A Cultural Quarter for Waterford

Outline Rationale, Priorities and Building Blocks

September 2017
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Executive Summary

This document provides an outline Plan for the proposed Waterford Cultural Quarter (WCQ) for Waterford’s O’Connell Street and its tributaries. It is commissioned by Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) with a view to exploring the potential for a WCQ which will play a transformative role for this district of the city and for the capacity, confidence and sustainable growth of the cultural and creative sectors of the city and region and for the inclusion of the communities who live in the area.

In doing so, it will play a vital developmental role for Waterford city centre, nurturing and attracting distinctive cultural and creative production and generating a dynamic cultural life for the area that enhances the city’s retail and tourism offer and transforming urban living for local communities.

The Plan describes the current reality of O’Connell Street – as a richly historic thoroughfare of the city, with a tapestry of buildings and deep memories as a place of trade, worship and social practice. Though a zone in transition – it has lost much of the prosperity and energy of its past and is struggling to find a purpose in the modern city. New beginnings and a fresh distinctiveness are evidenced through the diverse communities who call it home, the emerging scene of bars and cafés, and the cultural hub offered by Garter Lane Arts Centre.

It is by nurturing this scene and by providing the enabling conditions for cultural activities to flourish that O’Connell Street can be re-imagined and then re-born as a vital part of Waterford’s future. This Plan, informed as it is by extensive consultation and research, shows that O’Connell Street and its environs has the potential to become the type of inclusive, engaging, sustainable cultural ecosystem befitting the designation of Waterford’s Cultural Quarter. A cultural quarter which is co-created with existing residents and the wider cultural and creative sectors; that provides a mix of affordable and accessible spaces and platforms for cultural production and consumption; and thus becomes attractive as a place to meet, exchange, do business, and participate in the cultural life of a changing city and the gateway to Ireland’s south east.

To reach this point – where the WCQ operates as a sustainable model which provides a serious uplift in the culture and economy of the city and county – requires a long-term (5-10 year) commitment to sensitive urban change; an inclusive approach to partnership; and a blend of vision, opportunism and shared responsibility. This is (a) where the local authority operates as an enabler and champion, securing long-term cultural and creative use for buildings, encouraging developmental projects and use of spaces to animate the landscape, creating a planning framework which supports the development of the cultural quarter, being adventurous in mixed use of the street environment and working to build pathways for local communities to participate in the cultural life of Waterford city; and (b) where key partners in education (notably Waterford Institute of Technology and the Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board), culture (the city’s key cultural organisations) and business (creative industries, technology, retail and hospitality); will need to shape a collaborative
approach, conceptualising the WCQ as a shared concept which reinvigorates the civic, cultural and economic life of the city.

This Plan sets out a vision for the WCQ:

“To deliver inclusive and sustainable innovation and growth for the cultural and creative sectors of south east Ireland; to become a distinctive and engaging place to the heart of Waterford which is open, inspiring and a vital addition to the city’s creative, knowledge and visitor economy”.

It provides an assessment of the main building blocks to deliver this vision, the priority actions, investment opportunities and a preferred option for the next three years. It reflects on best practice internationally to inform a preferred approach for Waterford and to provide an assessment of the risks in activating this Plan and how these risks can be mitigated. And it sets out a mission for partners to support, where the WQC becomes:

"A vibrant, creative, supportive community for residents and creative business, and a cultural destination which showcases the best of south east Ireland“.
Introduction

Cities across the world have developed cultural quarters and many cities, including Waterford, are exploring ways to most effectively shape a culture-led approach through a focus on a specific district or development site. The motivations or drivers vary by city, but broadly, there are two contrasting narratives for the development of cultural quarter and districts and – more holistically - to culture-led place-making:

(a) To attend to a culture-led opportunity.

For example, in response to the in-migration and co-location of artists and cultural organisations attracted to a district by cheap rents, flexible space, architectural distinctiveness, and an emergent creative scene. The city, working with partners in the public and private sectors, may seek to consolidate this emergent cultural district – to formalise and give security to space; to attract and grow creative industries businesses; to encourage ‘anchor’ uses for cultural consumption, production and education; and to enhance the public realm and signage which increases legibility and access.

The city may also attempt to generate spill over effects from the emergent mix of cultural production and consumption activities – e.g. positioning the district as a cultural tourism destination; featuring it in inward investment activities; and championing diversity where the district becomes a safe space for cultural expression for minority communities (e.g. different ethnicities, LGBT artists and audiences etc.).

(b) To attend to an urban challenge.

Even the most successful cities are experiencing a crisis:

   Of identity: where city-makers are struggling to forge distinctive and relevant senses of place in light of increasingly homogenising global influences.

   Of inequality: where too many citizens are not benefiting from economic growth and do not feel ownership of mainstream civic identity.

   Of sustainability: where a mix of demographic, climatic and industrial influences are bringing cities to a tipping point.

   Of purpose: where old industries in decline are not replaced by new ones; or where new ones do not offer the life chances, esteem and community identity of the industries which gave the city its original purpose.

Culture is playing a major role in city-making as a response to these crises: delivering a set of civic, social and economic outcomes and critically, playing a defining role in how cities see themselves and
project their identities to others, including investors. The challenge though is positioning culture as an embedded response to these crises rather than being appropriated as a quick fix where the building blocks for a sustainable approach are not in place. If an embedded culture-led approach is not in place, it is rare for the cultural sector to respond favourably and for sustainable models of development to be realised. In this instance cultural quarters don’t work: they are too instructive and top-down, they lack authenticity and ownership and they tend to be geared toward cultural consumption (e.g. as a destination for tourism or the night time economy) rather than as places with a rich landscape populated by a diversity of practice and engagement.
Strategic Rationale and Context

Like most cities, the drivers for developing a cultural quarter are in response to a perceived opportunity and as part of a wider strategy to attend to the challenges the city faces. Critically, any new cultural quarter will not offer many immediate rewards – e.g. as a catalyst for the development and growth of the cultural sector or as a game-changer for the city’s cultural tourism credentials. It can, however, with the right mix of ingredients, long-term strategic commitment, and crucially - with a sense of shared purpose for the cultural sector and local communities, be very impactful for the city. Successful cultural quarters are those which are viewed as a process rather than an outcome. They are dynamic; they combine attributes, ownership models and uses; and they are contested. Contested because they are relevant to the conversations the city has with itself, because people feel engaged and convinced they have a role in place-making, and because people recognise what is at stake if not properly delivered – with poorly conceptualised cultural quarters doing more harm than good.

