

# ST GEORGE'S CULTURAL QUARTER

ACTION PLAN (2016-2020)



City Mayor



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## FOREWORD

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In recent years St George's Cultural Quarter has undergone an impressive development programme that has brought about many positive changes to create a critical mass of arts and cultural venues as well as a place for new creative sector businesses to start up and thrive.

The partnership between public and private investment has established Curve, Phoenix, Leicester Print Workshop, Two Queens, LCB Depot and Makers Yard, plus an eclectic mix of bars and restaurants that has transformed the area.

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More people are now choosing to live in St George's Cultural Quarter resulting in greater activity and vibrancy.

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Economic development linked to the arts and the creative industries remains one of the City Mayor's key priorities. There is an opportunity to further build on the strengths of what has already been achieved in St George's Cultural Quarter by setting out clear ambitions and actions to further develop and enhance the area.

Our plans between now and 2025 include creating more high-quality workspaces and places to live; continuing to support and promote our arts venues to grow and thrive; and encouraging the sustained growth of creative industries.



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We want St George's Cultural Quarter to be a lively place through the day with a vibrant evening economy.

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Our plans to transform St George's churchyard and the public space in Orton Square will create a stronger central focus in the area for both the community and visitors to enjoy.

We will continue to work closely with all of our valued partners including the Cultural Quarter Association, Curve and Phoenix to accelerate the development of St George's Cultural Quarter and promote this area as a home for arts and creative industries with a national reputation.

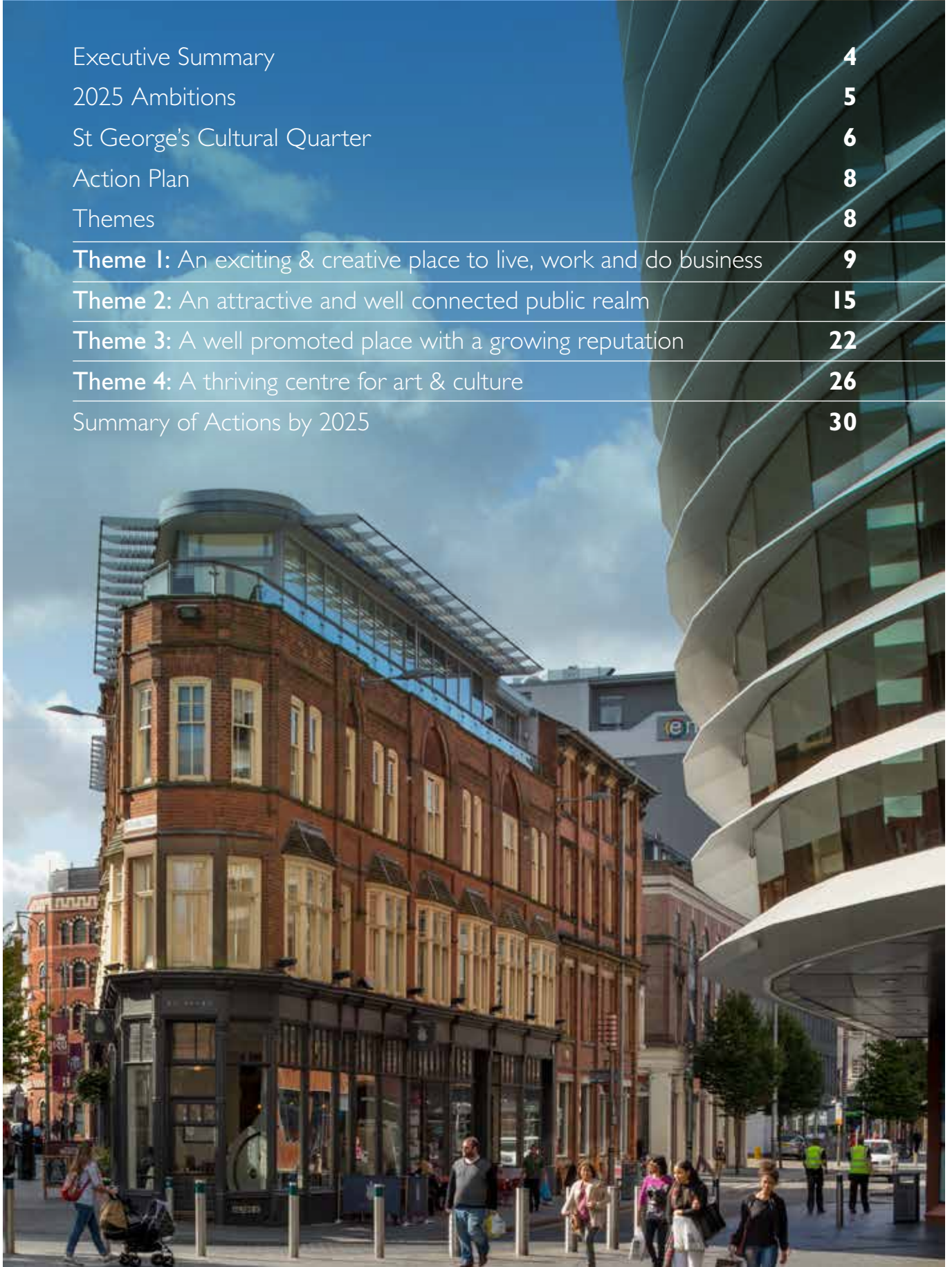
**Cllr. Sue Waddington**

Assistant City Mayor

Lead for St. George's Cultural Quarter

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Much has been achieved in the development of St George's Cultural Quarter in recent years with several key projects successfully delivered.

Both Curve, which has seen audiences up by 25% in the last 12 months, and Phoenix, where ticket income is 177% higher than five years ago, helped to cement the area's reputation as a thriving arts hub with a regional and national profile. A substantial portfolio of creative workspace for businesses and designers goes from strength to strength with Makers Yard, Two Queens and Leicester Print Workshop further adding to the established offer provided by LCB Depot and Phoenix workspaces.

Additional development work in the area has included the St George's Street children's playground and the creation of more car parking provision to support arts venues and the evening economy.

Bars, restaurants and cafés have opened around Rutland Street and Halford Street and more people now live in the area than ever before making it a more vibrant, active place both day and night.

