, film, dance, and theatre. Production spaces are crucial for these fields and can either be standalone, purpose-built facilities or co-located within other creative hubs.

Integrating educational initiatives within these creative spaces enhances their utility and impact. For example, art galleries can be designed to include teaching and support areas, fostering a hands-on learning environment. The incorporation of IT infrastructure is also vital, ensuring that spaces are equipped with ample electric sockets for charging cameras and laptops, facilitating modern, technology-driven learning experiences.

See spatial requirements of:

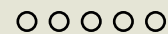
- Production and rehearsal spaces for music, dance and the performing arts
- Creative production hubs and makerspaces

Alignment to strategic need

1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production



2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer



3. Developing spaces for collaboration



4. Reducing heritage-at-risk



5. Embedding culture in the everyday



6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors



Scale of influence

- Neighbourhood
- Borough
- Region

Key assets

- The Music Projects
- Furthering Education Colleges
- Wigan and Tyldesley Little Theatres

The Music Projects

The Music Projects is an independent specialist college offering creative qualifications to students aged 16 and over.

Strategic Fit:

The Music Projects have fully equipped production spaces to support young talent and growth within the sector. Having recently secured an additional industrial unit adjacent to their main building in Wigan town centre, there are already plans to expand their educational offer. Forming strong partnership arrangements and unlocking production space for wider public use could further enhance job creation and skills development within the creative sector, contributing to the local economy and workforce.

Opportunity:

Immediate



Furthering Education Colleges

The borough is home to several Further Education colleges, including Winstanley College and Wigan and Leigh College. These institutions offer a range of creative courses designed to equip students with the skills needed for careers in the media and creative industries.

Strategic Fit:

Stronger partnerships with these colleges, which have dedicated spaces for creative production, can further strengthen the borough's creative educational offerings to enhance job creation and skills development in the creative sector, fostering a more robust local economy.

Opportunity:

Immediate



Wigan and Tyldesley Little Theatres

Wigan and Tyldesley

These two theatre spaces in the borough host productions of classic and modern plays.

Strategic Fit:

There is significant potential to utilise these theatres for hosting skills development sessions in areas such as sound, lighting, and stage production. This could not only enhance local expertise but also contribute to the growth of the borough's creative sector by developing a strong skills pipeline.

Opportunity:

Immediate



Tyldesley Little Theatre © Wikimedia Commons

At-a-glance

Summary of priority initiatives and key assets

Initiatives	Alignment with strategic objectives	Scale of influence	Key Assets
1. Production and rehearsal spaces for music, dance and the performing arts	1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production ● ● ● ● ●	– Neighbourhood – Borough – Region	Trencherfield Mill Wigan Town Centre (Complex)
	2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer ● ○ ○ ○ ○		Snug Coffee House Atherton (Immediate)
	3. Developing spaces for collaboration ● ● ● ○ ○ 4. Reducing heritage-at-risk ● ● ● ○ ○ 5. Embedding culture in the everyday ● ○ ○ ○ ○ 6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors ● ● ● ○ ○		Vacant spaces in the town centre Borough-wide (Immediate)
2. Creative production hubs and makerspaces	1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production ● ● ● ● ●	– Neighbourhood – Borough – Region	Leigh Spinners Mill Leigh Town Centre (Complex)
	2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer ○ ○ ○ ○ ○		Wallpaper Supplies Wigan Town Centre (Complex)
	3. Developing spaces for collaboration ● ● ● ● ● 4. Reducing heritage-at-risk ● ● ● ○ ○ 5. Embedding culture in the everyday ● ● ○ ○ ○ 6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors ● ● ○ ○ ○		

Initiatives	Alignment with strategic objectives	Scale of influence	Key Assets
3. Flexible community and civic spaces	1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	– Neighbourhood	Turnpike Gallery Leigh Town Centre (Complex)
	2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer ● ○ ○ ○ ○		
	3. Developing spaces for collaboration ● ● ● ● ○		Wigan Borough Libraries Borough-wide (Immediate)
	4. Reducing heritage-at-risk ○ ○ ○ ○ ○		
	5. Embedding culture in the everyday ● ● ● ● ●		Community Centres and Secondary Schools Borough-wide (Immediate)
	6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors ● ● ○ ○ ○		
4. Cultural consumption on the high street	1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	– Neighbourhood – Borough	Museum of Wigan Life Wigan Town Centre (Complex)
	2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer ● ● ● ● ●		
	3. Developing spaces for collaboration ● ○ ○ ○ ○		
	4. Reducing heritage-at-risk ● ● ○ ○ ○		
	5. Embedding culture in the everyday ● ● ● ● ○		
	6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors ○ ○ ○ ○ ○		

Initiatives	Alignment with strategic objectives	Scale of influence	Key Assets
5. Multi-purpose cultural anchors in the town centres	1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer ● ● ● ○ ○ 3. Developing spaces for collaboration ● ● ○ ○ ○ 4. Reducing heritage-at-risk ● ● ● ● ● 5. Embedding culture in the everyday ● ● ● ● ○ 6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	– Neighbourhood – Borough	Royal Court Theatre Wigan Town Centre (Complex)
			Assembly Rooms Leigh Town Centre (Complex)
			Wigan Pier Wigan Town Centre (Complex)
6. Spaces for skills development	1. Creating new, permanent spaces for production ● ● ● ● ○ 2. Enhancing the borough's evening offer ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 3. Developing spaces for collaboration ● ● ● ● ○ 4. Reducing heritage-at-risk ● ○ ○ ○ ○ 5. Embedding culture in the everyday ● ● ● ○ ○ 6. Expanding education access and establishing industry anchors ● ● ● ● ●	– Neighbourhood – Borough – Region	The Music Projects Wigan Town Centre and borough wide (Immediate)
			Furthering Education Colleges Borough wide (Immediate)
			Wigan and Tyldesley Little Theatres Wigan and Tyldesley town centres (Immediate)

The impact on the wider creative ecosystem

Working towards fulfilling the priority Initiatives and the development of dedicated creative spaces will lead to significant positive impacts on the borough's cultural and creative ecosystems.