The most effective cultural ecosystems are shaped by a set of shared values. For example, they are expressive of a distinctive local (often district-based) identity, which influences the cultural context for processes of creative production and consumption. They are also inclusive, with pathways into the creative industries available for a city’s increasingly intercultural talent base, as well as offering parity for different genders and ages. Effective cultural ecosystems tend to champion interdisciplinary collaborative practice where different sectors, aesthetics and technologies help generate new ways of working and in turn new types of product and service. Overall, cultural practitioners and the creative industries thrive because they generate meaning-laden experiences, goods and services. They depend, therefore, on relationships which are meaningful which are nurtured in places and spaces that carry significant symbolic value.

Waterford is a plan-led city in its development with the Waterford City Development Plan¹, Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan² and Regional Cultural Strategy³, all serving at a higher level to inform the public, statutory authorities, service providers, etc. of the policy framework that guides development decisions within the city. Through these documents (and associated plans for functional areas e.g. arts, libraries, heritage, archives etc.) Waterford is working to ensure that any improvement of the city is integrated, relevant to respective communities and in line with its core development goals. It is within this wider policy context that the proposed development of the WCQ sits.

The Waterford City Development Plan has as its over-arching goal to attract and retain inward investment to Waterford; to create critical mass in terms of the scale, talent and liveability of the city and its surrounding region. With the city currently home to some 53,504 people (living within the city and its environs) and its population growth only marginal in the last five years since 2011 (when the population was recorded at 51,519), achieving this goal will require increased sectoral assistance, exploiting new opportunities to replace declining industrial activities, creating additional opportunities to support entrepreneurship in indigenous enterprise, promoting an innovation culture and delivering a vibrant and authentic urban centre with good design at its core.

The City Development Plan highlights five development nodes within the city (evening and night-time economy, tourism and heritage, the North Quays and culture) with the WCQ forming the cultural node, and includes a framework for integration and development of the social, community and cultural requirements of the city’s population, as such providing a backdrop for development of the proposed cultural quarter in O’Connell Street which has the capacity over time to:

- Deliver tangible success for the resident community, commercial business, education and cultural services
- Create a significant and sustainable new quarter which reflects and extends the city’s existing cultural and creative potential
- Leverage existing potential for clustering and skills development in the creative sector

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4 Central Statistics Office, Census 2016. [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)
• Position Waterford as a place where culture and creativity are embedded as a way of life, central to regeneration and an economic driver for the city

• Create sustainable partnerships with industry, agency, education and community partners to deliver high quality cultural services and programmes

In addition to the above plans and on behalf of the Three Sisters region of Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford, the city led a recent bid to become European Capital of Culture 2020 (ECOC). This process incorporated the development of a Regional Cultural Strategy. Both of the above programmes brought clarity of the benefits of a culture-led response to regeneration and the opportunity for Waterford to become a leader in this field. Given the substantive investment by Waterford in the ECOC process, developing an impactful legacy which enhances Waterford as the gateway city to the south east and a place where culture and creativity are central to and embedded in the urban context, the WCQ presents a logical next step in cultural planning for Waterford and a first step in implementing the Regional Cultural Strategy proper.

The Regional Cultural Strategies core priorities provide a pre-worked agenda for the proposed development of the WCQ, namely; a creative and cultural economy programme, culture-led social development, and an urban and rural regeneration programme. These programme areas give space for exploration and development of a creative and cultural economy which reflects the Waterford context and responds to its strengths, embracing a culture-led approach to social development which positions the communities living and working within the O’Connell Street area as co-authors of the development process and creating a vibrant new district in the city for residents and visitors alike.

The WCQ project can also over time enhance the environment for inward investment by delivering a responsive and authentic urban centre which enhance Waterford’s human capital by developing a creative, adaptable, innovative and resilient workforce, and protect the diversity of resident communities and improves their quality of life, whilst restoring vacant and derelict sites to increase attractiveness as a place to do business for a creative community.

The table on the following page presents an overview of the goals of the Waterford City Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan priorities which have relevance to the WCQ project.

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## Waterford City Development Plan

- **Promote and facilitate the level of economic development and population growth necessary to create “critical mass” in the City and its zone of influence.**

## Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan

- **Create opportunities and support entrepreneurship – stimulate entrepreneurship and new business start up**
  - Develop a support framework for SMEs / Micro enterprises to reach their full potential
  - Develop specific sectoral hubs or centres of excellence
  - Identify sectors with potential for clustering i.e. food, creative industries, ecommerce, crafts
  - One-stop shop for start ups to include property solutions and a supportive environment for start-ups. Opportunities to grow centres of excellence.

- **Facilitate the delivery of key infrastructure.**

- **Realise the potential of the City Centre as a national and regional attraction, which is vibrant and lived in, has a strong retail and cultural offering and a high quality public realm.**

## Waterford City Development Plan

- **Support the provision of sustainable education facilities**
  - Promote the concept of continuing education and the delivery of a University for the South East Region with its headquarters in Waterford City.

## Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan

- **Support Pathways to Economic Participation and Opportunity**
  - Develop a skilled labour force - support lifelong development of relevant skills
  - Support the development of entrepreneurship in the education system
  - Co-ordinate employment, skills and local economic development policy
  - Establish a centre for research and analytics

- **Develop a tourism product of national and international standing.**

## Waterford City Development Plan

- **Develop sustainable neighbourhoods with facilities and services to meet local needs that give a sense of place identity and belonging to residents.**

## Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan

- **Develop Communities of Place**
  - Provide a framework and support to facilitate the development of Municipal District Communities of Place Plans

- **Promote social inclusion and facilitate equality of access to employment, education, transport, housing, social and cultural facilities.**

## Waterford City Development Plan

- **Have an Arts and Culture product which is of national and international standing and is an economic driver for the Gateway,**
Building blocks for successful cultural quarters

The following pages outline the key building blocks for successful cultural quarter development and provide best practice international models for reference in each instance.