The Cultural Quarter Association has formed a Community Interest Company (CIC) to unite the businesses and residents to develop the creative character of the area as a great place to live, work and explore in partnership with the council.

It is recognised there is more to do to build on what has been achieved to deliver a step change in what the destination has to offer.

The growing creative sector in Leicester is made up of over 1,600 businesses and nearly 5,000 employees and is a key priority for the council. St George's Cultural Quarter is the natural home and main focus for this.

Supporting development by the private sector of new homes, cafés, bars, restaurants and businesses to enhance the vibrancy of the area will continue to be a priority for the council.

Continued improvement of the public realm will include transformation of St George's Churchyard as a public space linked to an extended Orton Square and creating improved connectivity to the railway station. Improved signage, wayfinding and gateway improvements will help raise the profile of the area and make it more accessible from the city centre and the railway station.

Supporting investment in Curve, Phoenix and other developing arts venues will reinforce the artistic potential of the St George's Cultural Quarter and attract more visitors. Encouraging local artists and creative learning for local people will support grass roots opportunities in the city.

The reputation of the St George's Cultural Quarter needs to be developed further to attract more interest from within and outside Leicester. More active coordinated promotion by the council and art venues will encourage people to live, work, invest, and visit the area.

This plan provides the ambition and specific priority actions for the council and its partners to deliver over the coming years. It also provides a commitment and confidence to potential new businesses, residents and investors looking to locate and invest in the area.



## 2025 AMBITIONS

### JASON BRUGES VESTIGE

To develop a strong reputation for St George's Cultural Quarter, within and outside of Leicester, we will actively promote the area as a creative place to live, work and experience a high quality artistic offer

To encourage creative sector businesses to relocate, invest and grow in St George's Cultural Quarter we will support development of 20,000 square feet of new workspace as part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership Creative Sector Growth Plan

To create a more attractive public realm we will transform St George's Churchyard into a public space linked to Orton Square and will invest in improving gateways and signage to assist visitors to the destination

To accelerate numbers of people living in St George's Cultural Quarter to bring more vibrancy, and also support for the evening economy, we will actively encourage developers and landowners to bring forward development schemes for new homes cafés, bars and restaurants

To support a step-change in arts and culture we will work closely with venues to facilitate their development and expansion plans and develop a programme of exciting events to showcase artistic talent

## ST GEORGE'S CULTURAL QUARTER



### SARAH KIRBY WHERE ARE WE NOW

St George's Cultural Quarter is located a few minutes' walk from both the city centre's main retail space and Leicester Rail Station. Bounded by Humberstone Gate/Road to the north, Charles Street to the west and St George's Way (A594) to the east, the area is easily accessible from many destinations including London at only an hour and 9 minute train journey away.

The area comprises a mix of high-profile listed buildings as well as bold, iconic new ones such as Curve designed by Rafael Viñoly. Work to regenerate the area began in 2001 with culturally-led capital developments initiated by Leicester City Council that supported the wider creative environment through investment in public realm works at Orton Square.

St George's Cultural Quarter is home to three of Leicester's award-winning arts organisations - Phoenix, Curve, and Leicester Print Workshop. In addition, the area is home to several successful annual events - Skyride Leicester, St George's Festival and Light the Night.

St George's Cultural Quarter is not only a place to work. In fact the area houses the largest concentration of residents in the whole of Leicester city centre. These residents are important to the area as they create the

pedestrian footfall, which helps to create an active and vibrant area and contributes to trade for local businesses such as restaurants, cafés, bars, cinema and theatre.

The area has grown over the years into an exciting hub of artists and creatives that have embraced the workspaces. The council is keen to continue the momentum with its light-touch nurturing approach, which is considered important in developing a creative environment. The council has successfully delivered the LCB Depot and Makers Yard workspaces which have already seen businesses successfully grow, create jobs and graduate into alternative grow-on spaces, many within the St George's Cultural Quarter.

In recent years, the council supported Leicester Print Workshop's relocation to St George's Cultural Quarter with support from the Arts Council and a range of partners. The council also helped with the refurbishment of a 15,000 square feet building on Humberstone Gate East, Echo Factory, to create a music education hub, working closely with the building owner and developer. The council remains committed to working with building owners, developers and creative businesses to unlock empty or underutilised buildings for creative uses. Going forwards the council commits to maximising the use of its own assets to benefit the local community.

St George's Cultural Quarter is fortunate to have the benefit of several large companies on its doorstep. Hastings Direct is one of the inward investment successes for the city creating over 1,000 jobs. In addition, Performing Rights Society (PRS) and Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL) have chosen Leicester as the base for their new joint music business in Mercury Place creating 200 new jobs in the creative sector.

Leicester is a dynamic city with a diverse and relatively young population with 55% of people under 34. The city is home to renowned universities, De Montfort University and University of Leicester, producing more than 30,000 work-ready graduates each year.

The council has established strong relationships with the key partners such as the Cultural Quarter Association, a Community Interest Company run by businesses and residents, and continues to work closely with them to develop ideas and thinking on St George's Cultural Quarter.



St George's Cultural Quarter area boundary

## ACTION PLAN

Leicester City Council will work together with the key stakeholders in the area such as the Cultural Quarter Association with its strong active membership of local businesses and residents, Phoenix, Curve, Leicester Print Workshop, St George's Church, owners/developers of significant properties and sites, the community of creative industry businesses, residents and potential funders to make sure that the area thrives going forwards.

This Action Plan outlines the principal actions proposed to improve the St George's Cultural Quarter area for businesses, residents, and visitors.

