

Investment Prospectus

# Swindon Cultural Quarter



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**The Cultural Quarter represents an important opportunity to recognise the strength, depth and diversity of Swindon’s cultural ecosystem. The development of a suite of complementary cultural, arts and music venues, as set out in the Cultural Quarter scheme, will unquestionably unlock the extraordinary social and economic potential within Swindon, Wiltshire and beyond. If delivered, the ambition, innovation and creativity of the development will produce a cultural infrastructure of national significance.**

Julian Russell, Chief Executive at HQ Theatres & Hospitality

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# Welcome

I am proud to share with you Swindon's vision for the cultural heart of our life as a town and the regeneration of our town centre.

The idea of a Cultural Quarter that celebrates Swindon's fascinating heritage and shares the creativity of our communities has been a long-held ambition, but this prospectus, supported by our colleagues at Swindon and Wiltshire LEP, sets out a vision that is both exciting and compelling and ready to be realised.

It is a tribute to our creative community in Swindon that, through all the challenges and restrictions of 2020, they have worked with imagination and tenacity to shape this future for our town. Alongside our professional team led by DCA and Levitt Bernstein Architects, our cultural organisations and our Council colleagues have developed a series of major projects that, by the end of the decade, will have transformed the town centre and the prospects of so many of our young people.

In the following pages there are stunning images of projects of international quality that we will deliver in the years ahead. As the comparators that we are learning from show, we aim to deliver a step change in the arts that stands alongside the most inspirational projects in the world.

Throughout, we have done this as a broad partnership with our communities and our cultural organisations. Now we need to bring investors and delivery partners to work with us to see the vision realised. We invite you to read this prospectus, to share our vision and to come and talk to us about how you can help us to deliver it.

**Cllr David Renard**

Leader, Swindon Borough Council

The idea of a Cultural Quarter for Swindon arose out of the enthusiasm of local people and communities for the town's heritage and its rich and diverse artistic life – from the hundreds of thousands who attend and participate in arts activities in theatre, music, dance, visual arts and film every year to the town's thriving community of creative businesses and practicing artists.

The idea of a new Cultural Quarter is a celebration of a town of creativity, energy and generosity; but it is also a response to the need and aspiration for change and growth.

The Quarter has the potential to be truly transformational – a dramatic and highly visible signal of the confidence of the town for the decades to come, an economic motor with substantial impacts locally and regionally, driving supply chain and talent development in key new economic sectors, transforming the sense of place of the renewed town centre and delivering profound personal and community wellbeing benefits to its residents.

By the end of the decade, the vision for the town sees it renewed and transformed, and through this project, culture will be the visible, celebrated, focus for that transformation.

By 2029, the town centre will be an internationally recognised exemplar of sustainable, liveable development, and at its heart will be world class facilities for the arts and heritage – a new, zero carbon, 'number 1' touring theatre showing the best in music, musicals and theatre made

nationally, internationally and in Swindon; new facilities for younger people in particular to participate in and learn the business of dance, theatre, film and digital production; and new spaces for the appreciation of Swindon's fine heritage collections.

These vibrant new venues will stand in an animated and exciting public realm, suffused with cultural activity, entertainment and enjoyment – enriching the lives of residents and attracting hundreds of thousands to the town to transform its economy as a regional capital.

The Cultural Quarter will contribute to all the key objectives of the partnership that is driving Swindon forward: to transform and renew the town centre; to attract the best talent and businesses to come to Swindon to work; to drive the growth and resilience of the economy through consumption and the creative industries – and to engage all citizens to support their mental and physical wellbeing, their quality of life and their prosperity. More than 850,000 people will visit the Quarter and its venues a year in use – generating more than £35m of retained local economic activity and more than 1,300 jobs - a new cultural ecology, sustainable, resilient and recognised as a world leader.

With this vision and these objectives at all times in view, this document plots a path to one of the most ambitious cultural projects in the UK of recent years – its character and opportunities – and the roadmap to its realisation.



Photograph © Mark Papperall





# The Vision for Swindon

and a new cultural quarter

# The Vision for Swindon and a new cultural quarter

Swindon Council's vision states that by 2030 Swindon will have all of the positive characteristics of a British city with one of the UK's most successful economies; a low carbon environment with compelling cultural, retail and leisure opportunities and an excellent infrastructure. Swindon will be physically transformed with existing heritage and landmarks complemented by new ones that people who live, work and visit here will recognise and admire.

Swindon has both a rich heritage and an established arts and cultural offer, but its cultural infrastructure needs radical transformation. Current facilities are spread around the town and suffer from a range of weaknesses including poor repair, inaccessibility, lack of visibility, and unsuitability. Now is the time to consider a co-ordinated strategy to deliver an infrastructure that meets the aspirations of its communities and maximises the potential of its heritage, arts and culture.

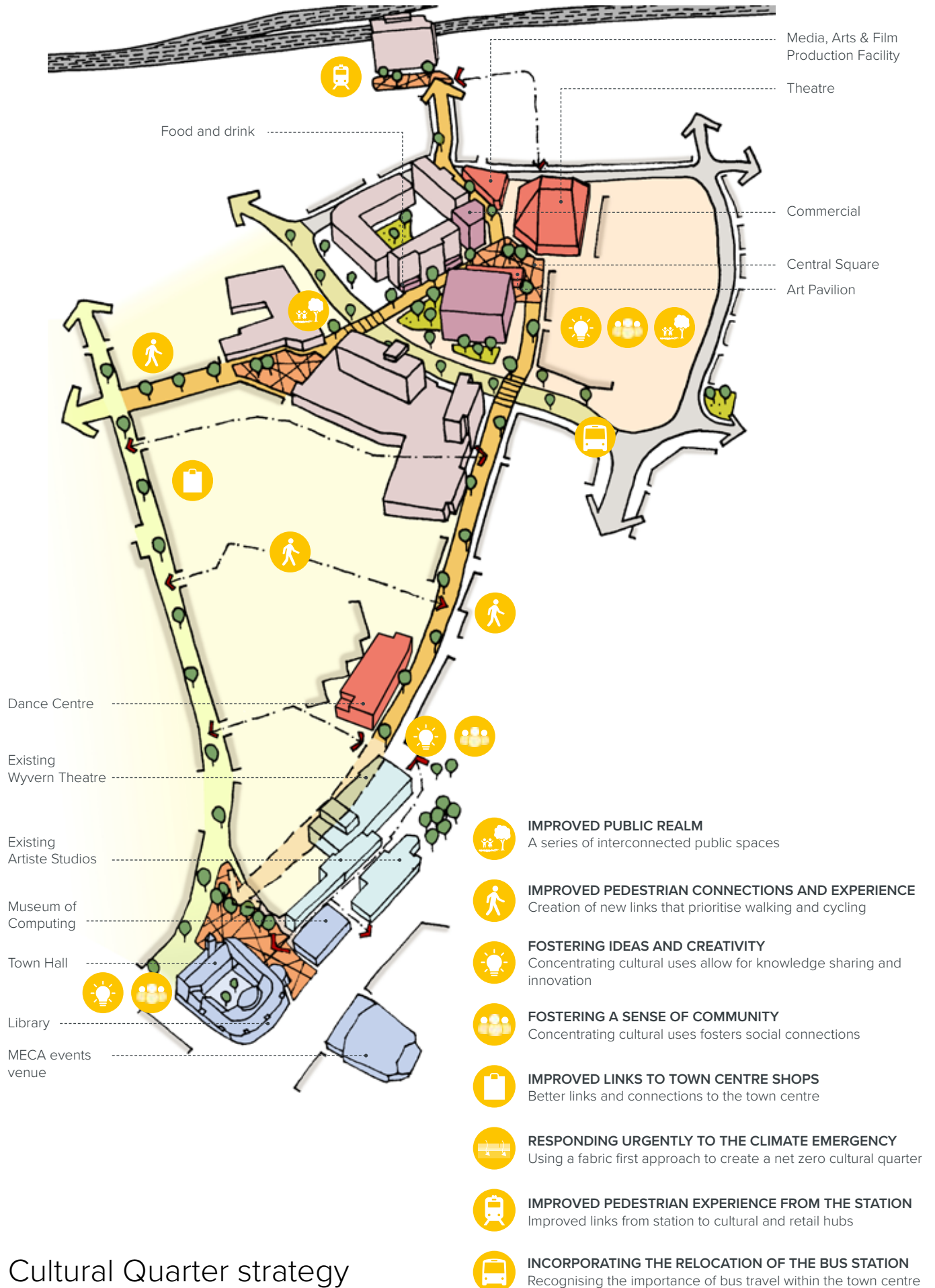
The 2013 Town Centre Masterplan articulated a vision for a new cultural quarter focused on the Princes Street site of the current Wyvern Theatre. Through 2020, extensive consultation, economic and environmental planning and the developing vision for a renewed town centre has developed a distinctive and visionary solution involving the creation of four new building blocks focused in the Kimmerfields development zone at the heart of the renewed centre, and extending organically along a cultural spine to Regents Circus and the town's fine Victorian Town Hall:

- A new Wyvern Theatre, at a scale and quality befitting the town's role at the heart of a thriving region; a 1200 seat auditorium, 200 seat studio theatre and supporting hospitality facilities.

- A new home for media, digital and performance production emphasising the creativity of Swindon's young population, reflecting the innovation that characterises Swindon, and bringing new activities such as independent cinema.
- A new dance centre of national reach and renown, training and engaging the region's dancers of the future.
- An art pavilion to showcase the town's superb and nationally significant collection of 20th century fine and applied art and, separately, a new home for the town's museum collections.

Kimmerfields offers the opportunity to create a gateway into the town centre; an animated, green and safe route leading from the railway station into the cultural and retail core of the town. The site's proximity to the railway station, new bus boulevard and proposed new cycle route places it at the centre of a sustainable transport network, accessible to all – residents of the town, region and visitors from afar.

The new construction of these four core cultural buildings will transform sustainability – meeting the needs and aspirations of successive generations of the people of the town as it grows and prospers, enabling a resilient and economically successful creative sector and meeting the challenges of environmental change – so that Swindon's Cultural Quarter will be the first new net zero carbon cultural quarter in the UK.



