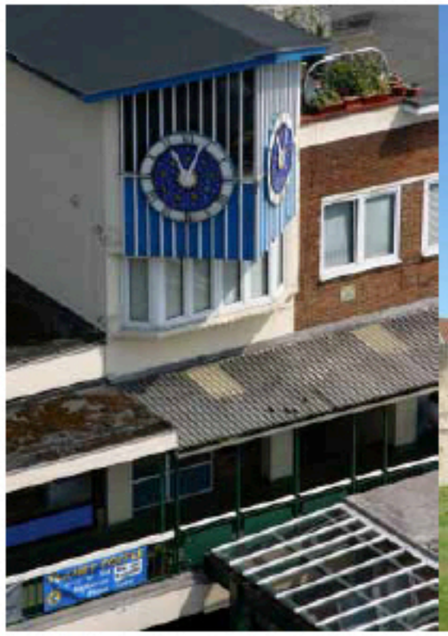
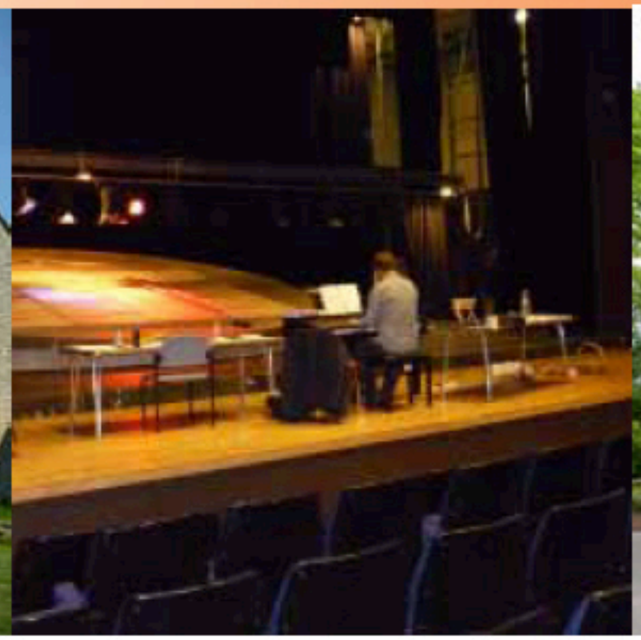
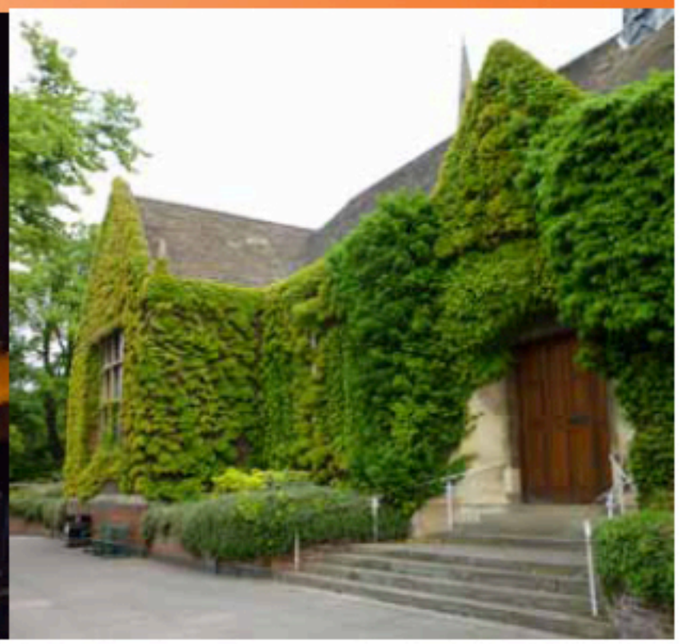
north northamptonshire
mapping overview of cultural assets






north northamptonshire cultural investment plan

final report

february 2010

tom fleming / creative consultancy /

Report funded by













contents

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1.0 introduction

north northamptonshire cultural infrastructure

This Report, written by Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, profiles the cultural infrastructure landscape of North Northants, contextualising the role of culture across current and forthcoming strategic agendas, identifying core assets and pointing to gaps in provision. It points to an emerging set of strategic opportunities and challenges for culture in the sub region. It is one of three documents that collectively form the Cultural Investment Plan for the North Northamptonshire. The additional documents include:

- A paper with a set of direct recommendations for a standard charge for culture in North Northamptonshire

- A Public Realm Overview and Action Plan for the County of Northamptonshire.

- A Cultural Investment and Action Plan for North Northamptonshire: the key strategy document, providing the rationale and direction for culture-led investment across the sub region

This project commissioned by North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (NNJPU), North Northamptonshire Development Company (NNDC) and Northamptonshire County Council (NNC), with an active wider partnership including Arts Council England East Midlands, East Midlands Museums Libraries and Archives, Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council and Wellingborough Borough Council. It builds on the 2008 work carried out by Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy and partners to develop a Cultural Investment Plan for West Northamptonshire. This result is a complementary level of strategic insight and direction for both West and North Northamptonshire.

The reports are prepared to position culture at the heart of the planning and development agenda in North Northamptonshire, an area in the heart of England undergoing significant change and set to undergo further change over the coming years. Both North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire form part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) Growth Area[1], one of four areas identified by Government as best positioned to absorb required growth in housing and provide a wider sustainable offer that includes new jobs, access to transport links, and lower environmental impact.

A key policy of the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy (2005)

1 Definition of Growth Area: "The four growth areas announced by the Government in the Sustainable Communities Plan 2003..were identified because of their potential to take on further growth more sustainably, with less environmental impact, and to exploit major transport and economic investment."

(Yvette Cooper, 16 June 2006).

(which outlines the strategy for Northamptonshire, as part of MKSM growth area) is to provide for a commensurate level of economic growth alongside the housing development. This means developing from the distinctive assets to attract jobs, investment and residents. As will be shown, culture can play a key role here: to improve the quality of life and the environment, connect communities, build confidence, create jobs, and build aspiration and confidence. In North Northamptonshire, which combines a set of very distinctive places; the opportunity exists to develop a mix of cultural assets and opportunities that play from the strengths of each town and the rural areas that surround them. This means establishing a connected fabric of cultural infrastructure, embedding culture to the mainstream of the planning and development agenda, and supporting talent to prosper and grow.

Image:

Stanwick Lakes Visitor Centre



1.1 The Focus of This Report

This report offers a means to better understand the dynamics and profile of the current cultural and creative dividend in North Northamptonshire, providing context and intelligence that informs the overall Investment Plan. It is not intended as a complete and comprehensive overview of all sector activity. Rather, it highlights the important role that culture plays in the sub region, identifies some of the key characteristics of the cultural offer, and introduces a set of challenges and opportunities for culture to play a more prominent and value-adding role.

The report covers the four local authority districts of North Northamptonshire – Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough. It also briefly considers the cultural assets beyond the four district boundaries that are accessed by North Northamptonshire's current residents and will also have a role to play as the population of the sub region grows in the coming years.

There is a diverse range of cultural infrastructure and activity taking place across North Northamptonshire. To make an assessment of the current cultural provision and to provide a baseline to explore the potential areas for investment a number of 'typologies' have been used to group and analyse the current infrastructure offer:

1.1.1 Cultural Infrastructure Typologies

We have designed 7 typologies to provide an overview of the existing cultural offer across North Northamptonshire. These match those used for the Cultural Investment Plan for West Northamptonshire – to allow for comparison and ensure consistency. They are:

- **Heritage:** historic houses and gardens, heritage sites and museums.

- **Arts venues:** galleries, theatres, live music venues and cinemas.

- **Other creative spaces:** creative workspace and commercial exhibition spaces.

- **Community facilities:** libraries, schools and leisure centres.

- **Community assets:** other community spaces used for cultural activity, village halls, community centres, pubs and cafes.

- **Parks, open spaces and public realm:** urban, sub urban and rural open spaces, both designated parks and public open spaces such as town squares and waterways.

- **Festivals and events:** countywide and local festivals, events, fairs.

In addition to these broad typologies, for North Northamptonshire we have developed a more detailed 'mapping matrix' to cross-check the physical/capital assets with those more organisationally-driven and people-centres assets. These additional typologies reflect key strategic agendas nationally, regionally and locally and allow a more action oriented overview of the programmes and activities taking place across the four North Northamptonshire districts. They also allow us to draw matrices to outline the key initiatives,

Cultural Infrastructure Typologies

1. Heritage
2. Arts Venues
3. Other creative spaces
4. Community facilities
5. Community assets
6. Parks, open spaces and public realm
7. Festivals and events

Images:

Public Library, Rushden

partnerships and collaborations that underpin the strengths of the sub regional cultural offer, opportunities that can be built on, and some of the challenges and gaps. The cross referencing typologies are:

Viewing: space and programmes of performance, exhibition and showcasing.

- Engaging: facilities and activities for people to participate in, supporting community cohesion, quality of life and well being and helping to deliver in LAA target to increase participation in arts activity (NI 11).

- Learning: formal and informal skills development, raising aspirations and opening up opportunities for residents in the CI sector and beyond.

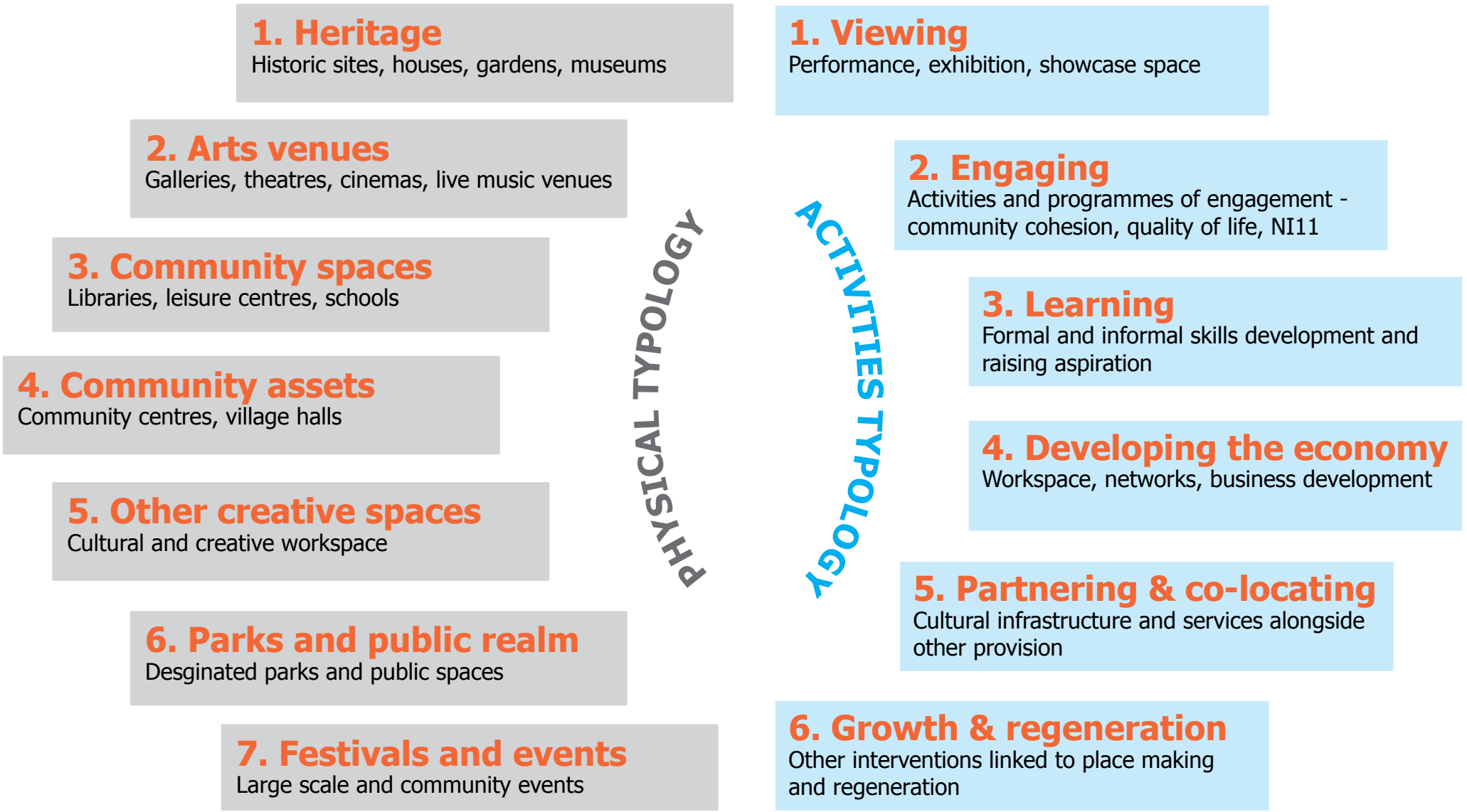
- Developing the cultural, creative and wider economy: workspace, business support, networks.

- Partnerships and co-location: examples of and opportunities for co-location with other services.

- Place-making, growth and regeneration: specific programmes and interventions linked to the agenda of growth and regeneration.



Figure 1 – The Mapping Typologies for North Northamptonshire



1.2 Our Methodology

This cultural infrastructure mapping has been undertaken combining quantitative and qualitative research approaches, underpinned by a very engaged relationship with stakeholders across North Northamptonshire and the wider County and region. Our main approaches have included:

– **Literature review:**
National, regional and local strategic and policy documents and cultural and creative industries research reports and documents to provide context for the mapping and identify key cultural assets and organisations and their role as cultural providers and drivers.

– **Explorative searching:**
Web searching and the review of local media and promotional materials to identify cultural activities across the sub region.

– **Interviews:**
Consultations have been carried out with over 70 cultural providers, planners and local, regional and national cultural agencies to explore, in more depth, the existing plans and activities of organisations, their connections with others and their future development plans, whether aspirational or existing.

– **Workshops:**
Four themed workshops were attended by 64 participants. The workshops were aimed at exploring and evidencing the requirements for an extended cultural offer of all forms to meet the needs of North Northamptonshire's expanding communities. The first two workshops - 'Cultural Infrastructure' and 'Learning and Skills' – held in June 2009 and third - 'Public Realm' – held in September 2009, brought together between ten and fifteen for focused discussion on the these key topics. The fourth event 'North Northamptonshire Cultural Future', used an 'open space' approach which saw 30 participants setting their own agenda on the priorities for discussion. Key issues discussed included audience development and engagement; organisation sustainability; professional development and leadership; prioritising cultural infrastructure needs; telling the story – promotion and joining up the cultural offer and; culture – embedding within learning and skills.

Image

'Visual Scribe' Joel Cooper at the Cultural Future (Open Space) Workshop, Kettering Conference Centre, 3rd September 09









Images:

Top left: Illustration from Learning and Skills Workshop, Victoria Centre, Wellingborough,10th June 09 (illustration by Joel Cooper)

Bottom left: Break-off group at Cultural Future (Open Space) workshop, Kettering Conference Centre, 3rd September 09

Right: Cultural Future (Open Space) workshop, Kettering Conference Centre, 3rd September 09

2.0 positioning culture within a strategic context

county wide strategic context

"By 2020, the East Midlands will be a flourishing region. Increasingly prosperous and productive, we will enjoy levels of sustainable economic well-being and a quality of life higher than the European average and comparable with the best in the world" (East Midlands Regional Economic Strategy 2006).

This section provides an 'aerial view' of the strategic context for culture from regional to county level. It highlights the way that culture is increasingly recognised for its role as a provider of strategic added value – across agendas that range from health to economic development; plus as a critical contributor to the livability and attractiveness of places.

