

**West Midlands Cultural
Sector Study**
Place-Based Analysis

**A Report by Hatch, We Made That
& Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy**
July 2021

Forewords

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands

Creativity is the driving force of our region. It is reflected in our rich heritage, our diverse cultures, and our entrepreneurial spirit. Our world-class arts & cultural sector is at the core of this, moving us forward, shaping our identity and nurturing the next generation of creative talent. Art & culture help to strengthen our society, bringing communities together, inspiring our young people, and making places more attractive for residents, visitors, and investors.



Covid-19 pandemic has, however, had a devastating impact on the sector. In many cases its reliance on human interaction, seasonal operating hours and flexible employment has left it particularly vulnerable. This research, initiated by our excellent Cultural Leadership Board, provides us with the evidence base to enable the sector's recovery. The research has allowed us to comprehensively map our cultural assets across the region, giving us a full picture of the sector's strengths and weaknesses.

It also exposes the challenging relationship between access to cultural assets and factors like health, wellbeing, and skills development – something I am determined to address in my second term as Mayor. But crucially, it shows how the sector's creative energy can drive the recovery of the region as a whole. I look forward to working alongside partners to act on these findings and grow our arts and cultural sector over the coming years.



Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

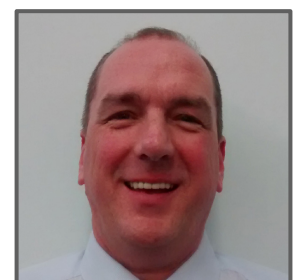
Creative cities are great cities: Fact! Large scale creative festivals are good for cities, be it European City of Culture in Glasgow or Liverpool, UK City of Culture in Hull, and currently Coventry. On a bigger scale still, the Cultural programmes of London 2012 and the 2014 Glasgow Games brought millions of people together over and above traditional audiences for sport. The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will also be a milestone moment for city and region.

It all starts with understanding audiences and the unique research within these pages will ensure the Birmingham 2022 Festival will act as a catalyst for real change, in a way that has not been possible before. Our aspiration is that the festival becomes a transformational moment for the sector strengthened by a plan to create a new 10-year cultural strategy that is region-wide. This will be another first that will test the commitment, generosity and vision of our councils, funders agencies, arts organisations, and arts professionals.

We want to use 2022 to ignite a revolution in the perception and status of Birmingham and the West Midlands as a creative place, changing national and international perceptions, increasing tourism, investment, ambitions and pride in place - inspiring creativity and change, long after the last medal is won.

Symon Easton, Head of Cultural Development & Tourism, Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council is proud to have supported this important research. It will help inform our future direction in regards to the Our Future City Plan and new Cultural Strategy through the Birmingham Cultural Compact.





Martin Sutherland, CEO of Coventry City of Culture Trust and Chair of the WMCA Cultural Leadership Board

As the Chair of the WMCA Cultural Leadership Board I am proud that during an extremely difficult year, we have found strength in collaboration and been able to produce this comprehensive report. It will provide us with the evidence base to continue the work of the board, and I am optimistic that this new report can help make the case for positive new developments across the region.

This report gives us the clearest picture we have ever had on the cultural sector in the West Midlands. At the heart of this is the way we can improve access to culture to our residents and visitors alike. Coventry City of Culture Trust has already done a lot of work around cultural engagement, to better understand the gaps and inequalities in provision. It is good to see some of this learning incorporated into this report, and we will be using the data and findings to complement our work.

It is also great that the report highlights the tremendous social value that arts & culture can deliver. While it may be more difficult to measure, it makes a significant contribution to our communities & society and is a central aspect of our work in Coventry.

This research has for the first time analysed our existing cultural infrastructure at region, putting a spotlight on what already exists and providing clarity where there are gaps in provision. It is vital that we continue to expand opportunities around our cultural ecosystem and the infrastructure supporting it.

Peter Knott, Midlands Area Director for Arts Council England

This cultural mapping provides detailed insight into the region's cultural assets and explores opportunities for place-based work - including major events like Coventry City of Culture and Birmingham Commonwealth Games. This brings benefits to creative individuals, organisations and communities across the WMCA.



We want everyone to benefit from inspiring and entertaining art and culture - from visiting museums or enjoying a show with family and friends, to developing creative talents at home via a Zoom workshop. Investing in creativity can have a powerful effect on improving wellbeing, transforming the places where we work, live and study, developing communities and unlocking the economic potential for towns and cities throughout the country.



Erica Love, Director – Culture Central

These pieces of research give us a significant insight into the lived experiences of communities within the West Midlands. This data is an invaluable resource for anyone who is interested in the ways in which culture and creativity play a part of our regional identity. At Culture Central, we are excited about the potential that this research provides, and the opportunity that we have to put the insights from this data into practice, working as a collective to ensure that we can all create opportunities through culture for the places and people of the West Midlands.

Anita Bhalla OBE, Board Member and Creative Lead, Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP



LEPs play a vital role in investing in people, places and businesses to drive forwards inclusive economic growth and increase quality of life. Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) has committed more than £30m in culture over the last four years, recognising the crucial role this sector can play in transforming our places, improving the well-being of our people and broadening opportunity for our communities.

We have established 'Cultural Action Zones', which are making a difference to our local centres and speeding up covid recovery on our high streets. Our £3m investment into a new Creative Content Hub for Birmingham is bringing more television and high-end film production to the region. We have also been developing new support programmes, for creative freelancers, creative businesses, and piloting new flexi-apprenticeships so that microbusinesses can access apprentices for the first time. Our unique Triple Helix structure of bringing local government, businesses and educational organisations together enables us to make targeted investments in a sustainable way.

None of these investments would be possible without evidence to back them up, from research to grassroots relationships with our creative businesses and communities. The high-quality data that this research has unearthed will guide and underpin our current and future policymaking. It will also play a critical role in our ability to advocate for the cultural sector nationally. GBSLEP views the cultural sector as a catalyst for economic recovery that will enable the levelling up of people, places and businesses in the West Midlands.

Fiona Allan, Chair of the West Midlands Regional Board for Tourism, West Midlands Growth Company

The West Midlands is home to a hugely vibrant, varied and compelling cultural scene, which contributed significantly to the £13.1 billion that tourists spent in the region in 2019. Whether it's theatres or museums, music arenas or heritage attractions, the region's cultural venues and festivals are the lifeblood of our tourism offer. They anchor the West Midlands' sense of place and purpose. They inspire visitors to come and explore, then choose to return, time and again.



As we start to welcome back more people to safely enjoy the West Midlands' internationally renowned cultural brands, this region has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bounce back and lead the UK's economic recovery and resurgence post-pandemic.

Major events such as Coventry UK City of Culture and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, together with its Cultural Festival, can be a focal point for national celebration and international interest. They can provide a catalyst for increased awareness of the West Midlands' cultural tourism credentials. Coordinated by the West Midlands Growth Company with regional and national partners, the Business and Tourism Programme will seek to maximise the benefits that the Commonwealth Games will bring. It will create a long-term legacy by boosting perceptions of Birmingham, the West Midlands and the UK as a world-class destination for tourism and culture.

As momentum and excitement builds ahead of a transformative 12 months in the arts spotlight, we support this analysis into the West Midlands' cultural sector, and encourage people to use these findings as we collaboratively shape our visitor offer.

Background

Arts & culture have a really important role in our society, both in terms of economic impact, as well as bringing together communities, delivering social value and supporting our health and wellbeing.

In 2020, regional partners commissioned two pieces of research that would provide more information about the cultural sector within the WMCA area.

The West Midlands cultural sector research project was a partnership between:

- West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) & WMCA Cultural Leadership Board
- Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games
- Coventry City of Culture Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
- West Midlands Growth Company
- Culture Central

The project received funding from Arts Council England and The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The purpose was to undertake both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the cultural sector in the West Midlands to provide an evidence base for future development of the sector, as well as maximise opportunities around major events and other place-based approaches. The aim was to provide a pre-Covid baseline, although the reports will also touch on the impacts of the pandemic.

The geographical focus of the project was on the three WMCA Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas; Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP, Black Country Consortium and Coventry & Warwickshire LEP. The Local Authorities included are listed on page 11.

The project included two overlapping strands of work:

1. **The Audiences & Engagement Strand** which included mapping & analysis of available population data and cultural engagement data. The aim was to analyse how people are engaging with arts & culture in the region, as well as provide some suggestions on how we could better encourage and capture this going forward.
2. **The Infrastructure & Economic and Social Impact Strand** included analysis of cultural sector employment, FE/HE education data relating to arts subjects, the regional impact of cultural tourism, levels of public & private investment into culture, as further analysis of four cultural clusters (North Birmingham, Digbeth in Birmingham, Leamington Spa and Dudley). The report summarises these findings to provide a baseline for the economic value, together with a framework for social value. Another key output of this strand is a digital Cultural Infrastructure Map which is available for anyone to use on the WMCA website.

This report covers the Cluster Analysis for the Economic and Social Impact Strand

Acknowledgements

The research commissioners would like to thank all the people who have guided and advised us on the development of this project, as well as engaged with the research & mapping activity through sharing their knowledge and experiences.

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the arts and cultural organisations participating in our research – thank you for your time and patience. We also greatly appreciate the support from Arts Council England and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for making this work possible.

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– Culture Central –



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1. Introduction & Place-Based Analysis

- 1.1 Hatch, We Made That and Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy have provided quantitative and qualitative insights on cultural employment, tourism, investment and education, in addition to understanding the economic impact of the cultural sector and its role in generating social value across the WMCA area. Although this research will be very helpful in understanding the cultural sector's profile across the WMCA area, identifying activity at a more granular level has not yet been undertaken, with the nuances within some of the West Midlands' neighbourhoods not being fully explored.
- 1.2 For this phase of the additional work, we have undertaken in-depth cluster analysis on four areas, providing a testbed for the economic and social impact frameworks being developed through the main body of the research, and also providing a series of cultural profiles that reflect the nuances of the cultural sector across neighbourhoods in the WMCA area.

Establishing Research Framework

- 1.3 To identify the areas to be examined in more detail, a range of criteria have been developed to demonstrate which clusters should be prioritised for this phase of work. We have identified **four clusters** from across the WMCA geography, which incorporate a wide range of different characteristics and specialisms.

Long-list of Clusters in West Midlands

- 1.4 We have arrived at a long-list of potential clusters through the following process:
- Evaluation of hotspots of cultural employment activity identified in the main report.
 - Evaluation of hotspots of cultural infrastructure identified in the main report.
 - Evidence from consultations undertaken across the WMCA area to inform the main report.
- 1.5 As suggested in our research brief, we would recommend that the clusters identified focus on neighbourhood-level activity where possible (e.g. Jewellery Quarter, Digbeth) as opposed to city-wide geographies so that the distinctiveness of geographies can be identified and the research can be more tailored to these locations.
- 1.6 The long-list of clusters identified is as follows:
- Digbeth, Birmingham
 - Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham
 - Birmingham, Centenary Square
 - Coventry
 - Wolverhampton
 - Dudley
 - Solihull
 - Walsall
 - Leamington Spa

- Stratford-Upon-Avon

Shortlisting Criteria & Framework

1.7 A sifting and prioritisation framework has been developed in order to reduce the number of clusters identified within the long-list of potential clusters. This will provide a clearer methodology through which clusters are selected. The key characteristics that have been assessed are:

- The geographical characteristics of the cluster (e.g. town centre/urban/rural) and the LEP they are located in;
- The maturity of the cultural cluster (e.g. well established/emerging/nascent);
- Cultural specialisms that are prominent in the area (e.g. creative industries/performing arts/heritage etc.).
- Current level of cultural employment.
- Recent growth in cultural employment (over the last 5 years).
- Future developments likely to influence the future of the cultural sector in each location.

1.8 The table on the page overleaf provides the evidence used to short-list the potential clusters.

1.9 Through the research framework, four clusters have been short-listed that provide a broad and diverse range of clusters for the study across different geographies and at different stages of their maturity:

- **Digbeth, Birmingham:** a well-established creative and cultural cluster in Birmingham, which is experiencing challenges as land values rise and demand for space put increasing pressure on the cultural sector (which is increasingly 'at risk'). The area currently has specialisms across the cultural and creative sector, including arts, crafts, music, media, design and publishing.
- **Leamington Spa:** a well-established creative cluster area, with significant representation of the gaming and design industry and supporting infrastructure including the University of Warwick's Creative and Digital Communities' initiative, Creative Futures Incubator, the Warwick District Creative Compact and the Creative Quarter. It has an emerging cultural cluster with specialisms in crafts, photography, museums and galleries.
- **Dudley:** an emerging creative and cultural cluster area with a rich industrial heritage and significant cluster of museums and galleries.
- **North Birmingham:** a highly diverse area with a relatively nascent cultural sector at present, with increasing signs of emerging activity which is mainly neighbourhood and community-led.

Table 1.1 Framework for Shortlisting Cluster Analysis Locations

Cluster Name	LEP	Area Type	Maturity of Cultural Cluster	Cultural Specialisms	Current Cultural Employ*	Growth in Cultural Employ (2015-19)*	Future Developments
Digbeth, Birmingham	GBSLEP	Urban	Well established – ‘at risk’	Creative industries, media, music, design & publishing	1,100	-11%	Culture ‘at risk’ – regeneration & rising land values (e.g. HS2); Digbeth Media Hub
Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham	GBSLEP	Urban	Well established	Crafts (jewellery)	1,500	+20%	Ambitions for ‘Creative District’ to protect sector
Birmingham, Centenary Square	GBSLEP	City Centre	Well established	Museums, galleries, performance space, libraries	1,625	+132%	Ambitions for new Science & Heritage Museum, wider regeneration initiatives
North Birmingham	GBSLEP	Urban	Nascent	Creative / neighbourhood-based placemaking	75	+50%	Ambitions around the Common Wealth Games and emerging organisations with strong community focus
Solihull	GBSLEP	Urban	Nascent	Activity around NEC	200	-40%	N/A
Coventry	C&W	City Centre	Well established	Museums, City of Culture	875	+54%	City of Culture FarGo Village, old Daimler factory, old Ikea building
Leamington Spa	C&W	Urban	Emerging	Creative & digital focus	345	+41%	Digital & creative incubator, Cultural Compact
Warwick	C&W	Urban	Well-established	Tourism & design	655	+24%	Cultural Compact
Stratford-Upon-Avon	C&W	Urban	Well established	Tourism & performing arts	1,750	+110%	N/A
Wolverhampton	BC	City Centre	Emerging	Performing arts & theatres	300	-20%	Cultural Compact, Civic Halls & Grand Theatre development
Dudley	BC	Urban	Emerging	Craft related spaces (linked to industrial heritage)	485	+47%	Dudley College of Technology
Walsall	BC	Urban	Nascent	N/A	140	-23%	Cultural Compact, area of focus for Heritage Fund

Note: * employment data has been selected using a geographical boundary around the specific areas in question (custom-defined)

2. Digbeth, Birmingham

Overview of Digbeth

- 2.1 Digbeth is one of the UK's well-know creative districts. Its origins can be traced back to 1990 when Bennie Gray bought the original custard factory built by Alfred Bird and set on out to revitalise the buildings and the area. Driven by strong determination and at times a relatively organic approach, Gray succeeded in securing initial investment to transform the key buildings as well as attracting a wide range of cultural & creative organisations and people as occupants. The development did kickstart the growth of Digbeth as the leading creative & cultural cluster within the region.
- 2.2 Although it is still and emergent creative district, with creative businesses and cultural organisations co-located with traditional 'light industry' and still fragmented urban fabric, Digbeth has become synonymous with the city's independent creative scene. Situated a few minutes' walk to the east of New Street Station, Digbeth has been a classic 'zone in transition' since 1992.
- 2.3 Today the Custard Factory covers 60,000 sqm of creative space across 15 acres, anchoring the renewal of Digbeth as a creative district. It has catalysed a wider process of creative and culture-led regeneration in the district, with other key creative production hubs including:
- Fazeley Studios – creative workspace and events space
 - Greenhouse – incubator / accelerator next to the Custard Factory
 - The Arch – former dairy; now creative workspace
 - Wilds – large warehouse space for creative and events
 - Arthaus – former chapel, now creative managed workspace.
 - Minerva Works – a creative hub including artists' studios and gallery organisation Grand Union.
- 2.4 The district has also evolved a distinctive arts and cultural ecosystem, kick-started by Ikon East (which has since closed), followed by studio and gallery organisation Grand Union, and currently comprising of a mix of independent production and project spaces such as independent gallery and arts development organisation Eastside Projects, Vivid Projects (a non-profit company supporting media arts practice) and Centrala, a centre for Central and Eastern European art and artists. Zellig by the Custard Factory is the reincarnation of Devonshire House and opened after a £10m redevelopment on the 100,000 square feet premises in 2010. It provides over 100 workspaces and offices with a particular focus of creative and cultural businesses. Studios and offices at Zellig are complemented by art galleries, exhibition spaces, workshops, cafes and the Nomad Club - a communal space for residents to get together.
- 2.5 In 2019, design studio dn&co created the new visual identity for the neighbourhood, which features an instantly recognisable custard yellow brand colour – signalling the creative confidence and maturity of the area, fast-becoming one of the UK's more established creative

“Digbeth is a growing neighbourhood of friendly, creative people in Birmingham’s former industrial heartland”.¹

¹ www.digbeth.com

districts due its critical mass of creative sectors, portfolio of cultural organisations and activities, and blend of production and consumption activities:

“In a place where a digital agency sits next door to a blacksmith and opposite someone who specialises in 3D printed candy, there was never going to be a single marque that could reflect the incredible diversity of this community. Instead, we developed a rich typographic identity to give us the necessary flexibility” dn&co Creative Director Patrick Eley.