## Cultural Quarter strategy

# Change, need & opportunity

The Swindon Local Authority area has a population of 222,193 (2019). Over the last 25 years, the population has grown by 25% – twice the UK average – and is forecast to grow by a further 22% by 2036. So, in fifteen years' time, just as the major cultural infrastructure being planned now will be operating at its peak, the population is forecast to be more than 265,000, and on some policy-based estimates, more than 275,000.

Swindon's growth is driven by its significant location and economic advantages. The town's position on the M4 corridor and its proximity to London and Heathrow make it a location of choice for corporate headquarters and innovation-focused businesses. Key growth sectors like automotive and aerospace, digital, pharmaceuticals, low carbon and financial and professional services are driving a rapid transformation of the character of the town's economy. Another strength is that it has one of the most attractive house price to earnings ratios of the region and space and plans for housing growth.

Growth and diversification create demand and opportunity, new and growing markets for culture experiences and for the talent and creativity that future businesses will rely on.

Although Swindon is relatively prosperous, there are pockets of deprivation. Eight Swindon LSOAs across three wards are in the most deprived 10% nationally. Swindon's relative deprivation is most severe in the education, skills and training domain, driven by indicators for children and young people. The town's cultural offer is, and will be, key to its quality of life and to meeting the challenges of inclusivity, so that all Swindon's citizens, existing and new, benefit from the opportunities that change and growth bring.

The regional connectivity of the town that underpins its economic performance also makes it a natural centre for culture for a population that extends well beyond the Local Authority boundaries. The 60 minute drivetime catchment of the proposed Quarter, with a population of 3m, demonstrates the scale of this market potential.

Cultural attendance levels in this 60 minute catchment are significantly higher than the GB average in all cultural sub sectors. There are strong propensities in both theatre and plays. Broadly contemporary sub-sectors (cinema, contemporary dance, popular/rock music) perform very strongly, but so do more often 'classical' forms such as ballet and classical concerts and heritage activities.

Analysis of the competitive context for new developments shows that Swindon is in a strong position to grow its cultural economy. Towns and cities with significant cultural offers lie within this catchment – Bath, Bristol, Oxford, Reading and Cheltenham being the most significant, but only three of these have theatres with a capacity on the scale of that planned for Swindon: Theatre Royal, Bath (900); Hexagon, Reading (1200); and New Theatre, Oxford (1785) but all have different roles and economies from the proposed new Wyvern theatre in Swindon.

This enviable market position is matched by the excitement and energy so evident in Swindon's creative sector – and in the enthusiasm and talent of its young people for participation and training in the creative economy. There is a clear and evident need and demand for facilities in Swindon accessible to, and driven forward by, this new generation of creatives and their development.

Image key:

1. Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
2. Wyvern Theatre
3. Prime / Create studio
4. Swindon Dance
5. Wyvern Theatre auditorium







# Consultation & engagement

The Cultural Quarter project has been driven by structured stakeholder consultation and a wide and flexible community engagement process to connect with the creative and educational sectors, alongside the Council's Young People's Services and representatives of local ethnic minority groups.

Consultation began with a large-scale Cultural Quarter stakeholder workshop in January 2020, with more than 60 guests from the cultural and business sectors. A series of one-to-one meetings with key stakeholders followed, and working groups were formed around the emerging conceptual 'building blocks' of the Cultural Quarter. A second stakeholder workshop, held online in September 2020, brought the wider stakeholder group up to speed with developments, and allowed them to share observations, ideas and concerns. An Advisory Group has guided the project team throughout, generously offering their time and expertise. Other opportunities have included discussion at the meetings of specific groups such as the Friends of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery.

The creative community of Swindon has been incredibly receptive to, and supportive of, the project, offering helpful, balanced perceptions and suggestions as ideas have developed. The key priorities from this engagement have been to:

- establish connections between local young people and the project;
- reach and engage local ethnic minority groups;
- encourage an integrated approach, breaking down silos (within the arts, business and community sectors and across public sector organisations);
- establish ways of communicating with stakeholders and the general public, keeping everyone up to date as the project progresses.

Quotations from one-to-one consultation illustrate some key ambitions, concerns and perceptions:

*"There is a vibrancy here that people don't often speak about."* - Luke Marquez, Shoebox Theatre

*"The trick is to raise the arts ecology of Swindon and retain people."* - Laura Jasper, Prime Theatre

*"How does Swindon's cultural offer help us to raise self-esteem, people's sense of achievement and overall improve people's lives through enriched positive activities – culture in its widest sense?"* - Sally Burnett, Commissioner, Routes to Employment at Swindon Borough Council

*"Flexibility is very important in Swindon [...] there are limited opportunities for young creative practitioners to do what they need to do to reach the next level."* - Anna Coombes, Tangle Theatre

*"If you want people to invest long-term in culture in Swindon, this requires people to invest significant amounts of time and effort in a sustained way. Youth, culture and community are diverse. You are asking them to take a punt, when a lot of things have folded – this is a task. Literally – a culture change."* - Nick Capstick, CEO White Horse Federation

Despite the challenges of lockdown and restrictions during the development of the project, there has been a hugely impressive enthusiasm and desire to engage among many hundreds of people – shaping the Cultural Quarter proposition and making clear that it is needed and wanted by the widest cross-section of people and groups across the town and its surrounding communities.

This has been most noticeable among young people and the mood boards participants in Create and Prime Theatre developed on their own initiative signal an opportunity for the next stages of development of the Quarter to embrace, and be driven by, those who will be the creatives and audiences who bring the Quarter to life in the years to come.

The Cultural Quarter vision and the practical propositions for the building block projects have been developed out of a partnership process with key Swindon cultural organisations and their users and participants.

During the development stage of each project, working groups were convened to identify key needs and demand for facilities and programmes and to develop the specification for space and technical capability for each building.

The input of the partners to the building blocks included:

For the proposed new Dance Centre the working group brought together the professional team with Swindon Dance and drew on both their work now and potential for growth in the future. Since 1979, Swindon Dance have developed a national reputation as an organisation that specialises in talent development, artist support, show-casing and personal engagement, instilling loyalty among users and artists and many former participants who have gone on to careers in dance and the arts generally.

The proposed new Theatre was developed with advisory input from HQ Theatres and Hospitality – the operator of the current Wyvern Theatre. As well as their impressive portfolio of theatres in the UK, including at the scale identified as appropriate for Swindon, HQ's advice and support meant that from the outset, the practicalities of touring work into this new major venue were clearly understood.

Create Studios and Prime Theatre were partners to the working group that has developed the vision and specification for the Media and Arts Production Centre alongside the professional team and expert cinema and venue developers.

Create are a Community Interest Company of digital creators who make content that matters through film, animation, photography and print and who train and mentor young people to learn skills and to express themselves and their voice through these media.

Prime Theatre are a professional theatre company for children and young people aged 5 to 25+ - engaging participants and audiences through youth theatre and the making and touring of professional shows for schools and other community venues.

Thinking about the future of the town's art and museum collections involved a wide range of discussions, with the Council's own team but also with groups such as the Friends of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery and a wider constituency of artists groups working throughout the town.

Swindon Dance, Create and Prime are all National Portfolio Organisations and partners of Arts Council England and the Council was grateful for the Arts Council's engagement with the process and support for the vision of a cultural future for the town throughout the development period. In turn, the principles of Arts Council's 'Let's Create' Strategy underpinned thinking and acted as a focus for the vision for the Cultural Quarter project.

# Advisory Group members

Role	Name
Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, CEO	Paddy Bradley
Prime Theatre, Artistic Director	Mark Powell
HQ Theatres & Hospitality, CEO	Julian Russell
Create Studios, CEO and Artistic Director	Shahina Johnson MBE
Swindon Dance, Artistic Director	Viv Slayford
Artsite, Creative Director	Sally Taylor
New College Swindon, Deputy Principal	Adam Fahey
Friends of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, Chair	Linda Kasmaty
Pebble Beach Group, Managing Director	Dominic Threlfall
Arts Council, Relationship Manager	Kirsty Brodest
FI-REM, Asset Manager	Rob Melling







# The Realisation of the Vision

# First principles

## Inclusivity

A new generation of cultural spaces and facilities will reach out to, and welcome, all Swindon's communities and people, and artists and visitors from across the world – exemplary inclusivity, accessibility, and a democratic commitment to the equal value of all who attend and participate will underpin the making of the Quarter and everything that goes on in it.

This inclusivity will be secured through a commitment to partnership and collaboration, with many organisations and partners subscribing to a shared vision and shared ownership of the project. As the development of the individual projects proceeds, each will be driven by its own special partnership, in the wider context of collaboration between organisations and groups and across communities and generations.

At the heart of the Cultural Quarter idea will be a celebration of the creativity of all people who live in and around the town – exploring, participating, engaging, performing and making; individually and through leading award winning cultural organisations.

Likewise, the benefits and outcomes of the Quarter should make a tangible difference to the lives of people across our communities. The Quarter will be a major, measurable, contributor to the prosperity of the town and its region, with resilient cultural organisations, delivering significant numbers of quality jobs, boosting the wider economy, contributing to the recovery of the town centre over the years to come and opening up new options for young people to learn, train and work in the creative and digital industries.



Photographs © Joseph Dart



# Sustainability

Swindon’s vision for its Cultural Quarter has a big sustainability ambition: to be the UK’s first new net zero carbon Cultural Quarter – so that in use, and situated at the heart of a new urban public transport hub, it will be an exemplar for the positive contribution culture can make to the environment and to a town centre fit for the 21st century and beyond.

The UK has declared a climate emergency and Swindon Council is preparing to become carbon neutral by 2030. The vision is to put Swindon’s new Cultural Quarter firmly on the path towards net zero through a commitment to the best and most innovative approaches internationally.