The actions are derived from various sources:

- Ongoing Leicester City Council work in the area
- Cultural Quarter Association
- A well-attended 'community planning' public event held in 2014 - run by the Cultural Quarter Association to discuss the future of the area
- Engagement with Leicestershire Business Voice
- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's Creative Industries Sector Growth Plan 2015

## THEMES

### THEME 1

An exciting & creative place to live, work and do business



### THEME 2

An attractive and well connected public realm



### THEME 3

A well promoted place with a growing reputation



### THEME 4

A thriving centre for art and culture



# THEME I: AN EXCITING & CREATIVE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND DO BUSINESS

## **ACTION I: SUPPORT CREATIVE SECTOR BUSINESSES TO START-UP AND THRIVE, INCLUDING IDENTIFYING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP/GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES.**

Leicester City Council provides business support services to tenants within its creative industries workspaces at LCB Depot, Makers Yard and Phoenix. These services include one-to-one business coaching, hot-desking, business workshops, staff and team development, assistance with recruitment processes as well as strategic planning to help businesses grow. Shared meeting spaces are provided resulting in reduced costs to new businesses, helping them to focus on business growth.

The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's Creative Industries Sector Growth Plan identifies a number of potential opportunities to develop business in St George's Cultural Quarter. Further support is recommended through a potential creative agency and actions to link partners in the sector; improve broadband, additional business support advice, assistance through the LLEP Business Growth Hub, finance assistance and cross sector working, particularly with colleges and universities.

Leicester City Council has successfully implemented a Leicester to Work programme that delivers support for apprenticeships, work experience and graduate placements as well as training opportunities. The thriving creative sector in St George's Cultural Quarter provides further opportunities to develop new talent and also retain more university graduates within the city.

**The council will deliver targeted business growth programmes for creative industry businesses. These will include a growth programme to provide support for capital investment. Proposals contained in the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's (LLEP) Creative Industries Sector Growth Plan will be further developed where funds permit.**

**The council's Employment Hubs and LCB Depot will target opportunities in St George's Cultural Quarter for apprenticeships, work experience, and graduate placements to retain and develop talent in the creative industries and create closer links with higher education/ further education.**

**The council will support 150 creative businesses to 2020.**

APPRENTICESHIP GRAUATION 2017



LCB DEPOT



**ACTION 2: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE CREATIVE WORKSPACES TO SUPPORT GROWING BUSINESSES.**

Several successful workspaces within St George's Cultural Quarter have already been delivered including LCB Depot, Makers Yard, and Phoenix.

The council's workspaces in St George's Cultural Quarter have proven popular and are currently fully let, suggesting further demand in the area for similar space. The land and property owned by the Council is largely already developed apart from the recently acquired

land adjacent to Phoenix. This valuable site is ideal for future development opportunities including additional workspace. There are however a number of potential vacant or underused buildings in private ownership that may provide further opportunities for additional grow-on workspace. Some of these are in key locations in the Orton Square and Humberstone Gate areas.

**The council will work with building owners and developers to identify opportunities for creating new workspace to allow creative business start-up and growth. A further 20,000 square feet of creative workspace is our target to 2020.**



**ACTION 3: ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE QUALITY PLACES FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE.**

Residents are an important part of the community and have created a strong sense of place. A flourishing residential community has grown within St George's Cultural Quarter in part due to the successful conversions of large, Victorian warehouses into apartments and flats. In addition, a varied programme of festivals and events attracts thousands throughout the year and has established the destination as a vibrant, safe and exciting area to explore.

Most of St George's Cultural Quarter is part of a designated Conservation Area, which means that the area is of special architectural and historic interest in character or appearance. Any alterations to, or demolition of, any building or part of a building in the area will need planning and/or conservation area consent. This process is designed to protect the area's character and ensure that new development takes account of the scale, form, materials and details of its surroundings.

Redevelopment of the former International Hotel, including for residential and ground floor commercial use, is a particular priority to address this currently redundant and unsightly building.

**The council is keen to support creative solutions to encourage the provision of high-quality housing. Whilst the Council's approach generally prefers active frontages/uses on the ground floors to attract business and visitors, the height and scale of many of the buildings lend themselves well to upper floor residential units.**

**The council commits to working with owners, developers and architects to identify opportunities, promote high-quality design, and encourage the residential community to flourish by delivering a target of 40,000 square feet of residential space.**

**ORTON SQUARE - ARTIST IMPRESSION**

**ACTION 4: PROVIDE SUPPORT TO CREATE MORE COMMERCIAL SPACES FOR CAFÉS, BARS, RESTAURANTS, AND MUSIC VENUES AS WELL AS SUITABLE WORKSPACES FOR DESIGNER MAKERS AND ARTISTS.**

As St George's Cultural Quarter grows and more people live, work and visit the area there is a need to provide a strong offer of leisure activities as well as additional choice for restaurants and bars. The cluster of bars, restaurants, and cafés in the area provides a solid foundation for a sense of place and delivers additional commercial opportunities.

Growth around Orton Square is more likely given the number of buildings with suitable frontage for commercial purposes. The provision of active frontages and the vibrancy resulting from visitors throughout the day and into the evening will support the growth as a destination and will further contribute to developing a 'café culture'.

The council is committed to providing suitable workspaces for designer makers and artists and will work with building owners to encourage the inclusion of affordable workspace. In addition, the Council will work to join up the workspace offer that already exists at Makers Yard, Leicester Print Workshop and Two Queens.

**The council will work with all stakeholders to support the refurbishment of vacant buildings into suitable spaces for café, bar, restaurant, music venue or workspace. This will include support through the planning process, bespoke advice and guidance, and targeted financial support. The council will work to enable exhibition space is made available for local artists to benefit from and showcase their work.**



Leicester Print Workshop's relocation to the Cultural Quarter presents us with a vast array of new opportunities. Not only do we have a unique, fit for purpose building that will enable us to grow the number of artists who use the space, but we have a higher profile and access to a larger audience for our exhibitions, education programme and shop. We celebrated our 30th birthday in 2016 and, going forwards, we hope to grow our reputation as a national and international centre of excellence for fine art printmaking



**CLAIRE HUDSON**

Chair  
Leicester Print Workshop



THE SOUNDHOUSE



THE SHED



LEICESTER PRINT WORKSHOP

**ACTION 5: PUT IN PLACE PLANNING POLICIES TO ENABLE THE RIGHT MIX OF DEVELOPMENT TO HAPPEN.**

A number of residential and commercial schemes have been developed within St George's Cultural Quarter. It is important to ensure that Leicester City Council's planning policies continue to support high-quality development and are flexible enough to allow new opportunities to be developed going forward.