1. **They have arts and culture to their core, with a mix of independent production spaces, innovative arts development organisations and platforms for audience engagement (e.g. venues, retail, open studios, activities).**

The arts and cultural sector has the summoning power to attract and inspire more commercially driven creative industries talent - offering a curated landscape of cultural dialogue and endowing creative practice with a socially embedded and critical perspective. Increasingly, arts and cultural organisations are operating as producers – connecting the arts to the more commercially driven creative industries, commissioning R&D activities, and providing shared spaces for production and presentation.

The best cultural quarters are enablers for the arts and cultural life of the city. They converge the different strengths of the city and amplify activities as the go-to place for production and presentation.

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**A 10 year cultural vision and strategy for Margate**

*Artists’ groups & communities anchoring Margate’s old town in long term cultural quarter development: taking over old industrial and residential space with peppercorn rents and support for organisational development to build a sustainable creative community. This generated energy and capacity to ensure the new anchor destination gallery – Turner Contemporary – could play a legitimate role in sector development and positioning the town as a major cultural destination.*

[www.resortstudios.co.uk](http://www.resortstudios.co.uk)  [www.crate-space.co.uk](http://www.crate-space.co.uk)  [www.bonvolks.com](http://www.bonvolks.com)  [www.piefactorymargate.co.uk](http://www.piefactorymargate.co.uk)  [www.marinestudios.co.uk](http://www.marinestudios.co.uk)  [www.turnercontemporary.co.uk](http://www.turnercontemporary.co.uk)
2. **They position universities as critical enablers.**

Cultural and creative ecosystems flourish when universities are open and collaborative generators of value: providing talent, expertise and technology. Such universities have a 'vortex effect' by providing a pipeline of talent for the ecosystem which benefits from developing work with creative businesses pre- and post-graduation; by developing research with industry rather than for industry; and by establishing special purpose vehicles such as incubators, accelerators, and bespoke research centres.

The best cultural quarters are generators of knowledge and new skills, they are attractive to emergent talent and they are the place for talent to congregate, live, work and play.

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**UPTEC, Porto**

*UPTEC - Science and Technology. A hub for R&D and knowledge transfer between the university and the marketplace, created to sustain the University of Porto’s third mission - the social and economic leverage of its knowledge. It has sector specialisms (Technologies, Creative Industries, Biotechnology and Sea), each with their own hub, plus a multi-disciplinary R&D and enterprise programme. A driver for Porto’s creative scene; adding to the vitality of a district to the north of the centre and characterised by a rich independent culture. [http://uptec.up.pt](http://uptec.up.pt)*

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3. **They are interdisciplinary and brokered.**

The best cultural quarters are built on a blend of trusted partnerships – some formal, some informal. They are richly networked and have visible spikes of activity (e.g. co-working spaces and festivals). They connect the creative industries to other sectors and are motivated by shared civic and / or social values. This does not happen by chance – every ecosystem has its trusted intermediaries – e.g. arts and cultural managers, specialist creative industries development agencies, and of course active and responsible creative businesses. This makes them more accessible, and increases efficiency and productivity because individuals are signposted to and often incentivised (e.g. via commissions) to work with partners where most value will be generated.

It is by matching complementary skill-sets and interests that cultural quarters flourish.

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**Nottingham Creative Quarter Agency**

*Based on a proven model (e.g. used in Sheffield, Manchester, east London, Nantes etc.), the NCA supports businesses in the city’s Hockley district CQ to become sustainable through its business support programme, 'access to finance' scheme and a proactive inward investment approach. It operates as a broker – connecting talent; and a commissioner – e.g. of projects which animate the public realm and generate buzz and distinctiveness. [www.creativequarter.com](http://www.creativequarter.com)*

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**Telliskivi, Tallinn**

*A former industrial site co-curated by the municipality and private landlords as a dynamic place for creative production and consumption – bringing together new specialist facilities (e.g. the national hub for independent theatre companies), with short-term retail and events spaces. It includes a suite of project spaces to explore socially impactful cultural practice. [www.telliskivi.eu/en/loomelinnak/](http://www.telliskivi.eu/en/loomelinnak/)*
4. They combine physical and digital platforms, connecting the local to the global.

Cultural ecosystems balance local encounters with access to international knowledge, skills and markets. Co-working spaces which are networked into international knowledge exchange and residency programmes; shared research programmes; and international festivals help to facilitate open dialogue across cultural and physical distance.

The best cultural quarters are expressive of the unique local cultural context while relevant to industry trends globally.

Bootstrap, Dalston, London

Bootstrap functions as a best practice cultural and creative quarter in one complex. It is led by a community interest company which oversees workspace provision for over 300 creative companies and cultural organisations. It is anchored by a leading independent theatre company and venue – Arcola; and experimental music venue Café Oto. It is topped by Dalston roof park – a hub for urban growing, events and cinema screenings. It provides enterprise support, B2B networking activities, and a range of social engagement programmes. www.bootstrapcompany.co.uk

The Playable City – global

A network and commissioning programme which explores playful techniques for re-booting planning and reanimating the city. www.playablecity.com

HOW TO PLAY HELLO LAMP POST

1. PICK AN OBJECT
   Look out for an item of street furniture with a code on it.

2. SAY HELLO
   Send a text in this format: Hello object #code
   e.g. “Hello hydrant #B6291“ to (512) 580 7373

3. KEEP TALKING
   You’ll soon get a reply.
   Answer the object’s questions and learn what other people have to say.
5. **They are generous, inclusive, open, engaging and a process.**

The best cultural quarters are fluid, agile and adaptive – enabling a continuous process of development and innovation. They are not restricted by artificial boundaries – they spillover in reach, purpose and identity. They are not hipster enclaves but co-authored by diverse local communities who in turn are not priced out by the success of the quarter. They do not just respond to change, but drive it: providing a continuum of opportunities for new voices and promoting impactful and authentic activities.