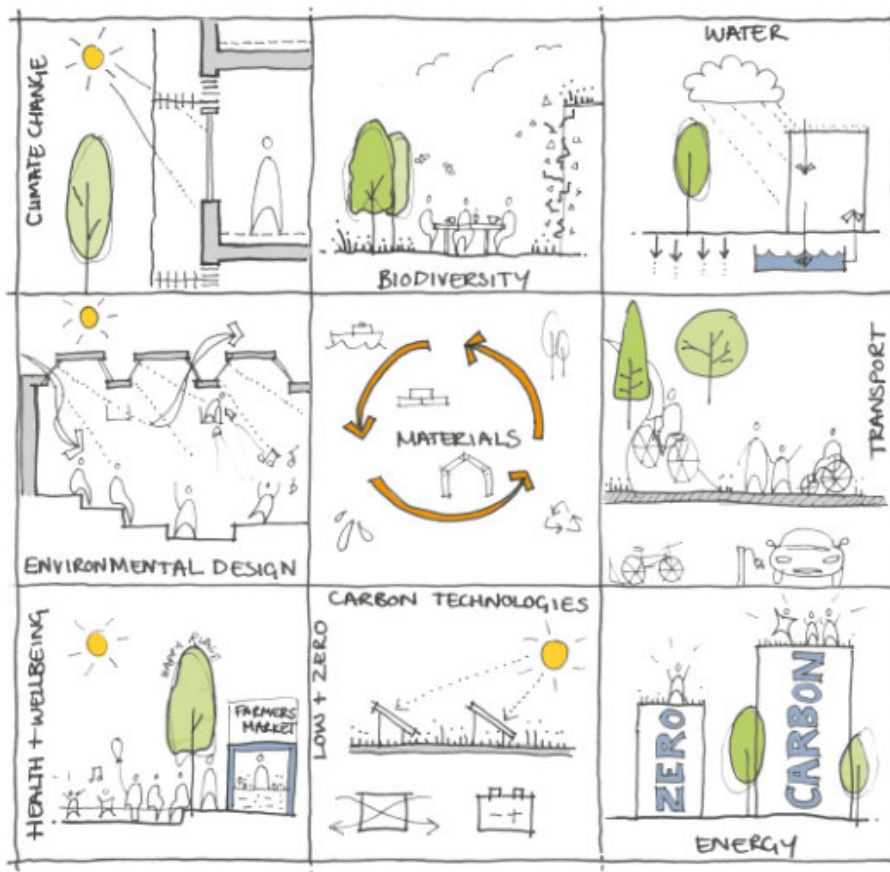
High performing building fabric will improve energy efficiency and keep running costs low. Energy demand of the cultural buildings will be further reduced by utilising passive design, such as natural lighting and shading,

and supplementing these with low carbon technologies, maximising roof spaces for renewables to balance out the energy used by the buildings. This approach will avoid the need for costly retrofits in the future.

A holistic approach to sustainability will be achieved through best practice place-making principles. This includes bringing ecology into the public realm, improving biodiversity, and utilising sustainable water-use, encouraging active and low carbon lifestyle aims to improve the health and well-being of those who use the public spaces.

As with all aspects of the Quarter project, we will build relationships with others who share our vision, such as Julie’s Bicycle, a charity working hard to transform the cultural community’s approach to climate change and translate advocacy into action.





## Targeting net zero principles by:

1. **Using a fabric first approach**  
Maximising the building fabric performance to improve energy efficiency
2. **Integrating passive design strategies**  
Using passive design to reduce running costs e.g. natural lighting and shading
3. **Using low carbon technologies**  
Targeting low carbon technologies for heating and cooling e.g. heat pumps
4. **Maximising renewables on roof space**  
Designing roof spaces to maximise electricity generation from PVs
5. **Future proofing the design for the Climate Emergency**  
Considering net zero design up front to avoid costly retrofits in future



## Art Pavilion sustainability strategy

### 1. TREES AND PLANTING

providing shelter and enjoyable spaces for public realm

### 2. RAIN GARDENS

planted edges will collect rainwater run-off for use as irrigation

### 3. LOCAL AIR COOLING

through evapotranspiration

### 4. IMPROVED SENSE OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

active by design encouraged by landscaping

### 5. SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE

permeable paving and carefully designed hard landscaping

### 6. LOW CARBON MATERIALS

materials will be selected for their robustness, longevity, local character, potential for responsible sourcing and embodied energy

### 7. BRINGING ECOLOGY INTO THE SITE

### 8. PEDESTRIANISED SPACE

A car free environment provides a safe accessible public space

### 9. HIGH AIRTIGHTNESS

### 10. POTENTIAL FOR RENEWABLES

### 11. DIFFUSE NATURAL DAYLIGHT

to allow controlled lighting conditions for gallery space and reduce energy bills. Black out blinds to increase flexibility

### 12. THERMAL MASS

in floors, ceilings and walls to regulate internal temperatures

### 13. HEAT AND HUMIDITY

to be carefully controlled by environmental strategy

### 14. HIGH PERFORMANCE BUILDING FABRIC

to reduce heat loss in winter, reducing energy bills

### 15. SOLAR SHADING

to reduce internal heat gains to south

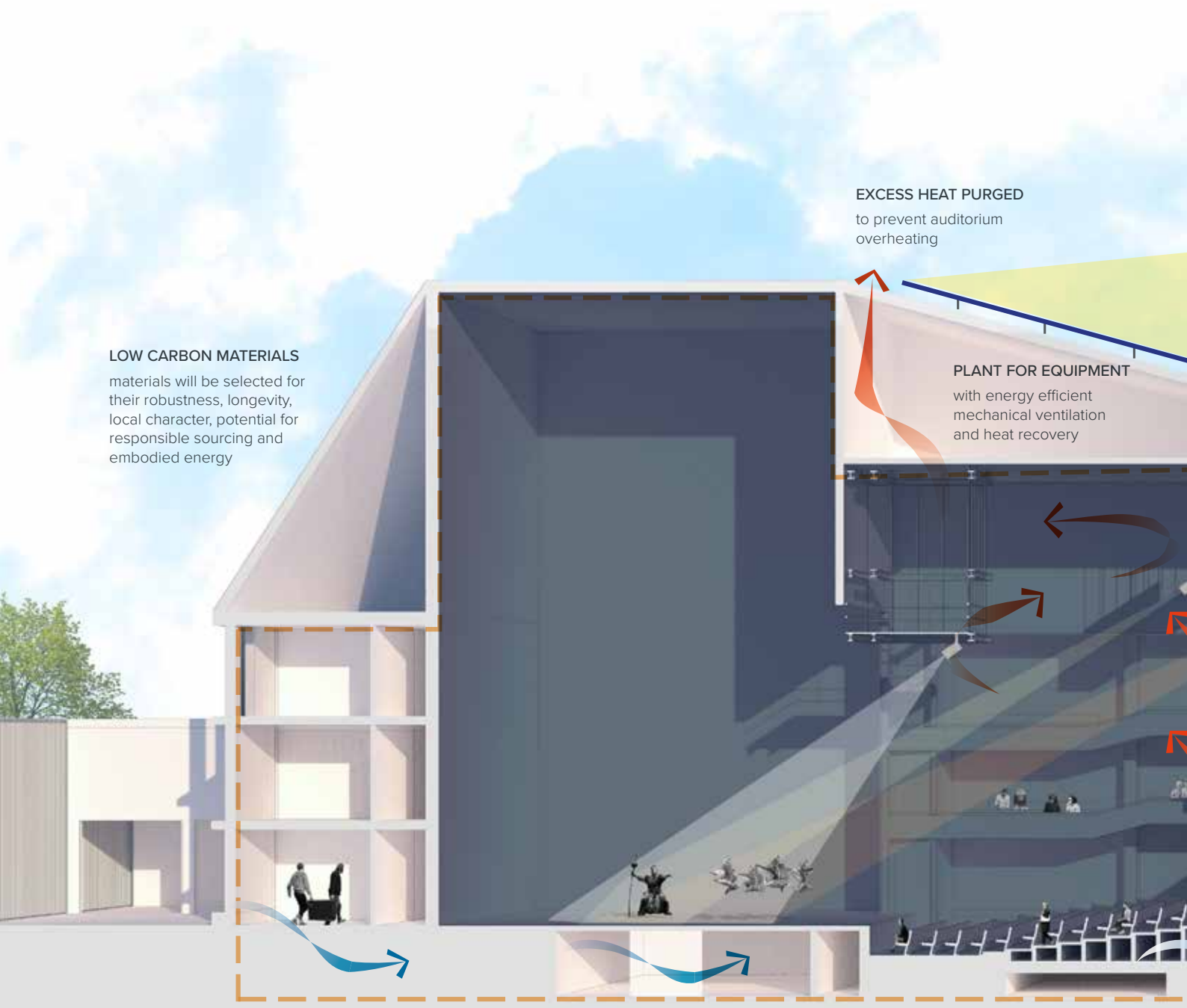
### 16. FOSTERING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