**The council will ensure the Local Plan review includes appropriate supportive policies and guidance to assist the sensitive growth of the St George's Conservation Area.**

**ORTON SQUARE - ARTIST IMPRESSION**

### **ACTION 6: ENHANCE THE VISIBILITY OF ST GEORGE'S CULTURAL QUARTER AT KEY GATEWAYS.**

In 2006 the Cultural Quarter Art Programme created artworks in sandblasted granite embedded into the pavements around St George's Cultural Quarter.

The artworks are situated at entrances on pathways leading to Curve, and were designed with the assistance of Leicester's wider creative community.



The 8 gateways with artwork are located at:

- Humberstone Gate/ Yeoman Street
- Humberstone Gate / Vestry Street
- Humberstone Gate / Rutland Street
- Humberstone Gate / Morledge Street
- St George Street / Queen Street
- St George's Way / St George Street
- Rutland Street/ Charles Street
- Church Street / Charles Street

In recent years the council installed a high-end projector in its offices at City Hall to project images onto the wall of Ramada Encore Hotel during the hours of darkness, which serves to highlight a key entrance to St George's Cultural Quarter from city centre. Local artists and creatives based in St George's Cultural Quarter or people holding events in the area are encouraged to

submit suitable images for projection to an independent panel for consideration. The projector also promotes events at the Curve, Phoenix, LCB Depot, Makers Yard and Leicester Print Workshop.

The key gateway entrances to St George's Cultural Quarter do not presently maximise the opportunity to promote the area as a destination and its many offers. This is equally true for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle drivers.

**The council intends to create better and more inviting gateways into St George's Cultural Quarter on roads and paths, including from the inner ring road, Granby Street and Humberstone Gate East.**

### **ACTION 7: TO SUPPORT THE ROLL OUT OF SUPERFAST BROADBAND.**

Work previously carried out as part of the Leicester Superfast Broadband Programme identified gaps in the network. It is expected that St George's Cultural Quarter will receive full superfast broadband (minimum 24mbps) coverage over the period to 2020.

**The council will encourage private sector providers to extend coverage to support the business and resident community with 100% coverage in the area of superfast broadband speeds by December 2017.**



## THEME 2: AN ATTRACTIVE AND WELL CONNECTED PUBLIC REALM

### **ACTION 1: IMPROVE THE PUBLIC REALM TO ENHANCE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER AND VIBRANCY OF THE AREA.**

Substantial public realm works were carried out as part of city centre improvements some years back, particularly at Orton Square, Halford and Rutland Street and in the vicinity of Phoenix. The Cultural Quarter Art Scheme also saw public art provided to complement and enhance this public realm improvement.

**The council will carry out further targeted actions to improve the public realm as set out below in Actions 2 & 3 and will work in partnership with the Cultural Quarter Association on these schemes to provide street furniture designed to reflect the creative environment.**

### **ACTION 2: DELIVER A HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC REALM SCHEME AT ST GEORGE'S CHURCHYARD.**

The council currently maintains and landscapes the churchyard area, which is the largest green space in the city centre. There are plans to open up and enhance

the churchyard to increase natural surveillance and, by transforming the space, create a community-friendly environment and help address incidences of anti-social behaviour. The objective is for the space to become a lighter, brighter, safer area for people to walk through or, spend time in a quiet environment. The scheme will also help to improve the route linking Orton Square with the Leicester Rail Station.

The council will in 2017/18 deliver a high-quality public realm improvement scheme in St George's Churchyard.

In consultation with the Serbian Orthodox Community that occupies the church for worship, a scheme will be designed to include high-quality footways and the creation of a more visible entrance at the St George's Street access to improve connectivity. An access to the churchyard will also be created at the rear of the LCB Depot courtyard, which will further open up the area and provide a potential improved space for outside eating and events.

It is hoped that the project, which is at the heart of the St George's Cultural Quarter, will become a catalyst to encourage the re-use of buildings around Orton Square.

**ST GEORGE'S CHURCHYARD – ARTIST'S IMPRESSION**



### **ACTION 3: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE THE PEDESTRIANISED AREA AT ORTON SQUARE.**

Orton Square is an important location to have a greater number of restaurants and bars, which in turn will support both the day and night time economy and will complement the Square's biggest occupier, Curve.

**The council will implement an experimental closure of the road through Orton Square between Rutland and Halford Street in 2017**

**to create a greater space for food and drink uses around the Square and a larger events space. If the temporary closure is well received and benefits the area it will become permanent, extending the public space.**

This will create an active and animated plaza for local residents and visitors to enjoy. Expanding Orton Square will potentially encourage owners of adjacent vacant and underutilised buildings to bring them back into economic use.

AN INDIAN SUMMER



#### **ACTION 4: MAKE THE AREA BETTER CONNECTED AND MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE BY FOOT, CYCLE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT.**

Currently many people do not realise the close proximity of St George's Cultural Quarter to the wider city centre area and transport nodes such as the Leicester Rail Station.

Visitors to the area may not realise they have 'arrived' in St George's Cultural Quarter as there are few directional signs to assist navigation. Directions to car parking could be made clearer and more provision made for essential visitor information.

Through better signposting and clear indication of St George's Cultural Quarter on all wayfinding maps the area will become more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists. This would benefit existing users and visitors to the area, which in turn may allow more businesses to realise the wider benefits from increased footfall within the area.

**The council will consider all opportunities to improve connectivity in St George's Cultural Quarter through its ongoing Connecting Leicester Programme.**

#### **ACTION 5: DELIVER THE 'LEGIBLE LEICESTER' SCHEME TO MAKE IT EASIER TO MOVE AROUND ST GEORGE'S CULTURAL QUARTER AND LINK TO OTHER KEY PARTS OF THE CITY CENTRE INCLUDING TRANSPORT NODES.**

'Cultural Quarter', Curve and Phoenix are all relatively well signposted for road users, however, few pedestrians realise how close they are to St George's Cultural Quarter when in the city centre. Pedestrian and cycle permeability is also difficult through the area due to the lack of good signage and information.