2.1 The East Midlands

"By 2020, the East Midlands will be a flourishing region. Increasingly prosperous and productive, we will enjoy levels of sustainable economic well-being and a quality of life higher than the European average and comparable with the best in the world" (East Midlands Regional Economic Strategy 2006).

This vision for the East Midlands is underpinned by three themes:

- Raising productivity
- Ensuring sustainability
- Achieving equality.

2.1.1 Regional Economic Strategy

The **East Midlands Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2020**, acknowledges the contribution that the Creative Industries make to the economy, particularly the economic contribution of the region's cultural and heritage assets and the role the cultural sector plays in community participation and developing social capital.

In recent years, East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) has invested nearly £20m in capital infrastructure projects to support the cultural economy in the region, in partnership with organisations Local Authorities and Arts Council England and others. However, much of the investment has focused on supporting the creative economy and wider cultural infrastructure of the larger cities and their hinterlands – notably Nottingham and Leicester. The only notable investment in Northamptonshire has been the contribution to the redevelopment of the Royal and Derngate in Northampton.

As noted in the West Northamptonshire Cultural Investment Plan, the under investment by EMDA and others in Northamptonshire is recognised as being both a demand and supply led challenge:

- It is **demand-led** because of the historical lack of larger, growth-orientated cultural organisations and institutions in the County and an under connected cultural sector. This has resulted in a low profile and a weak of voice. Without the strongly articulated demand for

investment and support, the sector has not been able to maximise the benefit that a strong and coordinated regional offer would bring.

- It is **supply-led** because regional bodies have previously failed to adequately assess the potential of Northamptonshire as a cultural proposition. The perception of the County's as an extension of the 'Greater South East', the relative social cohesion, the lack of a big city agenda (with big city institutions and organisations) and the distance from regional offices (which are Nottingham based) have all contributed the making investment and support for Northamptonshire more difficult to plan and deliver. The Growth agenda - in North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire – has now provided the focal point and justification for supporting the County to add to the region's cultural offer.

2.1.2 East Midlands Creative and Cultural Economy Partnership (emccep)[2]

Emccep, formed following publication of **Creative Britain**[3], brings together key regional strategic agencies to champion the growth of the creative and cultural enterprises for the benefit of the people and the economy of the East Midlands. The Partnership also seeks to align business support mechanisms and deliver significant benefits to the

2 EMDA, UK Trade and Investment; Arts Council East Midlands; EM Media; Culture East Midlands; Museums, Libraries and Archives Council; East Midlands Regional Cultural Observatory; regional HE representation; Learning and Skills Council, Prince's Trust, Cultivate, representative delivery bodies and sector skills bodies (Skillset and Creative and Cultural Skills)

3 DCMS, BERR, DIUS (2008) Creative Britain: New Talents for New Economy

Image:

Castle Theatre, Wellingborough



sector through more coherent, visible and effective use of resources, in particular, ensuring a robust evidence base is available to the economic development specialists charged with building the Integrated Regional Strategy. emccep are also leading on the regional response to **Digital Britain**[4].

2.1.3 Cultural Partnership

Following the ministerial statement of July 2008, the East Midlands Cultural Partnership of Arts Council England, English Heritage, Museums Libraries and Archives Council and Sport England have published a joint regional plan to deliver on the four regional priorities of:

- Regional strategies: sharing intelligence and providing evidence and clear messages to embed culture in Integrated Regional Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy and economic area assessments.

- Improving relationships with Local Authorities: to ensure their commitment to culture and sport including engagement with Culture and Sport Strategic Discussions, Cultural Improvement Partnership East Midlands, Local Area Agreements team and Government Office East Midlands, emerging Comprehensive Area Assessment.

- Place shaping: maximising leverage and success through Living Places, ensuring culture remains embedded in MKSM growth agenda.

- Cultural Olympiad: levering investment for culture and raising the profile of the region.

2.1.4 Creative and Cultural Skills Creative Blueprint

In May 2009, sector skills council Creative and Cultural Skills[5] published their Creative Blueprint East Midlands, building on their national Blueprint and outlining their delivery of their core programmes in the region to address the five key skills challenges. The challenges are identified as:

- Significant gaps in work based technical and specialist skills provision
- Increasing and further developing higher skills in the workforce, with a need to focus on business and enterprise

- High volume of education and training provision presents an unclear picture to individuals and employers in terms of qualifications valued by employers for entry into industry, career development and progression

- The need to diversify the workforce for business success

- Increasing employer investment and commitment to training and development in industries dominated by micro businesses and self-employed/freelancers.

Seven programmes have been developed to meet the challenges and address the skills issues.

- Creative Apprenticeships: there is currently limited roll out in the East Midlands. From autumn 2009, Nottingham venues will be working local training providers. Tresham Institute is offering employer led apprenticeships in a range of sectors. In 2009-10, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council is extending financial support from 10 to 50 apprentices across England, providing an opportunity for the region's museums and galleries to benefit.

- National Skills Academy (NSA): addressing urgent

4 DCMS BIS (Department for Business, Innovations, Skills) (2009), Digital Britain

5 CC Skills represents advertising, craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts industries.

skills shortages across the performing arts including in theatre and live music. NSA is working with employer led Midlands Offstage Consortium (MOSC) to explore their leading on developing action plans for both the West and East Midlands areas.

- Creative Choices˚: an online service providing tools, knowledge and networks to support individuals and business to 'get in, and get on in' the creative and cultural industries.

- Qualification Reform: The Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) marks the start of qualification reform for the CC Skills industries, which have little history of using qualifications to address skills gaps.

- Research Agenda: central to sustaining and developing baseline industry data, evaluating the demand for skills, assessing the impact of programmes and influencing policy by using and cross referencing with data on workforce demography, current and future skills needs, industry drivers and education provision produced for the first time in the Creative Blueprint research.

- Cultural Leadership Programme: The strategic delivery partners are Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council with current activity in the East Midlands including the Future Libraries Leaders / Senior Libraries Leaders Network: A network for emerging leaders (located in the East Midlands and East) and the School for Social Entrepreneurs East Midlands.

- UK Design Skills Alliance: a partnership of the Design Council, Creative & Cultural Skills and leading design industry and education bodies aimed at supporting the development of a highly-skilled and increasingly prosperous UK design sector through a programme of Continuing Professional Development, a UK-wide Design Professionals' network and designers in schools.



Image:

Fellowship of Professional & Amateur Artists, Summer Exhibition 2009 Poster Wellingborough Museum

Image:

The Castle,
Wellingborough



The Value-adding role of the Creative Industries

Research commissioned by the East Midlands Cultural Observatory - **East Midlands Urban and Regional Creative Industries Data Study (2008)** - shows that the creative and cultural sector makes an important contribution to regional employment and wealth.

In 2005, the regional creative economy employed 62,500 people (3.4% of total regional employment) within 13,400 cultural and creative businesses (8.3% of all regional businesses). The cultural and creative economy has been growing rapidly in the region, with employment growing by 8% and the number of businesses growing by 19% between 2001 and 2005. Particularly strong growth in the Visual Arts and Design and Audio-visual sub sectors were identified, with no change in the Performance sector and a small decline in the Books and Press related activity.

The majority of East Midlands cultural and creative businesses (59%) are based in rural areas of the region, however creative businesses in urban areas tend to employ more people (6 on average, vs. fewer than 4 in creative businesses based in rural areas) so the majority (54%) of employment in the sector is in urban areas. Businesses based in urban areas also tend to have a higher than average GVA per employee than those in rural districts.

Northampton, after Nottingham, Leicester and Derby, was found to have the highest concentrations of creative industries businesses in the East Midlands. Relatively high levels of creative industries employment were also identified in some more rural districts including Wellingborough.



Image:

The Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering

East Midland Creative and Cultural Industries Key Facts

- Creative and cultural industries in the East Midlands have grown by 29% in employment terms since 2006. Across the UK, growth in the creative and cultural industries is 9%.
- EM creative industries workforce is 44,380 people (7% of creative and cultural industries UK workforce).
- 4,155 businesses contribute £1.11B GVA to the UK economy total of £24.8B.
- Average GVA per head for the creative and cultural industries in the East Midlands is £25,500, compared to a UK creative and cultural industries average of £36,570.
- Design is the largest (in terms of workforce and GVA) of the industries represented by Creative & Cultural Skills, both regionally and nationally.
- Prior to the recession, productivity in the creative and cultural industries in the East Midlands had increased by 4%; this is compared to a decline across the UK creative and cultural industries of 7%.
- 50% of the creative and cultural workforce in the East Midlands is educated to Level 4 or above; this is compared to 53% of the sectors' workforce across the UK.
- 78% of creative and cultural businesses in the East Midlands are micro businesses (employing 1-5 people); this is compared to 77% for all businesses across the UK.
- 35% of people working in the creative and cultural industries are self-employed; this is compared to 12% for all industries across the UK.

Source: Creative and Cultural Skills East Midlands Creative Blueprint (2009).

2.2 Milton Keynes South Midlands

The MKSM Regional Strategy identifies the creative industries as a growth sector, with dynamic employment that will be a key sector in the sub-region's economic prosperity.

The Cultural Strategy[6] for the growth region is driven by a vision is to establish Milton Keynes as a leading European city for creativity, excellence and participation in cultural activities by 2012.

In 2005 MKSM Culture Task Group commissioned Living Space, to provide practical advice and guidance to organisations delivering the growth plans for MKSM outlining how culture can support sustainable community development.

The MKSM Cultural Co-ordinator has brought additional capacity and leadership to the area, supporting the sharing of best practice and helping to raise the profile of culture within the growth agenda.

2.3 Northamptonshire County

2.3.1 Sustainable Communities Strategy

The **Northamptonshire Sustainable Communities Strategy** sets out the vision for the County as "The best place in England to grow". The strategy provides the framework for the public organisations in Northamptonshire to work together. It has four key ambitions for the County:

- To be successful through sustainable growth and regeneration
- To develop through having a growing economy and more skilled jobs
- To have safe and strong communities
- Healthy people who enjoy a good quality of life

MKSM Creative Industries Research

In 2008, Arts Council England (East Midlands, East and South East) commissioned research into creative and cultural industries in the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area, also identified considerable growth in the sector, with 53% of MKSM creative businesses having seen an increase in turnover in the previous 12 months, compared with just 33% of all UK SMEs in a similar period 2004-5.

The research highlights the low profile, both at policy level and in terms of visibility at street level and public awareness that creativity and culture have in the MKSM area:

– Only 6% of creative businesses surveyed felt that the area is good for recruiting staff, and only 8% felt the area offered ample cultural opportunities.

– 54% felt that a better understanding of the sector amongst decision makers would help their enterprise achieve its objectives.

6 Milton Keynes: Creativity, Excellence and Participation – Cultural Strategy 2006- 2012.

The aim is for the County to be the 'leading economy in the East Midlands by 2020" and "One of the top five counties in England by 2030".

Culture is recognised as a key means of achieving these ambitions, with a focus on the importance of culture and sport in both enriching people's lives and in the sustainable development of communities.

Key priorities are outlined for the four North Northamptonshire districts and significant proposals important to consider as part of the Cultural Investment Plan for North Northamptonshire include:

- In Corby: Making sure facilities are available to meet the predicted growth in housing development and jobs including visual and performing arts and entertainment and securing university education facilities.

- In East Northamptonshire: increasing employment opportunities within the district, supporting start-up and growth businesses and encouraging knowledge-based businesses; increasing tourism through marketing and promotion of the countryside and heritage, River Nene and Rockingham Forest.

- In Kettering: using growth to make improvements to all the town centres, especially Kettering's, and particularly in retail, services, leisure, entertainment and employment; whilst also developing the education and skills we offer, increasing the amount of affordable housing; and improving the quality of open spaces and sports, leisure and community facilities.

- In Wellingborough: create more high-skilled employment using the new development areas, and improve the retail services in the town centre whilst maintaining and improving the unique features of the town and surrounding areas.

In the **second Local Area Agreement for Northamptonshire 2008-2011**, the delivery plan for the Sustainable Communities Strategy, a specific outcome target to increase participation in culture, sport and physical activity has been agreed under the Stronger Communities theme.

2.3.2 Northamptonshire Culture Strategy

The revised Culture Strategy for the County, **Creating Connections – A Strategy for Culture and Sport in Northamptonshire 2009-2012**, highlights the need for partners to "build on what we have (and) to work together to secure, sustain and grow the fragile infrastructure we have".

The Strategy has four key themes:

1. The development of the physical infrastructure – Culture and Sport, the spaces and places at the heart of communities
2. The development of capacity within the cultural sector – Culture and Sport fit and ready to go
3. The cultural offer for the residents of the county – Culture and Sport take your pick
4. The contribution of cultural sector to the profile of the county – Culture and Sport and Northamptonshire, a recipe for success

Work is already underway on themes 1-3. However, theme 4 is a new area for joint working and the 2012 Olympics is sees as a time limited opportunity for us to galvanise joint working and to promote the county through culture and sport.

2.3.3 The Arts Delivery Plan

The **Arts Delivery Plan** has been developed to be a practical and target focused document to reflect and galvanise key projects, programmes and partnerships across the

Image:

Lighthouse Theatre, Kettering



county. The vision is that the arts in Northamptonshire will:

- be ambitious, imaginative, challenging and stimulating
- play a dynamic part in the cultural life of the county
- help realise the cultural and educational aspirations of all the people of Northamptonshire, and celebrate diversity and different cultures
- support quality of life improvements for our most dis-advantaged communities and
- help raise the profile of our county.

The actions are grouped under four key themes:

1. The development of the **physical infrastructure** – culture and sport, the spaces and places at the heart of communities
2. The development of **capacity within the cultural sector** – culture and sport ready to go
3. The **cultural offer for the residents** of the county – culture and sport take your pick
4. The **contribution** of the cultural sector to the profile of the county – culture and sport a recipe for success

2.3.4 Other Parts of the County-wide Strategic Landscape

As part of the LAA 2 framework a **Community Cohesion Strategy** for the County has been published. Within the Strategy, 'cohesion' is seen as "…the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together". As the County is set to undergo significant population growth over the next 10 years, a strategy to ensure a "shared future that supports both existing and new communities" is seen as vital.

Renaissance, a DCMS funded programme, is aiming to transform England's regional museums, making them world class and fit for the 21st Century. It provides an example of the upturn in cultural support experienced in Northamptonshire over recent years. Led by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Renaissance East Midlands has helped the region's museums to benefit from a £8.3 million investment between 2003–2009.

The Northamptonshire Museums Development Officer is based in Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, hosted by Northamptonshire County Council, and is supported by officers in other counties and specialist Renaissance East Midlands staff; with work in learning, e-learning, digitisation, collections, sustainability, audience development, workforce development and accreditation.

Others strategies relating to culture in the County include:

- The Heritage Delivery Plan for the County: which links to the NCC Major Project for County Heritage & Promotion

- Libraries Going Forward: Strategy for County Libraries 2008 – 2018, which sets out the vision for "A leading and innovative service at the heart of local communities connecting everyone to knowledge, information and inspiration through community partnerships". Currently, the service just meets the target of a static service point for 85% of the population within 2 miles (at December 2007). Comparison with other counties indicates an under provision which is likely to become more acute with population growth. The Strategy focuses on the development of new models such as Discovery Centres with digital learning, creative community publishing and broadcasting at their heart. New mixed use centres shared with other health services or other council services is a priority. 16 of Northamptonshire's libraries already have partnerships with health services.