Cultural quarters which have resident communities at their heart and where these communities feed into the development of the district, tend to have a distinct identity and provide the energy, relationships and exchange on which creativity thrives. They become vibrant places to live and work and are rooted in place, with supportive frameworks between multi-disciplinary agencies and partners delivering an continuum for development and growth over time.

The best cultural quarters play a role in driving civic creativity across the city, are inclusive of communities within their boundaries, and are vital for progressive cultural and creative practice, production and entrepreneurship that can make a difference.

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**Impact Hub, Oakland**

* A member-based co-working space and event venue for entrepreneurs seeking to deliver positive impact. It has launched a new venture: Youth HUB, a collaborative workspace for young social innovators – with programming to create a pipeline for low-income youth of diverse backgrounds to participate in creating enterprises that address social and environmental issues. [www.oakland.impacthub.net](http://www.oakland.impacthub.net)

**High House Production Park, Thurrock**

* A major campus focusing on pathways to employment in backstage and behind camera skills across the creative industries – a major scale example. [www.hhpp.org.uk](http://www.hhpp.org.uk)
Waterford’s Proposed Cultural Quarter - O’Connell Street

Steeped in history, O’Connell Street was an area of significant wealth, prosperity and economic import to the city of Waterford during the 18th century, at the time when its port (then the third largest in Ireland) was a bustling trade route. This historical trading area of the city bridged the divide between Ballybricken (on the then city outskirts) and the river, where goods from outside the city were traded and exported. Many of the finest examples of the city’s architecture are to be found the streetscape bearing testament to this wealth. Important industry flourished in the area from shipbuilding to glass making, with Penrose Lane at the western end of O’Connell Street the site of the first glass factory, which would later become Waterford Crystal, arguably the most famous business in the city. However, the fortunes of the street changed over time and today O’Connell Street is an area largely overlooked in a city which has in recent years prioritised the development of its retail and tourism offer in other districts, notably the Viking Triangle and waterfront. The former significance of O’Connell Street is a distant memory, overtaken by this changed economic and strategic landscape.

The street remains a distinctive part of central Waterford but has lost much of its economic and cultural energy. It feels to the margins of the town centre, a little unloved, home to a set of economic and cultural activities which are fragile and lack coherence as a collective offer. It currently houses an eclectic mix of shops, service industries and small-scale micro-enterprises, a cultural node in the form of the Garter Lane Theatre and Artist’s Studios sits in the middle of the street and the old Granary building now houses Waterford Institute of Technology’s (WIT) School of Architecture. The street is peppered with vacant premises and enveloped by a substantial residential cohort of primarily new immigrants.
communities to the city. Resurgence in the area is developing slowly in the form of bars, cafés, its differing cultural communities, and vibrancy of its small but growing student population. Its current dilapidation providing a creative opportunity for considered renewal and revival.
Vision, Purpose and Guiding Principles

Vision
To deliver inclusive and sustainable innovation and growth for the cultural and creative sectors of south east Ireland; to become a distinctive and engaging place to the heart of Waterford which is open, inspiring and a vital addition to the city’s creative, knowledge and visitor economy.

Purpose
To be a vibrant, creative, supportive community for residents and creative business, and a cultural destination which showcases the best of south east Ireland

Guiding Principles
Waterford’s Cultural Quarter is:

✧ A place of openness and generosity with creative people to its heart and with a distinct local identity
✧ A place for experimentation, collaboration, knowledge sharing and exploration
✧ A catalyst and driver for the city’s creative economy
✧ Everyone’s cultural quarter
✧ Never complete, always in renewal
✧ Affordable for all types of users and different forms of activity
✧ Multi-disciplinary – bringing together different sectors, different communities and different perspectives through a focus on culture and creative practice
✧ A vibrant hub – using the city to provide the energy, relationships and exchange through which creativity thrive
✧ Supported by local agency partners for continued development and success
Visual distinctiveness captured on the Rainbow Road in Wijdesteeg, Amsterdam
Risks and Mitigation

"Authenticity must be used to reshape the rights of ownership...Authenticity is nearly always used as a lever of cultural power for a group to claim space and take it away from others without direct confrontation, with the help of the state and elected officials and the persuasion of the media and consumer culture. We can turn this lever in the direction of democracy, however, by creating new forms of public-private stewardship that give residents, workers, and small business owners, as well as buildings and districts, a right to put down roots and remain in place. This would strike a balance between a city’s origins and its new beginnings; this would restore a city’s soul."


No cultural quarter development comes without inherent risks. Cultural quarters are often contested, a source of discussion, query and reflection and this because they matter to the people for whom they are created. It is also because too often they are overly-municipal in their model and approach, with an area demarcated for culture, even if the cultural life of a city thrives elsewhere. This means they struggle to be meaningful for the cultural sector. In other instances, cultural quarters can be overly bounded, which limits opportunities for a more organic approach to place-making that encourages culture-led development in other parts of the city or which supports ‘non-cultural development’ in a cultural quarter. What is at stake is the potential for new and sustainable models for working and living within an urban context which are inclusive, explorative and open to different types of ownership, . Even at this early development stage, for WCQ it is important to state the following:

✧ **The WCQ is a long-term process** which will never be fully completed. It should be consistently open to different types of use, encouraging the cultural sector to shape its own development journey. It will build capacity and confidence in constantly changing ways across the cultural and creative sectors, to drive innovation and growth, and deliver value to sectors such as tourism and retail.

✧ **The WCQ is an open and collaborative endeavour**, with a wide sense of sector ownership, without which it will lack authenticity and feel disconnected from the cultural needs, aspirations and identities of the city. WCCC and key institutions such as WIT, WWETB, Fáilte Ireland etc will enable rather than own the process, ensuring no enforcement of activities or infrastructure for which wider ownership is lacking.

✧ **The WCQ is a proposition designed to mobilise community and sector engagement**. The WCQ development process should be owned and co-authored by community, business, education and municipality players. Creating a distinct district and naming it a cultural quarter, will not result in a realistic proposition if there is little support.
However, activities for which there is support will be explored further – even without the existence of an identified cultural quarter.

In addition to these points, which are really issues of value and positioning, the following are key risks for the WCQ and suggested approaches to their mitigation.