Creative clustering

If Wigan's priority initiatives are executed successfully, the result will be a thriving environment for creative clustering particularly in the town centres of Wigan and Leigh. By providing the spaces for artists, designers, and cultural organisations to work in close proximity, there is an opportunity for the facilitation and exchange of ideas and resources, driving creativity and enhancing the overall cultural offering. This collaborative environment not only benefits individual creatives by providing networking opportunities and shared resources, but also attracts talent and investment, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of growth.

Town centre placemaking

The successful execution of Wigan's priority initiatives will significantly enhance town centre placemaking efforts. By creating flexible community and civic spaces, alongside multi-purpose cultural anchors, Wigan can transform its town centres into a vibrant cultural hubs. These spaces could serve as gathering points for community events, performances, and exhibitions, encouraging residents and visitors to engage with the local arts scene. As the town centre comes alive with cultural activities, it will foster a sense of belonging and pride among residents, while also attracting foot traffic and stimulating local businesses.

Activate public spaces, canal and natural resources for cultural use

As more creative spaces emerge within the borough, these areas will become focal points for cultural and community activities. The canal, parks, and other natural resources can be reimagined as venues for outdoor performances, art installations, and festivals, providing a unique and immersive experience for both residents and visitors.

This activation could potentially lead to further cultural and creative uses of key sites such as Wigan Pier and Pennington Nature Reserve.

- Pathways to delivery
- Positioning Wigan as a regional production hub



Enabling actions and next steps

To foster cultural and creative activity in the borough, Wigan Council, along with Wigan's creative and cultural partners, communities, businesses, and key public and private stakeholders, must take a series of coordinated actions to ensure successful delivery of the goals outlined in this strategy.

The Creative Assets Register and assessment framework has been designed as a dynamic tool to guide future prioritisation and investment decisions, serving as a key resource to inform effective delivery.

Building on this strategy, a clear delivery plan is required to realise the potential of cultural and creative assets in Wigan. The proposed Creative Space Activation Plan fulfils this role and will provide a live action plan to guide delivery and monitor progress.



The Music Centre in Leigh Spinners Mill
©The Music Centre



Print making at Wigan & Leigh College © Wigan & Leigh College

Short Term 1-2 years

- Create a Creative Space Activation Plan
- Appoint an advocate for culture
- Identify and secure partnerships and funding for project development
- Strengthen regional partnerships
- Consider operational arrangements for creative assets
- Commission and deliver Feasibility Assessments for new venues
- Community engagement to assess specific needs
- Conduct soft market testing

Medium Term 3-4 years

- Review the creative space delivery activation plan
- Establish a creative land trust
- Strengthen regional partnerships
- Develop a creative space directory

Long Term 5+ years

- Revise and reassess the Creative Industries Assets Strategy to ensure alignment with borough needs and priorities

Position and advocate for Wigan as a regional production hub in the Northern Creative Corridor

Short Term

The following enabling actions focus on Year 1 (2025/26) and Year 2 (2026/27).

Create a Creative Space Activation Plan

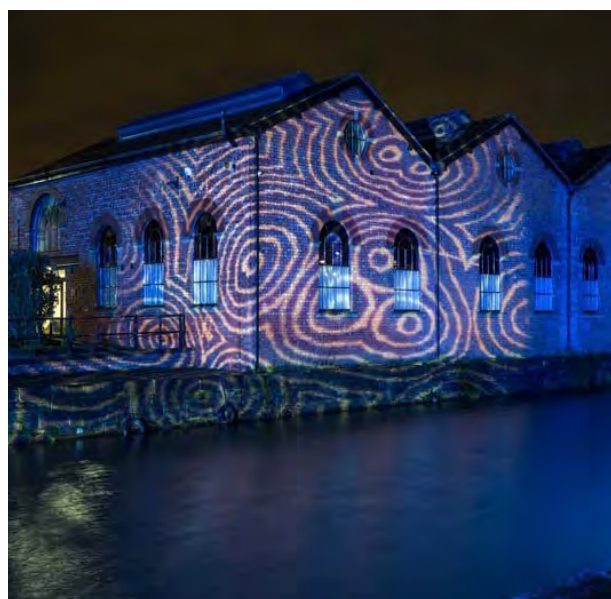
This plan sets out the route to delivery. The plan could include:

- Introduction and purpose of the document
- Enabling actions [such as those included below] including:
 - Description
 - Timeframe
 - Lead/Partners
 - Funding sources
 - Next steps <12 months
- Creative asset level project detail including:
 - Description
 - Action plan setting out key actions against lead/partner organisations and timeframe
 - Project outputs, outcomes and impacts
- Governance and Delivery
 - Funding
 - Role of Council and partners
 - Reporting and governance

The plan will be a live document, regularly updated to inform progress and oversight.

Appoint an advocate for culture

Having an advocate for culture in Wigan is crucial for the town's social, economic, and creative development. Such an advocate can champion the importance of art, culture and creativity in the borough, ensuring that these sectors receive due attention and resources. They can articulate Wigan's unique cultural identity, lobby for increased funding and support, and integrate cultural considerations into wider town planning and economic strategies. This advocacy can lead to enhanced cultural offerings, improving residents' quality of life and attracting visitors and investors.