- 2.6 Today Digbeth is the region’s most dynamic creative production district and has, pre-pandemic, grown as a hub for creative and cultural consumption, including a wide range of cafes and bars, plus events / market spaces. The sensitive re-use of industrial buildings, emergent supply-chain relationships between the light industrial enterprises and creative businesses, and a continued presence of independent art spaces and artists give the district a distinctive energy which feels more organic, inclusive and sustainable than many other creative districts.
- 2.7 These characteristics also give the district a critical mass which should prove resilient with forthcoming infrastructure developments – including HS2 potentially disrupting the mix and balance of creative activities while greatly increasing accessibility . Indeed, the district is well positioned to springboard to a new phase of development, with the 50,000sq ft £18m TV production hub at The Bond set to bootstrap Digbeth toward a more consolidated cluster akin to a (more inclusive and affordable) ‘Shoreditch for the West Midlands’.
- 2.8 This boost in infrastructure will require sensitive management – to ensure:
- Digbeth remains accessible to emergent talent and a sustainable home for creative sectors which require affordable space (e.g. visual artists, rehearsal space, community infrastructure).
 - Residential space does not displace creative space – including the night time economy, which plays a vital role in the overall dynamism and attractiveness of Digbeth as a place for creative production
 - The public realm is improved in terms of quality, access and safety, improving connections to the city centre, plus to emergent creative clusters in the environs
 - Talent pathways are connected with emergent creative clusters / hubs, such as in North Birmingham – to generate a ring of creative practice around central Birmingham. This can build on the ambition of www.artquarteruk.co.uk which “*aims to make an impact on the surrounding community, by creating an interactive safe space for the diverse cultures of Birmingham. The fun and vibrant space aims to help the community thrive and re-build*”.
 - The education / skills offer is given a post- for post-pandemic resilience support and to open up Digbeth as a more inclusive creative district in its next phase of development.
- 2.9 Key here is activating the Smithfield Masterplan³ as an inclusive and sustainable programme of development that adds to rather than displaces Digbeth’s creative strengths. This will transform 14 hectares of prime city centre estate in Digbeth.
-
- “Birmingham Smithfield will capitalise on the rich history of the area to deliver vibrant markets, public areas and 300,000 sq.m of floor space comprising new retail, leisure and commercial space”².**
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² <https://centrick.co.uk/news/digbeth-creativity-meets-capital-growth/>

³ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/943/birmingham_smithfield_masterplan

Cultural Economy in Digbeth

- 2.10 Based on the latest ONS data available (for 2019), 1,095 people were employed in the cultural sector in Digbeth, equivalent to 2% of total employment in the Digbeth area. The cultural sector in Digbeth is equivalent to 17% of cultural employment in Birmingham and 7% of cultural employment in the WMCA area. The largest cultural sub-sector in Digbeth is Arts (765 jobs), followed by Film, TV and Music (240 jobs). This does not however take into account freelancers.
- 2.11 Table 2.1 shows the sub-sector specialisms within the cultural sector. The Digbeth cluster area has specialisms in Arts, Crafts, Museums and Galleries compared to the national average.

Table 2.1 Sector's Specialisation (Location Quotient) within the Cultural Sector

	Arts (Performing Arts, Artistic Creation)	Film, TV & Music	Radio	Photography	Crafts	Museums & Galleries	Library & Archives	Cultural Education	Heritage	Cultural Sector (Total)	Cultural Sector (without Film/TV)	Creative Sector (Total)
Digbeth	1.3	0.7	0.0	0.5	1.3	1.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0
Birmingham	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.8	11.4	1.7	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.7
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.7	6.2	1.7	0.4	0.0	1.5	0.3	0.3	0.7
WMCA TOTAL	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.8	3.5	1.9	0.4	0.0	2.6	0.3	0.3	0.6

Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

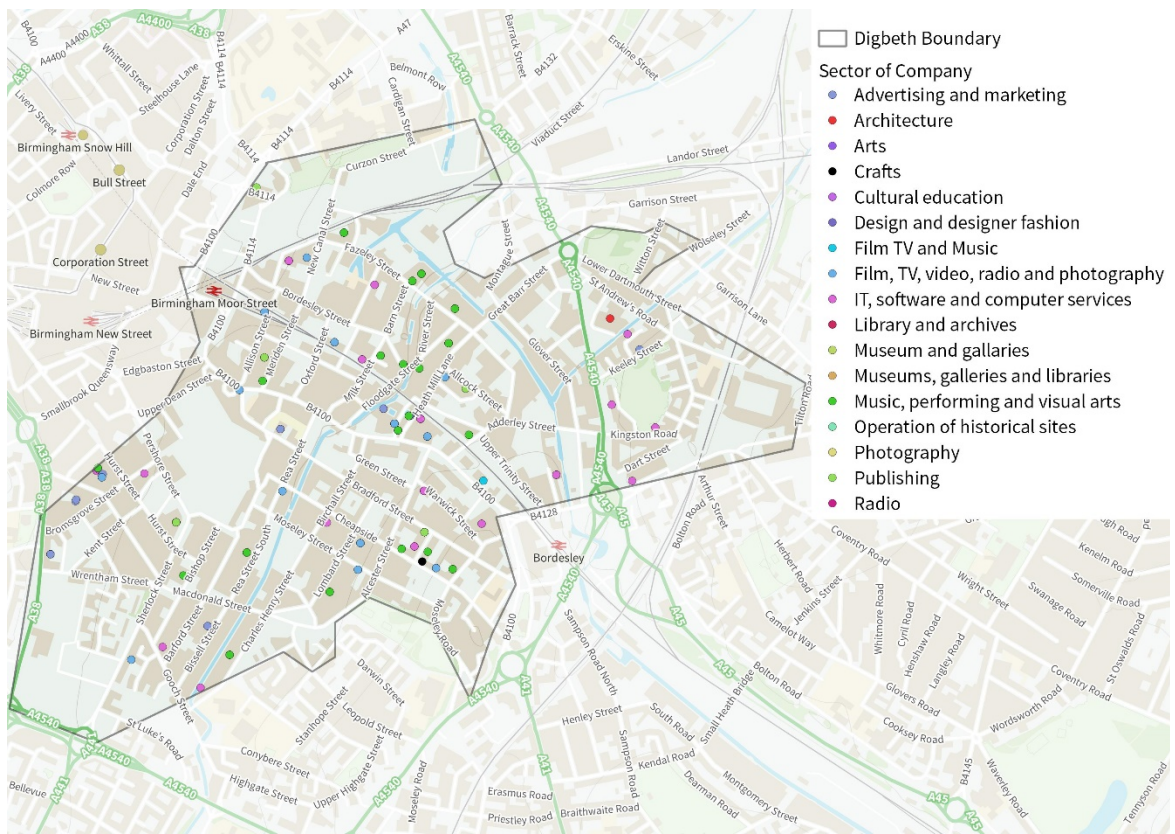
- 2.12 Over the period of 2015 and 2019, employment in the cultural sector in Digbeth has decreased by 12%.⁴ This has occurred due to a decrease in employment over a range of different cultural sub-sectors including photography (-10 jobs, 40% decrease), Film, TV and Music (-125 jobs, 34% decrease), Museums and Galleries (-25 jobs, 33% decrease). Arts has been the strongest growing sub-sector (in absolute terms) with 20 more jobs in 2019 compared to 2015 (3% increase), there has also been a growth in Crafts related jobs with 5 additional jobs (50% increase).

Cultural and creative businesses

- 2.13 The Cultural and Creative sector in Digbeth consists of around 293 businesses. As Figure 2.1 depicts, the main clustering of the sector is around the centre of the town, although there are multiple sectors that are located around the periphery including the Film, TV and music sub sector and the IT, software and computer services sector.

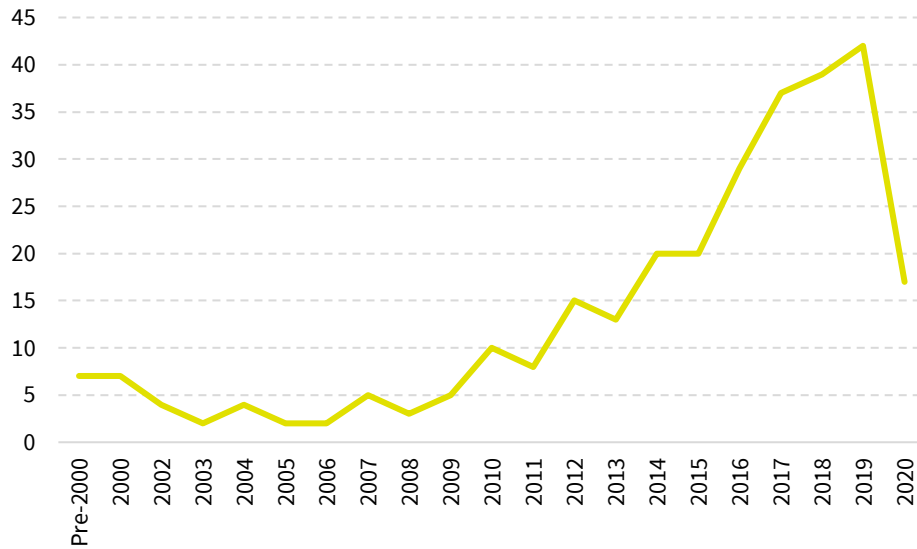
⁴ Note that these changes should be treated with caution due to sampling error at this local level.

Figure 2.1 Location of Creative and Cultural Businesses in Digbeth



Source: Companies House, 2020

Figure 2.2 Date of incorporation of Creative and Cultural Businesses in Digbeth



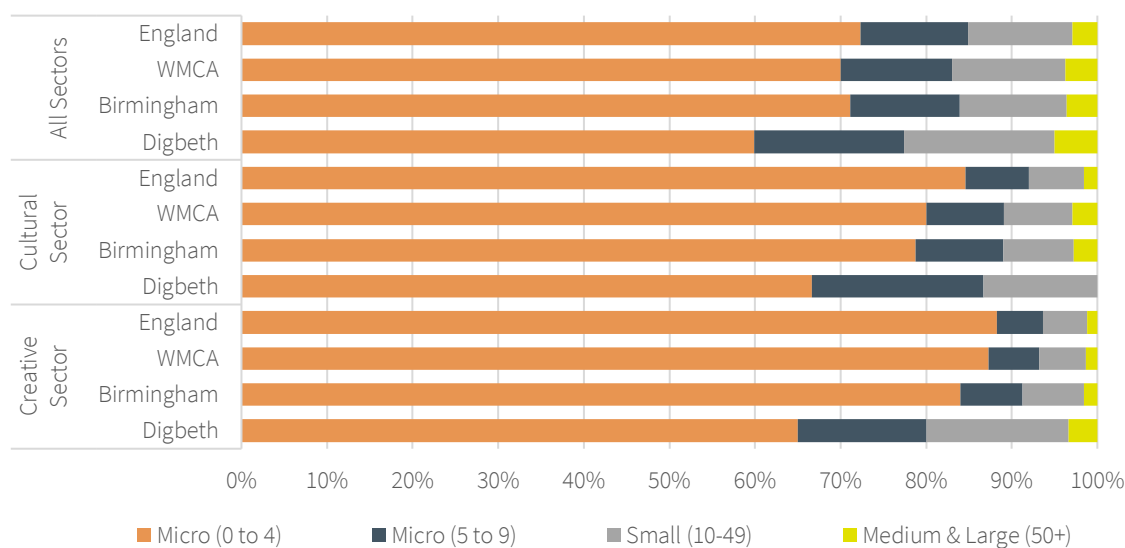
Source: Companies House, 2020

2.14 The cultural and creative sector is dominated by businesses incorporated since 2016 (56%), with only 2% of all current businesses incorporated prior to 2000. The largest proportional share of current businesses were incorporated in 2019 (14%) followed by 2017 and 2018 (both 13%) and

2016 (10%). The growth of the business base in recent years indicates that the sector is one that is growing in Digbeth town centre.

- 2.15 There are a number of strong sub-sectors located in Digbeth, with the three largest sub-sectors accounting for over half of all businesses (58%). The largest sub sector is the arts (22%), followed by IT, software and computer services (21%) and the film, tv and music industry (15%).
- 2.16 Data from the UK Business Count shows the number of employees employed by businesses in the cultural sector and the wider economy. This shows that the majority of cultural businesses in Digbeth are micro entities with 0-4 employees, however, there is a larger proportion of micro (5-9 employees) and small (10-49 employees) cultural businesses when comparing to Birmingham, WMCA and national average and all other sectors in the area.

Figure 2.3 Business Sizes of Cultural Businesses, 2020



Source: UK Business Count, ONS, 2020

Cultural Infrastructure

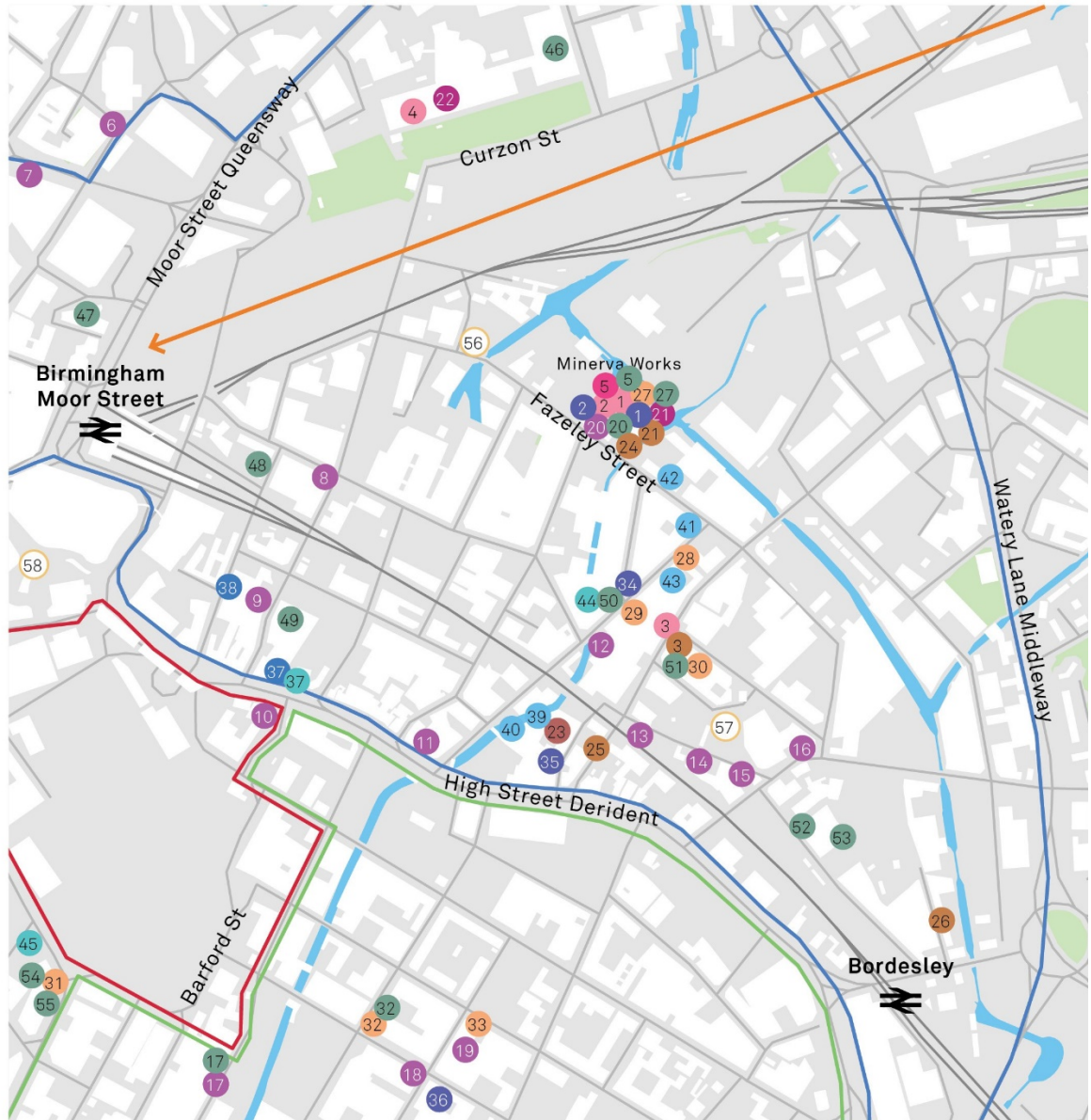
- 2.17 Digbeth is the former industrial heart of Birmingham. Located just to the east of Birmingham City Centre and directly next to Birmingham’s main transportation hubs, the built environment in Digbeth mostly consists of low to medium rise, red brick historic warehouse and factory buildings. Until recently, Digbeth was nearly exclusively an employment area, with very few residential buildings. However, this is changing with regeneration plans set to transform Digbeth into a mix-use area for ‘urban living’.