At a delivery level, the whole of Culture and Leisure Services across the county have completed he self assessment management tool **Towards an Excellent Service (TAES)**, to help plan for continuous improvement. Originated as a tool focusing on sports it has now been revised for County Council, District and Borough services. Northamptonshire is the first countywide pilot programme in the country to undertake TAES on culture.



Image:

Sinage

2.4 North Northamptonshire

North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire are the two sub sub-regions with Northamptonshire established as part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area, promoted by the Government through the Sustainable

Communities Plan[7]. The sub sub-region of North Northamptonshire, the biggest single growth area outside London, includes the Boroughs of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough and the district of East Northamptonshire.

The housing growth projections for North Northamptonshire set out plans for 52,100 new dwellings between 2001 and 2021[8]. 65% of the new homes are set to be incorporated within the growth towns – Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. The smaller towns of Burton Latimer, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Rothwell, Rushden, Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston will accommodate a large proportion of the remaining developments. The projected growth is expected to take the population of North Northamptonshire from an estimated 298,000 residents in 2006 to 370,000 in 2021[9]. A goal of 43,800 new jobs has been set for the area between 2001 and 2021[10]. The North Northants Development Company was set up in 2006, through a merger of of Catalyst Corby (Urban Regeneration Company) and the North Northants Together partnership, to drive, co-ordinate and manage the delivery of sustainable growth across the four Borough and districts within its boundaries.

District/ Borough	No. of dwellings required 2001-2021	Completions 2001-2009
Corby	16,800	2,870
East Northamptonshire	9,400	4,035
Kettering	13,100	4,539
Wellingborough	12,800	2,683
North Northamptonshire Total	52,100	14,127

7 ODPM (2003) Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future
8 Regional spatial Strategy (RSS8)
9 North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (June 2008)
10 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS8)

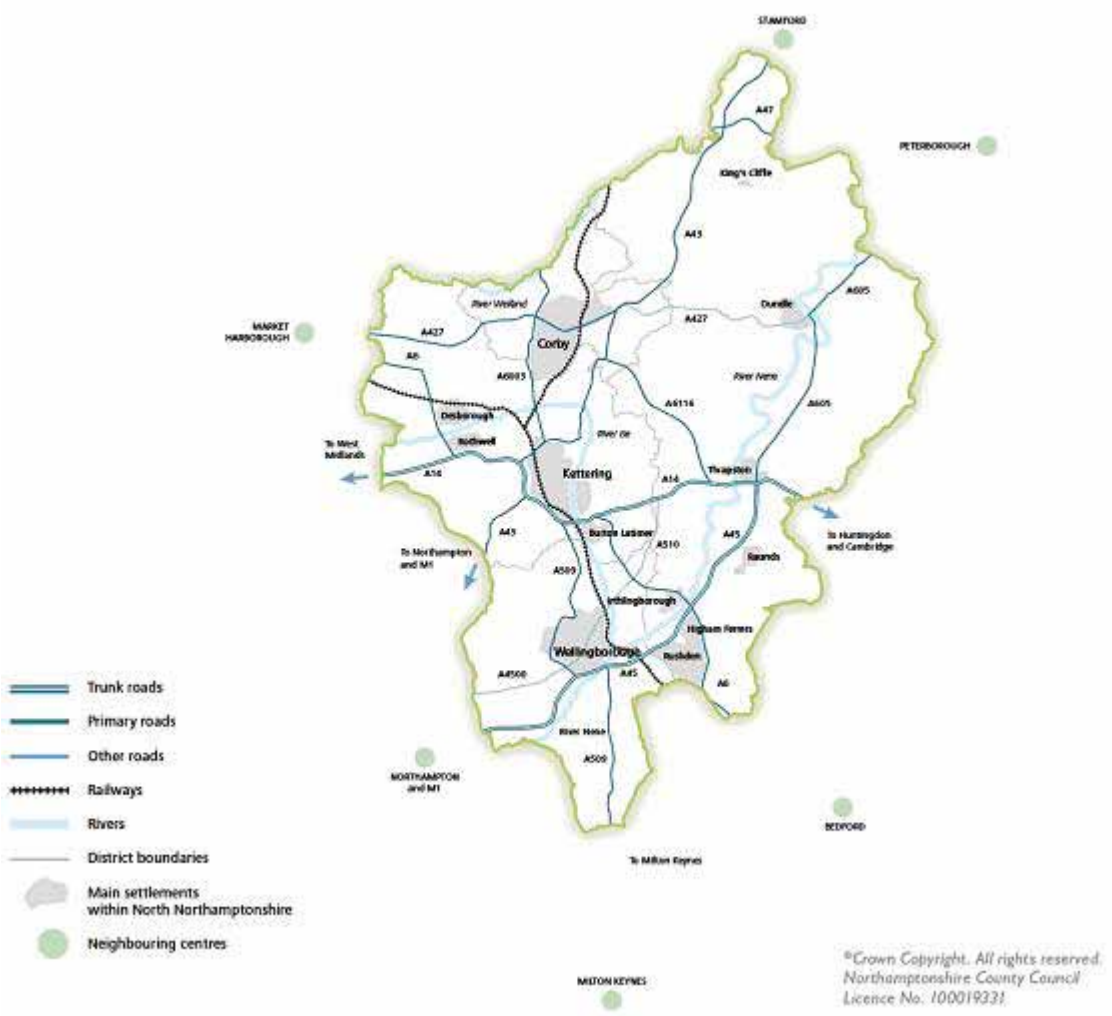
The North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS), adopted in June 2008, sets out the plan for delivering the housing and jobs growth along with the supporting infrastructure required to support the expanding communities. Considerable consultation has been carried out to ensure the CSS reflects the Community Strategies of the four boroughs and districts within North Northamptonshire.

The CSS outlines a vision for "North Northamptonshire in 2021 to be a better place: a showpiece for modern green living within a high quality environment and a prosperous economy". The aim is for the area to achieve greater self-sufficiency through the delivery of a network of strengthened communities around a North South Urban core (the growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough), smaller towns in the urban core (Burton Latimer, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Rothwell and Rushden) and rural service centres – Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston. King's Cliffe in East Northamptonshire, is identified as having a strategic role to play in the rural north east.

The current CSS, adopted in June 2008, shows commitment to the important role culture plays in place making and community shaping. The evidence from the North Northamptonshire Cultural Investment Plan reports provide additional evidence for a more explicit focus on culture in the revised CSS. This will show strengthened commitment and widening opportunities to secure resources for cultural infrastructure provision, both capital and revenue.

NNDC is working with CABE[11], on issues of design policy, standards and design management and supporting NNDC's role in the national pilot for Strategic Urban Design (StrUD) through a series of stakeholder workshops in autumn 2009 to derive and test quality design and development options.

11 The government's adviser on architecture, urban design and public space



Map of North Northamptonshire, 'North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy', June 2008

North Northamptonshire Cultural Infrastructure: Strategic Context

Regional: East Midlands

Regional Economic Strategy (2006-2020) acknowledges contribution of Creative Industries to the economy, cultural and heritage assets in particular, and the role the cultural sector plays in community participation and developing social capital.

However, there has been an **underinvestment in cultural infrastructure** in Northamptonshire in the past.

Growth agenda is raising the status of the County and highlighting the need for investment in its culture.

Sub Regional: Milton Keynes South Midlands

MKSM Regional Strategy identifies the creative industries as a growth sector, with dynamic employment that will be a key sector in the sub-region's economic prosperity.

County: Northants

Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Communities Strategy: Target to increase participation in culture, sport and physical activity

'Creating Connections' - strategy for culture and sport. Providing a framework for joint action and collaboration to achieve increased participation, new and better infrastructure, and a raised profile of the county.

Strategy for County Libraries 2009 – 2018 A vision for an innovative service at the heart of communities, connecting everyone to knowledge, information and inspiration through partnerships.

Culture Strategy for Young People ensuring cultural opportunities are available to all young people.

Sub Regional: North Northants

Joint Planning Unit co-ordinating the four districts.

Revised ***Core Spatial Strategy*** informed by work on Cultural and Sport Infrastructure Plans.

Investigating a ***Standard Charge for Culture.***

Green Infrastructure Study – a framework to ensure one of N Northants core assets, green and open space is maintained.

Working with CABE.

Districts: Corby, East Northants, Kettering, Wellingborough

Corby
- *Lives Places partner*
- *Community Strategy 'More in Corby'*
- *Culture 2010*
- *Corby Parkland and town centre development*

East Northants
- *New Sustainable Community Strategy*
- *Masterplan sfor Rushen , Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough*
- *Rural North and 2 town plan*

Kettering
- *Sustainable Community Strategy*
- *Kettering Town Centre Plan - Cultural Quarter*
- *Rothwell and Desborough Development Plan*
- *Public Art Strategy*

Wellingborough
- *Community Plan*
- *Town Centre Area Plan*
- *Arts Plan and Good Practice guide*
- *Public Realm Strategy*

2.5 Local Context

2.5.1 Corby strategic priorities

The **Corby Community Plan 2008-13** provides the visions to 'double the population of Corby by 2030, with a complementary increase in jobs, prosperity and the quality of local public services'.

In addition to the development and recent achievements in Corby - Corby Cube construction, the new Swimming Pool, facilities for young people alongside new transport links, major reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour the report outlines further improvement the residents would like to see:

- Further improvements to the new Town Centre; department stores and a wider variety of shops for clothing and specialist food.

- Better transport – the recently opened railway station and improvements to existing car parking facilities; a new multi-storey car park or park-and-ride scheme.

- Improvement and future development of entertainment for all ages such as a cinema, snowdome, nightlife and restaurants.

- Better permanent and skilled employment opportunities.

Living Places is a national consortium of cultural agencies and two government departments, Communities & Local Government and Culture, Media & Sport, formed to promote the role of culture in building sustainable communities. Living Places has three objectives:

1. To align investment from the sporting and cultural sector with sustainable communities funding across organisational boundaries so it works harder for people

2. To provide the people who are shaping communities with information, advice and support on the use of culture and sport to create better places

3. To empower communities to make cultural and sporting activity and infrastructure a part of their lives.

Living Places - Priority Places have been selected as test beds for developing new ways of working to inform the long term strategic direction of the Living Places programme. The Corby Priority Place Partnership has been formed to enhance the cultural offer to meet the needs of the new and rapidly expanding communities within the Borough.



Image:

Clock Tower, Corby

Priorities for the 'first stage offer' 2008-09 (the first year as a Priority Place) included:

1. Commissioning research on cultural participation in Corby (see below)

2. Co-ordinating an integrated forward plan of capital projects with associated capital and revenue costs

3. Reviewing and updating the Cultural Strategy.

In early 2009, Corby Borough Council published **Visioning Ideas for Cultural Regeneration in Corby**, setting out ambitions and aspirations for the Borough. Developed through close consultation with local people and national creative expertise the headline recommendations include:

- Corby: the 'Big Picture', with a commitment to a holistic vision and publicly-led master-plan within which individual creative approaches can thrive.

- 'Quest for Quality': in all aspects of the designed environment in both public and private sector schemes.

- 'Mind the Gap': celebrating and supporting Corby's existing cultural strengths, and filling gaps in cultural provision and expertise.

- 'Identities, Connections, Neighbourhoods': celebrating Corby's distinctive communities.

- Past and future heritage: drawing on the various heritages represented in Corby and celebrating them in a contemporary way.

A series of 24 key projects was recommended for implementation. Many such as distinctive gateways and entry points to the town, are under way. Other more ambitious proposals, such as for a contemporary art gallery and for a unique new 'cultural offer', await the right combination of funding opportunities.

Corby Priority Place – Living Places: Audiences and Participation Research (Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy/SAM, 2009) identified that the main barriers to greater participation in cultural activity in Corby as being:

- financial constraints

- lack of appropriate quality product

- poor health and/or disability

- limited public transport, especially in the evenings, and

- lack of information about what is available.

Five principles for effective interventions in infrastructure provision, programming and audience development were proposed:

- a 'self-build' approach, with local people as active stakeholders

- beginning in the learning and skills sector, with a focus on opportunities to influence children and young people through education, learning and skills, with increased participation as a major outcome of a 'transformed learning and skills landscape'

- extension into new and more challenging cultural experiences from the starting point of the recognisable and familiar

- cultural infrastructures that are open, interdisciplinary, cross-artform and enabling, rather than being fixed in traditional patterns of delivery

- cultural production to be integrated with consumption, with opportunities for everyone to be creators as well as consumers, and positioning Corby as a place of creative opportunity and integrity.

Consultation is currently underway on draft the revised Cultural Strategy and Action Plan for Corby (2009-2014). Other relevant strategies include the **Green Infrastructure Study 2005** and **Corby Play Strategy 2007-2012**.

2.5.2 East Northamptonshire strategic priorities

A revised **East Northamptonshire Communities Strategy (2008-2015)** went out to consultation in late 2008[12]. The vision for the strategy is "to make East Northamptonshire a network of thriving communities where people enjoy a high quality of life". The previous **Community Strategy (2005-2010)** whilst outlining key priorities for the development of a vibrant, engaged and environmentally sustainable community, was felt by Enable, the LSP for East Northamptonshire, to have a number of core weaknesses that the new strategy will seek to address. The key challenges were that the previous strategy depicted East Northamptonshire as a single community, which limited recognition of the diverse needs of the many communities that make up the district. It was also felt that it lacked a framework within which partners could work together to add value and make tangible improvements[13].

There are plans to update both the E**ast Northamptonshire's Cultural Strategy 2006 – 2009** and **East Northamptonshire's Arts Strategy 2004.**

The Three Towns Plan (Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough) 2006 sets out the key development principles for each town. Rushden is already the principal urban centre within East Northamptonshire, with a greater proportion of housing, retail, community, business and other facilities. Rushden principally serves the southern portion of the District, as smaller rural settlements in the north typically look to Oundle and Thrapston (Rural Service Centres), King's Cliffe (Local Service Centre) and neighbouring Districts to meet wider needs.

The recently prepared **Masterplan for Rushden and Higham Ferrers town centre regeneration to 2020** is based on Rushden's potential to become a thriving hub through carefully managed regeneration of town centre



Image:

Rushden Museum

12 It unclear as to when the revised strategy will be published
13 Paper to Policy and Resources Committee - 15 September 2008

sites and for the town of Higham Ferrers to develop in partnership with Rushden.

Overall development in **Irthlingborough** will seek to provide a significant number of residential units along with complementary services and facilities as well as essential infrastructure. Regeneration in the town is identified as a priority.

Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan 2008 focuses on a dispersed settlement pattern encompassing 2 towns and 50 villages, the urban areas forming a comparatively small amount of the Plan area. Key priorities in the Plan are to capitalise on green infrastructure and tourism assets whilst also protecting high levels of biodiversity and a distinctive historic environment.

2.5.3 Kettering strategic priorities

The vision of the **Kettering Borough Council Community Strategy (2008-11)** is for the Borough to be "The best place in England to grow". The Strategy sets out the priorities for a "successful borough where people and communities want to do well, where they take up new ideas and trends, but also celebrate history, heritage and local identity".

Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008) sets out the plans for a revitalised town centre that will form the heart of the borough and become a focal point for North Northamptonshire. The redevelopment if the town centre includes a series of interlinked 'quarters' – including a restaurant quarter, cultural quarter and high street and independent retail quarter - providing cultural assets for a daytime and evening economy. The high quality public realm aims to encourage greater pedestrian access. These are connected through an overarching concept – **Suite 16** – with a strategic agenda to link together a set of projects to build density, connectivity and quality across a transformed town centre. This is all to develop a fit for purpose town centre that delivers the requirements of The Core Spatial Strategy, which sets out the task for Kettering to develop 7500 net additional dwellings, a minimum of 20,500sqm net increase in comparison floorspace, and the delivery of up to 2,500 jobs.

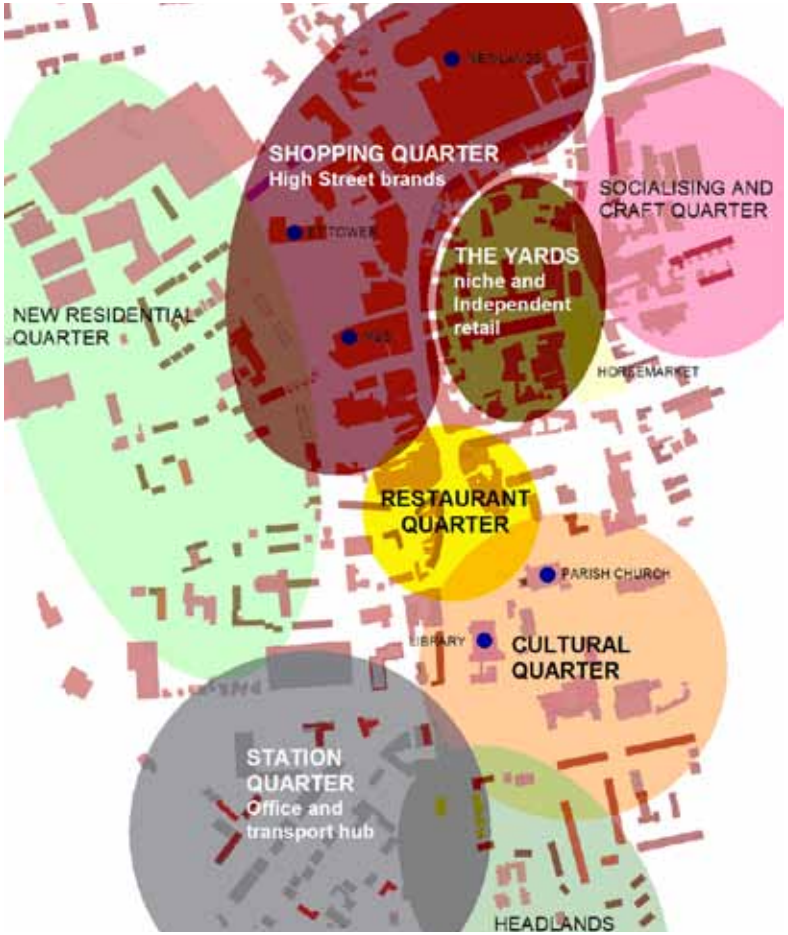
Recent successes cited in the Area Action Plan include the completion of the new Tresham campus, two new academy schools proposed, the £1million Chesham House Design & Technology centre, which opened 2009, and significant improvements to the public realm (such as a transformed market square). Aspirations for further development and positive change include a university campus for Kettering, higher uptake of new business premises and support services, and a new employment quarter adjacent to the railway station.

Key principles include:

- Any redevelopment should be characterful to reflect the locality.
- The quality of design and material quality must be high.

The development of quarters will provide distinctive functions for different parts of town and mesh together to form an integrated and coherent whole to:

- Retain Kettering's distinctiveness as a place to visit and shop
- Provide a characterful experience that offers more than just high street brands.



Rothwell and Desborough will also see considerable development over the coming years with plans set out in the two in **Urban Extension Area Action Plan**. A new leisure centre is planned for Desborough as part of the Grange development. Improved leisure and community facilities have also been identified as being needed in Rothwell.

A Public Art Policy for the Borough has been developed in line with the Council's corporate priorities about Sustainable Place Making. Recommendations have been made that the importance of public art to local people should be included in the development of Area Action Plans. It has also been suggested that the policies could be developed as a supplementary planning document as part of Kettering Borough's Local Development Framework.

Image:

Development Priorities by Zone in Kettering

2.5.4 Wellingborough strategic priorities

Wellingborough Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy (2008 - 2011) outlines a vision for the Borough as "a place where all have high aspirations, are encouraged to achieve them.. (and) lead in quality businesses and the environment[14]." Key outcomes in the strategy include increasing participation in cultural activity. The Local Strategic Partnership also acknowledges the central role of culture in planning for sustainable communities and delivery on a range of outcomes.

The council has demonstrated its commitment to the arts with the publication of the **Wellingborough Arts Plan (2007-2012)**. The aims of the Plan are to:

- identify and maximise the benefits from opportunities for public art in a strategic and comprehensive manner,

- make the best use of the SPD and facilitate the development of exciting and innovative public art in the Borough

- work in partnership with public and private investors to achieve the above.

The Arts Plan creates a vision for Wellingborough as a place where an exciting and innovative range of arts activities are provided for and attended by residents and visitors and where artists and arts organisations are valued for their talent, energy and achievements. The Plan has four key Objectives:

1. **Creative Economy:** providing and supporting Facilities, Networking, Promotion & Marketing and Profes-

14 Sustainable Community Strategy2008-2011

sional Development

2. **Participation:** covering Community Cohesion, Children & Young People, Lifelong enjoyment

3. **Infrastructure:** Advice & Support, Grant Applications

4. **Built Environment:** Public Art

Overarching all the objectives are the principles of partnership, equality & diversity. Key partners in the delivery of the Plan are identified as being The Castle, the Victoria Centre, Wellingborough Black Arts Consortium and the Libraries. Underpinning their commitment to and importance of good public art and quality public realm, Wellingborough has published **'Public Art: A Guide to Good Practice'** as part of the suite of SPDs. The document provides guidance and examples of good practice for the development and commissioning of public art in relation to developments in the Borough. It is aimed at developers, architects/architectural technicians and businesses of the Borough to help with identifying key points to consider to achieve a successful public art project.

In August 2009 Wellingborough published a Public Realm Strategy. The Strategy has five key priorities for public realm in the Borough:

1. **A Place for People** (an inclusive, accessible and safe environment that creates opportunities for meeting and greeting, recreation and play)

Images:

William Knibb Centre, Kettering



2. **Celebrating heritage preservation and use existing heritage assets** as the basis for visual townscape improvements

3. **A Focus on walkability and sustainable transport** (improvements to the pedestrian environment, legibility, more efficient public transport and a more comprehensive cycle network. Introduction of an 'arboretum trail' and improvements to the 'heritage trail')

4. **Encouraging the best quality, sustainable public spaces** (principles for the improvement of existing open space and guidance for the creation of enhanced or new landscaped open spaces)

5. **Promoting green links and ecology** (new green links with tree planting, new ecological habitat, SUDS and an educational arboretum trail).

The Wellingborough Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008) sets out a vision for a thriving town centre that is not only about shopping but focuses on the overall leisure experience, on cultural, community and educational facilities for both residents and visitors.



Image:

The Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

3.0 cultural infrastructure

a district by district overview

"Corby is in an exciting period of regeneration and growth. We want to create a borough that is vibrant and exciting for people of all ages and to do that we are putting a huge emphasis on culture and sport. From iconic buildings like the Corby Cube, theatre, library and artspace and the stunning International Swimming Pool to mundane roundabouts and highway verges we want to incorporate top quality design and creativity…we are investing heavily in the creative and performing arts, building on the rich vein of talent and creativity that has always existed in Corby". (Chris Mallender, Chief Executive, Corby Borough Council; and Councilor Pat Fawcett, Leader of Corby Borough Council – Visioning Ideas for Cultural Regeneration in Corby, 2009).

This section presents the current cultural infrastructure offer of North Northamptonshire district by district. This is intended as an overview of the range of cultural infrastructure in each of the districts that make up the sub region. The mapping includes not just vital physical cultural assets, such as arts venues and community facilities, but the broader cultural and creative programmes, organisations and interventions that bind together and provide literal routes between the physical assets and make a place attractive to people who live, work and visit.

Using the **two sets of typologies** outlined in **Section 1** of the report, we present the infrastructure in matrices that links the cultural ecology and wider creative economy, creative workspace and support services, the open spaces and public realm. The matrices set the cultural assets within a strategic context framework and highlight initiatives that can be built upon to ensure cultural infrastructure meets a range of strategic agendas and the needs of an expanding population. It is through this overview summary of the cultural infrastructure in each district that the gaps in provision and potential opportunities for development begin to be evidenced.

3.1 Corby

3.1.1 Corby District Profile

Corby is a former New Town striving to reinvent itself as a vibrant, diverse town. Corby district covers 8,003 hectares, the smallest local authority area in Northamptonshire. Corby town lies at the heart of the Borough which sees built up areas extending north eastern to the edges of Borough boundary and housing development at Oakley Vale forming a southern extension to the town. Only 25% of Corby is urban - large areas of countryside surround the main town and villages. The rural settlements within the Borough of Corby include Cottingham, East Carlton, Great Oakley, Gretton, Middleton, Rockingham, Stanion and Weldon.

The Office of National Statistics mid-year estimate for 2007 identifies a population of 55,200, an increase on the 2006 estimate and 3.8% increase since 2001 Census. The population is growing, driven by migration from the neighbouring areas, London, the Home Counties and Eastern Europe and there is some concern in the Council that the ONS estimates are too low and do not take full account of recent growth. Corby is home to a relatively small but growing population from black and ethnic minority communities – 5.8% in 2001 and 8.1% in 2007[15]. However, 23% of Corby's population were born in Wales, Scotland, Northern

15 2001 Census figure for non-white British residents – 2007 ONS estimates for non-white British residents

Ireland or Ireland.

According to ONS age estimates[16] Corby has a younger than average population with 20.5% 0-15 years old – 20.5%. This compares to 18.6% for the East Midlands region and 18.9% for the county. The proportion of under 15's in Corby did drop by nearly 2% between 2001 and 2007. The large young population is counterbalanced by a smaller than average retirement age population (female over 60's and male over 65's) - just 17.6% compared to 19.4% in the East Midlands and 18.9% across Northamptonshire. There has been a slight increase here of just over 1% since 2001.
Of the people in Corby who are of working age (i.e. those aged 16 to 64 for men or 16 to 59 for women) the employment rate was 79.7% during 2006/2007 compared with an average for the East Midlands of 80.5%.

The provision of a suitably qualified workforce will be essential to ensure the continued growth of the local economy. In 2006, the percentage of people in Corby aged 16 years or older with no qualifications had risen by 3.8% since 2001 and stood at 18.8%. This is 4.9% higher than the East Midlands average. Nationally 27.4% of people aged 16 or above have an NVQ4 equivalent or above, 9.6% higher than Corby at 17.8%. It is important however to note that this figure has improved considerably from 8.7% in 2004.

Combining the projected natural population growth (i.e. births, deaths and migration) with the housing targets anticipated population growth by age group and district over the next 20 years shows Corby experiencing a growth in its working age population, 20-64 year olds[17].

Growth Predictions

Corby has a target figure of 16,800 new homes for the period 2001-2021. The RSS8 presents ambitious targets for the growth of Corby including 13,580[18] new jobs to 2021 and a further 8,000 new jobs between 2022 and 2031[19].

Type of area	Settlement	No. of dwellings required 2001-2021	No. completed 2001-2006
Growth town	Corby	15510	
Rural Areas	Corby rural	1290	
		16,800	1,491

Image:

Corby

The bulk of the housing development is focused on the expansion of the town. Considerable redevelopment of the town centre itself, has already been completed providing an improved retail offer, with the adjacent Parkland Gateway Cultural Quarter including the International Swimming pool and new library and theatre complex – the Cube, well underway. Corby station reopened in February 2009 after 43 years of closure, giving the town a direct link into London.

The aim of urban planning policies in relation to the villages has been to restrict development in the villages so that their character and size can be maintained.

16 www.statistics.gov.uk
17 BOP (2008), North Northamptonshire Cultural Infrastructure Study for NNDP
18 Core Spatial Strategy
19 Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08

3.1.2 Corby Cultural Development Matrix

Typologies	Viewing - performance/exhibition/ showcase space	Participating – facilities and activities for people to engage in supporting community cohesion, quality of life and well being and NI 11	Learning - formal and informal skills development, raising aspirations and opening up opportunities for residents in the CI sector and beyond	Developing the cultural, creative and wider economy – workspace, business support, networks	Partnerships and co-location – examples of and opportunities for co-location with other services	Place making, growth and regeneration –
Heritage: historic houses and gardens, heritage sites and museums	213 listed building – 7 grade I, 10 Grade II*, 196 Grade II. 6 scheduled ancient monuments. Rockingham Castle and English Heritage Kirby Hall and East Carlton Hall and surrounding country park a key priority for the Borough's heritage focus.	Corby Heritage Centre – community led now secured funding. History of 'draglines' and quarries	Heritage Development worker linking with schools and community groups. Rockingham Castle provide schools education packs for visits. Happenin' Heritage a 3 year arts-based project looking at Corby's heritage. The project was open to anyone aged 9 – 19 living within the Borough. Experience could be built upon.	Rockingham Castle – for corporate events	History of steelworks; 'Pluto' was created in Corby	Hub/Cube by Hawkins Brown; Pen Green Early Excellence Centre by Greenhill Jenner Architects New Academy by Foster & Partners
Arts venues: galleries, theatres, live music venues and cinemas	Willows Arts Centre (closing). New Corby cube – 400 seat theatre.	Over 100 volunteers support the running of Willows – challenge to engage the volunteers in the new Corby Cube.				
Other creative space: creative workspace and commercial exhibition spaces						Corby Cube by Hawkins Brown; Pen Green Early Excellence Centre by Greenhill Jenner Architects; new Academy by Foster & Partners
Community facilities: libraries, schools and leisure centres	Arc Theatre, opened in 2004, is one of the country's only purpose-built community theatre based in a primary school (Rockingham Promary School).		Beanfield artists are currently three professional artists based at Beanfield Primary School in Corby who work with community in multiple ways.		The new Corby Central Library being co-located with a new theatre within the Corby Cube.	

Community assets: other community spaces used for cultural activity, village halls, community centres, pubs and cafes	Pubs and social clubs provide the traditional venues for music and cultural and community gatherings. Reducing audiences, a challenge to engage younger and incoming communities, and refurbished new village halls and community centres as part of the housing growth are increasing the community assets.	Corby's Community Centres including Corby village, Daneshome, Arran and Ennerdale Community Centres and the Autumn Centre all host of a range of arts, cultural and social activities throughout the week for different sections of their local community. Six village halls serve the rural Corby community providing local centres for meetings and social activity. Community facilities will be vital assets in allowing new and existing residents to celebrate their identity through a range of cultural interventions.	A number of organisations provide opportunities for young people to take and learn through arts and cultural activity - Corby Community Arts; Adrenalin Alley & its youth culture/ art programme, Big about Music.			
Parks, open spaces, public realm: urban, sub urban and rural open spaces, both designated parks and public open spaces such as town squares and waterways	2 local nature reserves, incl. Great Oakley and Kings Wood the first nature reserve in the county, covering 29 hectares. 45 county wildlife sites covering 707 hectares and 3 SSIs over 92 hectares (incl. Geddington Chase and Weldon Park). Less than half the SSI area was in favourable or recovering condition according to English Nature in 2006. Just 2 Grade II* parks.	Top Lodge, at Fineshade Woods, is an innovative project delivered by the Forestry Commission designed to celebrate the cultural heritage of Rockingham Forest and deliver a high quality, sustainable green infrastructure asset for the people of Corby, North Northamptonshire and further afield. Covering 208 square miles the project has four overlapping dimensions - Environmental Education and Lifelong Learning; Rural Crafts and Rural Products; Access to the countryside and healthy living; Conservation and enhancement of archaeological and ecological assets in Rockingham Forest	Forest School Project at Fineshade Woods has engaged pupils from 21 out of 23 schools in Corby in activities and games inspiring learning and development.			
Festivals and events: festivals, events, fairs	Watch this space – Guy Falkes Night display at Lyvden New Bield; annual fireworks display at Corby Boating Lane attracting 1000's of visitors.	Corby Football Club, Pole Fair, Old Village, Literature Festival. Corby Highland Gathering				

3.1.3 Overview of Culture in Corby – Challenges and Opportunities

A recent study of cultural activity in the Northamptonshire[20] identified Corby as having just **5% of arts, heritage and creative organisations in the County** - perhaps not surprising for the smallest district in terms of population. However, the research did find that Corby had a higher per capita number of organisations than built up areas such as Northampton.