**Risk A Lack of social inclusion** which results in low levels of ownership and a bland approach to development – resulting in a place with no distinct identity. The WCQ will not develop and grow in a sustainable way if it fails to engage a diverse range of stakeholders (e.g. local resident communities, businesses and organisations; plus the wider cultural sector, education sector, and creative industries) from the start of the process and nurtures these relationships throughout its development.

*Mitigation:* A cultural quarter which is inclusive will also be distinctive, authentic, adventurous, and interdisciplinary, providing a range and mix of uses, having both an enabling role in community cohesion and the development of cultural capital. Vital to this will be ongoing community engagement and the development of ‘hard infrastructure’ (such as workspace and activity space and imaginative public realm improvements) and ‘soft’ infrastructure (such as networks, skills and education programmes and events), which helps fashion a shared sense of ownership.

*Development examples include:* An incubation space which provides market opportunities and programmes for enterprise development in the cultural and creative industries, supported by education partners (including for example: WIT, WWETB and LEO) and available to local community players and cultural and creative practitioners.

Public realm improvements to create a visually distinctive place. e.g. commissioning new street lighting for the WCQ – e.g. coloured LED lighting, with each light different in character and style; echoing the glass history of Waterford city; enhancing the streetscape through use of colour; playful lighting using interactive technology etc.
Risk B  **Lack of cultural anchors**, with few spaces and places which deliver the cultural dynamism needed to kick-start the area’s transformation

Although an inclusive and detailed approach should be the main focus for the WCQ (favouring small acts and the curation of a mix of uses); without larger-scale interventions and developments the WCQ may struggle to generate the energy and visibility required to attract culture-led development over the longer term and to build the energy and profile required to attract other investment and realign city-wide perceptions of the area.

*Mitigation:* Many cultural quarters work best when they have signature developments that in one movement add to the vitality of the area and give it a clear brand narrative.

*Development examples include:* securing a more active and visible role for WIT with a new kind of open, industry-facing facility that connects arts, creativity, science and technology and involving a cultural production / visitor hub – e.g. related to glass and a space which is attractive to emerging talent in the creative industries sector. A re-imagining of the Garter Lane Arts Centre as a cultural hub within the WCQ offers opportunities for additional cultural production and civic engagement, amplifying the existing cultural strengths of the city and creating a space to talent to congregate, work and play.

*Canberra Glassworks, Canberra, Australia.*
Risk C  **Weak governance and partnership**, with a lack of imaginative place-making, advocacy, coordination and finance

The WCQ will only thrive if it is supported by a coherent governance structure; an arrangement of strategic partners working with the cultural sector and communities to co-develop approaches to urban planning and sector development. This is key to attracting investment and ensuring such investment is meaningful to local stakeholders. A partnership which lacks the potential to access the required funding to affect change will impact negatively on the possible success of the WCQ.

**Mitigation:** Vital here will be an overarching partnership group to drive forward inward investment and planning agendas with the local authority playing an enabling role across these partnership activities and, where possible, to identify opportunities for investment, offer proactive solutions and create a planning framework to support the development of the cultural and creative industries; therefore, it should include a set of ‘task and finish’ groups for specific investment and development themes (e.g. public realm, creative workspace, cultural skills, cultural tourism/destination management) as part of its remit.

**Development examples include:** Encouraging creative approaches to place-making with artist and design commissions to mobilise community engagement and encourage a participatory element to planning and development. Promoting mixed use of the WCQ streetscape, delivering flexible and phased pedestrianisation to support creative programmes and business development (e.g. creating a pavement café culture and becoming the home of street festivals in the city.)
**Risk D** Poorly conceptualised approaches to destination marketing and management, which creates a ‘product’ that lacks authenticity and relevance to key stakeholders in the community, the cultural sector and visitors alike.

Alignment with city and regional place-marketing and tourism products should be developed in full consultation with the WCQ – so that the WCQ is not appropriated without consent. Additionally, the temptation to view the cultural quarter as primarily a tourism destination in and of itself should be resisted as to so do can risk the success of the entire development process.

**Mitigation:** The WCQ should be encouraged to develop its identity over time and any branding activity should be participatory and driven by the activities which emerge from the quarter – e.g. festivals and events, pop-up activities, and diverse cultural practice. It is likely that the WCQ will become a focus for cultural tourism as the quarter develop but will only have a positive tourism development impact where it is considered by a discerning visitors that the WCQ is authentic and organic and enabled them to truly immerse themselves in a place which has culture embed and at its core.

**Development examples include:** WCQ Opportunities to provide funding to WCQ partners to develop their own brand identity, maps and itineraries should in itself be an inclusive and participatory process.
**Risk E. Imbalanced land-use leading to property inflation and gentrification over regeneration agenda**

Cultural quarters can create disproportionate economic and social effects for different socio-economic groups and communities, particularly those that may have limited access to the benefits of cultural development. Care must be taken to ensure that plans and frameworks put in place to support creative industries development do not lead to gentrification of the WCQ and a subsequent loss of authenticity, which in turn further limits access to these groups and threatens the success of the initiative.

**Mitigation:** The WCQ will thrive on a mix of production spaces that offer differing levels of affordability; consumption spaces which allow for independent retail, bars and restaurants; and residential spaces which provide a blend of social and private housing, including family units. To ensure long-term sustainability, early success will be in securing either long-term leases or, preferably, freehold ownership for cultural production space (e.g. artist workspace, grow-on space for creative businesses, cross-sector incubation/activation spaces for creative and technology companies linked to WIT etc.). In turn, by securing cultural activity over the long term, the area will start to generate the energy and distinctiveness attractive to both public and private investment for workspace and residential development.

**Development examples include:** Workspace development as a mix of provision, including encouragement of; larger space for activities such as sculpture and performing arts rehearsals; external/internal mixed use spaces for community use and cultural engagement, wet space for crafts and visual arts; and high spec. space for digital creative firms.