Key specialisms

- 2.18 Digbeth is one of the UK’s more established creative districts due its critical mass of creative sectors, portfolio of cultural organisations and activities, and blend of production and consumption activities. The diversity and volume of creative and cultural activities are Digbeth’s main strengths and have given rise to number of interesting projects and collaborations cutting across creative sector and art-from boundaries. This includes supply-chain relationships between the light industrial enterprises and creative businesses, although relatively few light industrial uses remain in the area.

- 2.19 The district has also evolved as a distinctive arts and cultural ecosystem. Several renowned cultural organisations have a well-established presence in the area and have contributed to Digbeth's public profile as a cultural quarter. The establishment of the visual arts cluster in Digbeth was kick-started by *Ikon East* (which has since closed), followed by the studios and gallery at *Grand Union*. It is currently made up of a mix of independent production and project spaces such as independent gallery and arts development organisation *Eastside Projects*, a non-profit company supporting media arts practice *Vivid Projects* and *Centrala*, a non-profit space based at Minerva Works, that presents art from Central and Eastern Europe and the UK.
- 2.20 The area has also been home to a number of successful music and arts festivals including the annual *Supersonic Festival* produced by *Capsule*, which has been identified as Europe's best experimental music festival by *The Guardian*. *Capsule* is one of many curator, production and festival organisations based in Digbeth – other include a hugely popular film festival *Flatpack*. *Capsule* was also behind the 2011 Home of Metal event which attracted more than 200,000 visitors to Birmingham, including international visitors.
- 2.21 Pre-pandemic, Digbeth has grown as a hub for creative and cultural consumption. The area has transformed from an inwards-focused creative and cultural production district epitomised by poor public lighting and a large amount of activities happening 'behind the closed doors' into an increasingly popular leisure destination. Digbeth hosts now a large array of public events as well as cafes, bars or markets, and its successful night-time economy attracts wide audiences transgressing the area's previous focus on creative professionals and artists. For example, the Digbeth Dining Club, founded in 2021, has been (prior to Covid-19) hosting weekly events providing a platform for UK's finest street food traders, accompanied by a soundtrack of some of the most loved and followed brands and music collectives regionally.
- 2.22 Thanks to the sensitive re-use of industrial buildings and a continued presence of independent art spaces and artists, the district has a distinctive energy and feels more organic and inclusive than many other creative districts. However, as the composition of creative and cultural businesses in Digbeth changes, the area might emerge as a more commercially-focused creative cluster.

Figure 2.4 Cultural Infrastructure in the Digbeth cluster area



digital industries, as well as several larger businesses and some artists studios. The complex also includes business provision and amenities such as conference, meeting and event spaces, bars, cafes and a cinema. It now has several offsprings in the area including creative and tech office workspace in *Fazeley Studios*, *Green House* and *The Arch*, as well as a conference and event space at *The Bond*.

- 2.25 Outside of the *Custard Factory* estate, *Minerva Works* has for more than a decade been home to a large number of artists' studios, exhibition spaces, and performance and rehearsal spaces. The organisations based in *Minerva Works* include a not-for-profit artists' studio and gallery complex (*Grand Union*), a gallery and venue focused on arts from Central and Eastern Europe (*Centrala*), music practice and gig spaces (*Fazeley Park Studios*), a female-led artists' studios and gallery providing artist development programmes (*Stryx*), or a collaborative performance and exhibition space at (*Vivid Projects*). *Minerva Works* is earmarked for redevelopment and this has been reported as a serious cause of concern by Digbeth-based organisations,
- 2.26 The artist and creative workspaces in Digbeth greatly benefit from the presence of renowned galleries including *Eastside Projects*, a leading artist-run space which opened in 2008 and exhibits a wide range from artists from Turner Prize winners to emerging talents. In 2018, *Eastside Projects* in partnership with *Birmingham City University* opened *STEAMhouse*, a makerspace and a centre for innovation, creative thinking, prototyping and business development. *STEAMhouse* has excellent facilities across large wood, metal, digital fabrication, print and new materials workshops. Next year, *STEAMhouse* will move to a new building at the *Birmingham City University* campus just north of Digbeth.
- 2.27 The success of Digbeth as a creative and cultural cluster has, to a large extent, been due to the availability of large and flexible spaces at affordable rents and the attractive industrial heritage. However, very few artists and cultural organisations in the area are freeholders and most of them have short leases on the spaces they occupy. Coupled with large infrastructure projects and rising land value, Digbeth is losing some of its initial locational advantages. Furthermore, the introduction of a substantial number of residential properties in the area give rise to significant conflict of uses. For this reason, Digbeth is now less suitable for large music events on one hand, and for the remaining industrial uses on the other hand. For this reason, some prominent organisations that have been an important part of Digbeth's creative ecology such as *Capsule* are looking to move outside of Birmingham.

'Soft' cultural infrastructure

- 2.28 Digbeth benefits from the critical mass of creative organisations and businesses located in the area, but many initiatives that put the district on the map have grown out of informal networks and collaborations. While the current opening up of Digbeth helps to reach wider audiences, there is a shared understanding that the long period during which the area was a rather inwardly focused island of creatives created the opportunities for cross pollination is now behind Digbeth's present day success.
- 2.29 In recent years, a key initiative that has helped to nurture collaborations and connections but also opened up Digbeth to wider audiences is *Digbeth First Fridays* – a series of events across Digbeth in the evening of every first Friday of a month. The events have seen a great rise in popularity pre-pandemic, and increasingly attracts lay audiences and the general public.
- 2.30 The collaborations between the area and *Birmingham City University*, which has a campus nearby, have been particularly fruitful. The University has been involved since inception with *Eastside Projects*, which is funded as an *Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation* in

partnership with *Birmingham City University*. Since 2018, *Eastside Projects* and *Birmingham City University* also jointly run *STEAMhouse*.

- 2.31 Digbeth also has the *Digbeth Social Enterprise Quarter (DSEQ)* which support further development of the social enterprise sector in the area, including many cultural and creative organisations. *DSEQ* exists to provide platform for social enterprises in Digbeth and the impact of the existing clustering of social enterprises in the area.

Social value

- 2.32 Digbeth is rather unique as an employment and a former industrial area which has had – at least until recently – only few residential properties. Even so, it is home to several organisations that consistently work with communities in Birmingham and beyond. One of these is *Friction Arts* which creates socially engaged, place-based artworks, projects and programmes from their base in Digbeth. Some of *Friction Arts*' recent projects include *Home*, a project with Birmingham's older African-Caribbean women at the intersection of photography, augmented reality and oral history, large-scale socially engaged site-specific performances, and multicultural music and drama programmes for young people. *Grand Union* also runs a community-led growing scheme which improves places across Birmingham through creative place-making and by growing food and creating green spaces in collaboration with organisations who support the vulnerably housed and people in crisis.
- 2.33 The cultural landscape in Digbeth also has several well-known organisations that champion female artists and help to create an ecosystem that creates space for people from less affluent or other than white backgrounds in the arts and cultural world. *Eastside Projects*, *STRYX*, *Friction Arts* and others also have dedicated artist development programmes. *Eastside Projects*' Associate membership scheme EOP is one of the most established and influential talent development programmes in visual arts in the UK, offering a mix of practice support, residencies, exhibitions and a rich network of partnerships. The programme has benefited more than 200 artists, with a strong presence in the West Midlands.
- 2.34 In many respects, local organisations and artistic talent from Digbeth puts Birmingham and the wider region on the cultural map and improves West Midlands' image as a creative region and a good place to work and live. In 2020, artist Jamie Crewe received one of the ten Turner Bursaries awarded instead of the Turner Prize for their sister exhibitions *Love & Solidarity* and *Solidarity & Love*, taking place at *Grand Union*. Digbeth-based organisations also significantly contribute to placemaking in Birmingham. *Eastside Projects*'s programme *Birmingham Big Art Project* commissions public artwork across Birmingham, including for large developments such as the Curzon Street Station and the HS2 Interchange Station.

Future Outlook

- 2.35 Digbeth is one of the most significant and recognisable creative clusters in the UK, with an increasingly strong public profile and a critical mass of creative and cultural activities, businesses and organisations. However, important parts of Digbeth's creative and cultural ecology are threatened by redevelopment and increasing land value. It is now a crucial time to safeguard and build upon its delicate strengths and to embrace openness and engagement to deliver fair and inclusive growth.

Opportunities

- 2.36 At present, Digbeth benefits from a critical mass of cultural and creative activities, as well as from the collocation of artist workspace, public cultural institution, creative businesses, venues and educational facilities. It still remains more accessible and relatively more affordable than many other creative districts across the country. Space is clearly an important differentiator and driver for Digbeth. The relative abundance and affordability of workspace – often in old industrial buildings – was a key attractor for creatives for the last 20 years. Although this is now challenged, Digbeth retains an identity as a place with a flexible, social and DIY workspace offer.
- 2.37 Digbeth is going through a significant transformation, with key infrastructure developments including the HS2 Curzon Street station and a new Metro, attracting investment into the area. In addition, the concentration and momentum behind creative activities in Digbeth position the district well to springboard to a new phase of development, with projects such as the Creative Content Hub – 50,000sq ft £18m TV production hub – set to come to The Bond. A new Business Improvement District is being developed through the Digbeth Business Forum which was formed by members of the local business community in 2018, promoting local commerce, culture and communities in Digbeth.

Challenges

- 2.38 Another reality however, is that creative workspaces in Digbeth are coming under significant pressure through increasing rents and increasing conflict of uses with the incorporation of new residential developments into the area. Insecurity of tenure contributes to a fragile overall picture. Several cultural and creative assets forming the backbone of the cluster including Minerva Works are earmarked for redevelopment. Furthermore, the introduction of residential properties in Digbeth increasingly leads to a conflict of use, with noise complaints becoming a significant challenge for event organisers. In the past years, this has been one of the key factors leading to events of national and international significance looking to relocate from Digbeth. Simultaneously, there is a shared feeling among key local stakeholders that there is a lack of genuine commitment to managing the change in Digbeth. Protecting and evolving the spatial offer, ensuring that the area can maintain a breadth of spaces, will be vital not only to scale and diversify of Digbeth's local economy but also to provide a broader base from which Birmingham and its residents can engage with the sector.
- 2.39 In addition, despite strong partnerships and the presence of a myriad of informal networks, Digbeth does not fully or adequately embrace the full available talent base and too many people do not feel part of the conversation.

Recommendations

- Focus upon partnerships, capacity building and governance to help Digbeth achieving stability, representation and ultimately inclusive growth. Better tailored networks and more open engagement will help to ensure that the full diversity of Digbeth is represented, focusing upon businesses, grassroots residents local residents and youth to maintain a lasting legacy and pipeline of opportunity. The creation of a governance board to develop long term solutions for the creative sector in Digbeth could be thought (The Hackney Wick and Fish Island Creative Enterprise Zone Board is a good example to see what has been done elsewhere).

- Explore ways to use planning gain policy to deliver genuinely affordable creative workspaces as part of new developments. There is a compelling case for doing so since the increased profitability of commercial development in Digbeth is a result of public sector infrastructure investment. S106 agreements could be leveraged to preserve/re-provide cultural infrastructure including genuinely affordable workspace. Solutions to workspace provision based on long leases and ownership that give cultural and creative organisations the stability needed for growth and development should be prioritised.
- Employ Agent of Change principles to manage conflict of uses between cultural and residential uses. Under agent of change policy, new developments would need to demonstrate sufficient noise mitigating measures and meet the cost of soundproofing when in the proximity of existing noise-generating uses.
- Ensure that future space provision is adequate and diverse, and provide space for cultural production. A mix of workspace and facilities which encourages specialist creative production in activities which contribute upstream to high growth parts of the creative economy should be supported, coordinated and nurtured. The provision of facilities such as maker-spaces or specialist design and manufacturing spaces should be enabled (these are often not seen as viable by the market). This could include facilities which can operate as a shared resource in Digbeth's collaborative economy and ensure access to a diversity of users.
- Build and grow the social sector as integral to the creative ecosystem to ensure Digbeth's evolve and grow in an accessible, open, diverse, and rooted way. There is also a need to build a wider collective approach to place-making, thinking beyond the physical environment, to take a more holistic view of the area's evolution and to factor in race and gender equality, quality education and skills, decent work and economic growth, innovation and infrastructure, responsible consumption and production.

3. North Birmingham

Overview of North Birmingham

- 3.1 North Birmingham, which includes the districts of Lozells, Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr, Newtown, Oscott and Birchfield, is one of the most diverse places in the UK. It is a place of immense cultural richness, yet remains one of the most deprived and marginalised parts of the city. It is a highly residential area and home to an increasingly youthful demographic, it is a place of enormous potential for the city and region's creative economy.
- 3.2 A number of arts organisations have been leading community engagement to explore the area's current cultural and creative assets and qualities, including what local people value, what is missing and what might be possible. Together, they have highlighted the historic opportunity gap for creative talent from North Birmingham and the need to focus infrastructure and investment on building local capacity and connecting activities in North Birmingham to the city centre and other key creative districts and hubs such as those in Digbeth and the Jewellery Quarter.
- 3.3 The area has the potential to be an exemplar for community creative infrastructure, commissioning and programming, which in turn establishes a system for talent development that can drive diversity and innovation in the city and region's creative economy. With the 2022 Commonwealth Games on the near horizon, this represents a major legacy opportunity as well as helping to re-boot the creative economy toward a more inclusive future post-Covid-19.
- 3.4 In 2019, Punch Records led a pioneering local engagement programme – *Roaming* – which explored:
- HOW local residents currently used their local venues and green spaces
 - WHICH leisure, cultural and creative arts activities were popular with local residents
 - WHAT local services could be improved by better planning and joined-up thinking
 - WHO was available locally to help meet these and other challenges
 - WHERE inward investment, such as the Commonwealth Games, could leave a lasting legacy.
- 3.5 This research highlighted the importance of community infrastructure in offering a safe and inclusive space for creative expression and in providing a platform for creative expression. Amenities such as Handsworth Wellbeing Centre, the Lighthouse Young People's Centre. The research also described the very significant appetite for more extensive arts, cultural and creative provision across all art-forms.
- 3.6 The Roaming report was published before the Covid-19 pandemic – a period when most relevant amenities have been closed and during which the structural inequalities of the Creative Industries have been brutally exposed, with talent from less affluent or well-connected communities having far less opportunities and struggling to access creative work post-pandemic. During the pandemic, the Black Lives Matters movement highlighted the structural barriers presented by institutional racism, unconscious bias and related indices of multiple deprivation. This is a time to act to invest in the neighbourhoods from which so much talent emerges yet which struggles to find an equitable voice or an upward trajectory in a very fragile sector.

“Cultural engagement in the North of the city was already 11% below the UK average before recent cuts from cultural provision. The 2016 closure of THE DRUM has disproportionately impacted organised arts provision and engagement for diverse communities and young people, who are demographically prominent in the area...THE DRUM was the leading arts venue in Birmingham serving residents with limited opportunities.”

Roaming Report

- 3.7 This presents an urgent need to re-open and re-purpose community-level cultural and creative infrastructure, establishing neighbourhood creative hubs as safe spaces for creative expression and vital enablers of confidence and capacity-building. It also presents an imperative to better connect community-based activities to those in the city centre and other more established creative clusters across the city and region. This can include dedicated programmes of genuinely directional apprenticeships; internships and exchanges; and new commissions which build capacity at a local level.
- 3.8 The 2022 Commonwealth Games and its legacy programme provides an opportunity to invest in local talent and connect it to something much bigger. With a mission to be a ‘Games for Everyone’, an approach to genuinely inclusive talent development and programming will be paramount. The Creative Cities Grants Programme - which is funded by Birmingham City Council and delivered by the Games Organising Committee - will play an important role to showcase local people, their talents, and their Birmingham story on a global stage. Part of the cultural programme, this £2 million grants programme will engage c200,000 community participants in Birmingham 2022 culture-related activities. At least 110 small grants of between £10,000 and £20,000 will be made to Birmingham-based groups across the city to create artist-led community projects. This can play a catalysing post-pandemic role for North Birmingham if it is connected to existing infrastructure and networks.
- 3.9 However, there is a need to go beyond neighbourhood-based commissioning toward establishing new inclusive cultural and creative infrastructure which is both embedded in the local community and connected to talent and business development activities across the city. The historic prioritisation of cultural and creative infrastructure in the city centre has bypassed so much of the city’s talent base, so the next period presents an opportunity to re-balance opportunity and supercharge the regional creative economy through an embrace with its diverse talent base.
- 3.10 There is strong potential (and expressed need) to:
- Develop a ‘cultural programme’ mentality and approach - coordinating a programme of cultural activities which are communicated with clarity and consistency – to increase awareness of and access to cultural provision.
 - Connect cultural participation to cultural and creative skills and representation – raising the profile of creative work and brokering access to professional development opportunities.
 - Nurture local hubs for creative practice which combine creative making and participation – e.g. as meanwhile creative studios, spaces for rehearsal and creative development and creative platforms.
 - Position parks and open spaces as cultural amenities – e.g. for outdoor arts, music and dance.