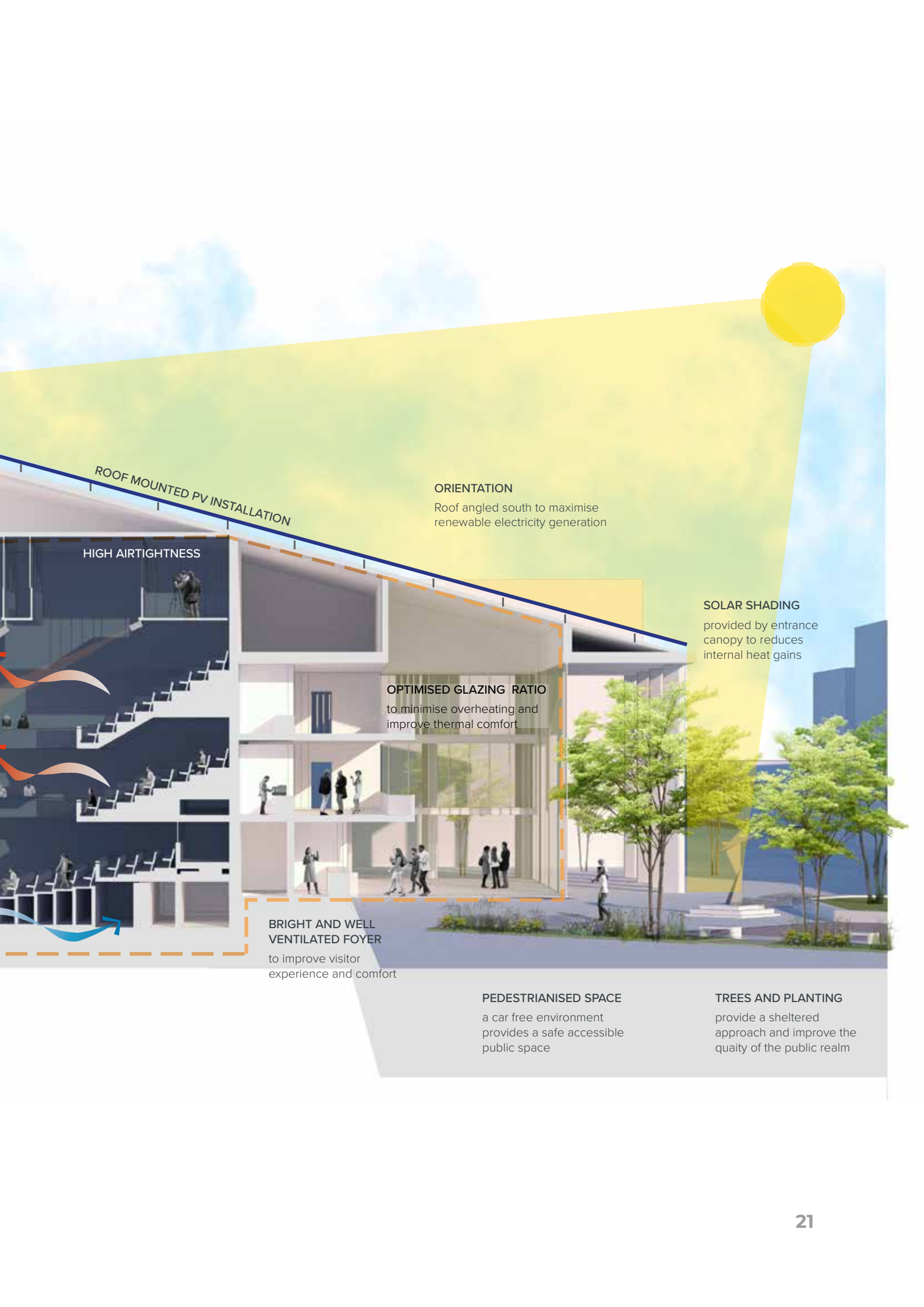
flexibility within design allows the community take ownership over the space

### 17. CROSS VENTILATION

for increased summer cooling and improved indoor air quality

# Theatre sustainability strategy





**ROOF MOUNTED PV INSTALLATION**

**ORIENTATION**

Roof angled south to maximise renewable electricity generation

**HIGH AIRTIGHTNESS**

**SOLAR SHADING**

provided by entrance canopy to reduce internal heat gains

**OPTIMISED GLAZING RATIO**

to minimise overheating and improve thermal comfort

**BRIGHT AND WELL VENTILATED FOYER**

to improve visitor experience and comfort

**PEDESTRIANISED SPACE**

a car free environment provides a safe accessible public space

**TREES AND PLANTING**

provide a sheltered approach and improve the quality of the public realm



Art Pavilion and Central Square

# The plan

The development of a practical plan for the Cultural Quarter has taken the form of an extended options appraisal considering alternatives for the facilities to be developed and the best organisation of them in the town.

Review of successful Quarters and creative sector strategies elsewhere tells us that towns thrive best when they balance three broad forms of cultural activity:

## Consumption

High quality presentation facilities in a range of artforms attract and engage large and diverse audiences and drive gross economic value, a diversity of jobs, economic impact in other sectors and the regeneration of place – including town centres.

## Participation

Facilities for people to explore and express their own creativity, join with others to make and present work and to learn and develop ensure inclusive cultures, support health and wellbeing outcomes, and bring people together across cultures, generations and communities.

## Production

Thriving cultural places need creative businesses and enterprises; artists, producers, designers and all the other workers who enable their production – supporting quality jobs and opportunities, attracting inward investment and developing talent for a vibrant wider economy.

The Cultural Quarter research in Swindon revealed strengths in all three – a balanced and vibrant sector really engaging people from across the town and region – but facing challenges of infrastructure, connectivity and visibility. Providing new places for these activities, in separate fit for purpose new buildings, threaded through the renewed town centre, we stand to maximise the visibility and impact of culture, create conversations between different uses, artforms and audiences and enable practical solutions to the phased delivery of facilities over the immediate years to come.

There are powerful arguments for clustering all ones' cultural infrastructure in discrete areas of a town or city – for impact and visibility – but there are also inspirational examples where audiences and visitors are taken on a journey through a town or city centre with cultural highlights along these routes or trails.

In Swindon, the Cultural Quarter has evolved to be the best of both models – with a major concentration of activity at the heart of the Kimmerfields development area and an extended route, via a new Dance Centre, to reach out to the historic former Town Hall and Central Library to the south. The form of the Quarter is organic and offers an immediate and major impact embedded in the new town centre and transport hub, and enabling journeys of exploration across the wider town centre.

# The journey from the station to the town centre

A key stop in the UK's intercity network, Swindon's Railway Station welcomes a vast number of people coming to work, shop or visit. The pedestrian experience from the station towards the town centre is pivotal to this masterplan.

The vision aims to create attractive new public realm guiding pedestrians through a sequence of interconnecting spaces that offer visual interest; promote health and well-being; and provide a great place to dwell. Ultimately creating a place that is flexible and allows many cultural uses to inhabit, generating a creative energy within this new and dynamic district.

A walk from the railway station down the newly improved Wellington Street brings you to the new Cultural Quarter. The Media, Arts & Film Production Facility frames the Quarters gateway and its activity leads people into the Central Square.

Here a multitude of different uses surround and activate the space - the Theatre, Art Pavilion, food

& drink outlets and other mixed-use buildings. Planting, play, public art and green space enrich the square and provide much needed public space in this part of town.

The Theatre, Art Pavilion and Media, Arts & Film Production Facility will be public facing buildings and visually the interiors will flow into the Central Square. Usage of the Central Square for events, performances and installations will be encouraged.

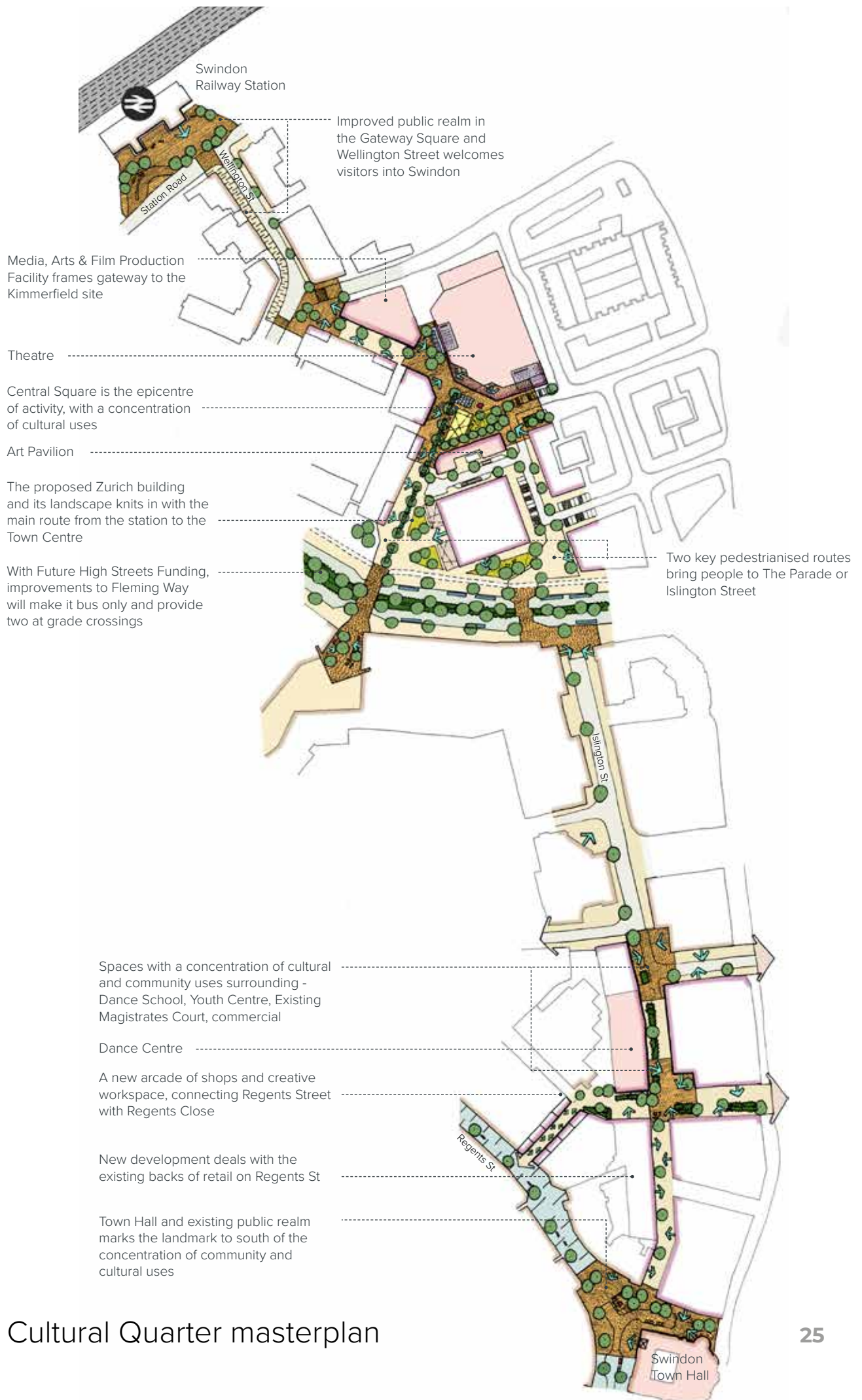
The consented Zurich building is a key component which shapes the public realm. The building and its setting provide pedestrians with two key routes into the town centre. To the south-west pedestrians will lead into The Parade - the gateway to the retail offering of Swindon's shopping quarter. To the south-east pedestrians will head towards and down Islington Street to another concentration of cultural uses including the Town Hall and proposed Dance Centre.