**The council will deliver its 'Legible Leicester' programme which will establish a new wayfinding and information network across the city centre, including 11 new signs/fingerposts within St George's Cultural Quarter before the end of 2017.**

The 'Legible Leicester' project will facilitate ease of movement for pedestrians to, and through the city and destination areas with clear signage, wayfinding and mapping system as well as to create pedestrian, cycle and vehicle accessible environments. The scheme will be delivered at a time when Leicester continues to see a substantial increase in the number of visitors to the city.

#### **LEGIBLE LEICESTER WAYFINDING**



**ACTION 6: TO ENSURE ADEQUATE VISITOR CAR, COACH AND CYCLE PARKING IS AVAILABLE IN THE AREA, PARTICULARLY SERVING CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS AND THE EVENING ECONOMY.**

In the last few years the council has identified a number of additional car parking spaces, including for free evening use. On-street spaces and a new car park at Phoenix have been delivered with the recent implementation of short-term tariffs in the latter to encourage visitors to the local cultural attractions. Further work is being undertaken by the council to understand the parking needs of the area.

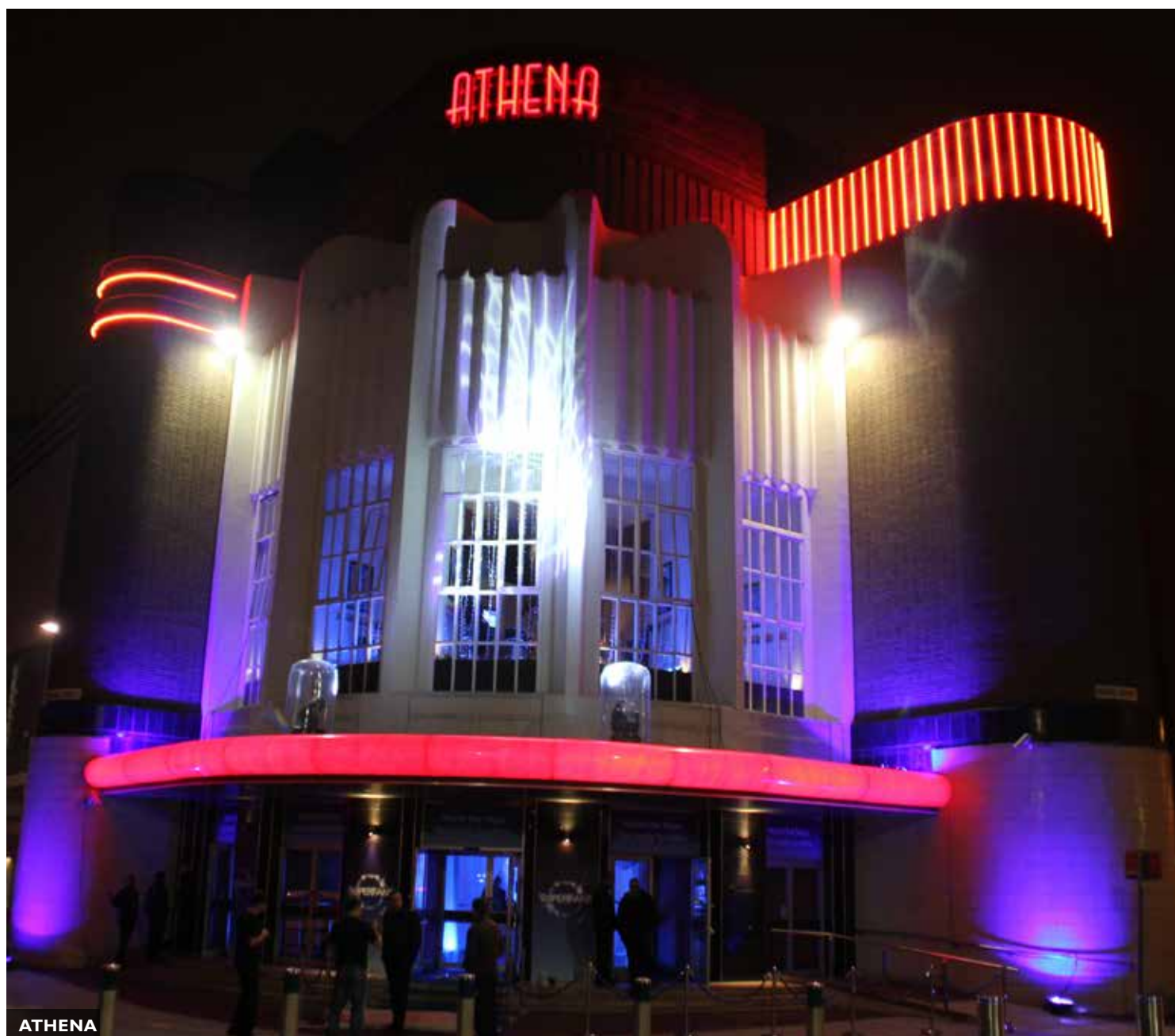
The council will work with key attractors to the area- Phoenix, Curve, and other organisations, to ensure there is the parking available to support their requirements. For visitors to Curve, easily accessible coach drop off and pick up parking will be supported with five new coach spaces being added to St George's Cultural Quarter by Summer 2017. The council will also continue to identify additional on-street parking opportunities for vehicles and cycles. We will also liaise with NCP to encourage appropriate tariffs and special offers for St George's Cultural Quarter visitors and businesses.



ATHENA



CURVE



**ACTION 7: INSTALL FEATURE LIGHTING TO HIGHLIGHT THE HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA.**

Feature lighting was installed as part of the Cultural Quarter Art Programme several years ago. More recently, the council has successfully worked with business owners throughout the city centre to deliver successful lighting schemes on some of the most historic and architecturally interesting buildings in Leicester.

Most of St George's Cultural Quarter is part of the St George's Conservation Area and has several prime

candidates for feature lighting. The council is keen to introduce additional architectural feature lighting into the environment to highlight the interesting historic character.