3.11 The seeds have already been planted for a more targeted approach which conceptualises North Birmingham as a network of diverse creative neighbourhoods. For example:

- Gallery 37⁵ is a creative development programme investing in North Birmingham and its young artists through masterclasses, ‘hyper local commissions’, residencies and workshops. It is led by Saathi House in collaboration with Punch. Activities include music production masterclasses, digital illustration classes, support activities (e.g. dialogue on mental health), and many other tailored support and development activities.
- The P-word is a leadership development programme for diverse artists & entrepreneurs in Birmingham. It specifically targets professional and practical 'roadblocks' preventing business growth and success. It is based on a partnership with Punch and Aston University. It is supported by leadership experts from The Centre for Research In Ethnicity Minority Entrepreneurship - "CREME" and connects directly into tiered business programmes offered by Aston University Business school.

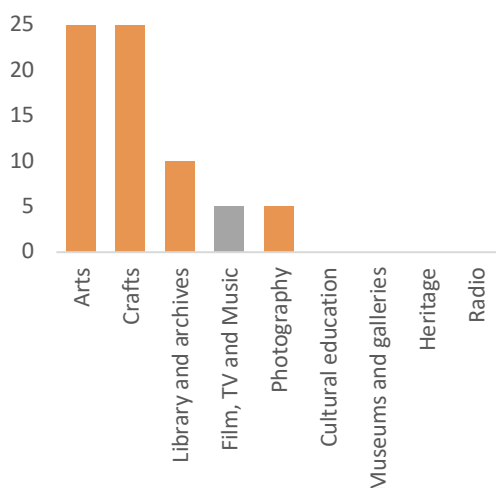
Cultural Economy in North Birmingham

Cultural and creative employment

3.12 The latest ONS data available (2019) shows that there were 70 people employed in the cultural sector in North Birmingham, equivalent to 0.3% of total employment in the area. Employment in the cultural sector in North Birmingham makes up 1.1% of cultural employment in Birmingham, and 0.4% of cultural employment in the WMCA area. This does not however take into account freelancers working in the area, and those operating beneath the VAT threshold, and so is likely to be very under-representative of creative and cultural employment.

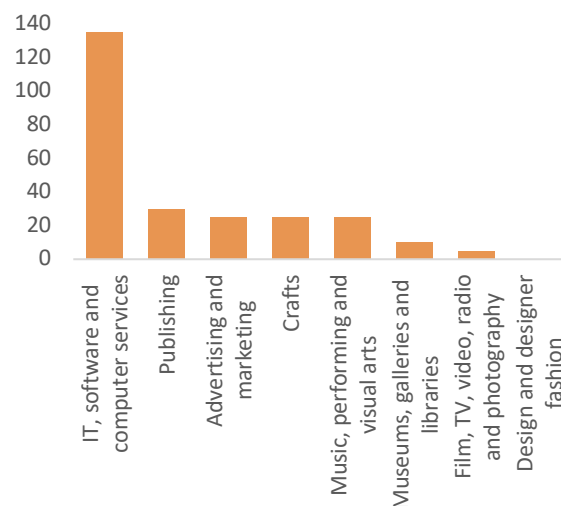
3.13 Figure 3.1 shows employment by cultural sub-sector in North Birmingham. The largest cultural sub-sector is Crafts (25 jobs) and Arts (25 jobs).

Figure 3.1 Employment in the Cultural Sector in North Birmingham



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

Figure 3.2 Employment in the Creative Sector in North Birmingham



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

⁵ www.saathihouse.org/gallery37

- 3.14 Figure 3.1 shows the sub-sector specialisms within the cultural sector. The North Birmingham area has a significant specialism in crafts compared to the national average.

Table 3.1 Sector's Specialisation (Location Quotient) within the Cultural Sector

	Arts (Performing Arts, Artistic Creation)	Film, TV & Music	Radio	Photography	Crafts	Museums & Galleries	Library & Archives	Cultural Education	Heritage	Cultural Sector (Total)	Cultural Sector (without Film/TV)	Creative Sector (Total)
North Birmingham	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.5	6.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
Birmingham	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.8	11.4	1.7	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.7
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.7	6.2	1.7	0.4	0.0	1.5	0.3	0.3	0.7
WMCA TOTAL	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.8	3.5	1.9	0.4	0.0	2.6	0.3	0.3	0.6

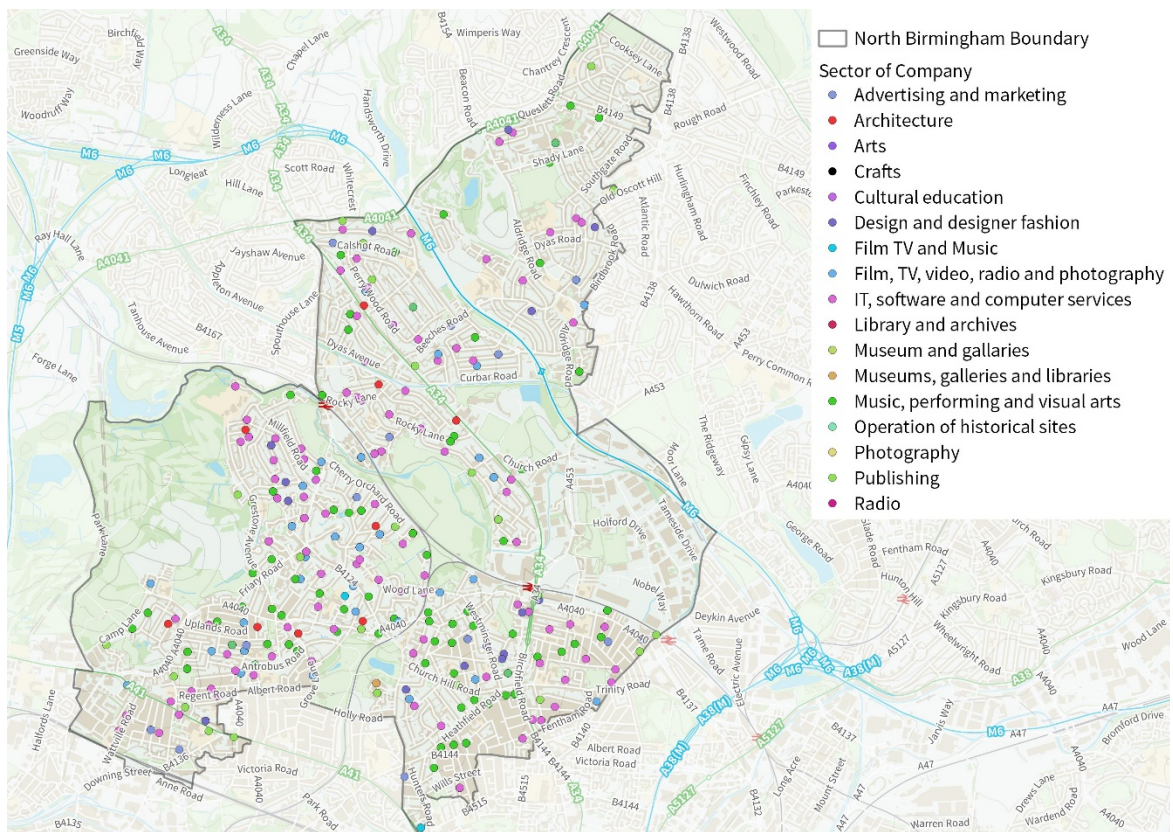
Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

- 3.15 Over the period of 2015 and 2019, the employment in the cultural sector in North Birmingham has decreased by 23%. The recent decline in the cultural sector across the North Birmingham area has occurred solely due to the decrease in employment in the crafts sub-sector, with no changes to employment numbers in any other cultural sub-sector in the area. In absolute terms, there has been a decrease in 20 crafts jobs (44% decrease).

Cultural and creative businesses

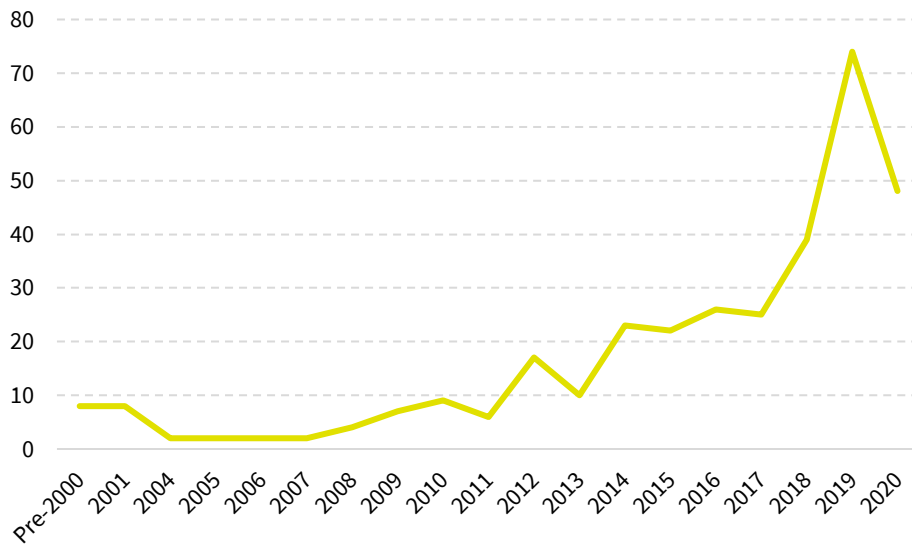
- 3.16 In 2020 there were around 328 companies located within North Birmingham area. The majority of the businesses are located to the south of North Birmingham with strong clustering of the IT, software and computer services and the music, performing and visual arts sector.

Figure 3.3 Location and type of cultural and creative businesses in North Birmingham



Source: Companies House, 2020

Figure 3.4 Date of Incorporation of creative and cultural businesses in North Birmingham

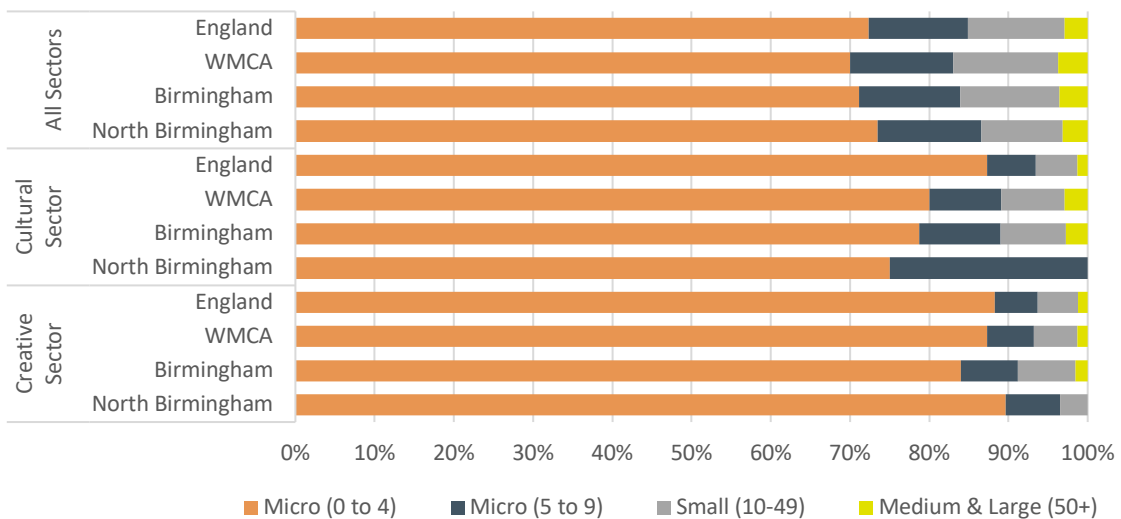


Source: Companies House, 2020

3.17 The overwhelming majority of the cultural and creative businesses located in North Birmingham were incorporated since 2000, with 65% of all active businesses incorporated since 2016. This highlights that there is a young innovative cultural and creative business base located in North Birmingham.

- 3.18 There are a number of strong cultural and creative sub sectors in North Birmingham with IT, software and computer services accounting for 35% of all businesses, followed by the arts sector (15%) and the film tv and music industry (11%). Both of the two largest sub sectors have experienced strong growth since 2016 with the arts sector increasing its business count by 74% and the IT, software and computer services sector increasing by 61%, thus highlighting continued strengths within the sub sectors.
- 3.19 Data from the UK Business Count shows the number of employees hired by businesses in the cultural sector and the wider economy. The figure below shows that the majority of cultural businesses are micro entities with 0-4 employees. There is also a larger proportion of cultural micro entities with 5-9 employees compared to other sectors in North Birmingham and compared to Birmingham, WMCA and the national average. However, this data only measures those who have registered for VAT or PAYE and does not capture freelancers.

Figure 3.5 Business Sizes of Cultural Businesses, 2020



Source: UK Business Count, ONS, 2020

Cultural Infrastructure

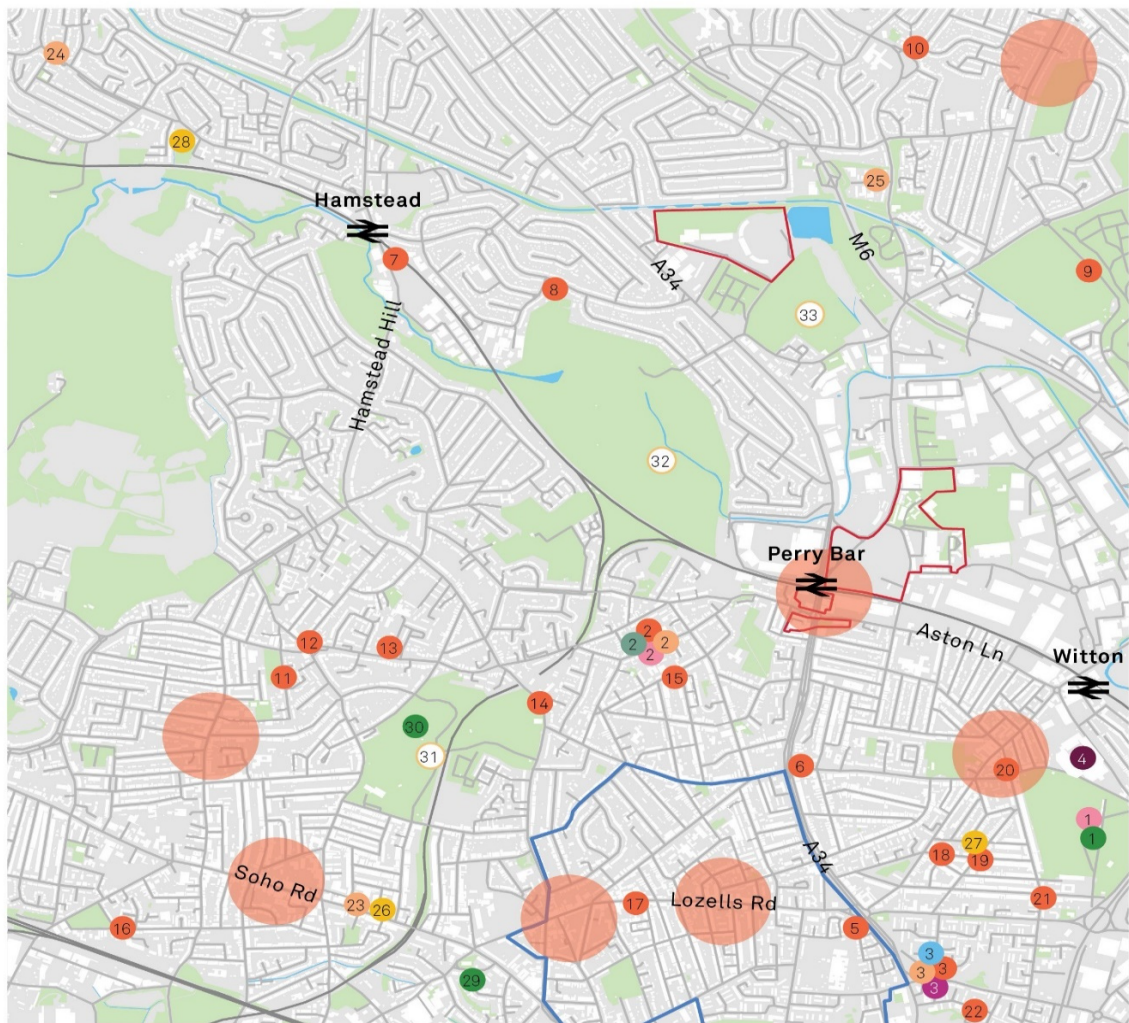
Key specialisms














- 3.20 North Birmingham is synonymous with great music and its parks host several popular festivals which attract acclaimed international artists, give platform to local talent, and bring together North Birmingham’s diverse communities. *Simmer Down*, held annually in and around Handsworth Park, has grown into an immensely popular event and one of the UK’s largest inter-cultural festivals, reflecting and celebrating Birmingham’s rich cultural heritage. The programme is delivered across multiple stages and consists of live music, dance, spoken word as well as a busy line-up of workshops and other educational and participation activities. Other regular festivals held in North Birmingham include the *Birchfield Jazz Festival*, an annual weekend of free jazz music from North Birmingham and around the world.
- 3.21 North Birmingham takes pride in being home of the best reggae music in the UK, but it has nurtured talent across many music genres. One of the leading music organisations in the area is *Black Voices*, a leading female acapella ensemble in Europe with the mission of preservation and

promotion of black oral music. Other names associated with the area include Steven Kapur BEM, known by the stage name Apache Indian and author of the 1990s hit “Boom Shack-A-Lak”, who set up *AIM Academy* to support local artists and work with further education stakeholders⁶. The cultural and creative richness of North Birmingham extends way beyond music and spans across visual arts, dance, or poetry. The area is home to *Handsworth Park Arts Trail*, a series of public art installations by local artists and *Perry Barr Arts Forum* which creates positive local networks between artists, the community and cultural organisations and raises the profile of arts activities taking place in the area, both organisations are a testament to North Birmingham’s visual arts talent.