**“Urbanism works when it creates a journey as desirable as the destination”** - Paul Goldberger



New crossing from town centre towards the station





Both routes will cross Fleming Way which is part of a £25 million project (with Future High Streets Funding) to transform the street into a bus only route, provide two new pedestrian at grade crossings, a cycle path and improved landscaping.

Pedestrians walking down Islington Street will then pass a sequence of existing buildings - the Health Centre, the Thistle Express Hotel and the two Court buildings. This will lead them into another concentration of cultural and community uses. This area is to have a distinctive character yet also have a strong visual connection with the cultural uses around the Central Square.

The Dance Centre will be the epicentre of the activity and along with other mixed-use buildings will deal with the existing backs of the shops on Regents Street. An improved pedestrian link west to Regents St is proposed with small units which could be let to cafes, shops or studio spaces.

Opening the link between Islington Street and the Town Hall will be a vital step in regenerating this area. It will allow for other potential uses to

be housed here: a youth centre, commercial or residential development, and linking to the new opportunities to house the town's museum collections at the Town Hall.

Furthermore, the link provides an essential visual connection between many of the different cultural uses within this part of town. It provides the pedestrian with visual stimuli and legibility as they walk from the Railway Station to the Old Town Hall.

Ultimately, this piece of public realm needs to be holistically designed considering how proposals will knit into the existing built form and spaces. Being built out over a 9-year period, the masterplan will need to work incrementally, and design will need to be considered in the short, medium and long term - meanwhile uses which activate spaces and cultivate community support will be essential.

Importantly all spaces will need to prioritise pedestrian safety, flexibility and urban greening, providing a narrative for this new Cultural Quarter.



New crossing from town centre towards the station



**“Cultures and climate differs all over the world, but people are the same. They’ll gather in public, if you give them a good place to do it”**

- Jan Gehl



# Central Square



Outside dining



Flexible performance space



Encouraged to dwell



Playful Design



Pop-up markets & events



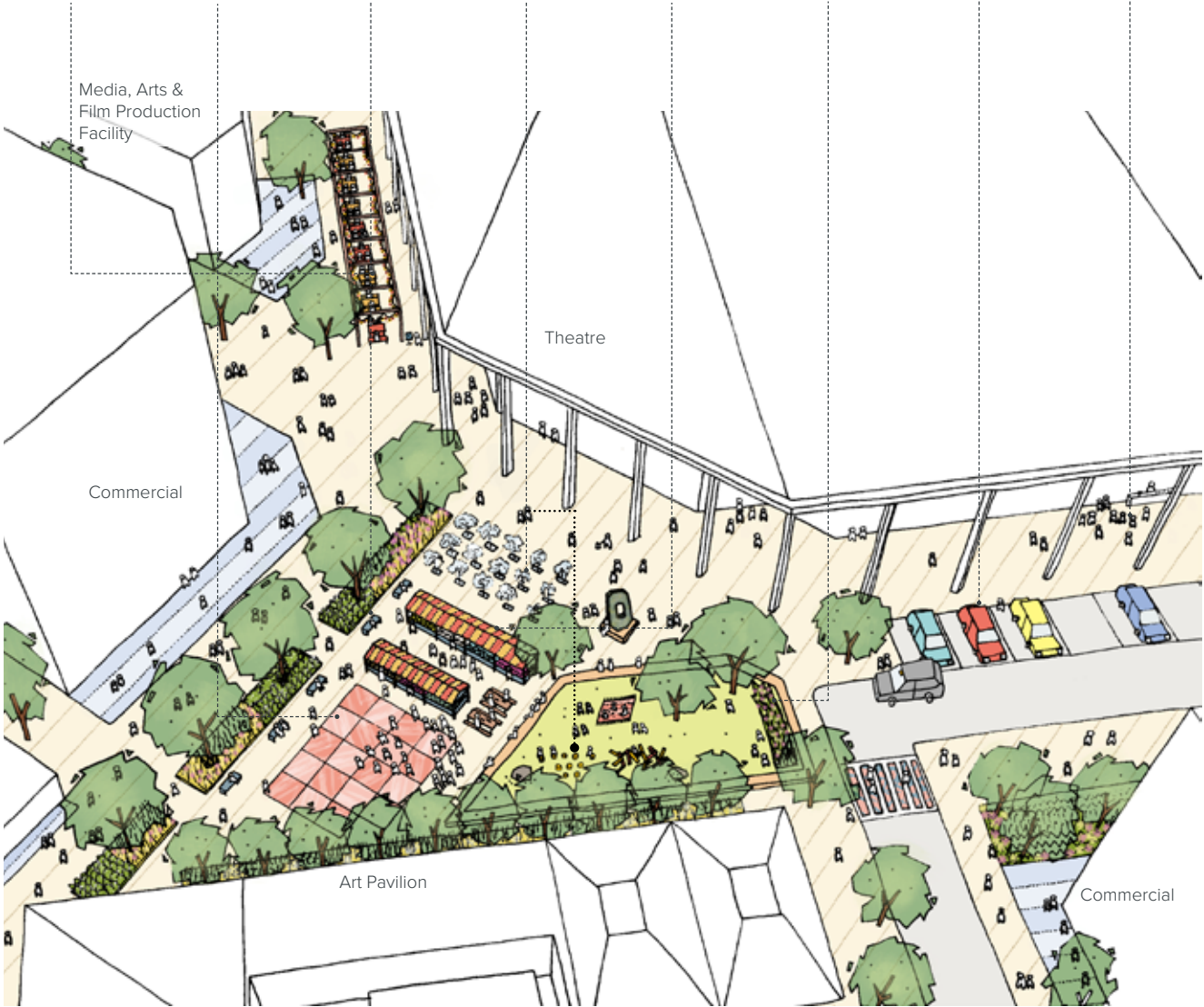
Trees, planting, rain gardens



Disabled car parking only

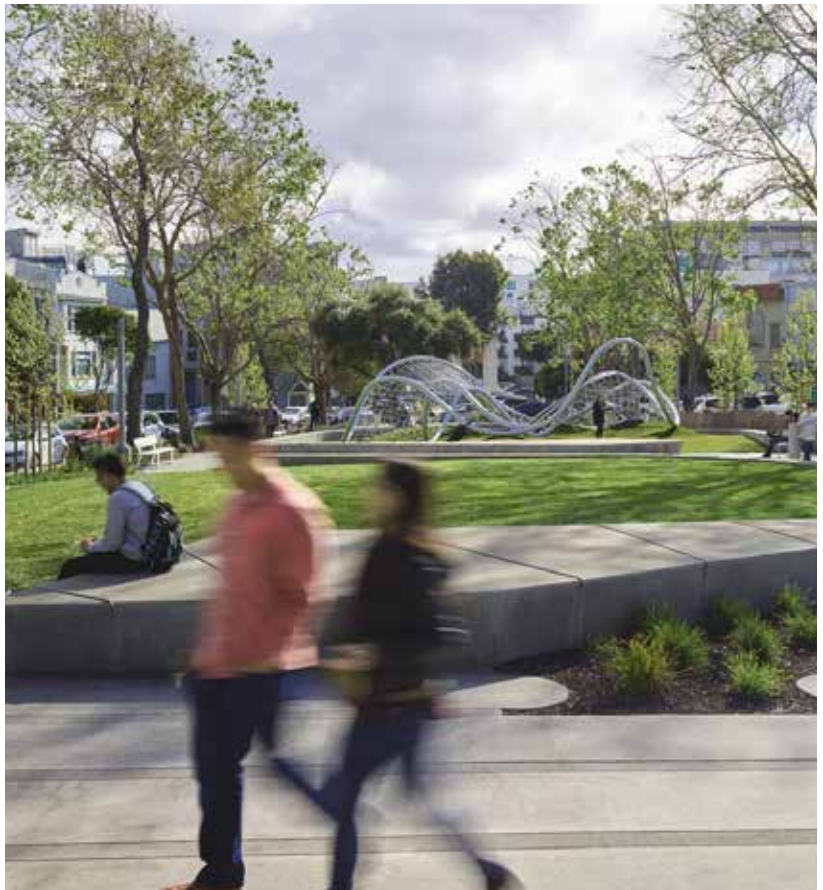


Outside bar area



Central Square concept diagram

**“First life, then spaces, then buildings.  
The other way round never works”** - Jan Gehl



Central Square precedents



The Theatre and Central Square



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# A new theatre for celebration and enjoyment

At the heart of the proposed plan for the Quarter, is a high quality and fit for purpose replacement for the Wyvern Theatre.

The Wyvern has served the town well, and it continues to inspire loyalty and affection among both audiences and visiting artists – but it is nearing the end of its lifespan and even essential repairs would incur very substantial costs. As with many theatres of its time, its facilities are ill-suited to the more flexible and diverse uses of the modern performing arts, and it faces its audiences with significant challenges of accessibility.

Making a new performing arts venue for Swindon also opens a very exciting market opportunity to respond to larger, more diverse, audiences and to capitalise on the place Swindon can command in the wider regional and national arts infrastructure.

This market and product appraisal has led to the development of a vision for a 1,200 seat number one touring house – a major theatre receiving the very best touring theatrical and musical productions and with the flexibility in its auditorium to welcome music concerts in all genres, including

for standing audiences. Music making and performance will be a major strand of the work that finds its home here and across the Quarter.

Many local groups will continue to present their work in the Theatre, including in a high quality 200 seat studio alongside the main house. Together with the other venues of the Cultural Quarter, the Theatre and its studio will provide formal and informal spaces and facilities for festivals as diverse as the Spring Festival of Arts and Music and of Science.

The landmark building at the heart of the Kimmerfields development will be commercially and economically powerful, attracting in the order of 400,000 visits a year, and sustainable – from its performance economics, its extensive food and beverage provision and its contribution as a conference, event and exhibition venue at the heart of the town centre.