Wigan Pier during Light Night Wigan © Light up the North

Identify and secure partnerships and funding for project development

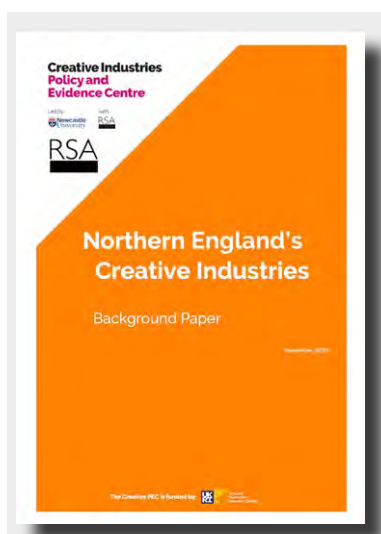
Wigan has benefited from a range of funding opportunities that have helped develop its cultural and creative offerings and safeguard key historic sites within the borough. To maintain and enhance this progress, continued funding support is essential. The development of additional creative assets requires a proactive approach to identifying and securing partnerships and funding. This involves researching and applying for local, regional, and national grants, as well as exploring opportunities for private investment and public-private partnerships. Establishing strong relationships with potential funders and stakeholders will be critical to ensure a steady flow of resources.

Additionally, many of the projects identified in this strategy will require significant onward funding to launch. Early identification of potential funding streams and thorough assessment of their suitability for key projects is paramount.

Strengthen regional partnerships

The potential for a Northern Creative Corridor has been identified, presenting a significant opportunity to develop a comprehensive pan-regional strategy that can leverage national and devolved powers and coordinate industry actions. Establishing this corridor requires concerted efforts to build and strengthen partnerships across the North of England. Wigan has already begun cultivating relationships with other northern towns and cities, but these efforts must be intensified and expanded to firmly position the borough as a key player in the region's creative landscape.

To accelerate the development of regional partnerships, Wigan should actively engage with regional bodies, cultural institutions, and creative industry leaders. Additionally, advocating for shared policy objectives and coordinated funding efforts can enhance the impact of regional collaborations.



There is a 'clear opportunity' for the North of England to capitalise on growth potential in the creative industries, if policy makers and industry work together via 'creative corridors'.



Working together across the region could unlock over £10 billion in GVA by 2030 (Creative PEC, 2023. Northern England's Creative Industries)

Consider operational arrangements for creative assets

The planned management of creative facilities makes a significant impact on the design. This takes into account both the end user and their specific requirements, and the workspace provider or developer who will manage and operate the space.

Broadly, there are two ways in which a new space can be managed; either the developer can offer a co-working set up in which a workspace provider would manage the space, or the developer can let the space to tenants as a direct lease and take on the management.

Once either the decision of a workspace provider or direct lease has been confirmed, strategic design can commence based on the needs and arrangements of the preferred option.

Architects and other professionals need to have a full understanding of the activities, capacities and uses they are designing for. If a design team knows what success looks like for an organisation, in both cultural and business terms, the resulting building is more likely to work well in furthering the end user's objectives.

Commission and deliver Feasibility Assessments for new venues

The council needs to know with certainty which sites within the borough may provide viable options for new or expanded uses. For all cultural infrastructure, feasibility testing must include assessments of viable business models, an understanding and assessment of the different operational and financial models and identifying and procuring suitable partners and operators.

All feasibility studies should include a scoring against the critical success factors and investment objectives outlined in this strategy.

Conduct community engagement to assess specific needs

While this strategy identifies buildings that can address particular gaps in the borough's cultural infrastructure, further and deeper community engagement with end-users is essential to truly understand their specific requirements. Engaging directly with artists, creative practitioners, and community groups allows for a comprehensive assessment of their needs, preferences, and challenges.

Conduct soft market testing

Soft market testing is crucial to gauge the interest and viability of proposed projects. This involves reaching out to potential operators, investors, and other stakeholders to test the feasibility of various operational models and partnership opportunities. This will help identify potential challenges and opportunities, allowing the council to refine project plans and align them with market realities.

Medium Term

Medium term enabling actions consider Year 3 (2027/28) and Year 4 (2028/29).

Review the Creative Space Activation Plan

The Creative Space Activation Plan is a live document however it is recommended that a full update is conducted at the start of Year 3 to ensure the plan is responsive to the current context and future opportunities.

Establish a Creative Land Trust

Wigan has a healthy supply of buildings suitable for creative production, however without dedicated action, there is the risk that they are lost to other uses that don't support the cultural and creative industries.

A Creative Land Trust is a specialised non-profit organisation dedicated to acquiring, developing, and managing properties for creative and cultural use. Its primary purpose is to provide affordable, sustainable spaces for artists, cultural organisations, and creative businesses, particularly in areas facing gentrification pressures. These trusts function by purchasing or receiving donated properties, renovating or building suitable spaces, and then leasing them at affordable rates to creatives. By doing so, they help preserve a vibrant cultural ecosystem in urban areas, support local artists, and contribute to community revitalisation. Creative Land Trusts are typically funded through a combination of public grants, private donations, and rental income, ensuring long-term affordability and stability for the creative community they serve.

Wigan has an opportunity to lead the way in implementing new models to safeguard creative production space. A land trust model would enable a focus on affordability, long-term tenure and quality of the public realm.

Develop a Cultural Space Directory

As Wigan's cultural and creative space offering grows, there will need to be a joined up effort in sharing what spaces are available to support effective use of assets. A live digital catalogue would consolidate borough-wide networking efforts and match skills with opportunities and talent with space.