⁶ www.sccb.ac.uk/517-aim/4509-the-academy

Figure 3.6 Cultural infrastructure in the North Birmingham Cluster area



KEY	
Performance & exhibition space	
	Museum and gallery
1.	Aston Hall
2.	Grosvenor Road Studios
	Multi-purpose and arts centre
3.	Legacy Centre of Excellence
	Large entertainment venue
4.	Aston Villa FC, The Holte Suite
Community, participatory & education space	
	Community-focused space
2.	Grosvenor Road Studios
3.	Legacy Centre of Excellence
5.	The Lighthouse Young People's Centre
6.	Holy Trinity Birchfield Parish Church
7.	Spring22 Community & Digital Hub
8.	Perry Hall Methodist Church
9.	The Pavilion
10.	St Matthew's Church
11.	Laurel Road Community Sports Centre
12.	St Andrews Sports & Community Centre
13.	Guru Ravidass Community Centre
14.	St Mary's Church Hall
15.	Nimra Muslim Community Centre
16.	Soho Community Centre
17.	Lozells Central Mosque
18.	Shahjalal Mosque and Community Centre
19.	Aston Learning Centre
20.	Saathi House
21.	Mosque and Muslim Community Centre Aston
22.	Calvary Community Centre
	Creative education space
2.	Grosvenor Road Studios
3.	Legacy Centre of Excellence
23.	AIM Academy
24.	Arabesque Dance Academy
25.	Gem's Dance Academy
	Library and archive
26.	Handsworth Library
27.	Aston Library
28.	Hamstead Library
Creative open workspace	
	Workspace with creative facilities
3.	Legacy Centre of Excellence
	Specialist production and rehearsal facility
2.	Grosvenor Road Studios
Environment, heritage and outdoor space	
	Environmental or heritage attraction
1.	Aston Hall
29.	Soho House
30.	Handsworth Park Arts Trail
	Outdoor event space
31.	Handsworth Park
32.	Perry Hall Park
33.	Perry Park
Strategic context	
	Perry Bar regeneration scheme
	Local Centres (Birmingham Development Plan)
	Housing Regeneration (Birmingham Development Plan)

Source: We Made That

'Hard' cultural infrastructure

- 3.22 Cultural infrastructure in North Birmingham consists from the most part from community-focused spaces with cultural programming including community centres, religious spaces and sports centres. With several important exceptions such as Soho House, the libraries and the Legacy Centre which are located on main roads or within local centres, cultural and community infrastructures in North Birmingham are rather dispersed across the area and located within a residential settings.
- 3.23 A key piece of North Birmingham's cultural infrastructure is *Grosvenor Road Studios*, one of the largest recording studios in the Midlands. *Grosvenor Road Studios* have a 60 years long legacy of working with some of the best musicians in the region and nurtured several generations of talent. In 2003, they were acquired by Black Voices and has since grown into a multi-cultural and community hub. The studios are now run by a voluntary board and host several cultural and community businesses and organisations including *Black Arts Forum*. It hosts a number of rehearsal and recording spaces, but also an exhibition space and a community garden. Organisations based on at the studios run a busy public programme of music nights and exhibitions organised in collaboration with local artists, as well as music workshops including popular drumming sessions.

- 3.24 *Legacy Centre of Excellence* is an arts and business centre based in Aston which opened in 2019. The space – formerly *The Drum Arts Centre* – was acquired by a Birmingham-based social enterprise *7E Youth Academy* and as such represents, together like *Grosvenor Road Studios*, an important cultural asset owned and managed by the community. The space has a live music theatre, a recording studio, number of flexible spaces for performance, rehearsals and exhibitions, a co-working hub and office spaces. The centre runs an educational programme, offers business support and holds regular events including a quarterly arts and crafts market.
- 3.25 North Birmingham’s parks and green spaces – including Perry Park and Handsworth Park – are a crucial cultural asset well liked and used by the community. Number of religious spaces also form an important part of North Birmingham’s cultural landscape, including the St Mary’s Church and Holy Trinity Church which host the annual jazz festival, Lozells Central Mosque, Lozells Methodist Church and Nishkam Centre. The importance of community facilities including key youth centres such as the Lighthouse Young People’s Centre in offering a safe and inclusive space and platform for creative expression is well documented in *Roaming*, a report based on a pioneering local engagement programme.
- 3.26 Outside of a few physical assets, North Birmingham’s key cultural assets lie in its communities and network of grassroots organisations. The cultural richness of the area is somewhat hidden or lack visibility as it seems insufficiently supported by physical infrastructure, a result of decades-long disinvestment in North Birmingham’s communities and inequality linked to race and class. The lack of affordable and accessible spaces have been reported as a significant barrier for creative practitioners across different art forms, including visual arts. The lack of investment in public realm and public spaces have also been reported as a key issue. The *2022 Commonwealth Games* and associated regeneration programme presents a unique opportunity to support North Birmingham’s communities by hardwiring cultural infrastructure into the urban landscape. However, there is a fear in the community that this opportunity will be missed out on.

‘Soft’ cultural infrastructure

- 3.27 Community and voluntary organisations are an indispensable part of the area’s cultural infrastructure and cultural life of North Birmingham hugely relies on their relentless work.
- 3.28 The rich network of grassroots organisations champions culture and creativity, nurtures talent, and creates significant momentum behind the sector. One of these is the North Birmingham Alliance (NBA). The North Birmingham Alliance (NBA) was established to preserve and lead Black arts and culture infrastructure development across Birmingham, especially in the north across Aston, Birchfield, Handsworth, Lozells, Newtown and Perry Barr. It aims to build the framework to enable, support and sustain practitioners and organisations based in and delivering across the north corridor. It will also work with mainstream organisations to develop new routes to promote the Black arts and cultural offers in their venues, and ACE Dance and Music, Black Arts Forum, Black Voices and Legacy Centre of Excellence will work jointly to steer developments, championing Black arts across north Birmingham’s Cultural and Creative Industries.
- 3.29 Other organisations and networks that form an important part of North Birmingham’s cultural and creative landscape include *Punch Records*, *Birchfield Big Local* and art forums such as *Perry Barr Arts Forum*. *Punch Records* is a music and arts agency specializing in training and talent development, commercial touring support and events production, they were previously based in the area and although they no longer are, they still hold North Birmingham as a priority area for their work. *Punch* is playing an activist and champion role for the area – highlighting the historic opportunity gap for creative talent from North Birmingham and the need to focus

infrastructure and investment on building local capacity. *Birchfield Big Local's* mission is to engage, educate and empower young people in Birchfield and beyond. Apart from offering a wealth of cultural and creative education programmes for young people, it is also a strong advocate for the needs of young people in the area. The *Perry Barr Arts Forum* was set up in 2010 as part of an initiative by Birmingham City Council. Since then, then Perry Barr Arts Forum has been working to forge better communication between arts & cultural organisations & the voluntary & community sector, increase opportunities for local participation & raise the profile of local arts activities within the constituency. The Arts Forum members include local artists & creatives, arts organisations, and a growing team of volunteers from a range of community organisations, including Black Arts Forum, Outside In, Birchfield Big Local, Access to Heritage Arts and Culture (ATHAC), Saathi House, The Lighthouse and many more.

Social value

- 3.30 Cultural infrastructure and organisations form the backbone of North Birmingham's communities and deliver social value across number of different areas including improving health and wellbeing, developing skills and nurturing talent, creating volunteering opportunities and driving community engagement and participation. A number of leading artists and artists organisations play an active role in nurturing local talent. For instance, *ACE dance & music* runs its own young person's company *ACE Youth*, the Handsworth born music star *Apache Indian* runs his own *AIM Academy* on Soho Road, and *Grosvenor Road Studios* host a large number of music workshops and sessions.
- 3.31 *Black Voices* and other organisations based in *Grosvenor Road Studios* encourage creative expression and engagement with the arts as a tool to explore and improve health and wellbeing in the community. Health, wellbeing and creative expression are at the heart of numerous workshops from drumming to dance, but also a frequent theme of exhibitions held in the studios. The importance of the studios as a community asset came to the forefront during the pandemic. The studios were turned in a food bank, but the organisations based in them continued addressing issues of health and wellbeing through several community initiatives including an online storytelling project with the community's elders to combat loneliness.
- 3.32 As demonstrated by the extensive community engagement and advocacy work of arts & cultural organisations in the area, artists and artists' organisations give voice to North Birmingham and its communities. For the occasion of the *2022 Commonwealth Games* held in the area, the *North Birmingham Alliance* is preparing a series of events celebrating North Birmingham's cultural heritage, working to make the most of the opportunity and put a spotlight on the area.
- 3.33 Creative and cultural organisations also create much needed training and employment opportunities. For example, the *NBA* has hired several trainees and apprentices to support its *Commonwealth Games* programme and is currently bidding for funding for its project *Bridging Barriers*, delivered in partnership with *Royal Birmingham Conservatoire*, *Rockschool* and *Resonance*, that would provide informal educational and training route into the music industry for young people from lower income backgrounds.
- 3.34 The National Lottery Community Fund has been working closely with communities in North Birmingham to provide culture related funding. In 2021, four organisations in the area received a total of £38,000 worth of funding to support the local community.

Mind Over Matter, Lozells and wider Birmingham

SECTA C.I.C received £10,000 from the fund. The funding will be used to deliver an arts programme remotely to older people living in extra care residential villages. The project aims to engage older people in a range of craft activities enabling them to engage in positive activities, interact, and reduce loneliness and isolation during COVID-19.

Creative Healing through Dialogue and the Arts, Handsworth and wider Birmingham

LouDeemY Productions received funding of £8,700. The funding will be used to deliver online therapeutic art workshops, along with online and telephone support, for adults who require physical, mental and emotional support, due to the COVID-19 crisis. Participants will be provided with the opportunity to express themselves through art and discuss issues concerning them with professionals and peers, with the aim of reducing isolation and promoting positive mental wellbeing.

Tripat Women, Handsworth and wider Birmingham

TRIPAT EMPOWERMENT CIC received £10,000 to deliver an art therapy program for women who have experienced domestic violence. The project aims to empower women to share experiences, restore confidence and build supportive relationships during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Artistic Movement Supporting Mental Health, Small Heath, Hodge Hill, Bordesley Green, Stechford

Unite & Uplift Together CIC has received £9,350 to deliver online art and counselling sessions for people experiencing isolation and poor mental health during the COVID-19 crisis, where participants will be provided with the opportunity to socialise whilst being creative

Future Outlook

- 3.35 The area has the potential to be an exemplar for community creative infrastructure, commissioning and programming, which in turn establishes a system for talent development that can drive diversity and innovation in the city and region's creative economy. With the 2022 Commonwealth Games on the near horizon, this represents a major legacy opportunity as well as helping to re-boot the creative economy toward a more inclusive future post-Covid-19. Certainly, this is more important than ever: the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the structural inequalities across the cultural and creative industries, as well as across the economy as a whole. North Birmingham has been disproportionately affected.

Opportunities and Challenges

- 3.36 North Birmingham can be positioned as a creative talent hub of regional and national significance. The 2022 Commonwealth Games provides an opportunity to invest in local talent and connect it to something much bigger. The demographic profile of North Birmingham reflects the story of the Commonwealth - colonial expansion, trade and subsequent immigration, followed by significant challenges in building shared prosperity and equality of opportunity for subsequent generations of British citizens of diverse heritage. The Commonwealth Values of humanity, equality and destiny support the mission to be a 'Game for Everyone', and North Birmingham presents an opportunity to directly tackle the challenges of a Commonwealth legacy - such as inequality and racism. An approach to genuinely inclusive talent development and programming will be paramount. The Creative Communities Grants Programme will play an important role - to showcase local people, their talents, and their

Birmingham story on a global stage. This can play a catalysing post-pandemic role for North Birmingham if it is connected to existing infrastructure and networks.

- 3.37 However, there is a need to go beyond neighbourhood-based commissioning toward establishing new inclusive cultural and creative infrastructure which is both embedded in the local community and connected to talent and business development activities across the city. The historic prioritisation of cultural and creative infrastructure in the city centre has bypassed so much of the city's talent base, so the next period presents an opportunity to re-balance opportunity and supercharge the regional creative economy through an embrace with its diverse talent base.
- 3.38 The seeds have already been planted for a more targeted approach which conceptualises North Birmingham as a network of diverse creative neighbourhoods. For example:
- Legacy Centre of Excellence, which opened in September 2019, is Europe's largest independent Black-owned Business and Arts Centre, which facilitates the need of the local community through the arts, jobs, training and education. It *“exists to offer great cultural, artistic, economic, youth, educational and business development related activities that uplift and upskill particularly the next generation.”*
 - North Birmingham Alliance (NBA) runs multiple activities to support talent development. For example, Kickstart has a commitment to offer at least 4 apprenticeships after 6 months training in cultural roles linked to the Commonwealth Games. The NBA is currently awaiting a second round funding decision from Youth Music for a major project called Bridging Barriers. The proposal is to train and provide employment opportunities for young people in music production and stagecraft (in collaboration with Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Rockschoool and Resonance).
 - Gallery 37⁷ is a creative development programme led by Saathi House in partnership with Punch, which is investing in North Birmingham and its young artists through masterclasses, 'hyper local commissions', residencies and workshops.
 - The P-word is a leadership development programme for diverse artists &. It specifically targets professional and practical 'roadblocks' preventing business growth and success. It is based on a partnership with Aston University. It is supported by leadership experts from The Centre For Research In Ethnicity Minority Entrepreneurship - "CREME" and connects directly into tiered business programmes offered by Aston University Business school.

Key Recommendations

- 3.39 There is an urgent need to establish community-level cultural and creative infrastructure, establishing neighbourhood creative hubs as safe spaces for creative expression and vital enablers of confidence and capacity-building. This can build on the above examples as an overarching **Creative Talent Programme** for North Birmingham which includes:
- Linking to the existing and emergent infrastructure and programmes (see above), there is a need for enhanced infrastructure in community settings, such as rehearsal space, recording studios, and a hub for coding and games development. This can include brokered apprenticeships which plug North Birmingham into regional hubs such as

⁷ www.saathihouse.org/gallery37

Digbeth and Leamington – so talent can access professional opportunities across the region.

- Nurture local hubs for creative practice which combine creative making and participation – e.g. as meanwhile creative studios, spaces for rehearsal and creative development.
- Connect cultural participation to cultural and creative skills – raising the profile of creative work and brokering access to professional development opportunities.
- Position parks and open spaces as cultural amenities – e.g. for outdoor arts, music and dance. This can include some enhancement activities, such as facilities for outdoor theatre and music events.
- Celebrate and showcase – as part of the Birmingham 2022 legacy establish a Creative Talent Showcase and Creative Enterprise Awards which promote North Birmingham as a creative powerhouse for the city and region.

3.40 There is also a need to manage change in North Birmingham (in planning terms), especially making sure that new development including regeneration schemes connected to the Commonwealth Games (1) delivers the much-needed community and cultural infrastructure, (2) generates jobs locally, and (3) responds to local housing needs

4. Leamington Spa

Overview of Leamington Spa

- 4.1 Royal Leamington Spa (Leamington) is a spa town and civil parish in Warwickshire. It forms part of Warwick District Council (as part of a mini conurbation with Warwick, Whitnash and Kenilworth). Originally a small village called Leamington Priors, it grew into a spa town in the 18th century following the popularisation of its water which was reputed to have medicinal qualities. The town contains especially fine ensembles of Regency architecture, particularly in parts of the Parade, Clarendon Square and Lansdowne Circus. This architecture is a key feature of the town centre, which has a strong retail and leisure mix, inclusive of a vibrant independent retail offer.
- 4.2 The ‘old town’ to the south of the train station lacks many of these amenities and has been prioritised for investment, including from the recently secured Future High Streets fund. The vision for the regeneration of the area is anchored around a series of projects under the umbrella name *Leamington Creative Quarter*.
- 4.3 In 2018, The District submitted a bid to attract Channel 4. This was under the hook ‘You think you know Leamington?’ – as a direct attempt to disrupt a common stereotype of the town as somewhere rather ‘stuffy’, or old-fashioned.
- 4.4 The area has become known known as a centre for computer games and entertainment software, informally referred to as ‘silicon spa’.
- 4.5 The study area includes most of Leamington, including residential areas in Sydenham, Whitnash Lillington and Milverton. Only a smaller part of the Heathcote Industrial Estate to the south west of the town centre is included.