Residential development - the WCQ can pioneer live-work spaces that combine social housing and creative industries; developer contributions to deliver affordable street level workspace, cultural sector commissioning and capacity building, and relevant new cultural infrastructure; all of which can help generate an inclusive and distinctive environment for working, living, playing and visiting.
Proposed Development Plan

Waterford’s new cultural quarter is the re-imagination of an urban space as a place where creativity flourishes and which is co-authored by its resident multi-cultural communities, to which creative and cultural individuals from within Waterford and further afield are drawn to work and live. A vibrant quarter which is distinctly different from other districts in the city and which links the city’s focal points, sited between the end of the Greenway and proposed distillery development; the North Quays and proposed relocation of the Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre and the retail heart of the city at John Robert’s Square; and anchored by a portfolio of innovative arts and cultural organisations which can develop as hubs of excellence to give the WCQ a symbolic value to the arts and cultural sector of the city, regionally and nationally.

Who is the WCQ for?

- Residents of the WCQ O’Connell Street area
- Creative and cultural practitioners, managers and entrepreneurs
- Retail and creative businesses in the WCQ
- Wider public and visitors to Waterford city
- Education and industry partners
- Investors in Waterford

What might it look like?
How can it be delivered?

Delivery of a successful WCQ will require strong public / private sector partners and the establishment of a business development group responsible for the identification of development and investment opportunities; building trusted relationships with developers; showcasing the WCQ as a creative place and delivering good governance for the delivery of the project and with a strategic intent to develop creative clusters in the WCQ over time. Members would include the council, WIT, housing associations, WCQ and neighbouring businesses (including hotels), and the city’s key creative businesses and cultural organisations. In turn, this sets up the terms of reference for a creative quarter agency (or equivalent) – a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee which will play the role as sector broker, inward investment lead and fund-raiser for the WCQ over the medium (3-5 years) term.

The WCQ also requires a supportive City and County Council which works to ensure effective delivery of the project over time to include:

1. Commits to championing and advocating for the project.
2. Embeds the WCQ into relevant planning and development frameworks for the city to support the development of a WCQ in O’Connell Street.
3. Delivers required revenue for public realm improvements towards the creation of the WCQ as a district in the city that is both visually and materially different.
4. Delivers necessary and future-proofed public service supports which will enable the WCQ to continuously innovate (e.g. high-speed broadband connectivity etc)
5. Provides sustained affordable space and incentivised rates for businesses (e.g. cafés bars, boutique retail shops, creative businesses etc) in the O’Connell Street area.
6. Commits to long-term and incentivised leasing of publicly owned premises for creative and cultural industries development.
What can the Cultural Quarter deliver for constituent communities?

FOR ALL

The WCQ will be a dynamic quarter in the heart of the city linking the end of the Greenway to the city’s retail centre and showcasing the best of Waterford’s creative talent, energy and spirit. A dedicated home for high-quality and innovative cultural and creative practice and programming with improved cultural venues and a vibrant creative community and a place where diversity is celebrated through local culture and where innovation and creativity flourishes. The WCQ will have a summoning power for a range of consumption and participatory activities – drawing people to the city and then to the district.

- A mix of spaces and platforms with strong networking functionality. This might involve B2B networking and cultural and community events (e.g. screenings, live music etc.); and a facilitated community for creative and cultural workers – e.g. a WCQ creative union which involves access to WCQ news, a level of business and legal support, units to be invested in CPD and skills, favourable rates for cultural events etc.
- An open and generous programme of activities, events and infrastructure which embrace the distinctive identities of local people and encourage intercultural dialogue to nurture new progressive senses of place for the WCQ.
- A landscape of experimentation and play – encouraging smart and interactive design across public space and the built landscape – e.g. experimenting with digital for way-finding, exploring the diverse languages and culture of the district, and for real-time exchange with cultural quarters internationally (via live cams). High bandwidth connectivity and free wifi in public spaces with engagement activities to re-imagine the district through gaming and play.
FOR CREATIVE AND CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS, INNOVATORS, AGENTS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Building on existing competencies in cultural management against the back office innovation and services, which is fast becoming a distinctive element of the Waterford economy; the WCQ will over time house a concentration of independent production spaces, innovative arts organisations, cultural facilities and organic clusters of creative industries and will act as a catalyst to drive the sector forward. Project elements which could be supported over the lifetime of the plan include:

✧ A new city gallery and exhibition space – focused toward contemporary and interdisciplinary practice.
✧ Supports for creative entrepreneurship in the form of an incubation / exploration hub, creative skills and entrepreneurship programmes, including apprenticeships – to nurture local talent and provide pathways into the growing local cultural and creative sector.
✧ An Activation Space for creative industries to commercialise and access new markets.
✧ Opportunities for artists and creatives to innovate; network, make, present, share learning and sell their products / services.
✧ Access to affordable managed workspace for artists and creative businesses (possibly managed by a recognised arts / creative studio or workspace management company; or the WCQ provides the opportunity for a new start-up studio management company - e.g. born out of an artist collective).
✧ Access to capacity-building and market development supports for creative and cultural enterprises (e.g. via bespoke programme development with the ETB, LEO and WIT).
✧ A new proposition for glass in the city e.g. a ‘hotshop’ for glass design, making and immersive learning which combines innovation in product design with a visitor experience.
Pop-up spaces for emerging creative businesses and for cultural programming.

For Agencies and Sectoral Partners

- A newly invigorated and sustainable cultural economy which creates a destination focus for Waterford city.
- A WCQ Management Company who will work closely with industry and agency partners to deliver on the strategic priorities of the WCQ over time.
- A WCQ network and platform to encourage ideas for projects, activities and interventions that position the WCQ as a co-created proposition. (Facilitated by a sector intermediary and nurtured with a small grants and events programme – e.g. Creative Ireland programme fund and Waterford City Arts Grants Scheme). A test-bed process to explore different ways to re-imagine the district and its role in the wider city.
- Development of hubs which smartly specialise, while encouraging innovation which crosses sectors for example:
  - Feasibility for new creative hubs and facilities which build on Waterford’s strengths
  - A programme of maker-spaces which explore the continuum from artisanal practice to digital printing.
  - Scoping for a centre for film, animation and memory – where contemporary production companies, digital agencies and artists working with archives and memory are encouraged to co-locate.
Waterford Cultural Quarter Development Plan