**The council will install an Architectural Feature Lighting scheme at St George's Churchyard in 2017/18 as part of the churchyard public realm scheme. Further opportunities, particularly through commercial development schemes, will also be encouraged.**

**GENT48 & ZINER BRING THE PAINT**



### **ACTION 8: IDENTIFY AND DELIVER OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW PUBLIC/STREET ART AND OTHER INITIATIVES THAT VISUALLY IDENTIFY THE AREA AS A CULTURAL AND CREATIVE PLACE.**

The Cultural Quarter Association has developed an ambitious week-long series of artistic events, featuring over 250 local and international creatives. St George's Cultural Quarter will be transformed with mixed media arts from murals to visual mapping and sculptural 3-dimensional pieces to create Leicester's first ever Street Art Festival – 'Bring the Paint'.

The festival will create a bright and refreshing visual arts legacy amongst a back drop of historically significant post-industrial buildings, which will inspire the city through innovative artist-led programmes.

**Working in partnership with key stakeholders in the city and beyond, the Cultural Quarter Association will stage Leicester's first ever Street Art Festival, 'Bring the Paint', to create a lasting visual arts legacy in the Cultural Quarter.**



The Cultural Quarter Association (formerly CQBA) is proud of the unique relationship that it has forged with Leicester City Council, working directly with them on the area's Joint Steering group. Through this, the Association has become a highly efficient conduit for the area's views and it is hoped that its conversion into a Community Interest Company will facilitate even further the area's growth and vibrancy as recently demonstrated in our acclaimed "Bring the Paint" Street art festival



**JED SPITTLE**  
Cultural Quarter Association (CIC)



### **ACTION 9: ADDRESS UNTIDY SITES; IMPROVE CLEANLINESS AND GENERAL MAINTENANCE THROUGHOUT THE AREA.**

Whilst the general environment is of a good standard in St George's Cultural Quarter there are a number of untidy sites awaiting development and there's a need for more regular maintenance of the street scene.

**The council will carry out regular audits and walkabouts of the area to identify maintenance and general environmental concerns. It will use its planning and enforcement powers when appropriate on untidy sites, and enhance the general street maintenance regime to improve standards of cleanliness.**

## THEME 3: A WELL PROMOTED PLACE WITH A GROWING REPUTATION

**ACTION 1:** DEVELOP A STRONGER REPUTATION OF WHAT THE AREA HAS TO OFFER AS A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT THROUGH EFFECTIVE PROMOTION WITH PARTNERS.

St George's Cultural Quarter has a story to be told. Its architectural and historic buildings as well as its public spaces are home to many residents, businesses, and a creative workforce making the area a unique destination in the city. The area needs to be positioned in place marketing activities to make the most of the physical, social, and cultural characteristics in attracting more tourists, investors, creatives and residents.

**The council commits to continuing its place marketing development and activities for the city and character areas including the St George's Cultural Quarter, and reviewing options for promotion in 2017/18.**





**ACTION 2:** DEVELOP A CREATIVE SECTOR-BASED PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY, TO MAKE A COMPELLING CASE TO ATTRACT DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT.

Creative industries is a priority sector for the Leicester economy with the city being recognised as having the second largest cluster of creative businesses outside of London. The council has a strong track record in working with creative businesses to help them grow and succeed, which has resulted in St George's Cultural Quarter now home to over 200 creative businesses.

The council's Inward Investment team has worked closely with London-based Performing Rights Society and Phonographic Performance Ltd to encourage their new business venture be located in St George's Cultural Quarter. This success sees the creation of 200 new jobs.

To attract more creative industries from outside of Leicester, it is proposed that research is carried out to identify the factors that would give Leicester the edge over competing cities in successfully attracting creative businesses to St George's Cultural Quarter and support the Creative Industries Sector Growth Plan.

The council's Inward Investment team will help to build an area profile that is relevant to an investor audience and make recommendations for a compelling proposition based on the research results.

**The council commits to undertake research to identify the relocation requirements of creative businesses they would wish to attract to the Cultural Quarter, and review options for inward investment in 2017/18. It will use inward investment resources to generate leads to attract businesses looking to relocate to Leicester over other competing cities.**

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As artists used to working in London with people from all corners of the globe, Leicester's rich cultural identity was a big draw for us. The proximity to London via rail, the strong university culture, and the cost of starting a business here were also key components in our decision to relocate here. What clinched it for Leicester over several other Midlands cities however was the existence of a cultural quarter and the clear support from Leicester City Council helping establish and grow creative businesses- all the foundations were in place. We felt comfortable, knowing we were joining a creative scene which is dynamic and interesting, and has great potential for growth. Leicester very quickly, felt like home.

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**STEVEN ALLBUTT,  
YUKA NAMEKAWA**  
Directors & Founders  
StudioAme





### **ACTION 3: WORK WITH PARTNERS AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE AREA'S UNIQUE QUALITIES TO THE BUSINESSES AND LEISURE TOURISM SECTOR.**

Curve, Athena and Ramada Encore have been successfully marketed as new conference hubs for the city centre attracting key events such as the Federation of Small Businesses' and Cycle City Active City conferences. Conferences in St George's Cultural Quarter had an economic impact in excess of £20 million for the city in the year 2014/2015. This is a growing market and more conferences have been secured for 2017/18.

Phoenix is a member of the Leicester Conference Hub. They have supported numerous bids and generally host 5-6 large conferences per year, sometimes in partnership with De Montfort University, which attract many overseas visitors that stay in Leicester.

The award-winning Curve has evolved into one of the UK's leading national theatres and attracts thousands of visitors each year. Phoenix has established itself as Leicester's centre for independent cinema, art, and digital culture. And the many eclectic bars and restaurants in the area are popular with residents and tourists alike.

The area is enhanced by Leicester's unique offer including Leicester Print Workshop, Two Queens and Makers Yard, all of which add value to the story that is St George's Cultural Quarter. They also provide additional tourism offers however, it is acknowledged that smaller organisations need support to develop their tourism offer.

The council recognises the importance of the tourism sector and is committed to working in partnership with venues and attractions in St George's Cultural Quarter to grow visitor numbers and continue to increase the value of tourism.