Strategic Development Priorities for the Cultural / Creative Economy in Leamington

- 4.6 Warwick’s Creative Framework is a five-year strategy that aims to accelerate creative sector growth and maximise its impact across Warwick district through partnership and collaborative working. In the context of the Creative Framework⁸, priority activities in Leamington include:
- **Shifting perceptions** – in a constant exercise to renew the identity of the town and refresh it with contemporary narratives. This is evidenced in the work of the BID, which works to animate the town centre and, post-Covid, to marshal a creative and culture-led recovery. It is also evidenced in the approach to place-making and place-marketing, such as via Creative Mornings which visibly connect creative businesses; and via the town hosting the Commonwealth Games Bowls – a chance to usurp the ‘stuffy’ narrative with some contemporary design activities.
 - **Establishing the Old Town as a creative district.** £10m has been secured from the Future High Street Fund helping to deliver the vision for a Creative Quarter⁹ in Leamington. This will focus on building

“We want to use heritage as a flagship for the Creative Industries”.

⁸ www.warwickdc.gov.uk/wdcreativeframework

⁹ <https://www.leamingtoncreativequarter.co.uk/about-us/>

density and visibility for the creative sector – e.g. renovating the old post office building into a creative hub; transforming the old Court Street carpark into a mixed use residential and creative workspace development; and turning the old United Reform Church Spencer Yard into a creative workspace and events space.

To the north, in the town centre, the Old Town Hall is gradually being repurposed as a creative and cultural anchor for the town, with a mix of workspace, rehearsal space and activity space. This can be a beacon for sector development going forward and plays an important role in creating a churn of creative space and activity which will be important in attracting new firms and retaining existing ones in a post-pandemic Leamington.

- **Re-animating the town centre** - to ensure the role of culture (events, creative production, public realm etc.) plays a forceful role post-pandemic. Leamington has a head start on many towns and can be a beacon of best practice for the region.
- **Connecting physical hubs / workspace interventions to wider network and business support activities** – to boost networks and connect to increasing home-working activities across the town and in surrounding areas.

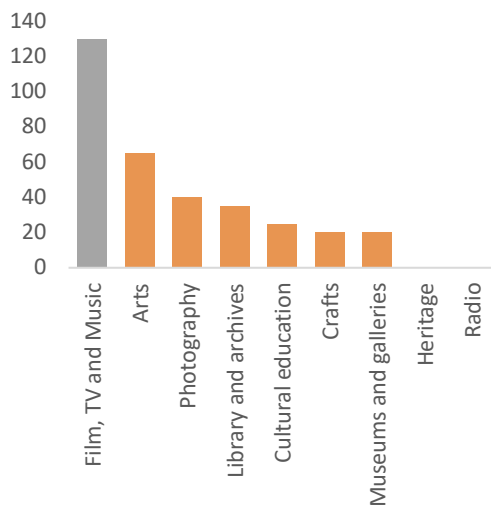
Cultural Economy in Leamington Spa

Cultural and creative employment

4.7 Based on the latest ONS data available (for 2019), 335 people were employed in the cultural sector in Leamington Spa, equivalent to 2% of total employment in the area. The cultural sector in Leamington Spa makes up 27% of cultural employment in Warwick, and 2% of cultural employment in the WMCA area. This does not however take into account freelancers.

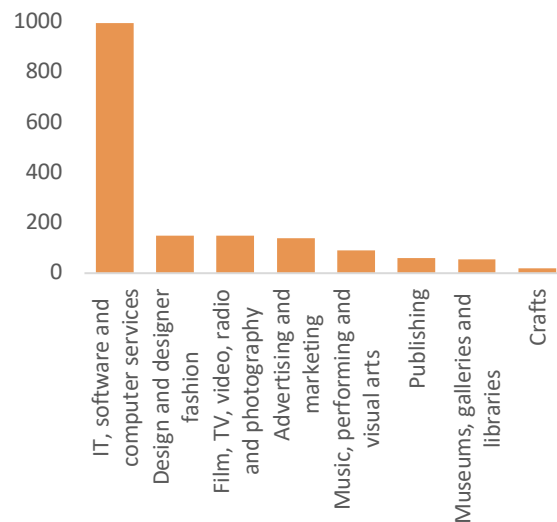
4.8 Figure 4.1 shows employment by cultural sub-sector in Leamington Spa. The largest cultural sub-sectors are Film, TV and Music (130 jobs) and Arts (65 jobs). Figure 4.2 shows there is a high proportion of employment in creative IT, software and computer services jobs.

Figure 4.1 Employment in the Cultural Sector in Leamington Spa



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

Figure 4.2 Employment in the Creative Sector in Leamington Spa



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

- 4.9 Table 4.1 shows the sector's specialisations within the cultural sector. The Leamington Spa area has a significant specialism in a number of cultural sub-sectors, the most specialist sub-sector is crafts, followed by photography and museums and galleries. There is also evidence of specialisms in the creative sector.

	Arts (Performing Arts, Artistic Creation)	Film, TV & Music	Radio	Photography	Crafts	Museums & Galleries	Library & Archives	Cultural Education	Heritage	Cultural Sector (Total)	Cultural Sector (without Film/TV)	Creative Sector (Total)
Leamington Spa	0.4	1.1	0.0	3.9	5.3	1.5	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.4	1.6
Warwick	0.3	0.4	0.1	3.8	1.4	1.8	0.3	0.0	33.3	0.5	0.5	1.2
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP	0.6	0.3	0.1	1.2	0.4	2.2	0.4	0.0	7.4	0.4	0.4	0.7
WMCA TOTAL	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.8	3.5	1.9	0.4	0.0	2.6	0.3	0.3	0.6

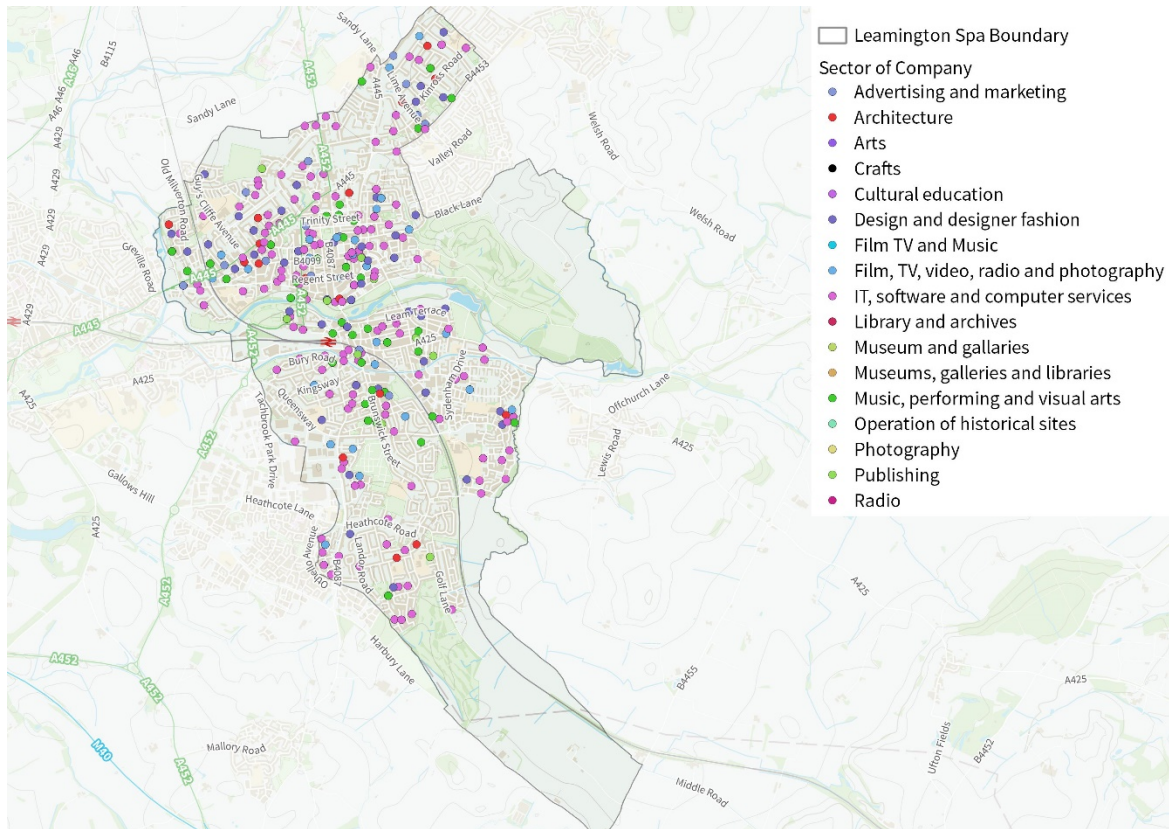
Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

- 4.10 Over the period of 2015 and 2019, the cultural sector in Leamington Spa has grown by 52%. The recent growth in the cultural sector across the Leamington Spa area has occurred over a range of different cultural sub-sectors. Film, TV and Music has been the strongest growing sub-sector (in absolute terms), with 85 more jobs in 2019 compared to 2015 (a 189% increase). Other strong growing sectors are Arts (+35 jobs, 117% growth), Crafts, which in 2015 had no employment in the area but in 2019 had +20 jobs and Museums and Galleries (+15 jobs, 300% growth). The Heritage sub-experienced a decline in employment by 60 jobs in absolute terms, equivalent to a 60% decrease since 2015.

Cultural and creative businesses

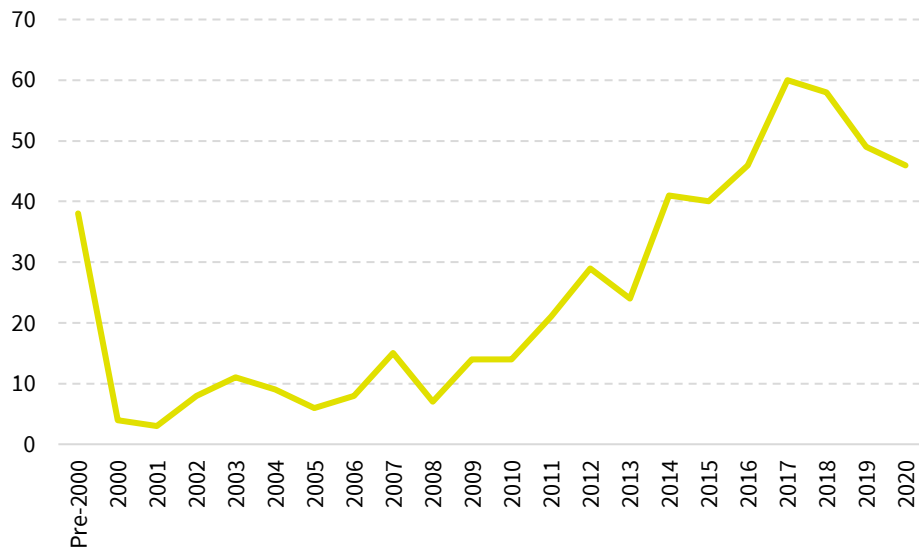
- 4.11 In 2020 there were 589 cultural and creative businesses in Leamington spa. Figure 4.3 below shows the spatial distribution of the cultural and creative businesses in Leamington Spa and depicts strong concentrations in the northern section of the area with strong densities around the A445 and the town centre.

Figure 4.3 Location of Cultural and Creative Businesses in Leamington Spa



Source: Companies House, 2020

Figure 4.4 Date of Incorporation of Cultural and Creative Businesses in Leamington Spa

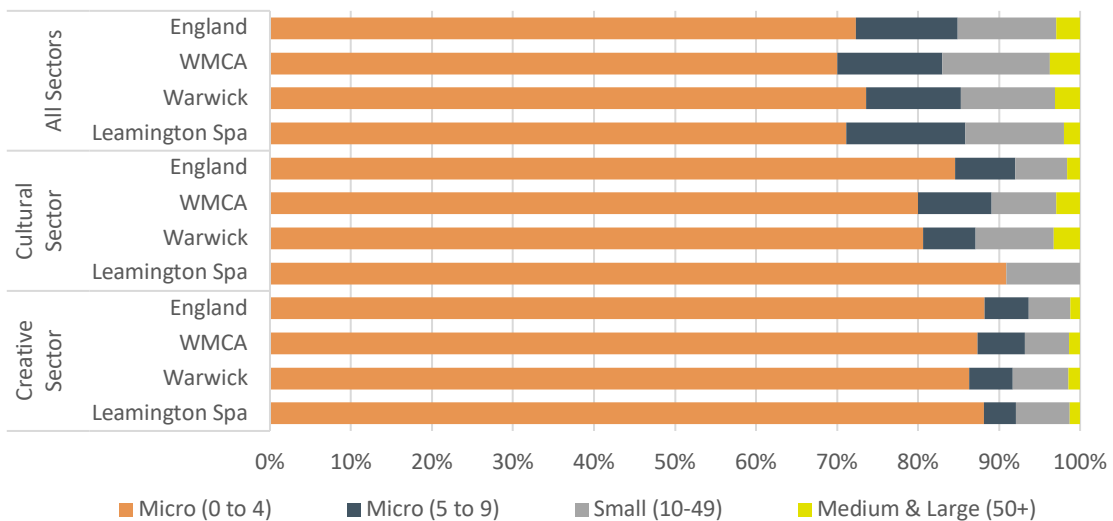


Source: Companies House, 2020

4.12 Of the creative and cultural businesses in Leamington Spa only 6% were incorporated prior to 2000. The highest proportion of the existing businesses were incorporated in 2017 (10.2%), followed by 2018 (9.8%) and 2019 (8.3%). This highlights that the majority of the businesses are relatively new to Leamington Spa.

- 4.13 There is a clear sub sector specialism in the IT, software and computer services sector which makes up almost half (44%) of all the businesses, with the next largest sector, design and publishing fashion, only accounting for 17% of all businesses.
- 4.14 Data from the UK Business Count shows the number of employees employed by businesses in the cultural sector and the wider economy. The figure below shows that the cultural businesses in Leamington Spa are mostly micro entities with 0-4 employees with some small businesses (0-49 employees). However, this data only measures those who have registered for VAT or PAYE and does not capture freelancers.

Figure 4.5 Business Sizes of Cultural Businesses, 2020



Source: UK Business Count, ONS, 2020.

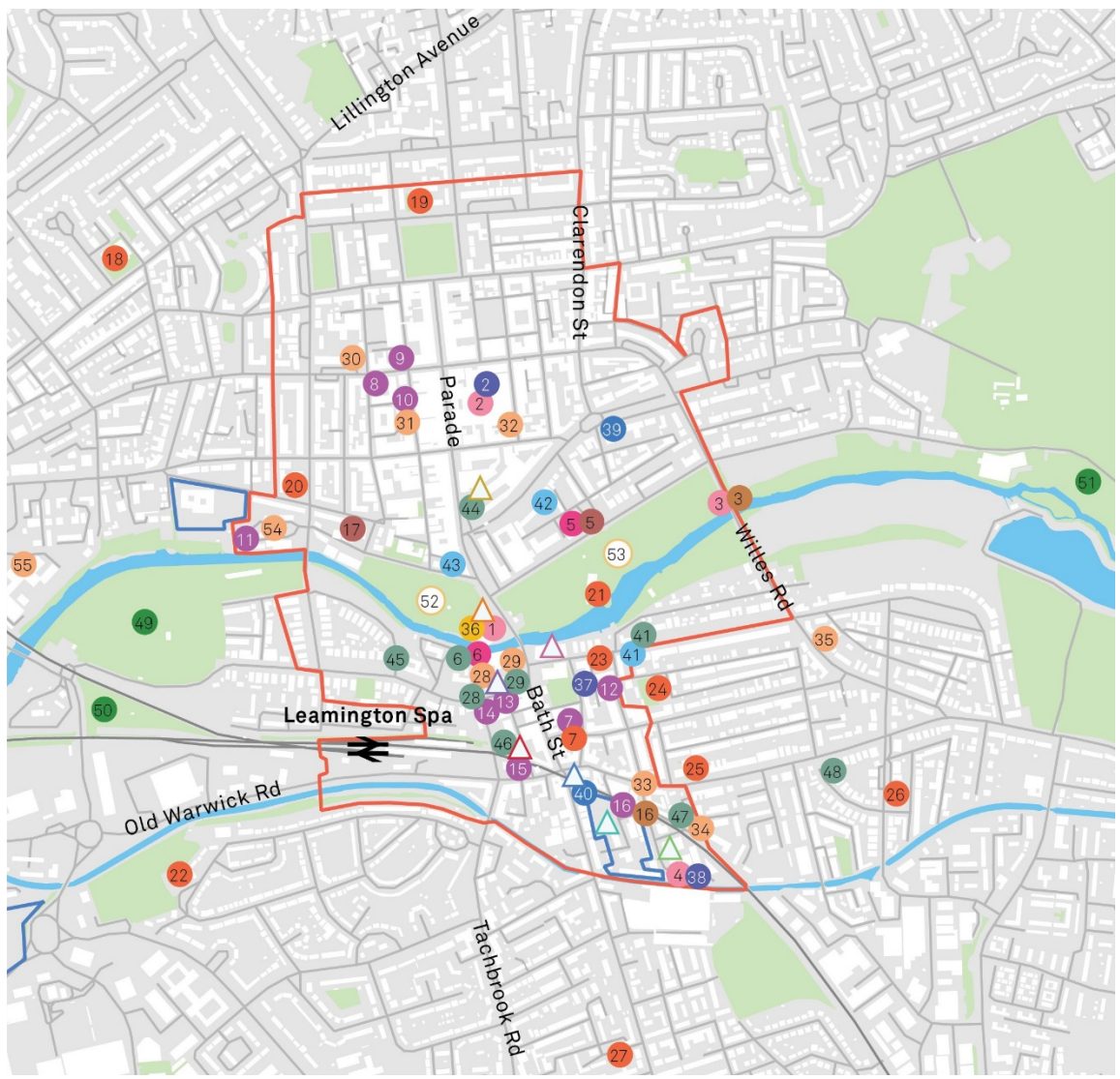
Cultural Infrastructure

Key specialisms

- 4.15 The rich built environment heritage in the town centre makes Leamington an attractive visitor destination. In juxtaposition to the grand historical facades and beautiful gardens, Leamington grew a globally significant cluster of excellence and innovation in the digital and specifically gaming industry, earning an informal nickname ‘Silicon Spa’. There are four triple A studios in the town. Leamington was ranked 17th by NESTA in 2016 (1st in the West Midlands). This clustering was kickstarted by pioneer companies such as *Codemasters* and is in part due to the attractiveness factors of the town (its architecture, retail and leisure mix, location, and perceived quality of life); and in part due to spillover effects of the nearby *University of Warwick and Coventry University*. Companies based in or around the town include *Third Kind Games, Super Spline Studios, Lab42, Sumo Leamington, Caperfly, Widgit Software, Fish in a Bottle, Ubisoft Leamington, Unit 2, Electric Square, Well Played Games, Mediatonic and Digi Monsters, Pixel Toys, Playground Games, Red Chain Games, Supersonic Software and Midoki*. *Codemasters* are based in the countryside outside Leamington. In 2013, *Sega's* mobile platform studio *Hardlight Studio* set up in Leamington, and *Exient* opened a satellite studio. While for a long time the digital and gaming cluster existed in Leamington Spa somewhat ‘underground’, the gaming industry has now become a local pride and a focus of much attention from the Warwick District Council.