Our mapping identified Corby as having 7.3% of the County's cultural organisations and venues, a marginally higher proportion than Daventry with only 6.7%. This may in part be due to more intensive work done by TFCC in Corby during the audience and participation research[21].

The cultural infrastructure is very much community focused – a network of volunteer managed community centres, many with limited opening hours and in need of refurbishment and resources for programming; village halls providing much needed community spaces in more rural areas; and a community and amateur arts sector that has developed to serve communities with an absence of professional cultural provision.

20 NCC, 2009, The Facts.

21 Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy carried out a study into audience and participation in cultural activity in early 2009.

Image:

Aran Community Centre, Corby



The **heritage** of the borough is also an important asset. The built heritage includes - Corby Old village, Rockingham Castle, English Heritage Kirby Hall and one of the boroughs main heritage focuses – East Carlton Park and Hall. The heritage development officer provides crucial support linking communities with the heritage of the borough and the county heritage resources and expertise.

While the number of arts and cultural organisations in the borough is small and the built cultural infrastructure limited, the strong push by the council to position Corby to forefront as a place for culture is making headway in addressing some of the challenges. The new Corby Cube – a combined space for a new central library and theatre, the improved public realm and retail offer and the developments at East Carlton Park and new community spaces planned as part of the expanding town are contributing to a place with culture at the centre of change. There are also opportunities to maximise the use of existing spaces such as the Arc theatre at Rockingham Primary School.

However, there are number of **barriers and challenges** that need to overcome before the cultural infrastructure of the borough is fit for purpose for the needs of the existing population, much less the new and emerging communities that they housing growth will bring. The recently completed Corby Priority Places Audience and Participation Research found that:

- 40% of residents are not satisfied with the current cultural facilities and activities in Corby Borough; only 38% are satisfied.
- Residents want to see future borough cultural infrastructure and initiatives capable of attracting professional performance companies while sustaining and developing local community arts participation.
- Cinema is the 'cultural' facility that residents want to see, followed by Theatre, Live Contemporary Music, Visual Art shows and classes and Heritage related displays and exhibitions.
- Of note was a call for more opportunities for younger people and families as a discrete market segment and a willingness to embrace the diversity that the region has to offer.

It will be vital that the programming for the new Cube provides the range of activities that the residents are looking for whilst raising aspirations and challenging perceptions of what the cultural offer should be. Particular attention will need to be paid to the barriers and challenges that prevent participation in cultural activity identified in the study - financial constraints, lack of cultural products, poor health and or disability, lack of transport. The new cultural infrastructure must work with the existing and familiar infrastructure to share and jointly programme activities that should also be taken out into open and public spaces.



Image:

Corby residents

Image:

Corby Star

A number of additional key cultural infrastructure challenges exist for the Borough:

– **An under-resourced volunteer and community led offer:** For a town of over 50,000 people, the current cultural infrastructure offer is relatively underdeveloped with most activity operating at a community level in multi-use buildings such as community centres and social clubs. The cultural offer is weakly resourced and volunteer-led, with many of the building not fit-for-pupose.

– **Traditional and declining offer:** Many of the existing cultural resources are linked to the cultural and industrial heritage – such as the football supporters' clubs and various labour and working men's clubs. Numbers for many of these activities are reported as falling and new demand is more difficult to generate among a younger members of the community, but particularly among new incoming communities.

– **A poor cultural profile:** The limited cultural offer has resulted in residents leaving Corby to 'consume' culture elsewhere, whether it is cinema in Kettering, West End Theatre in London, or popular music in Leicester and Nottingham. As a result Corby has become disassociated with cultural supply, which depresses demand for culture in Corby and reduces demand for culture overall. The lack of 'cultural profile' also presents a real challenge in 'opening up' a new cultural offer to a public that extends beyond the town.

– **A lack of cultural confidence:** The historical lack of built culture venues, theatres and galleries, has impacts on the confidence and perceived integrity of the non-formal and voluntary arts sector. A rich and sustainable arts and cultural sector depends on an interdependence between physical infrastructure (i.e. cultural buildings that one walks into) and networks of activities and programmes which are so vital for energy, vibrancy and distinctiveness (as well as providing the ballast for physical infrastructure through the development role they perform). New physical infrastructure will need to simultaneously lift the confidence, capacity and profile of the surrounding 'cultural ecology'. It also needs to develop content outside of its physical footprints – such as in public spaces and existing 'comfort zones' such as community centres.

– **Cultural disconnections:** The town is relatively polarised by sub-cultural groupings; this is in part spatially expressed, with postcode and estate rivalry common. It is also expressed through the contestation of ownership for the town's cultural and leisure resources, as well as key public spaces such as parks and the town centre. A challenge in Corby will be to establish cultural and social spaces/programmes for which there is common ownership while also enabling cultural differences to be explored and performed.



Opportunities and priorities for cultural infrastructure development

Corby's strong approach to high quality design and architecture is setting a bench mark across the region and there is opportunity here to share best practice. It is also a place where a commitment to culture is expressed by firm leadership and strong partnership – from the local authority across the Borough. A number of major infrastructure development programmes are underway that will considerably enhance the Corby and wider North Northants and in some cases the county cultural offer. However, these will need further resourcing to complete the capital build and revenue funding to manage and fully utilise the assets. Current infrastructure – existing, forthcoming or aspirational – include:

- The Corby Cube - the Civic Hub, Library and Arts Centre: Revenue funding is required for effective programme management
- The woodland management as part of Corby Park-

Image:

Installation, Corby



land Gateway surrounding the Cube and the new International Pool

– Development of Adrenaline Alley – both the skate facilities, said to be the best in the UK, and the music rehearsal and performance facilities

– £4.7 million development at East Carlton Park.

– Corby Heritage Centre – part funding secured from HLF

– Corby MY PLACE – world class youth facility – lottery funding is being pursued

– Deene Park community Media Centre and its proposed links with Fermyn Woods and Threshold Studios, plus regional link with Leicester Digital Media Centre, Nottingham Broadway and Derby QUAD

– Other community facility developments including Oakley village hall[22].

Other key infrastructure not yet in development:

- Big About Music – youth facility, potentially as part of the above Cory My Place development

- Kirby hall improved visitor facilities

- Redevelopment of Kingswood School with opportunities for community use facilities also a number of primary school and community centre developments.

- Green infrastructure – opening up woodland, working with Ground Work with links to arts activities.

- Housing developments at Priors Hall, Stannion, Oakley Vale with community facilities and public realm developments.

- In Daneholme a replacement library and communicare centre could form part of the regeneration plans.

- Proposals for Corby Enterprise Centre.

22 Extracts from Corby myplace bid

3.2 East Northamptonshire

3.2.1 East Northamptonshire District Profile

East Northamptonshire covers a largely rural area of 50,979 hectares. Extending some 27 miles from north to south, the district has six principle towns - Oundle, Thrapston, Raunds, Higham Ferrers, Rushden and Irthlingborough and 56 villages. At the time of the 2001 Census, 76% of East Northamptonshire's population lived in the six towns with the rest scattered throughout the 56 villages[23].

Each town varies considerably in size and character. For example the larger towns, Rushden, Raunds, Irthlingborough and Higham Ferrers cluster in the south where the majority of industry is based. Rushden, however has a population of 28,000 nearly four times the size of the next largest settlement. The rest of the district is predominantly rural, with the smaller market towns of Thrapston and Oundle serving as service hubs[24].

The most important topographical features of the area, and a major draw for visitors as well as asset for local communities, are the River Nene and its valley which flows in a north-easterly direction for about 23 miles and the River Welland and its valley abutting the boundary to the north – west.

The population of East Northamptonshire has increased by approximately 9,400 between 2001 and 2008, the largest population increase in the County[25], bringing the total estimated population of the district is 86,200[26]. The population is also ageing with the numbers of people over 60 increasing and 10-19 year olds and 40-49 year olds decreasing. Comparatively, there are small numbers of people in their 20s and a large proportion of local residents 50 and over[27].

23 2001 Census and ONS Mid Year Estimates 2006.
24 Northamptonshire's Cultural Strategy 2006 – 2009.
25 East Northamptonshire 2008 Annual Monitoring Report.
26 ONS mid year estimates June 2008
27 East Northamptonshire 2008 Annual Monitoring Report

With life expectancy rising the number of pensioners in the district will rapidly increase over the next 10-15 years. This pattern is most apparent in the villages and smaller towns. Rushden and Irthlingborough and Oundle have a slightly younger population than the rest of the district largely due to the school population[28].

The district ethnic minority population is small, less than 5%. However it is increasing with an estimated rise between 2001 to mid 2007 in Asian/Asian British population of 1.2%, Black/Black British by 0.7%, and Chinese/Other by 0.4%[29]. Net migration for the district has fallen from 1,596 in 2001, to 1,180 in 2007[30].



28 Northamptonshire's Cultural Strategy 2006 – 2009
29 2001 Census and ONS Mid Year Estimates 2007
30 East Northamptonshire 2008 Annual Monitoring Report

Growth predictions

The number of new dwellings scheduled across the towns, villages and rural areas of East Northamptonshire are set out below. Just under a third of the development has already been completed in particular in the districts towns where a large proportion of overall growth will be focused.

Type of area	Settlement	No. of dwellings required 2001-2021	No. completed 2001-2006
Smaller towns	Rushden	5090	1008
	Higham Ferrers		466
	Irthlingborough		469
Rural service centres	Raunds	1100	110
	Thrapston	1140	353
	Oundle	610	137
Rural areas	East Northants rural	1460	282
East Northamptonshire total		9,400	2,825

Image:

Higham Ferrers, Historic Trail

3.2.2 East Northamptonshire Cultural Development Matrix

Typologies	Viewing - performance/exhibition/ showcase space	Participating – facilities and activities for people to engage in supporting community cohesion, quality of life and well being and NI 11	Learning - formal and informal skills development, raising aspirations and opening up opportunities for residents in the CI sector and beyond	Developing the cultural, creative and wider economy – workspace, business support, networks	Partnerships and co-location – examples of and opportunities for co-location with other services	Place making, growth and regeneration –
Heritage: historic houses and gardens, heritage sites and museums	Oundle now an accredited museum is a model of good practice for a local museum. Rushden museum preserving and showcasing Rushden's history. Highest number of Grade 1 listed buildings in the county – 56. Additional 1331 Grade II and Grade II* buildings. Largest number of scheduled monuments in the county 59	Renaissance working with museums to attract younger volunteers. Rushden museum have secured a building with support of a core team of volunteers. Seeking additional funding to put on exhibitions. Thrapston are also looking to develop a small museum	Oundle museum developing links with schools but capacity and resources are an issue for the volunteer run facility. New education zone at Stanwick Lakes Visitor Centre with educational and learning tools looking at heritage and history of gravel pits.		History of 'draglines' and quarries	
Arts venues: galleries, theatres, live music venues and cinemas	Main art gallery Fermynwoods to close. Dolby Gallery, which hosts a variety of exhibitions every year.	Chichele College, Higham Ferrers managed by CCP. A diverse range of art exhibitions and workshops are held throughout the year with original and unusual pieces for sale.				River Nene Regional Park – Green Infrastructure, such as Stanwick Lakes.
Other creative space: creative workspace and commercial exhibition spaces	Northamptonshire Open Studios- largest visual arts event in the county takes place in September.	Jericho Pottery, Oundle and Woodnewton pottery – see pots being made and opportunity for people to make and decorate their own pieces	The Old Brewery Studios (king's Cliffe) specialises in wildlife, plants, landscapes and portraits. It is also a gallery shop offering a variety of art courses.			

Community facilities: libraries, schools and leisure centres	Artists in Rushden Library –photographer using local history section to create work on local author H E Bates and textile artist producing work on local nature. Pemberton Leisure Centre, Rushden have film nights.	Libraries used for used for events and meetings such as the Rushden Classical Music Society and Friday Book Chats at Raunds Library	Learn African drumming at the Great Hall Oundle School	AMEF - NewMusicNite gigs showcasing local young bands at The Pemberton Centre.	AMEF is working with Big About Music (BAM) on Possibilities, a project for young people aged 11-18 interested in all aspects of the music industry. Possibilities takes place on Monday evenings from 5pm-7pm at The Pemberton Centre in Rushden.	
Community assets: other community spaces used for cultural activity, village halls, community centres, pubs and cafes	Oundle international Festival – Music in Quiet Places – taking classical music out to communities in local churches	Meetings of a wide variety of cultural groups at village halls such as: Writers group at Wadenhoe Village Hall; Nene Valley writers group, Rushden Mission Church; ladies choral society, James Sunday School halls; lace-making groups, walking groups and many more using village halls and churches	Learning as well as participation - Monday Music (each week of school term) – pre-schools music classes at Chelveston Village Hall – Oundle and District Choral Society; singing, drama and dance classes at St Peter's Catholic Church Hall, Rushden.	Rushden Audio Visual Enthusiasts. (RAVE) - people interested in making digital audio visual sequences using photography, scanning and computer graphics together with various sound techniques. Sequences are used to entertain local community groups		
Parks, open spaces, public realm: urban, sub urban and rural open spaces, both designated parks and public open spaces such as town squares and waterways	2 nature reserves covering 105 hectares the largest is N Northants. 67% of N Northants wild life sites (5,461 hectares -209 sites). 29 SSIs covering 1,079 hectares with 84% in favourable or recovering condition	Stanwick Lakes, 500 acres of former gravel pits in the Nene Valley, owned by East Northamptonshire District Council and managed by the Rockingham Forest Trust, combines active outdoor pursuits - walking, cycling and water sports - with interpretations of the archaeological heritage and the internationally significant wildlife.			River Nene Regional Park – Barnwell Country Park and Stanwick Lakes	
Festivals and events: festivals, events, fairs	Oundle International Festival and Oundle Literary Festival	Arts Meets Environment Festival – annual arts and music – Strictly Culture at the Pemberton Centre			Greenway a network of routes for cycling and walking linking Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Raunds and eventually on to Wellingborough station	