Create a cultural and creative space activation programme

Introduce a programme to activate underused public spaces with cultural and creative activities. This could involve temporary pop-up events, outdoor festivals, or community art projects that bring life to dormant areas, creating a buzz and demonstrating the potential of these spaces for long-term cultural use. Additionally, the programme could facilitate partnerships with local businesses, schools, and community organisations to host workshops and collaborative events, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among residents.

Long Term

This considers actions which could be implemented from Year 5 onwards.

Revise and reassess the Creative Industries Assets Strategy

It will be essential to revise and reassess this strategy to ensure that it aligns with the evolving needs and priorities of Wigan Borough. This would involve engaging with local stakeholders, including artists, cultural organisations, businesses, and community members, to gather insights and feedback on current challenges and opportunities within the creative sector.

What partners should do next

Delivery partners, including developers and cultural institutions, will play a crucial role in supporting Wigan to deliver the recommended projects.

Developers can engage in collaborative dialogue with the local authority

Developers can play a crucial role by integrating cultural spaces within new residential and commercial projects. This might involve allocating areas for theatres, galleries, or community arts centres, thereby enriching the cultural fabric of the community and providing accessible venues for creative expression and engagement.

Offer financial contributions or in-kind support to fund projects

Institutional partners and private investors can significantly contribute to Wigan's cultural and creative landscape through financial contributions or in-kind support. This can include funding the construction, maintenance, or renovation of cultural and creative infrastructure. Providing grants, sponsoring cultural events, or investing in the development of cultural facilities are tangible ways to support the local creative sector.

Leverage expertise

Potential partners interested in supporting cultural projects can also offer invaluable expertise and resources. This might involve lending collections for exhibitions, providing technical support, or sharing knowledge gained from previous projects in Wigan or other locations.

Make priorities for culture known

It is crucial for creative and cultural communities to maintain active engagement with the council regarding their priorities for cultural and creative spaces and equipment. The recommendations of this strategy provide a framework for ongoing dialogue and project development. By continuously communicating their needs and aspirations, local creative communities can help shape the implementation of the strategy, ensuring that it remains responsive and relevant.

Summary action plan

The following action plan focuses on enabling actions for the strategy including consideration of indicative timeframes and potential funding implication to include low (below £100k), medium (£100-250k), and high (£250k and above).

Enabling Action	Timeframe	Lead/ Partners	Funding Implication/ Potential Funding Sources
Short term (Year 1 and 2)			
Create a Creative Space Activation Plan	Year 1	Wigan Council	– Low – Wigan Council
Appoint an advocate for culture	Year 1	Wigan Council	– Low – Wigan Council
Identify and secure partnerships and funding for project development	Year 1 and 2	Wigan Council GMCA DCMS	– Medium/High – Wigan Council, GMCA, DCMS, ALBs
Strengthen Regional Partnerships	Year 2	Wigan Council GMCA	– Low – Wigan Council, GMCA
Consider operational arrangements	Ongoing	Asset Owner Investors	– Low – Asset owner, investor
Commission and deliver Feasibility Assessments for new venues	Ongoing	Asset Owner Investors Funder	– Low/Medium – Asset owner, investor, potential funder
Community engagement to assess specific need	Ongoing	Asset Owner Investors Funder	– Low – Asset owner, investor, potential funder
Conduct soft market testing	Ongoing	Asset Owner Investors Funder	– Low – Asset owner, investor, potential funder

Enabling Action	Timeframe	Lead/ Partners	Funding Implication/ Potential Funding Sources
Medium term (Years 3 and 4)			
Review the Creative Space Activation Plan	Year 3	Wigan Council	– Low – Wigan Council
Develop a Cultural Space Directory	Year 3	Wigan Council Asset Owners	– Low – Wigan Council
Create a Cultural and Creative Space Activation Programme	Year 3	Wigan Council Culture and Creative sector including VCSFE partners	– Wigan Council, sector representatives
Establish a Creative Land Trust	Year 4	Wigan Council GMCA VCSFE sector	– Low/Medium – Wigan Council, GMCA
Longer Term (Year 5 onwards)			
Revise and reassess the Creative Industries Assets Strategy	Year 5	Wigan Council GMCA	– Low – Wigan Council

Positioning Wigan as a regional production hub

Through the successful implementation and delivery of the priority initiatives outlined in this strategy, Wigan can realise its ambition as a regional production hub, and as a key player within the Northern Creative Corridor.

Strategic investment in state-of-the-art facilities and resources for creative production, will not only enhance Wigan's production capabilities but also foster a thriving creative ecosystem that encourages sustained growth, collaboration and innovation.

Creative and cultural momentum across the Northern Creative Corridor

Growing evidence is highlighting the immense potential of a creative corridor in the north - from Liverpool through Manchester and Leeds to Newcastle upon Tyne the economic and cultural potential of creative corridors is substantial. As a share of the local economy, the creative industries in the North currently contribute less than 3% to GVA. In London and the South-East, this sector share is closer to 10%. If the North were to grow its sector share even relatively modestly the growth benefits would be considerable. For example, if the sector share rose to around half of the levels in London and the South-East, this would be equivalent to an annual GVA boost of around £10 billion by 2030.¹

The Policy and Evidence Centre has identified three critical areas that could supercharge cluster growth: enhancing skills, improving access to finance, and investing in innovation. Establishing spaces dedicated to cultural and creative production will significantly contribute to these factors, providing the necessary infrastructure for talent development and economic sustainability.