As a net zero carbon major theatre – the new Wyvern has the opportunity to be a national exemplar for the twenty-first century.



Cut-away diagram of Theatre, Central Square and Art Pavilion





Precedents of the main and studio theatres

# Design

Klimmerfields offers a blank canvas for the creation of an exemplar new-build adaptable and sustainable number one touring theatre free from the constraints of the existing Wyvern site. Orientation is ideal, with side-by-side auditoria, public foyers to the south and west, loading from Manchester Street to the north and dressing rooms to the east.

The Theatre is located at a pivotal point in the masterplan - closing vistas on approach from the station and town centre. Covered outdoor spaces engage with the Central Square easing the transition between inside and outside, provide shelter for outdoor catering and offer a wet-weather route from accessible parking to the main entrance.

A large photovoltaic-clad and multi-faceted pitched roof encloses the stage-house, main theatre, studio theatre and ancillary accommodation into single architectural entity, creating a prominent and distinctive icon for theatre in Swindon. The striking exterior offers great opportunities for advertising forthcoming programming with super-graphics, banners and digital images.

Stalls seating (retractable for standing rock/pop audiences) is easily accessible at street level and flanked by a large café/bar and restaurant. Lifts and a grand stair rise to two balcony levels, each with interval bars shared with the first-floor studio theatre. Conveniently organised backstage areas serve both auditoria, connect efficiently with the loading bay and can operate independently or combined. Dressing rooms, offices, and commercial function rooms create a buffer zone between the main auditorium and residential neighbours to the east.



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**A new theatre-making hub will be a beacon of hope for young people: a centre of aspiration, artistry and achievement and visible evidence that Swindon can once again be the forefront of change.**

Mark Powell, Artistic Director, Prime Theatre

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# A new centre for dance and movement

In common with the existing Wyvern Theatre, Swindon Dance's existing home in the original Swindon Town Hall has served well, but it is now a severe constraint on the growth in activity and accessibility that Swindon Dance has inspired in recent years.

Dance is a hugely powerful and accessible form for the engagement of the widest and most diverse range of participants. It has a particular strength in engaging young people and the potential to transform the lives of people facing life limiting conditions, physical and mental ill health and disability. With roots in popular culture, and with all cultures having their own dance traditions, dance participation and practice can be a forum for people from across society and communities to come together.

Swindon Dance recorded 50,000 participations in the last full year before Covid-19 restricted activity – and there is significant potential to grow this released from the constraints of the Town Hall.

As Swindon Dance's rapidly growing training and professional development work shows, dance

is also a career choice for many young people – trained dancers go on to a wide range of careers from contemporary dance performance and choreography to work in the entertainment industry across the media sector and in therapy and education.

Recognising this potential to make a profound transformation in lives – and the potential of dance for participation and for professional production, Arts Council England and many cities and regions have invested in new dance infrastructure over the last twenty years – and its timely for this major step for Swindon and its regional role in dance development.

The proposed new Dance Centre at the core of the Cultural Quarter will provide fit for purpose, professional standard studios, facilities for therapy and recovery and for student learning – together with a performance studio designed to the needs of dance and expressive performance – and will change lives and inspire tens of thousands of young and older people from the town and region – to participate, to express themselves, and to explore their professional potential.

Dance Centre with Theatre in distance





## Design

Located on Islington Street, between Kimmerfields and the Old Town Hall, the Dance Centre is the new home for Swindon Dance that rivals other regional facilities in Ipswich and Newcastle. The building is conceived as a carved-out urban block where the large internal volumes are evident externally by translucent glazing to the studios and the roofscape is modelled with sociable roof terraces and top-lights to the studios and offices.

At its heart, the building features a triple-height top lit atrium that allows natural light deep into the plan, provides a path for natural ventilation and a focus for social and breakout activity.

The centre includes a purpose-designed dance studio theatre with retractable seating and all the space required for small-medium scale in-house and touring dance productions. Foyer and refreshment spaces are provided for building users and for hospitality at public performances. There are four further daylit dance studios, varying in size from Pilates practise to medium-scale rehearsal, all naturally lit and served by safeguarded changing facilities for all kinds of dancers. Top-floor offices accommodate Swindon Dance and their partners with inspirational roof-top views, roof terraces and plenty of natural light and air.



Dance Centre - looking towards the Town Hall

“

**Swindon Dance has been based in the town hall for over 40 years, and while the building has been the bedrock to our early development it is now a cap on our future growth. Moving to the Cultural Quarter will give us the space and facilities to continue to grow and prosper across all areas of our work – professional and non-professional, local and international. It will also enable us to work with Swindon’s other cultural organisations to kick start the town’s economy and bring the passion and heart back to our town centre.**

Viv Slayford, Artistic Director, Swindon Dance

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# A Media and Arts Production Centre for a changing creative economy

Swindon has a growing and diverse creative economy of digital, media and production companies and all indications are that this will be a significant area of further growth over the years to come. One of the most exciting aspects of this potential creative growth is that the structure is in place, perhaps uniquely, to root this in the creativity and talent of local people – through the work of organisations such as Create Studios, Prime Theatre, Reach Inclusive Arts and others working to enable participation and support those who have talent and commitment to work in the sector.

The current homes of these Arts Council supported National Portfolio Organisations, in the existing Wyvern Theatre, already limit growth and imagination, and the Cultural Quarter presents the opportunity to focus the energy and growth of these partners in a new building at the heart of the Quarter that will sit at the intersection of wide participation, talent development and production.

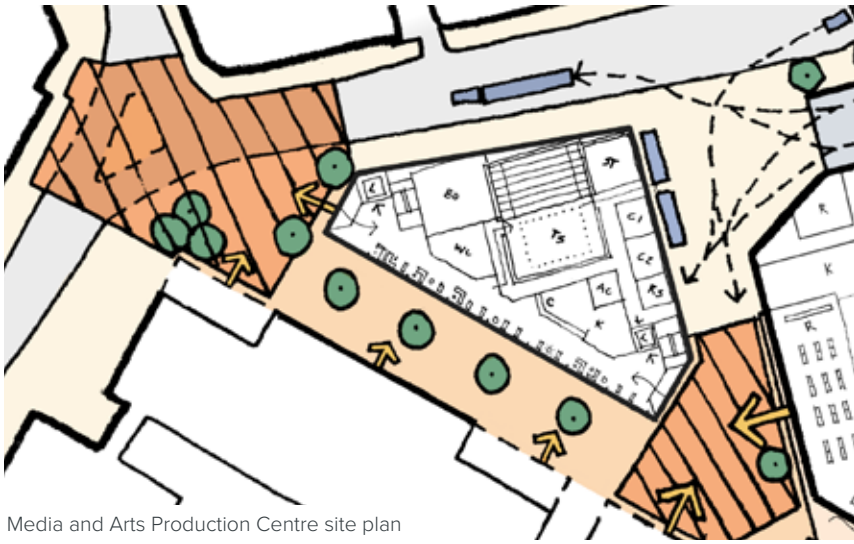
The vision for the building has been developed with the young people who drive Create and Prime – as a contemporary and welcoming

space with facilities for exploration, engagement and expression – supported economically and reaching a large audience through provision of independent film and media screens and social facilities. Already Create Studios and Prime Theatre work with more than 30,000 participants annually and Create's online presence reaches digital audiences of more than 3.5m. With these new facilities and continued super-growth in the sector in the town, these metrics are set to grow exponentially over the years to come.

The specification embraces new digital, film and live recording production facilities, rehearsal and informal performance studios - providing the facilities for many organisations in the town to continue their growth into digital - and three state of the art cinemas showing independent mainstream and alternative film and providing screening facilities for the town's screen industries cluster.

In use, the Centre will be a lively, animated and exciting gateway to the Cultural Quarter and the renewed town centre, and a beacon nationally and internationally for Swindon's energy and creativity.





Media and Arts Production Centre site plan





**As one of the established cultural partners in Swindon, the Create Studios team are proud of our alumni and are passionate about the game-changing opportunity the CQ represents for the next generation of young people who can benefit from the growth in the Creative Industries, forge careers and practice here in Swindon thereby growing the talent pool and economic prosperity of the town.**

Shahina Johnson MBE, CEO & Artistic Director, Create Studios Digital Media CIC





## Design

An innovative combination of theatre, film and digital arts production organisations and independent cinemas occupy this characterful new facility at the gateway to Swindon's Cultural Quarter. This new facility re-homes Prime Theatre and Create Studios, who currently occupy inconvenient and cramped spaces on the top floor of the Wyvern Theatre.

At street level, cinema café/concession, foyers and user social spaces animate the pedestrian approach from the station to the Cultural Quarter. A flexible rehearsal studio / studio theatre is central to the plan and is flanked by changing rooms, backstage support and creative/ educational spaces.

Above, writing rooms, edit suites, media suites and recording studio support digital film production in a purpose-made state-of-the art film studio.

The final element of this unique mix comprises three comfortable income generating cinemas for public enjoyment of independent films and screening of productions made onsite.

This building will be flexible, interconnected and future-looking, developing and promoting new and emerging art forms that transcend boundaries between theatre, film, sound/music, digital art and virtual reality.

# Celebrating Swindon's heritage collections

Swindon has a breathtaking heritage story and assets, and a wide range of projects are underway to explore and celebrate them. As the Cultural Quarter develops, there will be opportunities to link it with the neighbouring Heritage Action Zone and its great heritage buildings to the west of the Kimmerfields core, showcasing the past and future of the town in trails and routes across the two.

Within the Quarter, the main heritage highpoints will be new explorations of the fine collections of art and heritage currently glimpsed in the town's Museum and Art Gallery and its imaginative Art on Tour and similar programmes.

The town's Art Collection is a superb, international quality celebration of painting and studio ceramics, much of it among the very best work of British artists at work in the mid twentieth century. The collection is loved and cherished but deserves to be seen by many more people – and to be a visitor destination for the town in its own right.

To achieve this, the Cultural Quarter will feature a new and dramatic Pavilion at the heart of the new public park in the Kimmerfields development, a permanent home for the display of the collection and its appreciation through permanent and changing displays of art and ceramics – in a landmark 'jewel-box' of a building – set in a public realm that will itself be a place for public art and for outdoor and informal performance.