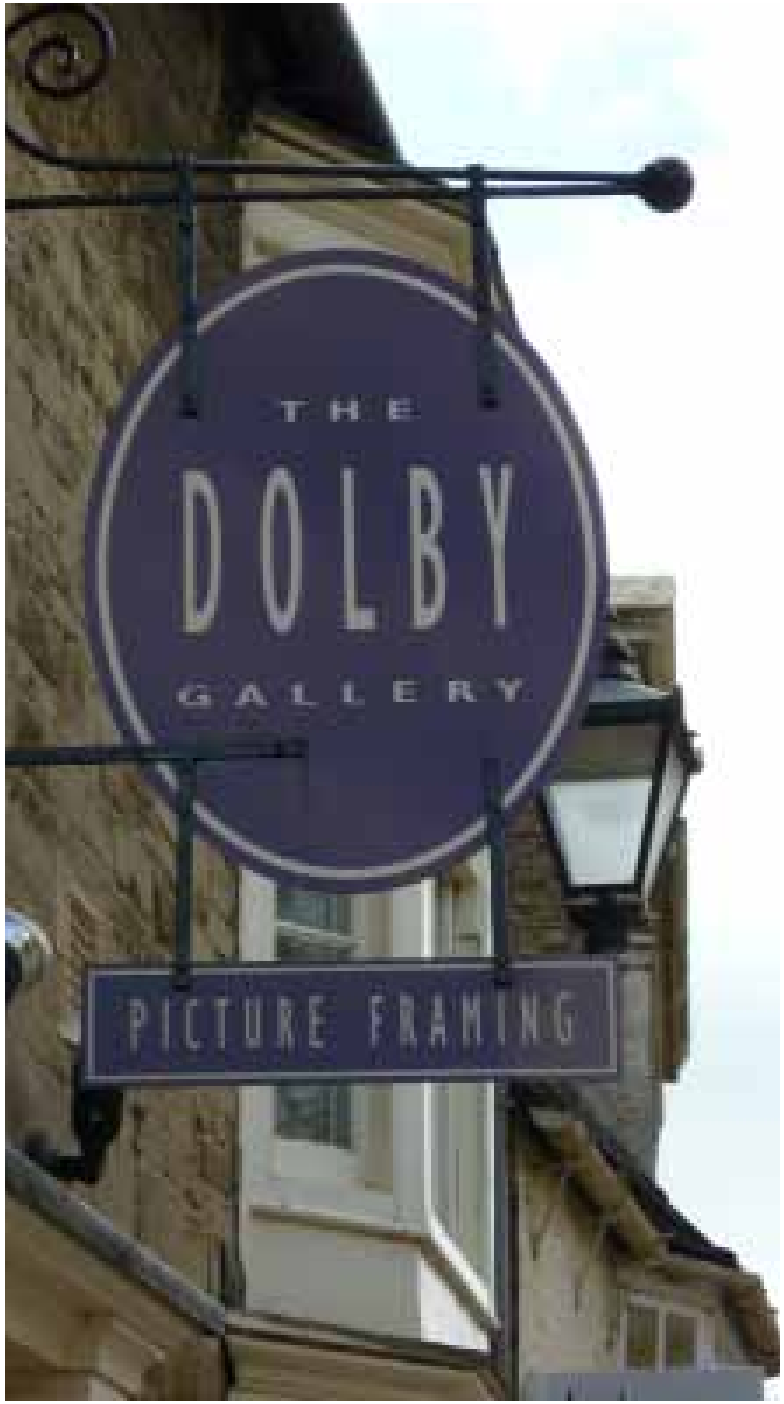
Image:

The Dolby Gallery, Oundle

3.3.3 Overview of Culture in East Northamptonshire– Challenges and Opportunities

In The Facts, a recent study of cultural activity in the County carried out by Northamptonshire County Council, East Northamptonshire was identified as having 13% of arts, heritage and creative organisations in the County - the fourth largest. The report suggest this correlates to the population size of the district however it also notes that rural boroughs have a larger proportion of organisations per person than the more built up boroughs and districts. This is supported by our findings which illustrate a high proportion of cultural organisations in East Northamptonshire. The district has also more than 300 creative industries businesses – representing around 9% of the stock of all (VAT-registered) businesses in the district[31]. There were approximately 990 people employed in creative industries in East Northamptonshire in 2005 – representing nearly 4% of all employment in the district[32]. Creative industries employment grew by 21% between 2001 and 2005, while the number of creative industries businesses grew by 19% (in both cases, a higher rate of growth than the economy as a whole)[33].

The largest town in the district Rushden has the highest concentration of creative industries businesses with the audio-visual sector employing the most people, but with the visual arts & design sector accounting for largest number of individual businesses. Rushden is also home to a range of cultural facilities the Rushden Museum and the Rushden Transport Museum both preserving and showcasing Rushden's history and Pemberton Leisure Centre providing the focal point for other cultural activity such as film night and music nights.



31 BOP (2008) East Midlands Creative Industries Rural Strategy study commissioned by Culture East Midlands: East Northants Factsheet.
32 ibid
33 ibid

As mentioned in the Cultural Strategy 2006 report, due to a lack of geographical cohesion the District is faced with challenges to community identity. With no natural central core town, a key challenge is to ensure cultural programmes reflect and engage with the increasingly diverse community. Our research has found East Northamptonshire indeed hosts a variety of cultural activity with ambitions to meet the needs of many of its residents. This ranges from the high profile Oundle International Festival, including world class classical musicians and jazz concerts, celebrity organ recitals, films, exhibitions and their Music in Quiet Places taking music out to the more rural areas and villages; Cultural Community Partnerships at Chichele House and their Arts Meets Environment three year programme with annual festival; to local activities in community spaces such as writing groups and craft groups in village halls and churches and African Drumming Group in Oundle. Whilst sub regional centres and principal towns outside of the district are used for more varied forms of cultural activity, it is vital that local community spaces are maintained and developed in local towns and villages to provide a fabric of cultural infrastructure providing all members of community access to places to meet and share cultural experiences.

Despite the presence of facilities such as Pemberton Centre, Chichele College heritage site situated in Higham Ferrers, The Nene Centre and its range of sports facilities and meeting rooms, the majority of cultural venues in East Northamptonshire are village halls and church halls. These venues are often cheap to hire and form a focal point for community engagement and activity. For cultural activities they are the backbone and most used service provider. However these venues are not necessarily fit for purpose. As performance and rehearsal space they often lack basic



Image:

Lyveden New Bield

facilities such as sufficient space for movement, sprung flooring, and adequate lighting. Seeking to address these shortfalls, East Northamptonshire Council offer Community Grants for village hall improvements. Their other small grant programmes include: Arts Grants for exhibitions of fine art and craft, public art, performance art, productions and shows, film and video, music photography, and literature; Heritage Grants for preserving history, memories and celebrating cultural and local traditions; Leisure Grants, and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups Small Projects Grants.

However, the total fund available is relatively small in relation to the size of the district and many of these venues and activities are run and managed by volunteers, so the infrastructure is dependent on limited community resources. Throughout our research and consultations there has been consistent need raised for more fit for purpose venues, open and public spaces that can be used for performances, showcasing and shared learning. Collaborations between organisations are starting to happen but there are opportunities for further partnership developments to share experience and resources.

Opportunities and priorities for cultural infrastructure development

Three main priority cultural projects have been identified by East Northamptonshire. These are:

- **Rushden regeneration:** public realm improvements including the possible creation of a new public space and appropriate public art in the town centre; using improved public realm to help reconnect the town centre with adjacent built up areas

- **King's Cliffe:** community (sports) facility as part of the King's Cliffe area development. This will be identified through the sports plan but it is crucial that the specification for the facility includes space wider cultural activities such as performance and rehearsal space as well as community meeting space and exhibition space. The shortfall in funding is currently being sought through Growth Area Funds through NNDC.

- **East Northamptonshire Greenway:** developing a network of routes for walking and cycling in the south of the district. It will link the communities of Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Raunds and give access to Wellingborough and its railway station. It will also link to Stanwick Lakes, key nature reserves and historic sites in the River Nene Regional Park area based in East Northamptonshire

Other priorities and aspirations for cultural infrastructure development include:

– An extension to Rushden Museum

– Redevelopment of Rushden library

– Enhancements of market square and High Street in Higham Ferrers and to use the heritage assets as a potential vehicle for regeneration activity, as outlined in the Three Town Plan[34]

– Also outlined in the Three Town Plan, actions identified for Irthlingborough through the market town health check which include improving the appearance of the town, improve facilities for young people, to make better use of the natural resources, to improve the provision of sport, leisure and community facilities.

- In the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan 2008 potential to capitalise on green infrastructure and tourism assets is identified and the need to protect high levels of biodiversity and a distinctive historic environment which includes Apethorpe Hall, Lilford Hall, Prebendal Manor, Fotheringhay, Deene Park and Lyveden New Bield and other notable features such as the viaduct at

34 Three Towns Plan (Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough) 2006.

Harringworth, and the Charter market towns of Oundle and Thrapston.

– In the Raunds market town healthcheck[35] several actions were identified for the regeneration of the town that could contribute to the cultural infrastructure development – public realm improvements in particular the gateways from the A45 and Stanwick and the town centre; improving facilities for young people; promoting the tourism/heritage aspects of Raunds. The community social enterprise centre, including business support and training opportunities for local people, already been completed and is open and operating.

– Library extensions and refurbishments include those at Raunds, Rushden and Thrapston.

Image:

Rushden Museum

35 Raunds Preferred Options Stage 2007/2008



"We want our Borough to be recognised by everybody as a successful borough where people and communities want to do well, where they take up new ideas and trends, but also celebrate history, heritage and local identity. It will be a borough where people will want to invest, work and enjoy life" (Vision from Kettering Borough Council Community Strategy 2008-11).

3.3 Kettering

3.3.1 Kettering District Profile

The Borough of Kettering covers an area of approximately 235 km2 and in 2007 had an estimated population of 89,500[36], an increase of 7,200 since 2001. It is anticipated that with the planned growth, the Borough's population will increase further to approximately 101,073 in 2021.
In 2007, 62% of the population were of working age with just over 18% of retirement age (65 for men, 60 for women) and nearly 20% under 16.

Kettering is predicted to experience a growth in population among working age groups 35-64 and also in people 65 and over.

Ethnic minority groups represent a small but increasing part of the Borough's population rising from 3.3% in 2001 to 5.3% in 2006. Asian or Asian British people, the largest grouping, made up 1.7% of the population in the 2001 and are now estimated to account for 2.6%.People from mixed ethnic backgrounds make up a further 1.1% of the population in 2006, with Black and Black British and Chinese and other ethnic groups accounting for 0.8% of the population each[37].

Nearly 90% of the Borough's population live in the main urban areas of Kettering, Rothwell, Desborough and Burton Latimer. The principal town Kettering, has a population of 55,000, with Rothwell and Desborough registering populations of 7,108 and 8,073 respectively at the 2001 Census. There are a further 27 villages in the borough of between 135 and 2,100 people. Kettering is classed as a 'Significant Rural' district[38], which means that more than 37,000 people, or more than 26 percent of the population, live in rural settlements and larger market towns; this category contains both rural and substantial urban areas.

Kettering has good transport links situated on the A14 trans-European route (E30), linking the M1 and M6 with the East Coast port of Felixstowe. It also has excellent road and rail links to the rest of the country with London less than an hour away on the train. The good road connections support the high number and logistics companies in the area that provide employment for many of Kettering's residents. The manufacturing and finance sectors are also large employers.

In 2005, more than 1,500 people were employed in creative industries in Kettering– representing more than 4% of employment in the economy of the district as a whole. Creative industries employment grew by 25% between 2001 and 2005 – nearly two-and-a-half times the rate of growth in the district's economy as a whole.

Books & Press was the largest domain in employment terms, representing around 50% of all creative industries employment. The district is distinctive in this regard, as the largest domains in most rural districts of the East Midlands are Audio-visual and Visual Arts & Design.

In 2005 there were more than 280 creative industries businesses in Kettering in 2005, representing 8.5% of the stock of all (VAT-registered) businesses in the district's economy[39].

36 Office of National Statistics 2007 estimates
37 ONS 2006 estimates

38 DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) classifies local authority districts and unitary authorities in England according to how rural or urban they are, based on the proportion of the population living in rural settlements. The three most rural classes are: Rural 80 (the most rural); there are eight such districts in the East Midlands; Rural 50 (the next most rural); there are ten such districts in the East Midlands; Significant Rural (a mixed rural/urban category); there are eight such districts in the East Midlands.
39 BOP (2008) East Midlands Creative Industries Rural Strategy study commissioned by Culture East Midlands: Kettering Factsheet.

One company making a considerable contribution to the local economy as an employer but also as a global connector is SATRA Kettering, a world leader in product testing and materials research. Due to industry classifications SATRA may not be included in the creative industries data count, but are clearly an important knowledge-based company.

Growth Predictions

Over recent years, Kettering has experienced a steady increase in the number of households within the Borough. At the 2001 census there were 33,871 households, a number that had increased to 40,289 at the beginning of April 2008. The Regional Spatial Strategy and Core Spatial Strategy set out a requirement for a further 13,100 new homes to be built by 2021 and 16,200 new jobs being created.

Developments are focused around the town centre and its urban extension and in East Kettering. The East Kettering area covers over 300 hectares and extends from the A43 in the north of the site to the A14 in the south. The plans include new homes and community facilities and a third of the area is set to 'green spaces' – parks and playing fields.

Type of area	Location of development	No. of additional dwellings 2001-2021	No. completed 2001-2006
Growth town	Kettering	7500	1023
Smaller towns	Burton Latimer	700	161
	Desborough	1940	407
	Rothwell	1320	126
Rural areas	Kettering rural	1640	636
Kettering total		13,100	2,353

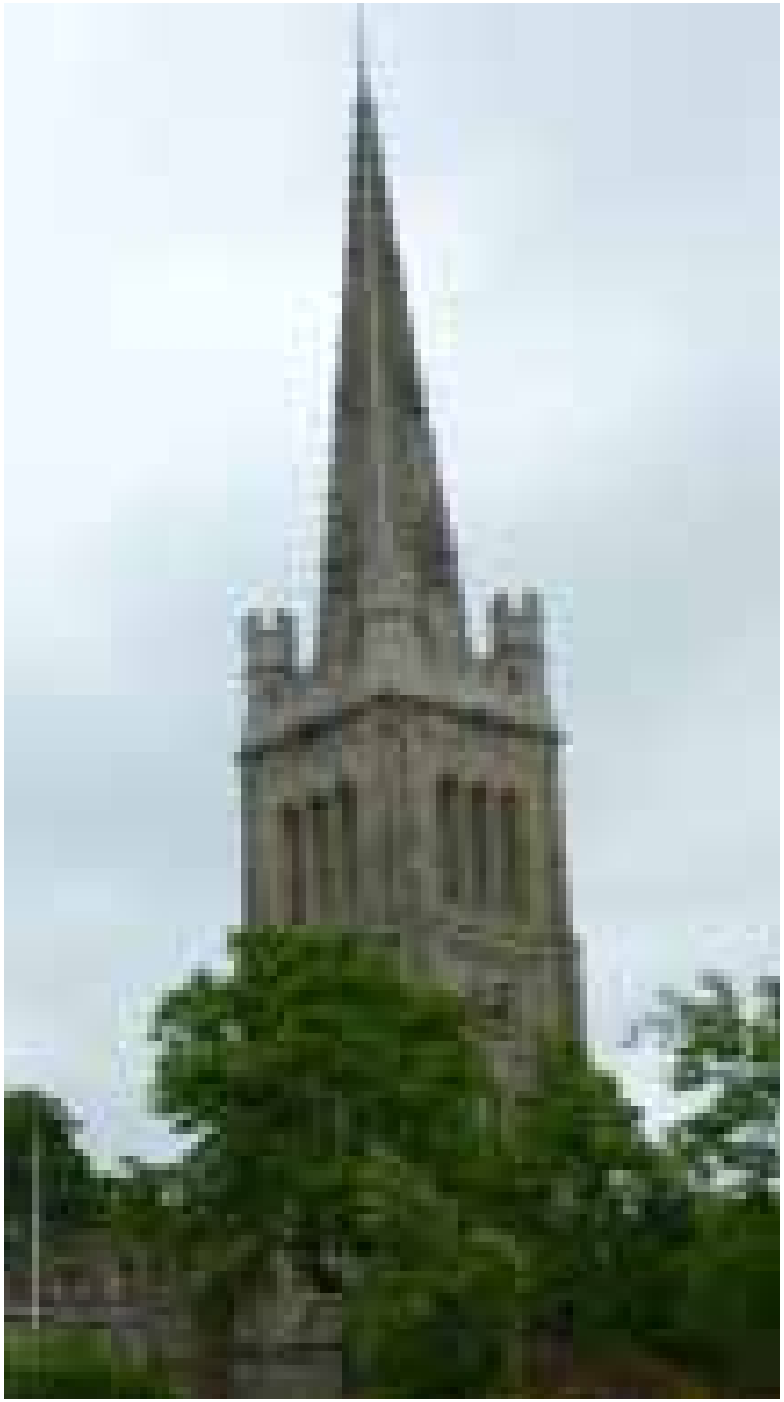


Image:

Kettering

3.3.2 Kettering Cultural Development Matrix

Typologies	Viewing - performance/ exhibition/showcase space	Participating – facilities and activities for people to engage in supporting community cohesion, quality of life and well being and NI 11	Learning - formal and informal skills development, raising aspirations and opening up opportunities for residents in the CI sector and beyond	Developing the cultural, creative and wider economy – workspace, business support, networks	Partnerships and co-location – examples of and opportunities for co-location with other services	Place making, growth and regeneration –
Heritage: historic houses and gardens, heritage sites and museums	Historic towns and villages. The Borough has 23 Grade I, 35 Grade II*, 467 Grade II listed buildings, 11 scheduled monuments and 4 listed parks Heritage and history is exhibited at Manor House Museum in Kettering, the family section of Kettering library in association with the Northants Archive, Rothwell Heritage Centre and the Burton Latimer centre which has 3 temporary exhibitions a year and Desborough Heritage Centre with opens 6 days week with through considerable volunteer support. Boughton House open to public Aug and Sep and to education groups all year.	Rothwell Heritage Centre – a community resource run by volunteers. Rothwell Preservation Trust working to record, preserve and bring to life the history of the town. Boughton House - talks and family fun days; Manor House run a programme of activities for all ages.	Boughton House has a 'Quality Badge for Learning Outside the Classroom' for their work with schools. Manor House Museum worked with heads of CYP service on education programme to highlight the value of heritage in education. Desborough Heritage Centre receiving support from Northampton Museum education officer to develop education programmes and Chair currently training as NVQ assessor, good links with schools.		Rothwell Heritage Centre, art gallery and creative workspace – rental income helping to fund the heritage centre/gallery	Opportunities

Arts venues: galleries, theatres, live music venues and cinemas	Commercial rather than public sector venues. The Lighthouse Theatre – commercially run by Phoenix management with mixed programme of entertainment and local performances. The Odeon on the outskirts of Kettering is the only dedicated cinema in North Northants. The Masque Theatre at Latimer Arts College is an additional 224 seat theatre with dance and recording studios	Importance of collaboration – The Kettering Theatre Users group made up of 8 local amateur groups, worked with the council and Phoenix management to get the Lighthouse built when the McKinlay Theatre at Tresham was closing. Strong amateur dramatics sector: 2 youth theatre groups -Kettering Youth Theatre, United Theatre Group; 2 dance schools Sheila Wates and Jean Harris schools of dance; and for adults Kettering and district Theatrical society, Kettering Gang show, Kettering Operatic Society, Oddbods theatre Group. All rehearse regularly and perform once or twice a year at the Lighthouse or Masque.			The Lighthouse is an integral part of conference centre providing additional auditoria space	
Other creative space: creative workspace and commercial exhibition spaces	Largest creative workspace in North Northants over 40 artists housed in studios at Barton Seagrave			SATRA – world leader in product testing and materials research – strong links to leather industry. Employing people in Kettering and China. They developed Hillary and Hunt's boots for the Everest assault.	Chesham House – small business unites, hot desking and virtual office solutions for a range of small and emerging businesses, managed by University of Northampton	

Community facilities: libraries, schools and leisure centres		Development of a prototype 'Discovery Centre' based at Kettering Library.			Possible co-location of new library in Desborough with Heritage Centre and Kettering Council Customer Service Centre. Kettering library co-location in multi-functional building incorporating KBC/NCC customer services, voluntary orgs, police, museum and TIC	
Community assets: other community spaces used for cultural activity, village halls, community centres, pubs and cafes	Current community infrastructure in need of expansion and refurbishment to maximise use as performance spaces	Current community infrastructure in need of expansion and refurbishment to provide facilities for community activities for all sections of existing and new communities				New and refurbished community centres and spaces including planned extension and refurbishment of Rothwell Community Centre; possible relocation of Barton Seagrave community Centre; a new Community Centre for Desborough and possible refurbishment of Desborough Chapel for community use.
Parks, open spaces, public realm: urban, sub urban and rural open spaces, both designated parks and public open spaces such as town squares and waterways	Smallest area dedicated as nature reserve in N Northants, just 1 reserve covering 5 hectares. Section largest area covering wildlife sites in the sub region (71 sites over 1,150 hectares). 26 SSIs over 173 hectares – just under 60% in favourable or recovering condition	Wicksteed Park – attracting visitors from across the region. Borough has 18 parks, gardens and open spaces with a programme of events including jazz on the bandstands and DJ workshops.	Wicksteed Park – mixing pupils from different schools at art, design sessions linked to the curriculum. School holiday activity programme		Kettering East Green Corridor development as part of RNRP	Aim in the to secure new and preserve existing open spaces. Borough Public Art Strategy underpinning action to provide public art within as core element of Area Action Plans. Groundwork based in the Borough engaging communities in regeneration. Upgraded green spaces and commitment to new parks as part of growth outlined in Community Strategy and Area Action Plans.
Festivals and events: festivals, events, fairs		The 805th Rowell Fair was held in June 2009. The annual Kettering Carnival sees all sections of the community getting involved				

3.3.3 Overview of Culture in Kettering – Challenges and Opportunities

While there are some key cultural strengths in the Borough, not least through the amateur sector and main arts and cultural venues, the Alfred East Gallery, the Manor House Museum and increasingly the Lighthouse Theatre, the overall cultural offer is fairly weak.
The Fact study identified Kettering as having 9% of the County's arts and cultural organisations, less than East Northamptonshire but more than Wellingborough. Our mapping shows the borough with nearly 12% of the county's cultural infrastructure, on a par with Wellingborough, but with less than East Northamptonshire.

The construction of the **Lighthouse Theatre** is a **testament to collaborations** possible between, voluntary, public and private sector organisations. This experience should be built upon with the cultural sector developing further connections with local creative businesses. Another example in the Borough of **linking with business is the Rothwell Heritage Centre**, with their workspace units providing income for the gallery and exhibition space and programmes. There is a strong volunteer led heritage sector preserving the rich cultural history of the Boot and Shoe Industry and Ironstone working. There are opportunities here to link in with the County initiative promoting and developing the leather industry. The **heritage sector in the**

Image:

Boughton House



Borough also has its own proven track record of securing resources and delivering programmes of engagement and learning across the community. Desborough Heritage Centre will soon have their own NVQ assessor and are using the expertise and resources of the larger Northampton Museum to develop their own local education programme. The stately home Boughton house is also leading the way in terms of cultural education with their Quality Badge for Learning Outside the Classroom' for their work with schools.

The Borough also has one of the largest dedicated **'creative workspaces',** in North Northants the artists' studios at Barton Seagrave, currently housing 40 artists and with a long waiting list. This is also the head office for the Northamptonshire Open Studios which has developed some strong cross sector partnerships across the county. This year open Studios are worked with the National Trust on the launch of Open Studios event at Canons Ashby. The planned sale of the Barton Seagrave building there is the potential that workspace and the artist community it support will be lost from the Borough and sub region. With the development of the town centre cultural quarter the potential should be explored for creative workspace development in town which would also support the drive to include a greater diversity of businesses in the town. As part of the redevelopment of the town centre the new performance space has already been unveiled. The challenge now is the animate the space with a programme of events.

The current community facilities are in need of development to provide appropriate community and cultural spaces away from the town centre.

Opportunities for cultural infrastructure development

Kettering Borough will continue to be the most populous area in North Northamptonshire and the CSS identifies Kettering Town Centre as continuing to be the main retail centre for the sub-region it will therefore require the necessary cultural infrastructure to fulfil this role.
The town centre is undergoing considerable development with a new 'public space' in the Market Place other public realm improvements are planned along with an enhanced retail offer and expanded restaurant and cultural offer.

These include:

- Redevelopment of Kettering Museum and Art Gallery – a key element of the town centre Cultural Quarter development

- Development of a prototype 'Discovery Centre' based at Kettering Library

- Learning and creative economy development - New Tresham campus completed. New Design and Technology Centre at Chesham House. Aspirations for University Campus

Outside Kettering town centre, potential infrastructure developments include:

- Further development of Rothwell Heritage Centre to involve more community activity.

- Proposed replacement libraries at Burton Latimer, Desborough, Kettering and Kettering East.

- New Heritage Centres at Burton Latimer and Desborough possibly as part of library developments.

- Repairs and enhancements to Market House Rothwell as focal point of the historic town centre.



Image:

The Alfred East Gallery & Library, Kettering

- Improvements to Rothwell Manor Park, a park of SSI.

- Refurbishment and extension to Rothwell Community Centre as part of area action plan.

- Possible upgrade of existing green space or provision of a new park or garden in both the east and west of Desborough and Rothwell in line with proposed growth, plus recommendations for provision of two pocket parks in Desborough.

- New community centre for Desborough and possible refurbishment of Desborough Chapel for community use

- Kettering East Green Corridor linked to RNRP

- A long term aim to create green spaces in the south and north west of Kettering and provide an accessible natural or semi natural site in Walgrave, Pytchley, Geddington and Wilbarston.

3.4 Wellingborough

3.4.1 Wellingborough District Profile

The Borough of Wellingborough covers an area of 163 sq km situated and lies about 65 miles from both London and Birmingham. With a current population of around 75,900[40] the planned growth for the Borough could see the number expand to 88,500 by 2021[41].

Young people (0-16 years) currently make up a larger than average proportion of the population, 19.8%. But the number of young people in the Borough is reducing down 1.5% since 2001[42]. This is coupled with an aging population, the number of 75+ year olds is predicted to grow by 124% to 2031[43]. The Borough also has an increasingly diverse community with almost 10% of its population being from ethnic minorities.

89.1% of the population were White in 2006, a drop of 1.7% since 2001. Asian and Asian British people made up 5.1% of the population with Black and Black British accounting for a further 2.9%. Chinese and other ethnic groups make up the remaining 0.8% of the population[44].

Two thirds of Wellingborough's population live within the town of Wellingborough. The urban area is surrounded by 19 villages which range in size from Earls Barton (population 5,356) and Irchester (population 4,805) to Hardwick (population 70) and Strixton (population 32). Much of the Borough remains largely rural[45].

Of those people of working age, over 65% are in employment with just over 3.1% of economically active people are without a job. 17% of the population have no qualifications with 13.3% having qualifications to level 4/5 – 30% below the national average[46]. 49.4% of young people gain 5 or more grade A*-C GCSEs[47].

Growth Predictions

An additional 12,800 homes are scheduled to be built in the Borough of Wellingborough by 2021[48].

Type of area	Settlement	No. of dwellings required 2001-2021	No. completed 2001-2006
Growth town	Wellingborough	11590	1037
Rural areas	Wellingborough rural	1210	484
Wellingborough total		12,800	1,521

The main areas of planned development are:

- Stanton Cross (WEAST – Wellingborough East) – over 3,00 new homes and 165 acres of commercial space, a town park, a neighbourhood and transport access to include walking and cycling routes.

- Town Centre development including expansion of retail offer including mixed use development of Tresham Institute site and Market Square; a Cultural Quarter – public realm improvements around the Castle theatre and Museum, enhanced links and access routes to the town centre and opportunities for other arts and culture activities; 850 new homes to be built in the town centre as part of mixed use development.

40 ONS estimate 2007
41 2006-based Subnational Population Projections (SNPP) for England (June 2008)
42 ONS estimates 2007
43 Annual Monitoring Report 2007-08
44 Office of National Statistics estimates 2006
45 Annual Monitoring Report 2007-08
46 ibid
47 NOMIS Census 2001
48 Community plan 2006 – 2011

3.4.2 Wellingborough Cultural Development Matrix

Typologies	Viewing - performance/ exhibition/showcase space	Participating – facilities and activities for people to engage in supporting community cohesion, quality of life and well being and NI 11	Learning - formal and informal skills development, raising aspirations and opening up opportunities for residents in the CI sector and beyond	Developing the cultural, creative and wider economy – workspace, business support, networks	Partnerships and co-location – examples of and opportunities for co-location with other services	Place making, growth and regeneration –
Heritage: historic houses and gardens, heritage sites and museums	Strong heritage offer - 11 Grade I listed buildings and 507 Grade II listed. Also 11 scheduled monuments and 1 Grade II park. Despite having a dedicated and excellent Borough museum, and local museums and historical societies in Wollaston and Irchester, 48% of Wellingborough residents have never visited a museum.	Irchester Narrow Gauge Railway Trust run a small museum of steam and diesel locomotives, open to public on Sundays at Irchester Park. Wollaston Museum has had considerable local involvement since the 1970's. Volunteer run requires funding for day to day activities. Earls Barton Museum – shoe makers cottage, Saxon church and craft shop – good links with schools	Wellingborough Museum is expanding schools activities	NCC owned Knuston Hall provides conference facilities at Grade II listed property	Chester House and Farm is one the most significant heritage sites in the County with over 2000 years of continuous on-site inhabitation from the iron age through Roman to present day. Options are being explored for a new interpretation centre on site owned by the NCC and is seen as potential flagship scheme by River Nene Regional Park due to its location, history and wide appeal.	The town centre action plan included a priority to conserve and enhance the architectural and historic fabric of the town centre.
Arts venues: galleries, theatres, live music venues and cinemas	The Castle, one of Northamptonshire's main arts venues, has 2 performance spaces. 20% of Wellingborough residents have not been to a theatre. Limited gallery space in - some exhibition space at the Castle, gallery@wren and at the museum. Open Art and community exhibitions at the Castle	The Castle runs: - Holiday workshops for young people in art, theatre and dance - Early years classes for young children and their parents - Adult classes Open Art competitions for adults and young people run by Wellingborough Arts Development Officer – open to artist from across the county.	The Castle runs Castle youth theatre, Castle youth musical theatre and Castle youth dance developing skills in theatre making and performing	Lack of business development and networking for 'creatives'. Artists mentored through artist in residence programme – artist currently at Castle. Art at the Heart networking event for artists		Artist in residence at the Castle, working engaging communities in the regeneration in the priority ward Hemmingwell. Art at the Heart – quarterly magazine promoting Wellingborough as a place for cultural activity