¹ Policy and Evidence Centre (2023). England's Northern Creative Industries. [online] Available at: <https://pec.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Englands-Northern-Creative-Industries-September-2023-Designed-v2.pdf>

A borough of opportunity

Situated at the heart of the Northern Creative Corridor, the borough of Wigan possesses immense potential to contribute to the corridor's growth and success. Its optimal location, coupled with a burgeoning population, positions Wigan favourably for the development of a vibrant cultural and creative sector. Evidence indicates that this sector can become more productive and make significant contributions to local and regional economies, fostering resilience and adaptability in the face of changing market dynamics.

The case for investment

Positioning Wigan as a regional production hub is a direct response to national growth priorities in terms of the development of the Northern Creative Corridor and the overall national growth mission.² The creative industries are widely recognised as fundamental to the UK's future economic vitality and competitiveness, providing productive, resilient jobs and supporting the evolution of diverse and distinctive localities across the country.

There is a time limited opportunity to embed culture and creativity within new developments and changing places across the borough. With significant new developments in both Wigan and Leigh Town centres, including The Galleries and Eckersley Mills, there is a unique opportunity to integrate creative spaces and infrastructure from the ground up.

Finally, the availability of high-quality production spaces will help to retain and attract further talent and businesses, supporting clustering of activity. As creative clusters grow, they can stimulate and growth in related industries such as hospitality, retail, and tourism, thereby contributing to the broader regeneration and vibrancy of Wigan.

² Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2021). Culture Secretary declares culture, media and sport sectors crucial to national growth mission. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/culture-secretary-declares-culture-media-and-sport-sectors-crucial-to-national-growth-mission>

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Appendix: Spatial Requirements for cultural and creative spaces

Designing spaces for culture and creativity

Creative communities can't exist without supporting infrastructure, whether that is rehearsal and performance spaces, or galleries, and museums. These spaces enable the creative workforce to create, showcase and share their work.

Each of the priority initiatives in this strategy will require industry-specific technical standards for a range of cultural facilities and sectors, which differ between cultural production spaces and consumption spaces. Drawing on the [Cultural Facilities Design Toolkit](#), this strategy outlines the types of spaces and general spatial requirements needed for each priority project.

Consumption Spaces

The design of cultural consumption spaces are typically sector specific. This includes, but is not limited to spaces for:

- Art and design
- Music
- Film
- Fashion
- Theatre
- Dance
- Culture+ (community and civic use)

The sector specific design requirements are outlined in this strategy where applicable.

Production Spaces

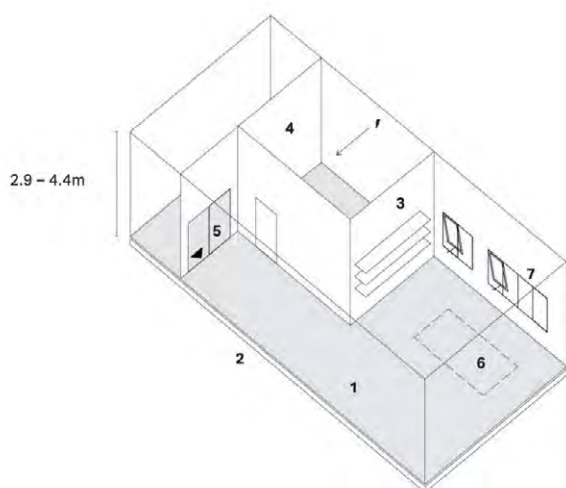
The design of cultural production spaces is categorised into three main typologies, each offering flexibility and diverse usage options:

- Small Creative Studio
- Large Creative Studio
- Small Industrial Space

The design considerations for these three spaces are outlined overleaf. Some sectors require specialised production spaces with tailored features, which are detailed in this strategy where applicable.

Large Creative Studio

Large creative studio type space spans workspace for creative uses that have outgrown small creative studios space. This may be through taking on larger numbers of staff, making products in larger numbers, or developing performances at a scale that necessitates more space. As before, these spatial requirements and activities are within 'B1 B, Research and development of products or processes' or 'B1 C, Light industry' planning use classes.



1. 32-500m² floor area
2. Floor loading between 3.5-5kN/m²
3. Larger space allows for additional storage of materials
4. Subdivision of space into clean and 'messy' space or for specific functions is key to larger creative studios
5. Access for large scale works or deliveries facilitated by shared or ground floor access
6. Specialist large scale equipment to be considered in fit out
7. Natural cross-ventilation with manually operable windows

*Not drawn to scale

Scale

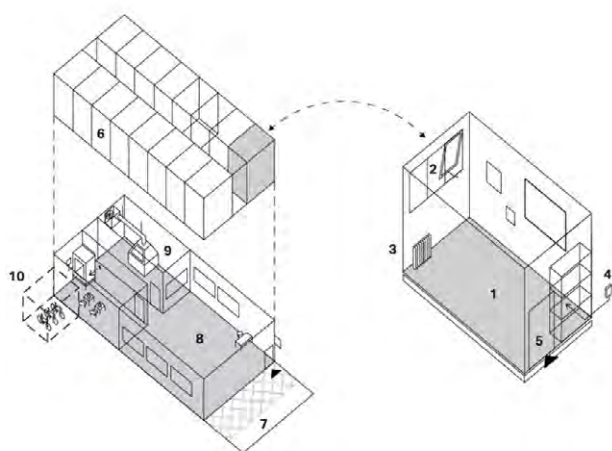
Typically 32m² to 500m².