Chapter: Proposed Development Plan

- Continued exploration and development of Waterford’s urban fabric with Dept of Architecture through long-term project collaboration, student exchange, and multidisciplinary practice
- Proposed relocation of performing and creative arts programmes to WCQ
  - Design and delivery of industry supports for enterprise development within the creative sector via Incubation Hub
  - Developing and managing relationships with individual and collective communities living in the WCQ
    - Platform for engagement between communities and WCQ
      - Continuous collaboration with other partners and WCCC to deliver bespoke programmes and initiatives to promote social inclusion
  - Continuity of existing relationships to create opportunities for collaboration in skills development in design-led craft enterprises
    - Leadership and advocacy for specialist design-related projects in WCQ - specifically glass development
      - Continued development of integrated framework of educational supports for enterprise and skills development in creative and cultural industries
        - Inclusion in Cultural Quarter development to align with visitor proposition for Waterford city and Ireland’s Ancient East brand
          - Provision of supports for high potential creative industries enterprises via the WCQ Activation Hub
            - Designation by Council of WCQ for cultural / creative use

- Providing leadership and clarity for culture-led development in the city
- Creating a planning framework to support the development potential of the WCQ
- Delivering cross-agency support throughout the WCQ development process
- Identifying and leading development for the delivery of cultural anchorage in the WCQ
FOR BUSINESSES

- Increased investment and footfall into the area over the lifetime of the plan and beyond.
- Public realm improvements to the streetscape delivering a safer environment for commercial businesses to operate beyond core working hours.
- Strong sector and community involvement to deliver on the WCQ plan.
- Provision of affordable rentals and rates and security of tenure for creative and cultural businesses in the quarter.
- Incentives for relocation of existing cultural and creative businesses to the WCQ.

FOR RESIDENT COMMUNITIES

It will celebrate the increasingly intercultural residential population living within its boundaries, promoting a greater understanding and awareness of the value which these communities bring to the urban centre and responding to ways in which these communities want to live, work and play in the city. Core project ideas identified within the planning process include:

- A space for communities to flourish, e.g. community kitchen and gardens, public realm spaces for residents of the WCQ, enhancement of intercultural awareness through celebrations of
distinctive cultural identities and the commissioning of new syncretic cultures ‘made in Waterford’.

✧ A continued opportunity for residents to be included in development of their local area.

✧ Improved safety of the area through public lighting, walkways, seating etc

✧ Greater animation of the streetscape and the provision of public realm space for communities to congregate.

✧ Increased activity and vibrancy in the WCQ beyond core working hours (e.g. via accessible cultural programming, bars, cafes etc) increasing the opportunity for residents to participate more fully in the cultural life of the city.

✧ Provision of a community / industrial kitchen and development of a food market incorporating foods made in the community and offering an opportunity for trade and social engagement with both Irish residents and visitors alike.

✧ Enterprise development opportunities and supports for creative entrepreneurs in the community.

**FOR EDUCATION PARTNERS**

Referencing Waterford’s aim to be a ‘Learning City’ establishing the WCQ as a transformation opportunity for WIT as it becomes the University of the South East is a major opportunity to converge civic and institutional interests, in relocating some creative and cultural facilities to the WCQ but also innovating and transforming – to develop the types of facilities and models which can play a major role in supporting best practice in research, teaching, knowledge exchange, enterprise and innovation. This can include:
✧ A new centre for performing arts which can co-locate teaching and development with a skills, performance and festival development facility which builds festival capacity and innovation and delivers front and backstage skills to support an already strong sector for Waterford.

✧ A new model of educational support which serves to bridge the gap between the formal education system and the business / creative sectors. These supports will build on the existing framework of education within the city and county with a focus on competency development within the creative industries space in particular.

✧ Deepening of the existing relationship with the relevant Schools within WIT, namely schools of Humanities, Engineering and Business to develop a strategic framework which supports graduates of these schools who wish to pursue a career in the cultural and creative industries and developing bespoke supports and accredited programmes which serve to further careers in this field.

✧ The location of the WIT’s Department of Architecture in the Granary on Hanover Street has already resulted in collaborative projects with local creative practices through undergraduate projects. As the Department further develops into postgraduate research programmes, there is potential to create innovative, research-led collaborations across the creative and cultural industry sectors in the WCQ. Inclusion within the WCQ spatial framework of collaborative, incubation ‘live-work’ spaces or ‘graduate hubs’ would enhance opportunities for architecture graduates to undertake research, competitions, exploration of material prototype developments and IT innovation in collaboration with other graduate students across the cultural and creative fields. Such facilities could also attract European and International interest through student exchange Erasmus partnerships further developing new forms of collaborative creative practice and new creative enterprises in the city.
New space(s) for interaction and R&D which connect different creative, technology and knowledge-intensive activities already in existence – e.g. a centre for creative technologies which brings together the South East applied Materials Research Laboratory, VR and AR activities, design and robotics, sound and performing arts. This can be a multi-disciplinary lab and teaching hub with additional enterprise and skills functionality and which might include in its early stages a virtual reality modelling of the proposed WCQ.
Work in progress

This process of development for the WCQ is already taking shape. A range of stakeholder engagement meetings and workshops have taken place over the summer months and these sessions have elicited more than 80 separate ideas for development of the WCQ, relevant to different communities and industry players. The process of development is ongoing and the ideas generated to date will be included in the work plan for the implementation of the WCQ at the end of the planning process. In addition, a number of programmes and projects which support the WCQ development phase are already in progress and these include but are not limited to:

Creative Spirits

Creative Spirits is the name given to a network (of nine EU cities) in which Waterford participates as part of the European Union funded URBACT III programme – Driving change for better cities. This programme helps cities work together to develop sustainable solutions to major urban challenges by developing transnational networks, networking, knowledge sharing and capacity building / learning opportunities across partner cities. Each partner city in the Creative Cities network has a plan in place to improve their urban area through development of their creative and cultural industries sector. The network includes partners from: Ibi - Spain, Maribor – Slovakia, Sofia – Bulgaria, Kaunas – Lithuania, Ravenna – Italy, Loulé – Portugal, Budapest – Hungary and Lublin – Poland. The project is in its second phase and will run until June 2019. WCCC’s participation supports the development of O’Connell Street as a Cultural Quarter by creating leaning opportunities to develop novel approaches which link creative places, people and businesses, attracting more creative entrepreneurs and boosting creative entrepreneurship in dedicated urban spaces as a result.