- 4.16 In addition, Leamington is also home to a number of high calibre creative, marketing and communications agencies including Craig Spivey Creative, Staak, Palmer Hargreaves, Sonder, Vital and RBL which service global brands like Microsoft, Rolls-Royce and Disney and a number of media companies including BBC and Channel 4. In 2018, The District submitted a bid to attract Channel 4. This was under the hook ‘You think you know Leamington?’ – as a direct attempt to disrupt a common stereotype of the town as somewhere rather ‘stuffy’, or old-fashioned.
- 4.17 Much more than a beautiful historic town and digital hub, Leamington has a rich and vibrant arts and cultural sector, with upwards of 135 festivals, markets and other public events taking place in the town centre across the calendar year. Some of the key organisations in the cultural infrastructure landscape include:
- Leamington Music, launched in 2006, provides a varied programme of concerts bringing in musicians of international standing, mostly chamber music. The winter season has twenty concerts each year with some groups brought in specially for their flourishing Education Programme, which with Warwickshire Music Hub support takes them into schools across the county. Its flagship event is Leamington Music Festival in May.
 - Leamington Studio Artists (LSA), It is entirely run by volunteers. It instigated Art in the Park, an annual, free, arts festival based in Jephson Gardens.
 - The Lantern Parade, or ‘Luminate Leamington’, was established in 2010 and is inspired by the illuminations which used to feature in Jephson Gardens in the 1950s. “. The event is organised by BID Leamington (as is the Leamington Food and Drink Festival).
- 4.18 Some of the cultural offer in Leamington Spa, including major institutions such as the Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum and the Royal Spa Centre, primarily cater for Leamington’s older and more affluent residents and visitors.
- 4.19 Somewhat contrary to the more traditional perception of Leamington, as well as the current momentum behind increasing the profile of the town’s digital and gaming industry, Leamington is also home to significant young and independent artist talent spanning dance, visual arts, music, videoart or jewellery. One of the most important cultural assets giving Leamington artistic credibility is the renowned internationally touring contemporary dance-circus company *Motionhouse*. The international dance-circus company, tours full-length productions across the UK and internationally and offers an education and training programme at its studio in Spencer Yard, developing its work in its creation, rehearsal and performance space in Leamington Town Hall. Nothing speaks to the success of *Motionhouse* more than the fact that the company has recently been able to offer 5 new contracts coming out of the pandemic which hit the performing industry in an unprecedented manner. There has also been a stronger presence of young artists in Leamington’s public life thanks to events such as the *Leamington Young Talent Festival (LYT Festival)* organised by *Creative Leamington* – a grassroots creative production company set up by *Motionhouse* dancers.

Figure 4.6 Cultural Infrastructure in the Leamington Spa cluster area



KEY			
Performance & exhibition space			
	Museum and gallery		Library and archive
1.	The Royal Pump Room	36.	Leamington Library
2.	Arts Trail Studios	Creative open workspace	
3.	Leamington Studio Artists		Artists studio
4.	Light Space Gallery	2.	Arts Trail Studios
	Drama and dance theatre	37.	Community Arts Workshop
5.	Royal Spa Centre	38.	Art Group Studios
6.	The Loft Theatre		Creative IACs
	Live music venue	39.	Leamington Studio
7.	The Temperance	40.	COWork Arch Four
8.	Clink Cellar Bar		Workspace with creative facilities
9.	Altoria Nightclub	41.	Mill Street Studio
10.	Bedford Street Bar	42.	26 HT Digital Gaming Hub
11.	St Patrick's Irish Club	43.	Meet By The Park
12.	The Town House		Specialist production and rehearsal facility
13.	Assembly Leamington	6.	The Loft Theatre
14.	Zephyr Lounge	28.	Motionhouse Studio
15.	Kelsey's Live	29.	North Hall
16.	The Band Factory	41.	Mill Street Studio
	Cinema	44.	Town Hall
5.	Royal Spa Centre	45.	One Nation Studios
17.	Vue Cinema Leamington Spa	46.	14 Records
Community, participatory & education space			
	Creative-led hub	47.	Complete Sound Rehearsal Studios
3.	Leamington Studio Artists	48.	Woodbine Street Recording Studio
16.	The Band Factory	Environment, heritage and outdoor space	
	Community-focused space		Environmental or heritage attraction
7.	The Temperance	49.	Victoria Park
18.	St Mark's Church	50.	Foundry Wood
19.	Holy Trinity Church Hall	51.	Newbold Comyn
20.	Dale Street Methodist Church		Outdoor event space
21.	The Riverside Glasshouse	52.	Pump Rooms Garden
22.	Westbury Community Centre	53.	Jephson Gardens and Mill Gardens
23.	Christ Church	Strategic context	
24.	Leamington Masjid and Muslim Community Centre		Town Centre
25.	Radford Road Church		Housing Allocation
26.	St Mary's Church	Leamington Creative Quarter proposed sites	
27.	Brunswick Healthy Living Centre		Town Hall - Civic Building
	Creative education space		The Royal Pump Rooms - A Civic & Cultural Destination
28.	Motionhouse Studio		Post Office - A Design Hotel in the Old Town
29.	North Hall		Spencer Yard - A Hub for the Tech and Digital Industry
30.	Aspire Studios		Bath Place Carpark - Artists' Yard
31.	Fiery Feet Dance Studio		Bath Street - Creative Quarter Wayfinding
32.	Gallery PHOTIQ		Court Street Carpark - Creative Grow-on Workspace
33.	Leamington & Warwick Academy of Dance		Althorpe Street - Social Exchange
34.	Totally RAD Music Tuition		
35.	Michael Baker Piano		

Source: We Made That

'Hard' cultural infrastructure

4.20 With the exception of a number of churches, community centres and other community-focused spaces which are dotted around the residential areas, most of cultural infrastructure in Leamington is concentrated around the town centre's Parade and Bath Street. While the northern part of the town centre (north of river Leam) receives more footfall and is where most of the visitor attractions are, there is a large cluster of cultural infrastructure to the south of

Leam, including some of the key creative and cultural production spaces as well as live music venues.

- 4.21 Key pieces of cultural infrastructure that linked to the traditional cultural offer in Leamington and the town's visitor economy include
- The Royal Pump Rooms - Owned and managed by Warwick District Council, this is home to Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum, Leamington Library and various event spaces. The building has an annual footfall of 450,000, 134,000 of which visit the gallery
 - The Royal Spa Centre is the district's only professional theatre. As a medium size receiving house, it delivers a programme of theatre, drama, comedy, film and community events in its 667-seat main house and 188-seat studio theatre and cinema. It has an annual footfall of 95000
 - Assembly Leamington - an art-deco, multi-function venue in the heart of Leamington. It has a longstanding heritage as a music venue.
 - Leamington Town Hall on Leamington's Parade has two main rooms; the Council Chamber and The Assembly Hall. It is being re-purposed as a creative hub.
- 4.22 There are several coworking and incubator spaces which primarily service Leamington's creative businesses. These include successful coworking space at *1 Mill Street* with flexible desk space, several event spaces, and an on-site production studio. *1 Mill Street* is also a base of the Warwick University's *Creative Futures Incubator* which provides business advice and mentoring services. Other co-working spaces in Leamington are *COWork Arch Four*, *Meet By The Park* business centre, and *The Neighbourhood* event space and bar. However, given the strong presence of the digital and gaming industry in Leamington, more physical infrastructure is needed to support the array of creative professionals and a whole scale of small to large businesses, as well as to provide a focal point for the industry and encourage further growth. To this end, the Leamington Creative Quarter proposals include a new hub for the industry at Victoria Colonnade & Spencer Yard and a grow-on workspace at Court Street Carpark.
- 4.23 While Leamington greatly benefits and builds on its heritage, the compact and historic town centre coupled with high rents present specific challenges especially for Leamington's artists who require larger and flexible spaces. This is particularly true for Leamington's performing artists and makers. Leamington's leading performing arts organisation *Motionhouse* has worked with the Council to lease the Assembly hall in Leamington Town Hall as its new production and rehearsal space. The lack of affordable workspace is a challenge for young and independent creative professionals more broadly. In addition, the built environment heritage reinforces the identity of Leamington as a 'wealthy and white town', which is perceived as a barrier to participation for artists and audiences from lower income and non-white backgrounds. More flexible, affordable and genuinely inclusive artist workspace is needed to meet the needs of Leamington's artists.

'Soft' cultural infrastructure

- 4.24 Warwick District Council plays an important facilitating and catalyst role in Leamington, with creative businesses at the heart of the Council's Creative Framework strategy. This five-year strategy aims to accelerate creative sector growth and maximise its impact across Warwick district through partnership and collaborative working. It provides a collective vision for our creative communities to unite around and outlines how they can shape and influence how the sector is defined in the future:

“By 2025 Warwick district will have an established reputation as a thriving creative cluster of national significance and be known for its distinctive blend of rich cultural heritage and cutting-edge creative companies. Residents will feel pride in their local area and be inspired by shared cultural experiences, which celebrate the dynamic, innovative character of the district. In five years’ time Warwick district will be experiencing the positive economic and social benefits of creative regeneration. Our thriving, interconnected creative sector will play a crucial role in the prosperity of the area and support the ambition of Warwick district being the first choice for people to live, work, and visit”.

4.25 There are **five strategic themes** to guide deliver to 2025:

- **Engagement** - “It is a priority to improve the quality of life for all residents of Warwick district by diversifying the variety of cultural experiences and artistic programmes; to increase opportunities for people to participate in, and be inspired by, high quality creative activity”
- **Voice** - “It is a priority to raise the district’s national and regional profile as a high quality ‘creative cluster’ and articulate the offer locally to residents, visitors, investors and business - advocating how it contributes to health and wellbeing, society and the economy”.
- **Pathfinding** - “It is a priority to improve co-ordination and awareness of opportunities by fostering a culture of collaboration and communication - and to support creative organisations to be sustainable and financially resilient and increase levels of inward investment. It is also a priority to attract and nurture exceptional talent and to become a place where creative practitioners are welcomed and supported to build sustainable careers”.
- **Place making** - “It is a priority to incorporate culture and creativity into the way we design and use our public spaces and use the creative sector to revitalise and enhance our town centres; to protect, preserve and grow our historic architecture, heritage and cultural venues”.
- **Innovation** - “It is a priority to attract innovative companies to the area and encourage existing innovators to use their skills and knowledge to introduce new ways of thinking and address challenges within the sector; to tangibly connect the ‘digital’ strength of the district with cultural organisations to create original ways of engaging with creativity”.

4.26 A new **Creative Compact** is playing a leadership and convening role for the creative sector in Leamington. It brings together representatives from the creative sector, business, universities, local authorities, voluntary sector, and the Coventry Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP). It will develop an action plan to deliver the priorities of the framework, with a particular focus on unlocking new resources for projects, encouraging the development of partnerships to attract new forms of public and private investment, ensuring effective coordination with stakeholders, and communicating closely with the sector.

4.27 A **Creative Forum** will play an important role in shaping the work of the compact and other strategic partners in its approach to sector support:

“Anyone or any organisations with an interest in the success of creativity in Warwick district can join”.

- 4.28 Warwick District Council has also organised several conferences and networking events including a Spark 2020 Symposium and an online SPARK IGNITE earlier this year which aim to unpick and further explore some of the topics and themes of today’s creative economy, presenting another opportunity for the creative community to come together and network, and visit some of the district’s cultural venues, spaces and places.
- 4.29 The CWLEP has a specialist Culture and Tourism Business Group and a Digital Creative Business Group which provide support and strategic advice the growth of businesses and organisations in these sectors. In 2017, The CWLEP commissioned a Blueprint for Growth for the Games Industry¹⁰, which led to the investment in an industry-focused online conference February 2021 - Interactive Futures, showcasing the sector’s latest developments and opportunities and providing a platform to form new collaborative partnerships. The event was organised along with the District and County Council in association with Warwickshire College Group and NGM.
- 4.30 The LEP has been instrumental in drawing down funding to support growth for the creative industries in Leamington through funding programmes such as the Getting Building Fund as well as investment into the town ahead of the Commonwealth Games and co-funding 26 HT a new incubator facility for start-up gaming companies.
- 4.31 Outside of the Council, CWLEP and the digital and gaming sector, Creative Leamington is connecting young artists and creatives from Leamington through monthly breakfast lectures and networking events. Started in 2019, *Creative Mornings* in Leamington Spa have given platform to young people, nurtured several collaborations, shed light on common barriers to participation and highlighted shared needs among young creatives. With links to the Council and major cultural and creative organisations in the area, and a strong focus on creating inclusive space, Creative Leamington has since become a voice of the grassroots creative community and an important agent of change in Leamington.

Social value

- 4.32 Leamington has repeatedly been named as one of the happiest places to live in the UK. In 2017, Leamington topped the Happy at Home index by Rightmove. This corresponds to the image of Leamington as a well-off, middle-aged and white town, and a great place to settle for successful professionals. This is arguably also one of the reasons behind Leamington’s success as digital businesses hub. While the image is certainly representative of a large proportion of Leamington’s demography, parts of the town are also in the 20% and 30% most deprived areas nationally.
- 4.33 The perception of Leamington as a “middle-class” and “white town” nurtures a culture where accessibility is not high on the agenda, and the relative lack of diversity in the creative industries is widely attributed to the assumed demography of the town. This reinforces the existing barriers faced by artists and creatives from lower-income and non-white backgrounds, but also hampers creative participation of young and starting artists more broadly. It might also be one of the reasons for generally low levels of participation of the sizeable student population in Leamington’s cultural life.
- 4.34 Creative Leamington is addressing some of these issues by providing an accessible platform for young creatives to showcase their work, reach audiences and become a stronger presence in

¹⁰ www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

Leamington. In December 2020, Creative Leamington organized Leamington Young Talent Market (LYT Market), displaying the work of 12 young makers in an empty shop window and using QR technology to engage audiences, give the young artists platform, and help them sell their work. With funding from Warwickshire County Council, the event has developed into a month-long LYT Festival held in May 2021, working with 20 creatives and displaying their work across a range of vacant and occupied store fronts.

Future Outlook

- 4.35 Leamington has a strong creative economy and ambitious Council with cultural and creative strategy and plans that will help the town benefit from the changing patterns of work after COVID-19 and further grow as a creative cluster. However, a set of challenges related to affordability, social and cultural legacies, and space availability make Leamington a difficult place for grassroots culture and creativity.

Opportunities

- 4.36 Leamington has benefited from people and companies relocating from London and Birmingham and this trend is likely to continue in near future due to the changes in work accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents a significant opportunity for the creative and cultural cluster in Leamington to grow further provided that the Council succeeds in making sure that Leamington continues to be an attractive destination, but also in supporting local talent and starting to attract a wider demography.
- 4.37 Alongside the Warwick-wide creative strategy, Leamington Creative Quarter is a town centre masterplan aiming to regenerate the town centre as a new creative district, with a particular focus on the area south of the River Leam. The Creative Quarter is an excellent opportunity to further increase the visibility of the gaming industry in Leamington and provide a focal point for the industry in the town. The plans for the provision of new workspace and infrastructure to support small and medium-sized digital businesses, as well as the increased visibility of the digital sector in the town, position Leamington well to benefit from the changing work patterns which increase the attractiveness of towns and smaller cities.