Key considerations

1. Larger space will accommodate a larger range of creative production activities. Larger scale efficient buildings allow for flexible uses, including desk-based work as well as spaces for more complex production.
2. Larger creative workspaces producing physical products will require servicing/deliveries related to production materials, which may be of a large scale. They can become disruptive, noise generating neighbours that need to be accommodated for.
3. Large creative studios can unlock a space for use for a more diverse range of creative production through flexible subdivision. For example, a theatre production space can section of workspaces for scenery joinery and scenery paintwork as different functions.
4. The target markets for large creative studios are artist studios where they are working with assistants or on larger scale works, media production services, especially film and broadcasting, textile\ fashion design studios, rehearsal space and photography.
5. Whilst large creative studios may be provided as singular provision, economies of scale are achievable by providing multiple studios in one building, with a diversity of scale, including smaller creative studios. Tenants are likely to remain highly price sensitive.
6. Sometimes larger creative studios are used to cross-subsidise smaller creative studios for non-commercial artists. Often provision in London is provided by dedicated workspace or industrial space organisations. There is likely to be less supporting activities provided to larger businesses

Small Creative Studio

Creative studio type space spans workspace for creative uses that may have additional spatial requirements above and beyond those of office type work places.



1. Individual small studios typically 11-32m² floor area
2. Daylight and natural ventilation
3. Heating through wet system or space heaters
4. Potential for sub-metered servicing
5. Locking door
- Ancillary spaces:
6. Generally, minimum of 10 studios is required for critical mass
7. Delivery bay and service access
8. Gallery space
9. Shared space with specialist equipment
10. Secure bike store

*Not drawn to scale

Scale

S - 11m²; 2.9m height

M - 20m²; 3.5m height

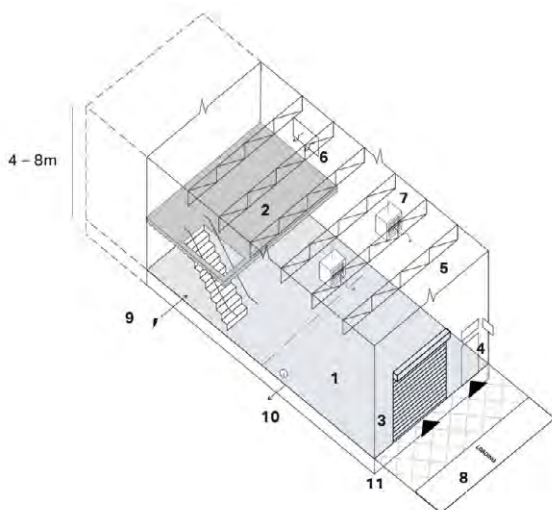
L - 32m²; 4.4m height

Key considerations

1. Characteristics of creative studios are that they can exist on any floor, with lower ceilings being manageable, but with higher preferred. Creative workspaces require occasional servicing/ deliveries related to production materials, which may be of a large scale. They are generally minimally disruptive, low-noise level neighbours.
2. These characteristics are a standard requirement. Providing further and specific features can unlock a space for use for a more diverse range of creative production.
3. The target markets for small creative studios are solo artists, textile designers, recording and digital production studios, etc. Small-scale makers can also be a target market, however, the nature of their production will dictate if they can occupy a space appropriately.
4. Small creative studios are generally cellular spaces around 11m² (118sq.ft). Often multiple small creative studios are provided within larger buildings to allow for critical mass and keep rents/running costs as low as possible. Tenants are likely to be highly price sensitive. Often provision in London is provided by dedicated artist studio workspace management organisations, who will sometimes deliver a supporting program of activities, networks and business support.

Small Industrial Space

This typology covers small industrial workspaces utilised for creative production uses. Small industrial spaces range up to 1000m² (10,764sq.ft), and would be expected to have a higher ceiling (4m – 8m), loading bays with dimensions of around 4m in height and width. Industrial spaces are typically purpose-built units.



1. Less than 500m² floor area
2. Double height ceiling allows for administration mezzanine. May also be provided adjacent to loading doors in wider units
3. Roller-shuttered doors for deliveries (min. height 3.7m and min width 2.4-3m)
4. Separate staff/visitor access with signage
5. Spanning structure creates flexible internal layout
6. Radiator heating to office areas
7. Blow air heating for work areas
8. External loading area
9. 3 phase power
10. 7.5 ton vehicle access and occasional articulated vehicle access
11. Drainage from floors areas (suited to food production/brewing)
12. Floor loading

Note: Typically rectangular plan form with ratio of long to short sides between 1:1 (where no particular traffic routes are dictated by process) and 3:1

*Not drawn to scale

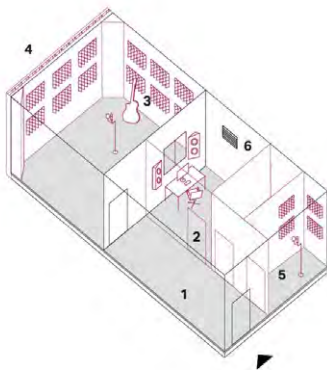
Scale

500m² –1000m².

Key considerations

1. Small industrial units will have a higher level of services to enable messy or dangerous production activities, with mechanical extraction and artificial lighting as standard.
2. Examples exist of shared makers spaces in small industrial units where individuals pay for workshop spaces, to drop-in open access space to the collective leasing of larger workshop spaces. Some of these maker spaces are operated by a workspace provider managing units across a larger space, others are provided individually by landlords.
3. Target markets include exhibition fabrication, textile and fashion production, set design and manufacturing, instrument fabrication, costume and prop hire, art and design manufacturing, Industrial crafts and small-scale manufacturing, and open access specialist fabrication.