**The council will continue to provide support to promote St George's Cultural Quarter as a conference hub to attract more events to increase spend in the area and a review of options will be carried out in 2017.**

**The Cultural Quarter Association will continue to be invited to be represented on the Tourism Advisory Board to inform the tourism strategy for the city. New niche markets will be developed, especially group travel and additional coach drop off and pick up points will be provided in the area.**

**ACTION 4: SUPPORT THE CULTURAL QUARTER ASSOCIATION TO PROMOTE THE AREA.**

Support will be provided by the council to continue to promote the venues and activities in the area. The redevelopment of the Visit Leicester website creates the opportunity to better promote St George's Cultural Quarter's heritage, green space, and venues and attractions. Businesses and event organisers that meet the website listing criteria will be able to have a free listing to promote events on the website.

A growing programme of festivals and events take place on and around Orton Square including Leicester Comedy Festival, St George's Festival, City Festival, Indian Summer, Visual Arts Week, and Light the Night.

These events attract many visitors increasing spend and helping to promote the area to first time visitors. Various guides are produced by the council including the City and County Guide and Christmas Guide. St George's Cultural Quarter benefits from promotion of the area and businesses through editorial copy and have the opportunity to take advertising space. The guides are distributed throughout Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and neighbouring counties.

The Visit Leicester Information Centre provides a service to promote St George's Cultural Quarter to tourists and also sells tickets for Curve.

**The council will continue to support the Cultural Quarter Association to promote the area by ensuring they are included in the marketing for the city centre and to ensure that the creative character and vibrant personality of the place is represented.**

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In the last 8 years Curve has established itself as a leading producing theatre in the UK. In 2015 over 320,000 people came through our doors to see a production, take part in a workshop or attend a conference. The plans for the Cultural Quarter are incredibly exciting and will cement this area of the city as a vibrant, beating heart of Leicester's rich cultural offer

**CHRIS STAFFORD**  
Chief Executive  
Curve



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**ACTION 5: WORK CLOSELY WITH PARTNERS TO DEVELOP A PROGRAMME OF EVENTS THAT PROMOTES THE AREA AND SHOWCASES LOCAL TALENT.**

Festivals and events are a great contributor to the cultural and economic development of an area and are effective promotional tools for the destinations, which may increase the demand for tourism in the area as well as create an image of a place to live, work, and visit.

The council will work with local partners to create awareness of St George's Cultural Quarter as one of the city's 'character areas' through its citywide Place Marketing Strategy.

**It will also facilitate joint programming and events within, and linking to, St George's Cultural Quarter; and ensures that city events have a presence in the area. Together with partners, the council will develop a future programme of events.**

**CURVE INSIDE OUT FESTIVAL**

## THEME 4: A THRIVING CENTRE FOR ART AND CULTURE

**ACTION 1:** WORK WITH KEY PARTNERS, CURVE AND PHOENIX TO PROVIDE SUPPORT WITH THE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE THEIR ARTS & CULTURAL OFFER.

Curve and Phoenix are both successful venues in St. George's Cultural Quarter and both are considering how they might expand to significantly increase visitor numbers and the cultural event programme.

**The council will work with both of these key partners to assist with their expansion plans.**



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Phoenix has established itself as a high-profile independent cinema and creative digital media centre attracting over 200,000 people a year.

We have an important role as Leicester's hub that uniquely specialises in digital culture – showing and producing film, art and creative media. Phoenix attracts national funding and supports initiatives to boost tourism, investment and creative industries in Leicester.

We look forward to contributing to the next phase of the Cultural Quarter's development. Our ambitious plans to expand Phoenix will benefit Leicester and the region by increasing visitors, as well as business and community engagement in film and digital media

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**JOHN RANCE**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Phoenix



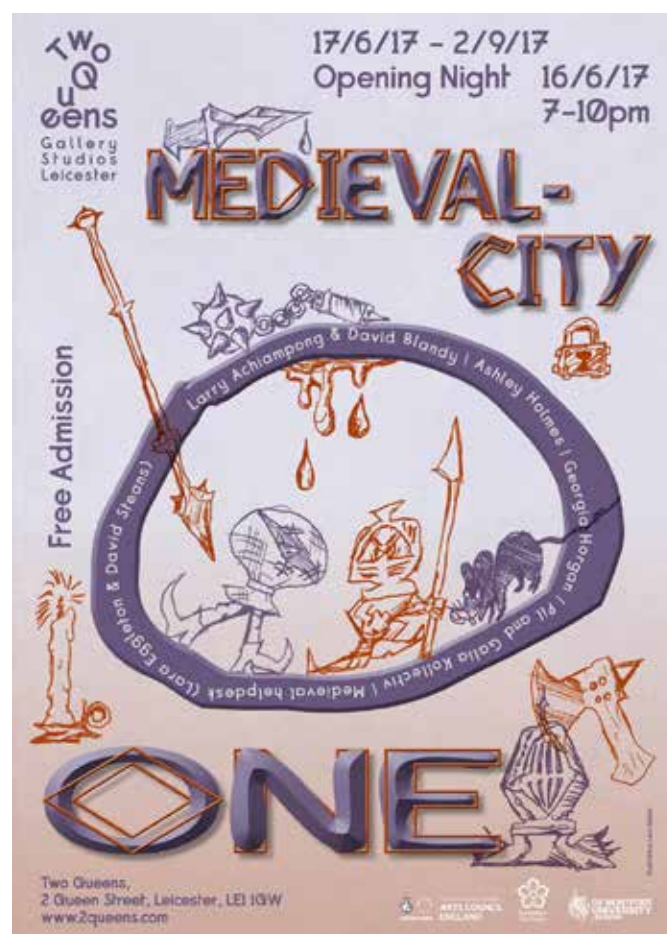
**ACTION 2: SUPPORT ARTISTS TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN THE AREA.**

The council has installed a projector at one of the main gateways into St. George's Cultural Quarter. Artists in the area are encouraged to submit images for projection to an independent panel to showcase their work. The location is in a particularly prominent position facing theatre-goers arriving on foot from the city centre.

The council and partners will work to identify funding to invest in cultural activity. We will seek to encourage local artists within the area to become actively involved in developing the cultural offer.