The town's Museum collections tell important stories about how Swindon came to be – and about the lives of its communities down the

centuries. For new communities, and for young people growing up in Swindon, the Museum collection is important in defining what it means to be a 'Swindonian'. To ensure the widest possible access to and enjoyment of these collections and stories, the Quarter will extend to an imaginative project to consider their redisplay at the Town Hall, from which Swindon Dance will move to the new Dance Centre, linked with the town's Central Library, at the Regent's Circus southern end of the Quarter.

## Design

Entered beneath the dramatic cantilevered main gallery, on the pedestrian thoroughfare connecting station and town centre, the Art Pavilion faces north overlooking the Central Square. It is a free-standing linear building with an interesting roofscape shaped to control daylight and provide a playful composition mediating between the Square and the new Zurich office to the south.

There is a small coffee shop with outdoor seating near the entrance, a gallery shop in the foyer facing the Square and a changing display gallery on the ground floor as well as a volunteer / activity space and an art loading/handling area to the rear.

Upstairs is the main painting / art gallery, a smaller second ceramics / art gallery, gallery offices and support spaces. The galleries will be tailored to showcase Swindon's fine collection of twentieth century art but are also sufficiently flexible to host other collections appropriate to passive environmental control.



Art Pavilion precedents



Art Pavilion and Central Square

ZÜRICH

MCS

ART









# Lessons Learned

from other places

# Lessons learned from other places

Of course Swindon is unique – and its Cultural Quarter will feel and be like no other – not least because the strength of the participation and production in Swindon and the degree to which what is presented and enjoyed in the Quarter will be a reflection of the stories and creativity of the people of the town and its region.

However, as the Quarter concept has developed, it has been instructive to learn from projects around the world that are on similar journeys to celebrate their cultural lives and regenerate their places through new cultural facilities and activities.

The main lesson looking at the global experience of place-regeneration through culture is that Swindon's vision and ambition is genuinely the match for anything going on around the world. Over the next eight to ten years as the Quarter is developed, delivered and celebrated, Swindon can be a world leader in place based regeneration through culture and a source of learning and inspiration for other towns and cities in the UK.

It follows in an interesting and instructive tradition of the last twenty five or so years, and the vision for the Quarter sits it alongside some of the world's best realised and continuing projects:

# Inclusivity and distinctiveness

## Newcastle/Gateshead

Between 1995 and 2010, the banks of the Tyne were transformed by a programme of investment in world-class cultural facilities that have changed thousands of lives of local people and perceptions of the North-East worldwide. This programme can be an inspiration for the work underway in Swindon.

Development was focused on the Gateshead Quays — but was allowed to organically develop across the Tyne and into Newcastle centre. Great care was taken to balance the large and glamorous with alternative, smaller and community owned facilities such as Live Theatre, Tyneside Cinema and Seven Stories — bringing together enjoyment with learning and participation and supporting the creative economy.

Perhaps most relevant for Swindon was the fact that these great developments were rooted in partnership — different projects were advanced and sponsored by different organisations and communities — within a partnership that optimised the benefits for all — and this continued in operation with the ground-breaking work of the Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues consortium.



# Cultural districts and the power of concentration

## West Kowloon

The West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong has been one of the most closely studied major cultural regeneration projects in the world. Still progressing on site, many of the core 20+ cultural facilities and spaces planned are now open.

As has been so successful in Swindon, the teams' leading the project went to great lengths to ensure, through consultation, engagement and the participation of, in particular, young people from neighbouring communities, often through digital and media production, that the project was both hugely ambitious on the world stage and still relevant and accessible to its local communities.

Not all of these major, very concentrated, cultural districts around the world have this sense of growing out of local need and ambition – but they do show the huge economic power of cultural infrastructure in cities across the world.

Although West Kowloon and many of the members of the Global Cultural Districts Network

<https://gcdn.net/> are on a larger scale than the Swindon project, there is the potential to seek to command for Swindon the same levels of global attention and interest in a distinctive, genuinely innovative and major project of world class – particularly as Swindon can lead out the next generation of thinking about how one makes these major projects in the context of climate crisis.



# Cultural routes, trails and connectedness

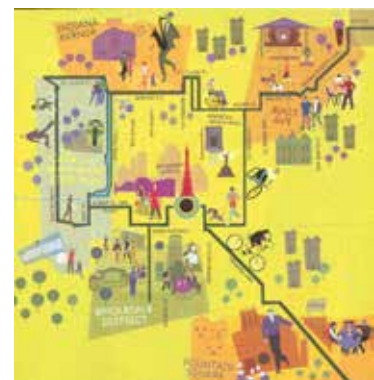
## The High Line Network

One of the most exciting discussions about connected cultural space and quarters going on in the world may sound a bit of an unlikely learning resource for Swindon, but the network founded by the New York High Line to connect projects that are focusing around the world on repurposing disused infrastructure is inspirational at many levels - <https://network.thehighline.org/>

Across the world, these projects are creating the most successful, accessible, cultural spaces that combine regeneration and the new with the navigation of the heritage of towns and cities.

In Swindon there is a brilliant opportunity to use the Cultural Quarter and its investments to weave together new routes across and through the town – from the railway quarter and the heritage focuses of activity and restoration, through the vibrant new gateways to the town in the Kimmerfields development and onward toward the former Town Hall and the Library. Throughout the consultation process people emphasised that investment in the town centre was needed and important, but that it had to connect to where people live, to the character areas and to the green spaces of the outer town and to other cultural and heritage sites out of the centre.

In High Line Network projects such as the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Destination Crenshaw (Los Angeles), Hemisfair Park (San Antonio) and many others – there are profound inspirations for Swindon's transformation of its town centre as an engaged, community owned and economically transformed cultural place.







# The Cultural Quarter project

outcomes and realisation

## Transformation: outcomes and Impacts

Throughout this Investment Prospectus, we have illustrated how the individual projects as well as the Quarter as a whole arises out of express needs and aspirations of local people and communities – and in response to opportunities for regeneration, economic growth, and prosperity.

In summary, the Quarter has the potential to be truly transformational – a dramatic and highly visible signal of the confidence of the town for the decades to come, an economic motor with substantial impacts locally and regionally, driving supply chain and talent development in key new economic sectors, transforming the sense of place of the renewed town centre and delivering profound personal and community wellbeing benefits.

## Driving town centre regeneration, celebrating Swindon as a world leader

In their update report ‘Build Back Better’ late last year the Grimsey Review emphasised the new thinking that would be needed to reanimate town centres post Covid-19. The Swindon Cultural Quarter can be a leader in this movement, community focused, emphasising experiences and quality and embedding culture as the bedrock of the town centre of the future.

Generating more than 850,000 footfalls and uses annually in the cultural buildings alone and contributing to millions of visits and footfalls through the renewed and extended town centre, the Quarter buildings will be safe, virus-secure, new centres of public celebration set in transformed public space for outdoor activity.

Together with the heritage developments adjacent, and the wider regeneration of the town centre, the Quarter will be a significant motor for the transformation of perceptions and awareness of Swindon’s status as an internationally successful and vibrant conurbation for the 21st century.

## Contributing to economic growth, jobs and prosperity

The proposed Quarter building blocks are designed to balance publicly supported participation and engagement with commercial entertainment and business productivity in an economy increasingly driven by experiences and creativity.

850,000 footfalls - visits, admissions and participations – will generate direct and indirect benefits throughout the local and regional economy – to the tune of more than £65m annually at 2021 prices – a net impact of more than £35m retained in the local economy after leakage, displacement and optimism bias allowances - supporting an anticipated 1,300 FTE jobs. This activity will drive the viability of the town centre more generally – generating significant business for retail and hospitality neighbours and extending and reinforcing the ambition to a safe, accessible, populous day/night economy for both residents and visitors.

For individuals, the training, personal development and work opportunities in the sector will attract and retain talented people to Swindon, enable local people from all backgrounds to gain and provide the skills needed in the creative, design, digital and media sectors which will be key to future growth and prosperity. This skills base, the confidence and quality of life of the community, supported by the cultural life of the Quarter, and the national and international profile the Quarter will command and will be significant contributors to inward investment of leading and quality businesses across decades to come.

## Social benefit, equity, opportunity and wellbeing

In their recent report on the social value of culture, Government recognised the profound potential for cultural investment to change and support lives across all communities – giving young people in particular opportunities and confidence to thrive; emphasising the physical and mental



health and wellbeing impact of cultural activity and the importance of cultural opportunity to bring together and celebrate the diverse communities of the town.

The emphasis in the Quarter strategy of Swindon Dance's inclusive activities and the imaginative and engaged work of Create, Prime and Reach, alongside the substantial opportunities to see and enjoy national quality shows in the new Theatre will ensure profound and far reaching benefits throughout Swindon's population.

The thread of music that runs through the entire Quarter plan – indoors and out, embraces the proven power of music in place-making and in wellbeing – an exemplar of the benefits celebrated in the Sound Diplomacy report – 'This must be the Place'.



The creation of a new Quarter over the next ten years places Swindon at the forefront of many of these movements. Continuing the project as an open, consultative and engaged project with all generations fully involved will place it as a sector leading project in community co-design of culture and answering the Government's call for the fullest measurement and tracking of social value in major cultural projects.

## A sustainable strategy embracing the challenges to our environment

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the project embraces the challenges of climate crisis and the need to transform the environmental footprint of culture.

As set out in this report – the Swindon Cultural Quarter has the opportunity to become the first new net zero carbon cultural development of its scale in the UK – and possibly globally. The benefits of this visionary approach by the Council will be tangible – replacing inefficient and environmentally damaging older buildings – and in the reputation and profile of the town as a leader in the sector. With these environmental benefits come economic ones – all aspects of the cultural activity of the partner organisations will be strengthened, made more viable, extended and more resilient. The Quarter will underpin a vibrant and viable cultural sector in the town for decades to come.

Around the buildings, this report shows how a new kind of public space can be made that rises to the challenge of the need for outdoor activity in town centres post-Covid and which actively improves the town centre environment through planting and green technologies.