Sector Specific



Music Recording Studio

1. Half of the space allocated to a recording/performance space
2. Focused desk space (control room) for audio recording/production without requirement for daylighting
3. Foam boards/bass traps to absorb low frequencies and prevent deadening
4. Acoustic specifications for the floor and party walls
5. Vocal Booth
6. Quiet mechanical ventilation

Music and Radio Sector

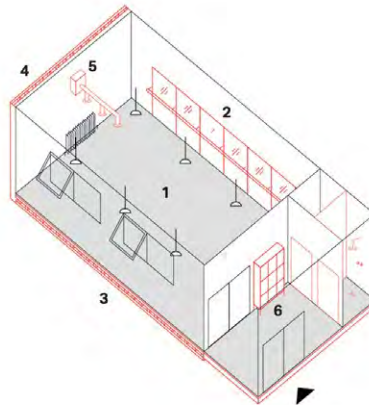
Music and Radio workspace typically feature a series of component parts and specific requirements relating to internal layout, acoustic mitigation, building materials and storage needs.

Appropriate typologies and scales:

- Small creative studio
- Large creative studio
- Small industrial space

Associated activities include:

- Radio broadcasting
- Vocal recording
- Music recording
- Music publishing
- Music rehearsal



Dance Rehearsal Space

1. Clear span spaces with minimum clearance of 10x10m. Barres and mirrors not required by all disciplines but are good for basic fit out
2. Specialist sprung floor essential for dance
3. Acoustic specifications required for both the floor and party walls to avoid disruption
4. Ventilation and climate control necessary to enable physical exercises
5. Lockers, changing rooms, showers and green room are highly desirable supporting spaces

Dance and the Performing Arts

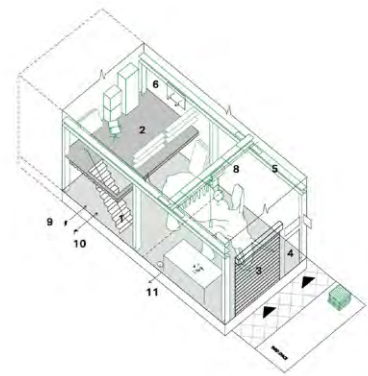
Dance rehearsal studios typically feature a series of component parts and specific requirements relating to internal layout, acoustic mitigation, ventilation controls and technical lighting.

Appropriate typologies and scales:

- Large creative studio
- Small industrial space

Associated activities include:

- Dance and other performing arts rehearsal
- Performing arts support activities



Specialist Prop Making

1. Clear access to mezzanine
2. Double height ceiling
3. Roller-shuttered doors for deliveries
4. Separate staff/visitors access
5. Spanning structure for flexible internal layout
6. Radiator air heating for work areas
7. Yard or loading space
8. Lifting equipment
9. 3 phase power
10. Water supply
11. Drainage from floor areas

Theatre

For production activities (Prop and costume making and hiring, Set /exhibition design and manufacturing) spaces feature a series of component parts and specific requirements relating to internal layout, servicing and other operational needs

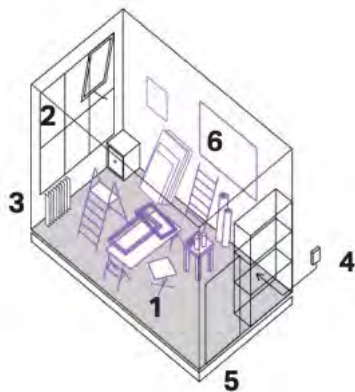
Appropriate typologies and scales:

- Large creative studio
- Small industrial space

Associated activities include:

- Theatre rehearsal
- Prop and costume making and hiring
- Set and exhibition design and building
- Event and festival services

*Diagrams not drawn to scale



Artist's Studio

1. 11-32m² floor area
2. Windows reflect height of space to maximise lighting
3. Heating through wet system or space heaters
4. Potential for sub-metered servicing
5. Safe or locking door
6. Spaces maximising useable wall space are desirable

Art and Design Studio

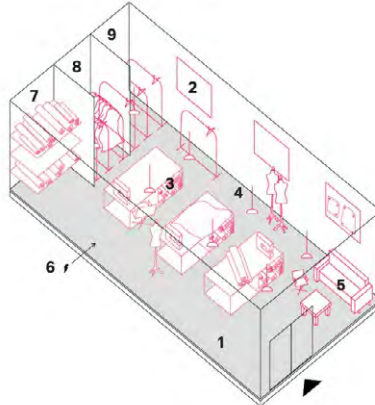
Art and design studios typically feature a series of component parts and specific requirements relating to internal layout, servicing and other operational needs.

Typologies and scales:

- Small creative studio
- Large creative studio
- Small industrial space

Associated activities include:

- Painting, drawing, print-making sculpture, mixed media work, pottery and ceramics, wood, metal and glass crafts
- Product design and manufacturing
- Advertising and marketing Architectural services, graphic design software/web design
- Publishing digital/IT



Fashion Designer's Studio

1. Workspace to be arranged with consideration to process and function
2. Windows reflect height of space to maximise lighting
3. Storage for materials integrated into workspace
4. Low lighting for precise work
5. Space for buyer/client meetings
6. 3-phase power and lights
7. Fabric storage
8. Archive storage
9. Stock storage

Fashion Sector

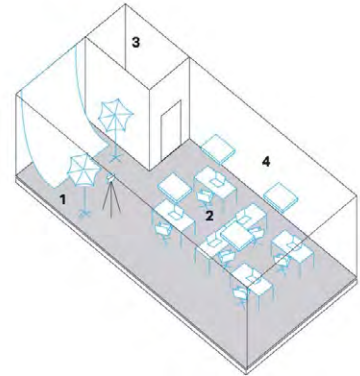
Fashion workspace typically feature a series of component parts and specific requirements relating to internal layout, storage space and other operational needs.