Other creative space: creative workspace and commercial exhibition spaces	Open Studios Northamptonshire – Wellingborough artists encouraged to participate – exhibitions at Victoria Centre and All Hallows Church			Creative workspace feasibility – report looking at options for 20 studio units as part of Wellingborough East development – needs to be revisited especially with potential loss of artists studios at Barton Seagrave. University of Northampton interns working with Wellingborough arts officers. Existing creative businesses e.g. music studio Connect FM not connected to each other or wider cultural/ creative economy with existing.		
Community facilities: libraries, schools and leisure centres	Exhibition space located in the art department at Wrenn School, Doddington Road, Wellingborough. The gallery shows a range of visual arts including work by nationally renowned as well as established and emerging local artists.	5 libraries and one mobile library. Limited use of leisure and sports centres for cultural activities.	Knuston Hall, Adult Residential College. Courses include arts and practical crafts, music and ICT. Borough grant for development of dance clubs, particularly for boys, at Wollaston school			

Community assets: other community spaces used for cultural activity, village halls, community centres, pubs and cafes	Strong local music scene in pubs, but not connected with rest of cultural offer. Northants Touring bringing performance to communities in community spaces. Tithe Barn in town centre an additional venue in town centre for music and other performances.	Community halls, community centres, places of worship and other community spaces are concentrated around Wellingborough town centre with rest of the district suffering a lack of community facilities. Victoria Centre important community arts space in town centre. Strong amateur sector at least 3 writers groups, 4 amateur music companies and clubs and 7 amateur dramatic groups. Hindu Centre and WACA engaging with different sections of the community	Arts and cultural Lifelong Learning opportunities in the town are limited. The villages (Wollaston, Earls Barton, Irchester, Finedon, Sywell) have better provision as the junior schools, bowls clubs & village halls provide facilities for courses.		Tithe Barn lunchtime recitals partnership between Borough arts officer, Orchestra Live, ViVA and the Castle.	
Parks, open spaces, public realm: urban, sub urban and rural open spaces, both designated parks and public open spaces such as town squares and waterways	On 48 hectare nature reserve, 60 wildlife site over 838 hectares. Second largest area of SSIs in the sub region (792 hectares and 14 sites) with almost 100% in favourable or recovering condition in 2006.	Sywell Park and Green Flag Irchester Country Park, run by the NCC, both have friends groups and offering volunteering and other opportunities such as youth rangers and wildlife watches WBC are considering submitting a Green Flag application for their Swanspool Gardens				The Council supports the development of public works of art and recognises the importance of design in the built environment in Policy G16, the Public Art Plan and SPD Public Art: A Guide to Good Practice. A town centre action plan priority is to protect 'Environmentally Important Open Spaces' and promote initiatives to encourage wildlife and biodiversity'.
Festivals and events: festivals, events, fairs	The first East Midlands Youth Theatre Festival held at the Castle.	Historical strength in festivals with annual Wellingborough Carnival celebrating 100 years in 2008. Newer events co-ordinated by the Hindu Assoc., Wellingborough African Caribbean Association and Wellingborough Black Arts Consortium and Council SMART festival for families.	University of Northampton Arts and Events Internship with Wellingborough Arts Development and Events team			

3.4.3 Overview of Culture in Wellingborough – Challenges and Opportunities

In The Facts, a recent study of cultural activity in the County carried out by Northamptonshire County Council, Wellingborough was identified as having **7% of arts, heritage and creative organisations in the County.** This was the second lowest percentage in the County after Corby but in line with proportion of the County's population. The study found that the more rural boroughs such as Wellingborough have a higher proportion of organisations per capita than the more built up boroughs and districts.

These findings correspond with our own mapping work across the county where Wellingborough comes just above Corby in terms of the proportion of arts, heritage and creative organisations and facilities. However, our study found Wellingborough had a slightly higher proportion of the total organisations, just over 11%.

In terms of **facilities for hosting arts events and activities the Borough is not well resourced, with a real lack of facilities outside the town of Wellingborough.** The primary venue is the Castle, the only Arts Council England regularly funded organisation in North Northants. The Castle has two performance spaces, rehearsal space, a sprung floor dance studio and exhibition

Image:

Tithe Barne, Wellingborough



space. The Tithe Barn in the town is also used for cultural activities and performances and hosts a series of lunchtime recitals co-ordinated by the Borough arts officer in partnership with Orchestra Live, ViVA and the Castle. Wellingborough library has exhibition space for two dimensional artworks, Wellingborough Museum host exhibitions and the Victoria Centre, the community centre in the town hosts a variety of clubs, and runs workshops, music and other performance events. The Gallery@Wren, at Wren School exhibits the work of nationally renowned as well as established and emerging local artists.

The **lack of dedicated cultural facilities mean spaces such as village and church halls are used for workshops, amateur activity and performance.** The amateur groups using the facilities include at least seven amateur dramatic societies such as Cooperative Amateur Dramatic Society and the Wellingborough Operatic Society; 4 music associations and groups such as the Orpheus Choir and the Redwell Band; writers groups and dance groups such as the Street Dance project and professional schools & classes from folk to ballet, from ceroc to modern sequence. Northants Touring also bring their productions to these community venues.



Image:

Wellingborough Museum

There is **already considerable pressure in terms of the number and quality of community facilities per population and this will only intensify as the population grows.** Again there is a lack of facilities outside the town and many of these spaces are not fit for purpose with access issues that make it difficult for organisers to provide high quality activities and events.

As with other boroughs and districts in the County, Wellingborough has a strong heritage offer with 11 Grade I listed buildings, 35 Grade II* and 472 Grade II listed, according to the English Heritage 2008 count. This is a similar overall figure to Kettering but with half as many Grade I listed buildings. The Borough also has 11 scheduled monuments and 1 Grade II park.

Chester House and Farm is one the most significant **heritage** sites in the County with over 2000 years of continuous on-site inhabitation from the iron age through Roman to present day. Options are being explored for enhancement of the site with is owned by the County. The site is seen as potential flagship scheme by River Nene Regional Park and other partners, due to its location, history and wide appeal.

The recently refurbishes Wellingborough Museum is housed in Dulley's Baths, built in 1892 as an indoor swimming pool. From 1920 to 1995 the building housed a shoe factory but is now home to the collection of artefacts owned by the Winifred Wharton Trust. The museum, at the heart of proposed Cultural Quarter, is run by a group of volunteers with

several local groups using the museum as their base including the Film Archive Trust and Northamptonshire Family History Society. As exhibiting the collection the museum hosts art exhibitions and concerts.

There is a strong history of **festivals and events** in the Borough with the annual carnival, recently celebrating its 100th year. The growing diversity in the borough is reflected in the range of festivals organised by groups such as the West African and Caribbean Association with a carnival now in its 9th year; the annual Afrikan History Month organised by the Wellingborough Black Arts Consortium (WBAC) offering a programme of events and activities across arts, sports and heritage and arts events and activities provided throughout the year; the District Hindu Association with the annual Diwali celebrations.

While the **built facilities offer may be weak there are some strong cultural programmes targeting different sections of the community** e.g. the SMART festival for families run the Council and the varied programme at the Castle. However, **lack of interest of interest in engaging in cultural activity is a real challenge** and is born out the lack of high profile cultural programmes and the largely rural nature of much of the Borough.

In Wellingborough 48% of the population have never visited a museum or gallery, 20% have not been to a theatre and 31% never used sports or leisure facilities. Reasons given included 'poor access to public transport' whilst the need for better activity for teenagers was also cited[49].

Current opportunities for cultural infrastructure development

There is currently a deficit of cultural infrastructure in Wellingborough, and the offer is under-connected. There is a need to support the growth and development of the existing offer and bridge gaps in provision (for the existing and prospective population). Opportunities include:

- Replacement of Wellingborough library with a new building on the existing site so remaining in the retail hub. The intention is to create a Discovery Centre or Ideas Store, focusing strongly on children & families, with joint community use with a range of other orgs.

- Refurbish and increase use of Wollaston and Irchester libraries – opportunity for joint service location and community use.

- Further developing the programme in the refurbished Wellingborough Museum to build on the art exhibitions and films already shown.

- Potential for further workspace feasibility, now experience within the council to drive this forward following 2006 feasibility.

- Ensure the new and extended leisure centres and sports facilities are appropriate for other cultural programming and use as community facilities.

- Development of a Cultural Quarter – public realm improvements around the Castle theatre and Museum, enhanced links and access routes to the town centre and opportunities for other arts and culture activities as part of town centre development.

- Supplementary planning guidance developed for Public Art, could be used as a model of good practice.

- Feasibility for Chester House and Farm to become flagship heritage site. This will need further resourcing.

49 Best Value Surveys and BVPIs 2003/4, 2004/5, 2006/7 cited EDAW

4.0 cultural infrastructure

beyond the four district boundaries

North Northamptonshire needs to be considered within the context of its position within the county of Northamptonshire, the East Midlands Region and beyond. The cultural offer beyond the North Northants boundary provides attractions and services for residents of the four districts and boroughs that make up North Northants. Whilst the area has an aim to be self-sufficient, consideration should be made about whether cultural infrastructure in a neighbouring district or county could fill the role of plugging some to the cultural gaps. Figure ? shows the drive times of North Northamptonshire cultural infrastructure against that of Northampton.

The County Cultural Strategy, the programmes of work and strategic connections of the many NCC partners, the Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd. initiatives promoting heritage and festivals, the work of the River Nene Regional Partnership, and other key partnerships across the region, all have a key role to play in supporting, connecting, promoting and helping to develop North Northamptonshire

Image:

View across Northamptonshire



cultural infrastructure.

For example, access to heritage networks, advice and support, and a small pot of funding have been provided by Renaissance East Midlands to offer short-medium-term sustainability to many existing museums and small emerging museums and heritage groups. Each of the local museums and heritage groups hold their own boot and shoe collection and histories linked to leather industry in the county.

Image:

Corby

A further example is through the Renaissance-funded Museums Forum, where the county archive is starting to work with the 42 voluntary museums across Northamptonshire on training and advice and guidance on how to care for historical items and setting up a loan service. The archive is also looking at a digital programme for the future, linked to work with villages and local historical societies and museums. There is a need here for ongoing monitoring of the heritage assets and cross-sector strategic partnerships from the sub- regional to the local level. In particular, closer working is required between local authorities and voluntary bodies.



5.0 north northamptonshire cultural offer

an overview

Overall, North Northamptonshire has an underdeveloped and underconnected cultural offer and culture is not sufficiently mainstreamed into the wider range of strategic agendas, such as regeneration, planning and learning and skills. Certainly, the cultural offer is not adequate for projected population growth, it lacks the capacity to provide for existing populations, and it is not positioned to provide strategic added value as a key means of attracting inward investment, improving livability and creating jobs. There are, however, some real assets. For example, Fermynwoods is a fantastic organisation that genuinely connects with and inspires different communities, not least through its work with young people. The short-term loss of facilities, through the closure of the gallery, is a major

concern. The Oundle International Festival with its annual music programme in July, Music in Quiet Places programme and finale night music and fireworks display (that attracts 5,500 people) has a programme with real potential to grow and impact far beyond the town. The Castle arts centre, with its Excellence in Education programme, strong community links in both its theatre and gallery programming, and its co-location with the Wellingborough Museum, has the potential to lead in the development of a strong cultural quarter for Wellingborough. The River Nene Regional Park and other green and heritage sites, although these are perhaps under-enjoyed by the wider population, provide major opportunities for open-air cultural experiences. And new and emergent infrastructure – such as Corby Cube and an increasingly active Lighthouse theatre – provide a strong base from which to grow and develop.

There is also a strong amateur and community arts sector in music, performing and visual arts and heritage, but it often lacks the necessary venues to meet, rehearse and display work; and the capacity and expertise to develop and grow. This is a particular concern if talent is to be supported to prosper and grow, opportunities to access and experience culture are to be increased, and culture and creativity are to be embedded as key tools in education, regeneration, and of course growth.

Below we provide a SWOT of the overall North Northamptonshire Cultural Offer and position this as the link to the Cultural Investment Plan for the sub-region.



Image:

Corby

5.1 A SWOT of North Northamptonshire Cultural Offer

Main Strengths:

- Distinctive places with strong cultural identities that mix rural and urban to provide a collective offer through which cultural infrastructure can be developed and connected
- A small collection of arts and cultural venues with sub-regional (The Castle and increasingly the Lighthouse) and national reputations (Fermynwoods)
- A small though increasingly confident organisation base – such as Threshold Studios and Big About Music
- Councils recognising the importance of design in the built environment in policies and plans
- Strong and committed amateur sector across the sub region
- Very strong heritage offer in public and private sector; and strong local interest in heritage, many local groups
- History of leather and shoe making – number of individual shoe-makers still remaining, extensive knowledge through local museums and historical societies
- Nationally recognised parks, forests and gardens – green infrastructure as a cultural asset
- Emergent creative industries facilities – e.g. Chesham House

Main Weaknesses:

- Culture is not mainstreamed and embedded across different local authorities and between departments as a core tool for successful and sustainable growth
- Culture is not recognised and fully understood as a core ingredient for effective place-making
- The full diversity of the cultural asset base – the buildings, organisations and people – is far from delivering its potential
- Lack of galleries/exhibition space, rehearsal space and storage space (particularly for amateur groups)
- Lack of adequate cultural and community facilities – fit for purpose community and village halls - particularly outside the main towns
- Underdeveloped professional development opportunities for cultural partners, with few opportunities for peer learning and
- Poor life-long learning offer – few classes for adult population
- Limited progression offer for those in the amateur sector
- Under engagement of residents – 48% not visited museum, 20% not visited a theatre
- Poor local transport infrastructure
- Under developed connections within the cultural sector in North Northants and beyond
- Weak promotion of what is on offer – the asset base is not effectively promoted
- Lack of start-up and expansion business units for new creative businesses

Main Opportunities:

- Town centre developments and public realm improvements
- New facilities such as Corby Cube – offering genuine step change in what is possible
- New Tresham Institute campuses and the wider embedding of arts, culture and creativity into learning and skills agendas
- A festivals programme that can be better connected and programmed as a unified offer
- Scale and intensity of investment coming into North Northants highest in the country
- Good national and international connections — close to five airports and main motorway arteries
- A drive for leather and shoe industry promotion and development - bring in businesses, local museums and historical societies and local artists to engage communities – economic, social and cultural opportunities
- Seed funding for rural businesses in the form of North Northamptonshire Rural Action Partnership Leader programme £1.5 million over 4 years
- Bid submitted for New Higher Education centres in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough – led by NNDC with University of Northampton, Tresham, NCC, NEL

Main Threats:

- The failure of local authorities, NNDC and regional partners to commit in a coordinated and complementary way to the role of culture as a development and place-shaping tool. This requires a robust and consistent approach when working with developers, and an innovative approach that levers investment for culture through budgets in economic development, health, learning and skills etc.
- The continued inter-local authority competition, which blocks coordination of a collective offer
- Ongoing recession – which reduces economic vibrancy and weakens leverage potential from developers
- A fragmented approach to audience development, programming and promotion – so that the profile and influence of the cultural sector is undermined
- The neglect of community facilities, which are so critical for talent and audience development
- A disconnect between cultural development, creative industries support, and agendas in tourism and inward investment. NEL have a major role to play here
- The non-enforcement of design codes and the failure to influence partners in highways departments of the opportunity to reposition the public realm as a cultural resource