As we imagine a new kind of set of cultural spaces with young people, the Quarter offers an opportunity to meet their concerns for their environment of the future – a world leading and high profile example of new thinking, innovation and the transformation of our town centres.

# The route to realisation

This prospectus has sought to communicate the excitement and broad support that has been a feature of the development of the vision for the project.

In parallel with that developing vision, the Council, partner organisations and professional team have worked to understand the practical opportunities and challenges of moving the Quarter from the drawing board to realisation and launch, so that there is a launch pad in place that enables immediate progress.

## Swindon Cultural Quarter: potential programme

	2021/22			2022/23				2023/24				2024/25	
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
<b>Dance Centre</b>	Options / pre-feasibility		Feasibility and funding development			Funding aligned		Construction					Opening
	Procure design		RIBA 0-1	RIBA 0-2	RIBA 3/4		Tender						
<b>Theatre</b>	Feasibility												
	Partner PIN	Partner procurement		Investment appraisal	In principle sign off	Procure design		RIBA 0-1	RIBA 2		RIBA 3		
<b>Museum - new display strategies</b>	Feasibility		RIBA 0-4		Sign off	Fit out			Opening				
<b>Media &amp; Arts Production Centre</b>	Options / pre-feasibility / funding development							Feasibility			Procure design		RIBA 0-1
<b>Art Pavilion</b>	Options / pre-feasibility / funding development										Feasibility		RIBA 0-3
<b>Town Hall reuse options</b>	Options / pre-feasibility / funding development							Feasibility	Option decision	Feasibility	Stage 1 funding	RIBA 0-4 / tender	



## Understanding the scale and nature of investment

With projects of this vision and scale come challenges, perhaps most obviously at this stage of securing the resources to realise the buildings and then to sustain them.

The research and development behind this prospectus includes quite detailed analysis of the implications and costs of realising the proposed projects – so as to set clear expectations from the outset of the scale of the task facing the partners.

This analysis has developed through stages of work, with the projects at slightly different points of development but broadly with sites, architectural approaches, specifications and technical requirements understood to give a clear picture of the overall cost of the Quarter building projects.

The following table summarises the gross costs (and separately the construction only costs) of the building projects, rather than the underlying site infrastructure and eventual public realm works, as it had been estimated at stage 1 in summer of 2020 and now at spring 2021 with allowance for inflation across the pre-construction period:

	Theatre	Dance Centre	Media and Arts	Gallery Pavilion	Museum	Programme management	TOTAL
Gross cost (stage 1, 2020)	47,000,000	13,500,000	11,250,000	4,250,000	2,700,000		78,700,000
<b>Gross cost (stage 2, 2021)</b>	<b>46,970,000</b>	<b>11,200,000</b>	<b>12,970,000</b>	<b>4,170,000</b>	<b>950,000</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>77,860,000</b>
Cost ex fees/costs	39,470,000	9,350,000	10,780,000	3,510,000	780,000	0	63,890,000

One of the major challenges of the last year has been the difficulty in advancing the funding partnership that is always required to undertake projects of this scale and benefit.

As we think about the funding strategy for the Quarter, its useful to see how the phasing of the project shapes the potential flow of costs – and the funding requirement over the years ahead – with early opportunities to realise smaller discrete projects and a longer lead in to build the investment partnership for the realisation of the larger/later projects in the sequence:

### Cashflow indicator based on assumed delivery programme

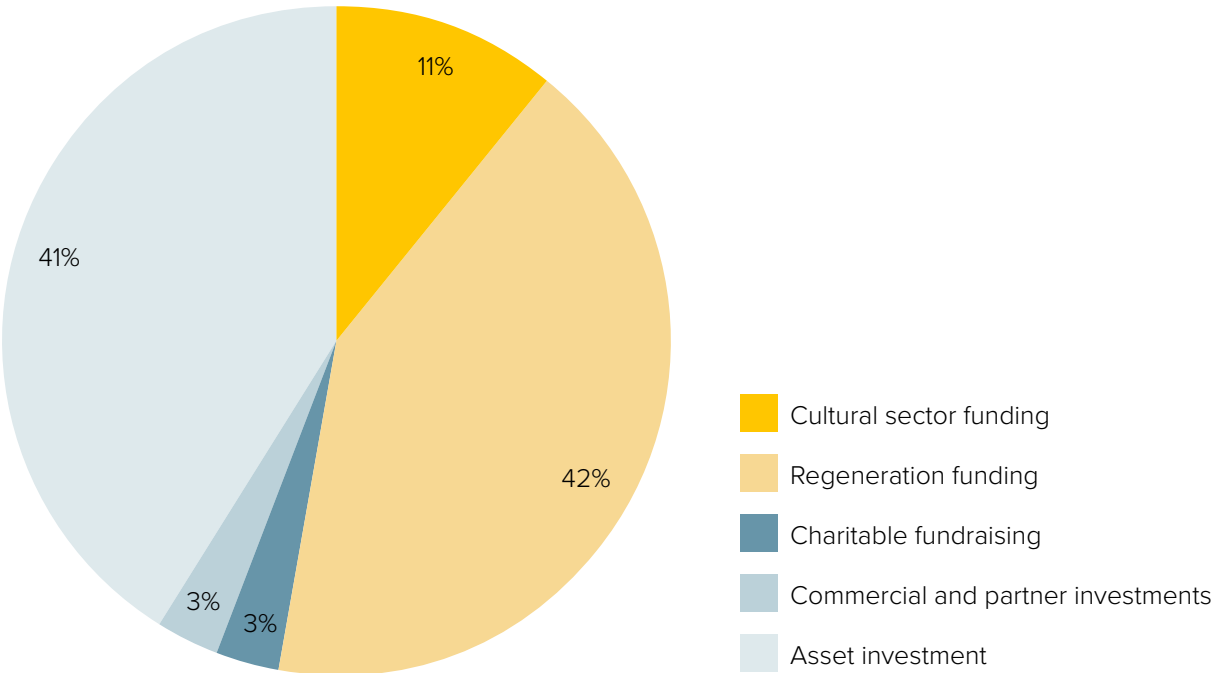
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	TOTAL
Theatre	-		1,312,500	1,312,500	1,875,000	16,988,000	16,988,000	8,494,000	46,970,000
Dance Centre	323,750	4,822,250	6,054,000						11,200,000
Media and Arts				383,250	383,250	2,212,643	6,660,571	3,330,286	12,970,000
Gallery Pavilion					231,000	165,000	1,887,000	1,887,000	4,170,000
Museum	102,000	848,000							950,000
Programme management	200,000	200,000	200,000	350,000	300,000	150,000	100,000	100,000	1,600,000
<b>Annual Total Spend</b>	<b>625,750</b>	<b>5,870,250</b>	<b>7,566,500</b>	<b>2,045,750</b>	<b>2,789,250</b>	<b>19,515,643</b>	<b>25,635,571</b>	<b>13,811,286</b>	<b>77,860,000</b>

As we start to build the partnership that will be required to meet this funding and investment challenge, there are some key strengths of the project:

- The practical partnerships with the cultural sector and organisations in the town that have developed the individual projects are a powerful force for making the case for investment and funding. Going forward, each project can be championed and its funding developed by these partners – this collaborative approach will broaden the potential sources of funding and investment and the workload of securing support.
- The Quarter project appeals powerfully and directly to urgent priorities for public investment now – in culture, in young people and their futures, in economic recovery and resilience, and in the regeneration of the town centre. The building block approach means that there are ‘shovel-ready’ projects here that meet immediate and urgent need and can be advanced with immediate support.
- The Quarter is a balanced portfolio of public and private, subsidy-attractive and private sector commercial operations – with a major revenue return in savings and incomes generated across its projects – so that the strategy for realisation can be similarly balanced between public grant for social and economic outcomes and commercially supported investment.
- Overall, the Quarter offers terrific value for money to investors public and private. The outcomes offered - a town centre transformed; lives and communities profoundly improved; a visionary and innovative address to urgent questions of environmental sustainability; a series of the most exciting, world class places for culture - for a budget, in world project terms, of manageable proportions.

This strategy of balance and partnership can be expressed in the potential strategic breakdown of funding and investment opportunity: - a balance of public benefit and commercially effective investment, of national, local and cultural funding:

**Swindon Cultural Quarter potential funding strategy**



## Why now? A call to action

This prospectus is an early step in this process, and the main development work has taken place against the backdrop of Covid-19 – a time when investors and funders have understandably been focused on the immediate rather than the long term.

However, as we write, we see the urgency of investment in our towns and cities, and in cultural and community facilities that are fit for purpose in a post-pandemic world, gathering pace.

The regeneration of town centres like Swindon was already urgent and recognised before Covid-19, and now it is more urgent still.

Audiences have been deprived of cultural opportunity in person, and the creative economy has been tested in the extreme by the pandemic. But all research shows that the appetite for being together with people for cultural experience, to join together as communities to make and share creativity, is undimmed and that if anything the appreciation of the arts and heritage will be all the greater post-pandemic.

In particular sectors, there will be market change – in supply, distribution and demand, perhaps most notably at the moment in cinema exhibition, and these changes will need to be monitored and factored into the planning of the Cultural Quarter projects as they proceed through the programme period and its gateways.

There is much to do. The research behind this prospectus establishes Project Definition Documents for each building block that set out the work ahead in each case – and an overall masterplanning and strategic coordination of the planning of the Quarter, consulting and working with local partners and communities, making of the case nationally and internationally, learning from the experience of others, developing the technical information and resources to manage risk and enable project commissioning and, importantly, bringing together a national coalition of support, excitement and investment for one of the major cultural journeys of the next ten years in the UK.

As we begin to emerge from lockdown, we see more urgently than ever the need and opportunity of culture and of regeneration of our town – we believe that the Cultural Quarter is a living response to the challenges of the last year – prepared for the future by its development in a time of real testing and questioning – and that it emerges ready to be part of the solution – short, medium and long term, for Swindon, for its region and for the UK's journey of cultural regeneration.



Theatre

HE

# Swindon Cultural Quarter