Typologies and scales:

- Small creative studio
- Large creative studio
- Small industrial space

Associated activities include:

- Fashion design and manufacturing
- Textiles design and manufacturing
- Jewellery design and manufacturing
- Specialised design activities



Photography Studio

1. Space and fit out for specialist artificial lighting
2. Workspace for digital post-production work
3. Secure storage for technical equipment
4. If refurbished space, high quality fit out potentially required to enable quality of work

Film, TV and Photography Sector

Film, TV and photography workspace typically feature a series of component parts and specific requirements relating to internal layout, ventilation controls and technical lighting

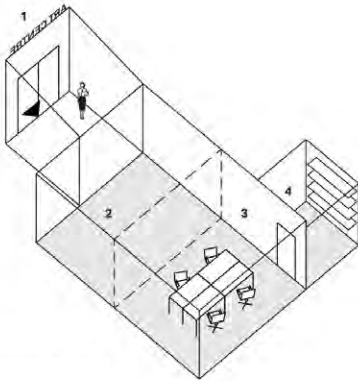
Typologies and scales:

- Small creative studio
- Large creative studio
- Small industrial space

Associated activities include:

- Film, video and TV production, post-production and distribution
- TV programming and broadcasting
- Photography
- Casting, management and booking services
- Lighting and sound design

*Diagrams not drawn to scale



Community and Civic Space

1. Central, prominent location within the community with street facing frontage and visible signage
2. Column free open space
3. Potential to divide space for multi-functions
4. Storage for materials

Community and Civic Space

Spaces for flexible community and civic use should prioritise multiple uses and ensure that they can be equipped to host different types of activities at different times of the day.

Scale

Flexible spaces are likely to each vary between 50 and 150 m².

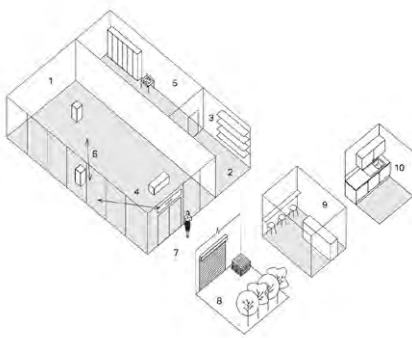
Typical Use Classes

- F1 Learning and non-residential institutions
- F2 Local community use

Key considerations

1. When developing a community facility, it is useful to consider that spaces fulfil more than just what is required for a particular function. A space that has some generosity will be able to accommodate varied unanticipated uses and be a more valuable resource in a neighbourhood.
2. The layout of community facilities should provide for ease of use & flexibility – a range of routes and ways through allows rooms to be used in combination to support theatrical performances and events.
3. Community venues need strategies for security and zoning for after-hours use. In this way, the areas used for cultural consumption can, if necessary, be arranged to work independently from other facilities with discrete access and support spaces.
4. It is worth thinking about how temporary services can augment spaces to give them additional capacity. Forecourts, yards and gardens can be used to locate temporary spaces, and equipment can be rented to provide enhanced lighting or servicing into space. Cultural consumption spaces.
5. Venues with evening use, particularly those with compressed ingress and egress times need to consider strategies for good neighbourliness. Activity outside a venue, including queuing, taking a cigarette break or emptying the bins can be as disturbing as any noise issues generated from inside the building.

*Diagrams not drawn to scale



Art Gallery

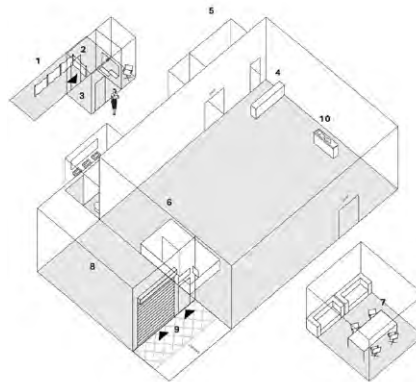
1. Clear span spaces for flexibility
2. Additional office/ support space for the administration and support team
3. Appropriate scale of storage
4. Rectangular proportions for galleries
5. Teaching and support space
6. Comfortable space to view the object
7. Visible and pronounced front door
8. Loading bay access
9. Supporting cafe space
10. Supporting kitchen space

Art and Design: Gallery

A gallery is a building for the display or sale of works of art. The most important sequence of spaces are the galleries themselves, often conceived as 'perfect' spaces for the contemplation of 2D, 3D and virtual art.

Scales:

Gallery scale is very much dependent upon the individual institution. Typically, individual gallery rooms will range between 100 and 250 m².



Live Music Venue/Nightclub

1. Space to queue before and after events
2. Lobby and box office
3. WC provision
4. Bar area
5. Back bar for storage and access by staff
6. Elevated stage for performer visibility
7. Green room
8. Back-of-house facilities, admin, etc.
9. Wide loading bay with direct access to back of house
10. Sound desk

Music: Live Music Venue/Nightclub

A live music venue is any location used on a regular basis for musical performances with facilities such as a public address system, a stage and artist lighting. A nightclub is a venue that is open from the evening until early morning, having facilities such as a bar and dance floor, typically with a greater reliance on recorded music than live performance. Venues range in size and location, from an outdoor bandstand to a traditional music hall or basement club.

Scales

Typically between 20m² and 1,000m². Nightclubs specifically are typically 300 to 700 m².

*Diagrams not drawn to scale

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