WIT Department of Architecture Vertical Studio 2017

The Vertical Studio is a generous, collaborative project of the collective creative minds of the students of the WIT School of Architecture and their academic faculty. This project is visualising, mapping and modelling the O’Connell Street area finding the spaces that make up the fabric of the WCQ - O’Connell Street and its tributaries. In addition to the mapping process the project will re-imagine a new vision for the WCQ that provides a distinct identity as a place, space and home for creativity and culture.

During the first week of this semester the students of the School carried out a mapping of the spaces and buildings of the WCQ, developed a scale model of the Waterford Cultural Quarter7 and a range of conceptual ideas to realise the potential of the street, bearing in mind its constituent communities. The initial concepts were presented on 15 September at the Granary Building on O’Connell Street and the scale model is currently open to public view in the building.

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7 Model of the WCQ shown on the front cover of this document
Concepts included: development of public realm at Garter Lane Theatre for community and creative use; a community kitchen and food market; re-imagination of rear access to hotels to include pavement cafés; plans to create a cultural node at Mary Street to connect the WCQ with the proposed Waterford Distillery Visitor Centre and the end of the Greenway and a food, entertainment and film concept (Full-Film-Ent) located form Gladstone Street to the old city wall.

Further work will be carried out on these concepts in the coming months and the outputs of this work and continued collaboration with the WIT School of Architecture will serve to inform development planning for the WCQ into the future.
Creative Ireland

- The Waterford Creative Ireland programme is completing its first year of cultural programming. A five year strategy for Creative Ireland is currently being developed and will dovetail with the ambition of the WCQ and provide opportunities to deliver new audiences for cultural and impact cultural programming in the city over the lifetime of the plan. This programme presents opportunities for cultural programming and commissioning to support small-scale development projects in the WCQ.

Waterford Walls

- The success of the Waterford Walls international street art festival, which transforms Waterford City into an open-air gallery, is felt far beyond Waterford city. It’s annual event enticing over 50 international and national artists to present their work on Waterford’s built heritage canvas. The city’s embrace of Waterford Walls highlights an understanding and appreciation of art and culture at agency level and a flexibility and generosity towards animating the streetscape of the inner city and delivering a cultural attraction, an international ‘go to’ street art destination, born of Waterford’s creative spirit.
Waterford Youth Arts

- Waterford Youth Arts in partnership with the WCCC has developed a feasibility document seeking to document to secure capital funds for development of a youth arts facility (Arts and Cultural hub) at the end of the WCQ district. Included in this comprehensive plan is the restoration of two existing Georgian buildings which would be re-purposed to house Waterford Youth Arts and specifically its connectivity with film development. In addition to this proposition is the potential to leverage coding and skills development programmes for young people in Waterford and to house these within the same complex, creating a hub for innovative youth arts and creativity. Positioning of a grass-roots youth arts initiative in the WCQ offers potential for the development of talent to support creative enterprises in the WCQ over time. An opportunity exists therefore for the WCQ Management Company to pursue possible capital funding for this project to be realised in the medium term.

Waterford City Library

- Waterford City Library, while positioned outside of the WCQ proper on Lady Lane, was formerly housed on O’Connell Street. A the central library serving the inhabitants of the city it offers the potential to work with the WCQ to deliver additional enabling resources to support development process via programming opportunities, information and engagement with the city’s inhabitants and supports for creative entrepreneurs. Collaborative working with the WCCC culture team (managed via the central library) also creates opportunities to provide a continuum of cross-sectoral support for the WCQ.

Waterford Area Partnership

- Working on behalf of the resident communities in the WCQ, Waterford Area Partnership is an integral part of the WCQ Steering Group. The focus for WAP in the WCQ development is on; ensuring social cohesion, promoting social enterprise and job creation for those living in the O’Connell Street area, developing opportunities and access for community use of existing (and vacant) premises, providing resources to support communities to apply for European Union funding related to project and programme development, developing cohered ownership and organisation of the WCQ by the resident community and ensuring that the WCQ reflects and responds their cultural diversity.

Ireland’s Ancient East

- Is Fáilte Ireland’s tourism brand proposition for the south and east of Ireland and which includes Waterford city. This visitor framework is based on the development authentic stories and immersive experiences which reflect local people and place. Fáilte Ireland is currently developing a series of workshops for trade in the south east of Ireland and is working with trade partners in Waterford in particular to improve accommodation stock in the city, build a
cohered and high-quality visitor offer and create a destination focus which will increase dwell time in the city and wider region.

Conclusion

The development of a cultural quarter for Waterford shows a continued commitment from Waterford City and County Council to culture-led regeneration. It leverages the work carried out to date in developing a coherent culture-led framework for the region and positions Waterford as a national leader in this field, through their re-imagining of an existing site with a living community at its heart. This is no ‘brown-field’ site for Waterford and so development of the WCQ requires careful planning in order to be successful. Focussing on where best practice global models have garnered their success in the development of similar districts, learning from the range and scale of their developments and contextualising this against the backdrop of the proposed WCQ, will enable the partners to realise their vision. Central to this success is the integrated community aspect of the development process. The value in embedding the voice of the communities living in the district should not be underestimated. Creating a framework which gives voice to their needs, aspirations and potential in relation to this development will present a socially-inclusive district which is co-authored by its residents, which provides access to, engagement with and participation in cultural and creative practice, performance, production and exhibition leading to a more vibrant, animated, visually and culturally diverse district in the city.

This draft plan will be presented to the Strategic Policy Committee of Waterford City and County Council on Tuesday 10th October and will be made available for public consultation from that date until Friday 3rd November. After this time responses from the public consultation process will be reviewed and a more detailed work plan will be developed. The final plan will serve to animate further possibilities which the WCQ can deliver for Waterford. It will include a proposed governance model and funding framework for the WCQ, finalised strategic development priorities and an implementation plan for the short, medium and long term development of quarter.