**The council will work with developers and building owners to deliver more workspace and exhibition space suitable, for artists and design-makers.**

**The council will support the Cultural Quarter Association in their ambitions to hold a Street Art Festival – Bring the Paint, as well as support the public art and festivals agenda.**





CREATIVE LEICESTERSHIRE PECHAKUCHA EVENT

**ACTION 3: ENCOURAGE CREATIVE NETWORKS.**

There are a number of established networks in existence already and the importance of knowledge sharing is recognised within those creative networks. The creative sector, unlike other sectors, mostly comprises of a one person business. It is common for such businesses to work collaboratively to add value to their own businesses-perhaps tapping into other businesses' skills to fulfil larger contracts in terms of plugging skills gaps or additional freelance support. Organised networking events can help to strengthen these links creating a stronger, more inclusive business community.

**The council will work collaboratively with partners, stakeholders, and artists to support and amplify the range of creative networks in the area. The council will support and encourage further networking opportunities for the wider creative community through resources and available venues where appropriate.**

#### **ACTION 4: SUPPORT LEARNING AND SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE THROUGH ARTS VENUES AND LOCAL ARTS GROUPS.**

The council has been working closely with local education providers to encourage graduate retention to ensure that skills and knowledge remain in the city. The Council helped to support the transformation of 15,000 square foot for the Echo Factory on Humberstone Gate East, a music education provider with degree courses accredited by the University of Wolverhampton.

Phoenix hosts the largest student arts initiative in St George's Cultural Quarter to develop the next generation of film industry professionals through De Montfort University's Film Studies course based at Phoenix. Over 100 students are taught four days a week, adding significantly to the morning footfall and vibrancy. Film students further attract visitors to the destination through their annual film festival.

The entrepreneurial route is often a favoured direction of creative graduates. The city's universities have recognised this and are working to provide appropriate business space for these opportunities to flourish. The council too, with its business support offer, is in a position to encourage these prospects.

**The council commits to working with businesses and the universities to retain graduating students and encourage more, high-quality work experiences for students and graduates from creative backgrounds.**

**The council will explore opportunities for low-cost start-up space suitable for graduate needs. We will involve Two Queens in the progression and development of this action. Together with the networking opportunities listed in Theme 4, Action 2 and the business support listed in Theme 1, Action 1. This will stimulate the right business environment and provide the support tools that new-start businesses need in order to be able to grow and thrive.**

#### **ACTION 5: SUPPORT LOCAL ARTISTS, TO MAKE A PHYSICAL ARTISTIC MARK ON ST GEORGE'S CULTURAL QUARTER.**

The council will work with local artists and the Cultural Quarter Association to develop place-making in the Cultural Quarter.

**The council will kick-start one initial pilot artist intervention project in at least three locations. It will involve and support local artists to create and install small arts interventions in the public realm using various art forms, as part of a rolling programme of small creative commissioning opportunities. These small artworks will collectively strengthen the impression that you are in a 'cultural quarter' and create a sense of local ownership, pride and connections between artists, arts organisations and the physical locality. The art works will use humour, be non-traditional where possible, bring surprises and create a 'buzz'. The work will aim to appear over time, giving the viewer the desire to visit the area regularly, to see what is new where.**



## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TO 2025

The following actions will deliver a step change in St George's Cultural Quarter over the period to 2025.

### THEME 1 AN EXCITING & CREATIVE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND DO BUSINESS

**ACTION 1:** support creative sector businesses to start-up and thrive, including identifying grant opportunities and training and apprenticeship/graduate opportunities.

**ACTION 2:** support the development of more creative workspaces to support growing businesses.

**ACTION 3:** encourage development of more quality places for people to live.

**ACTION 4:** provide support to create more commercial spaces for cafés, bars, restaurants, and music venues as well as suitable workspaces for designer makers and artists.

**ACTION 5:** put in place planning policies to enable the right mix of development to happen.

**ACTION 6:** enhance the visibility of St George's Cultural Quarter at key gateways.

**ACTION 7:** to support the roll out of superfast broadband.

### THEME 2 AN ATTRACTIVE & WELL CONNECTED PUBLIC REALM

**ACTION 1:** improve the public realm to enhance the historic character and vibrancy of the area.

**ACTION 2:** deliver a high-quality public realm scheme at St George's churchyard.

**ACTION 3:** identify opportunities to increase the pedestrianised area at Orton Square.

**ACTION 4:** make the area better connected and more accessible for people by foot, cycle and public transport.

**ACTION 5:** deliver the 'Legible Leicester' scheme to make it easier to move around St George's Cultural Quarter and link to other key parts of the city centre including transport nodes.

**ACTION 6:** to ensure adequate visitor car, coach and cycle parking is available in the area, particularly serving cultural attractions and the evening economy.

**ACTION 7:** install feature lighting to highlight the historic and architectural features within the conservation area.

**ACTION 8:** identify and deliver opportunities for new public/street art and other initiatives that visually identify the area as a cultural and creative place.

**ACTION 9:** address untidy sites; improve cleanliness and general maintenance throughout the area.

### THEME 3 A WELL PROMOTED PLACE WITH A GROWING REPUTATION

**ACTION 1:** develop a stronger reputation of what the area has to offer as a place to live, work and visit through effective promotion with partners.

**ACTION 2:** develop a creative sector-based promotional strategy, to make a compelling case to attract development and investment.

**ACTION 3:** work with partners and visitor attractions to promote the area's unique qualities to the businesses and leisure tourism sector.

**ACTION 4:** support the Cultural Quarter Association to promote the area.

**ACTION 5:** work closely with partners to develop a programme of events that promotes the area and showcases local talent.

## THEME 4 A THRIVING CENTRE FOR ART AND CULTURE

**ACTION 1:** work with key partners, Curve and Phoenix to provide support with the infrastructure needed to develop and improve their arts & cultural offer.

**ACTION 2:** support artists to be more active in the area.

**ACTION 3:** encourage creative networks.

**ACTION 4:** support learning and skills opportunities for local people through arts venues and local arts groups.

**ACTION 5:** support local artists, to make a physical artistic mark on St George's Cultural Quarter.

## MONITORING IMPACT

This plan sets out ambitions and specific actions up to 2025. A baseline report was carried out by Leicester City Council in 2014 and will provide a basis for regular monitoring of delivery progress until the end of the action plan period. This can be reported annually and shared with partner groups. A regular meeting to monitor ongoing progress is held with the council, partners and stakeholders including the key arts venues and business and resident representatives.