Challenges

- 4.38 An overarching challenge in Leamington Spa is to nurture a welcoming and dynamic creative and cultural ecosystem that welcomes and encourages new entrants, as opposed to settling down and eventually losing its current momentum.
- 4.39 In this context, Leamington's rich built environment heritage can be a source of concern because it limits access to space, especially in combination with relatively high property prices. The scarcity of affordable space in Leamington significantly affects performing artists and makers who need larger and flexible spaces, as well as artists and young or starting creatives more generally. Unavailability of space is a significant impediment to the town's cultural life outside traditional established institutions or profit-generating businesses. This negatively impacts the diversity and attractiveness of the cultural offer in Leamington, hampers opportunities for local young talent, and stands in the way of innovative or disruptive initiatives. With a predominant focus on business and the digital industry, the key challenge for Leamington Spa is to better integrate grassroots culture and creativity into its long-term vision and its existing plans for creative and cultural infrastructure and workspace delivery.

- 4.40 Another challenge relates to existing perceptions, including how the rest of the UK sees Leamington Spa, how Leamington Spa understands itself, and how Leamington Spa looks at the world outside. The perception of Leamington Spa is often rather traditional or 'stuffy' which is a contrast to the town's strong creative economy, but also a potential barrier to its growth. At the same time, the perception of Leamington as a 'wealthy, white and middle-aged' works internally as a barrier to participation by artists and audiences who are younger or come from lower-income or non-white backgrounds. Because of the assumptions about the town's demography, accessibility and inclusion are often not among the main priorities. Challenging perception is therefore a vital internal dialogue as much as an external communication strategy.
- 4.41 Finally, the creative and cultural life in Leamington operates in a surprising disconnect from its nearest neighbours including Coventry – the UK city of culture 2021. Despite or exactly because of the perceived and the actual differences between Coventry and Leamington, building closer links between the two cultural and creative ecosystems would benefit both. For once, strengthening the bridges with Coventry could give more force to the emerging conversation around access and diversity. In this respect, the University of Warwick and Coventry University which work with Coventry on its Creative Economy Strategy and are also part of Leamington's creative ecosystem is an important asset.

Key Recommendations

- Increase the visibility of cultural and creative sectors in Leamington, building on the success of the LYT Festival and the existing plans for Leamington Creative Quarter. While Spencer Yard will give a focal point to the digital and gaming industry in Leamington, other projects that form part of the masterplan can do the same for other creative and cultural sectors (e.g. performing arts)
- Deliver inclusive, affordable creative workspace and community spaces in the town centre. To ensure that the space meets the needs of Leamington's grassroots creative community, this could be a community-managed asset, with community input from the early stages of project inception. This could also help in developing an alternative cultural scene which will help to activate the town centre.
- Challenge the perceptions of Leamington as 'white, well-off and middle-aged'. While events such as the Commonwealth Games provide an opportunity to show a different face of Leamington Spa to the rest of the UK, Creative Leamington and other grassroots initiatives do important work in changing how Leamington sees itself. This includes last year's BLM protests in Leamington which were initiated and led by college students.
- Build on the existing networks to facilitate closer integration of the surroundings creative and cultural ecosystems (Coventry, Warwick). Spark: Ignite or Creative Mornings already play an important role in connecting people within and outside of Leamington Spa. Together with expanding industry-focused activities such as Interactive Futures, the dialogue could be further supported by joint cultural events.
- Build talent pathways into the gaming industry from a diversity of backgrounds. This could include working with key industry stakeholders, the University of Warwick and other organisations to champion inclusive games development and build synergies between the gaming industry and other local specialisms – for example in music and performing arts in other parts of the region.

5. Dudley

Overview of Dudley

- 5.1 Dudley is a large metropolitan Borough in the heart of the Black Country with a population of over 300,000. It includes districts such as Stourbridge, Halesowen, Brierly Hill and – at its heart – the town of Dudley. The Borough, as part of the Black Country, is characterised by its rich industrial heritage. This is apparent as a tangible asset in the built environment and as an intangible asset in the identity and culture of the distinctive towns and neighbourhoods which make up the Borough today. In recent decades, industrial decline and associated social and cultural change, have had a significant impact on the local economy, evidenced in high levels of deprivation and in the loss or reduction of key amenities – such as the role and value of ‘the high street’. Dudley High Street has seen a significant withdrawal of key shops and requires root-and-branch re-imagination as a post-retail proposition.
- 5.2 The Black Country Plan (which includes Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall)¹¹ does include a focus on heritage as a cultural resource, alongside a primary focus on skills, employment, housing and improvements to transport links for instance through the introduction of the Metro and Very Light Rail (VLR). For Dudley, it will be important to leverage heritage and cultural assets as a resource which supports social inclusion, wellbeing, skills and employment agendas; plus also to develop and grow the visitor economy, especially toward generating higher visitor spend and overnight stays.
- 5.3 Key cultural and heritage assets in the Borough include:
- **Black Country Living Museum¹²**: An open-air museum that tells the story of one of the very first industrialised landscapes in Britain. Registered as an educational charity, the museum is a major attraction for the region and has provided multiple scenes for the hit TV show *Peaky Blinders*. It is set for a £23m expansion ‘Forging Ahead’ which will expand the museum’s footprint by about a third and increase its capacity to welcome around 500,000 visitors per year by 2026.
 - **Red House Glass Cone¹³** – as the only full height glass cone in Europe (120m), this is a Council-managed scheduled ancient monument. It anchors the Stourbridge Glass Quarter, with a museum, shop, glass / crafts studios (independently run), and a hot house studio for glass-making. Next door is the White House Cone – a new home for the Stourbridge glass collections.
 - **UNESCO Black Country Geopark¹⁴**: In 2020, Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall councils received news of their successful application to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network to become England’s third European and Global Geopark (after the North Pennines and the English Riviera):

¹¹[https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/bcp/#:~:text=The%20Black%20Country%20Plan%20\(formerly,whole%20of%20the%20Black%20Country.&text=Our%20current%20plan%20covers%20the,our%20needs%20up%20to%202026](https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/bcp/#:~:text=The%20Black%20Country%20Plan%20(formerly,whole%20of%20the%20Black%20Country.&text=Our%20current%20plan%20covers%20the,our%20needs%20up%20to%202026)

¹² <https://www.bclm.co.uk/>

¹³ <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/museums>

¹⁴ <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/>

“This is an exciting opportunity for us promote to the world the Black Country’s wonderful geological and cultural heritage and to show how the minerals on our doorstep helped shape the industrial revolution and the world...In the Black Country our landscapes, nature reserves, open air visitor attractions, historic buildings, museum collections and the history of development and settlement are a direct consequence of the geology beneath our feet. Abundant raw materials made way for the area to flourish in experimental science and technology that founded many aspects of the industrial revolution and transformed the world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”.

5.4 The Geopark provides a major opportunity to develop cultural tourism itineraries, connect green and cultural infrastructure, and develop education and knowledge regarding the region’s distinctive geological, industrial and cultural landscape. There are 45 sites in the UNESCO accreditation.

- **Castle Hill Vision Phase 2.** This involves an ambitious plan for improvements and investments to the castle, zoo and Castle Hill Woodland. The new vision document outlines eight key projects including: the castle; visitor and education facility; stores cavern mine; lodge; giraffe house; Tecton buildings; woodlands; and southern gateway.

5.5 In the absence of a Cultural Strategy (this is much needed), Dudley Council has partnered with Culture Central to develop two bids for ‘Culture Action Zones’:

- **The Stourbridge Glass Quarter** – to develop its profile as a cultural quarter and introduce new facilities for glass-focused creative enterprises
- **Dudley High Street / town centre** – with a focus on diversifying the offer, improving the night time economy, and generating a participatory approach to high street renewal. This builds on the ongoing work of Co-Lab Dudley¹⁵ - an experimental form of social infrastructure located right in the middle of Dudley High Street

“We are testing out a new approach to creating places and experiences on the High Street which are open to everyone, where strangers can meet and grow connections”.

5.6 Like many high streets across the West Midlands and nationally, Dudley High Street is in serious decline. This decline has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing the issue and requiring a re-think on the role, purpose and thus mix of the High Street. This includes considering cultural and creative production space as a way of re-energising vacant spaces; of combining social and leisure activities to co-locate uses, and seeing the high street as a living lab for urban renewal.

5.7 The **Portersfield Development**¹⁶ is £82m of private investment to regenerate an area of central Dudley, offering a mix of retail and residential opportunities. It is projected to create up to 500 jobs via a mix of uses including up to 400 apartments (including student accommodation), retail and leisure.

5.8 Additional priorities / activities underway include:

¹⁵ www.colabdudley.net

¹⁶ <https://www.regeneratingdudley.org.uk/our-projects>

- A new **public art strategy** which will include a focus on temporary commissions and public art as a participatory engagement process; rather than simply a programme of permanent commissions leveraged via Section 106. This includes a programme of public art interventions at each of the four new metro stops (as part of the Metro extension to Brierly Hill).¹⁷
- **Enterprise and skills** – with lower than average attainment and skills levels, all cultural and creative industries interventions need an education and skills element at their heart.
- **Dudley Business First**¹⁸ plays an important role in supporting start-ups and will drive processes of business development as the economy opens-up post-Covid.
- **Resonance**¹⁹ is a key regional institution for music education. Based in Brierly Hill waterside, it offers multiple vocational courses and 3 degree-level courses (with a further two from September 2022). The institution was created in consultation with 48 industry colleagues – including Roland, Focusrite, Korg, Yamaha, Marshall, Fender, Solid State Logic, Avid, Ad Lib Audio, Total Solutions Group and others.
- **Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology**²⁰: £26.8m purpose designed facilities to address regional Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills shortages.

“Resonance isn’t your usual higher education provider. It has been created by the music industry, for the music industry”.

5.9 The cultural sector can play a vital role in Dudley: in post-Covid recovery and as a way of diversifying the economic base and providing pathways for employment for local people. Such pathways are, at least in the medium term, most likely to emerge through the spill over effects of investment in culture – such as in the leisure and tourism sector. The reinvigoration of the ‘night-time economy’ and generation of longer- and higher-spend cultural tourism, are both priorities for the Council. A further priority is on socially engaged and participatory practice, with arts and culture a key enabler for active citizenship and wellbeing.

Cultural Economy in Dudley

Cultural and creative employment

- 5.10 Based on the latest ONS data available (for 2019), 465 people were employed in the cultural sector in Dudley, equivalent to 3% of total employment in the area. Employment in the cultural sector in Dudley cluster area makes up 3% of cultural employment in the WMCA area. This does not, however, take into account freelancers.
- 5.11 Figure 5.1 shows employment by cultural sub-sector in Dudley. The largest cultural sub-sector is Museums and Galleries (400 jobs) and Film, TV and Music (50 jobs).

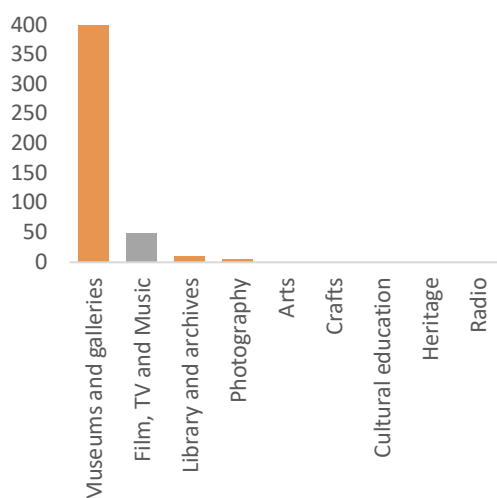
¹⁷ <https://westmidlandsmetro.com/about/expansion-programme/>

¹⁸ <https://www.dudleybusinessfirst.org.uk/>

¹⁹ <https://www.resonance-edu.org/>

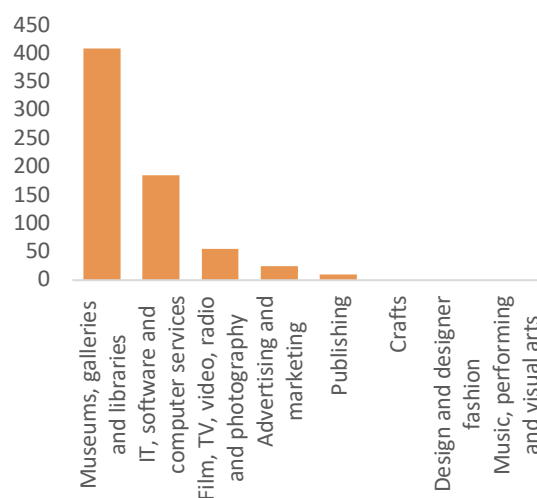
²⁰ <https://www.regeneratingdudley.org.uk/our-projects>

Figure 5.1 Employment in the Cultural Sector in Dudley



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

Figure 5.2 Employment in the Creative Sector in Dudley



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

- 5.12 Table 5.1 shows the sector's specialisations within the cultural sector. The Dudley cluster area has a highly significant specialism in the museums & galleries sub-sector.

Table 5.1 Sector's Specialisation (Location Quotient) within the Cultural Sector

	Arts (Performing Arts, Artistic Creation)	Film, TV & Music	Radio	Photography	Crafts	Museums & Galleries	Library & Archives	Cultural Education	Heritage	Cultural Sector (Total)	Cultural Sector (without Film/TV)	Creative Sector (Total)
Dudley Cluster Area	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.0	38.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.9
Dudley Local Authority Area	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.3	5.7	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4
Black Country LEP TOTAL	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.7	2.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3
WMCA TOTAL	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.8	3.5	1.9	0.4	0.0	2.6	0.3	0.3	0.6

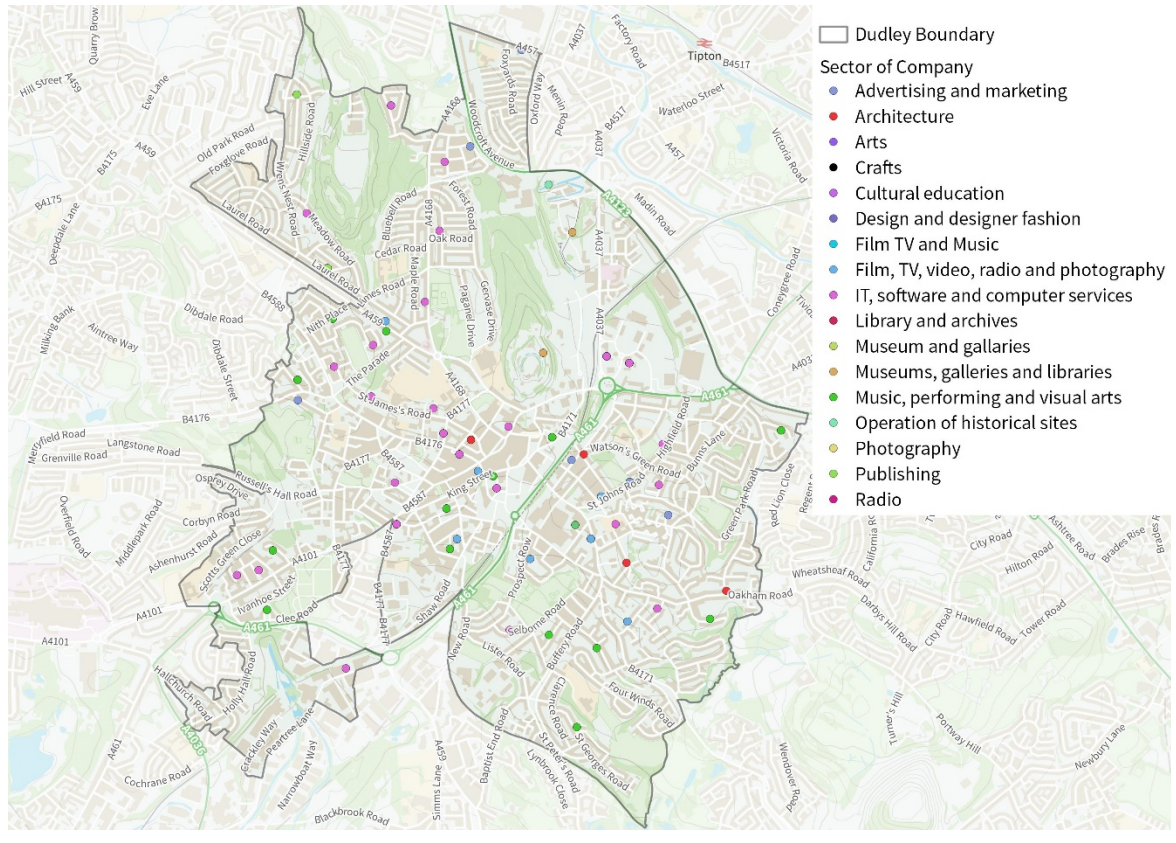
Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

- 5.13 Over the period of 2015 and 2019, cultural employment in Dudley has grown by 35%, this has occurred due to a range of different cultural sub-sectors. Museums and galleries has been the strongest growing sub-sector (in absolute terms), with 170 more jobs in 2019 compared to 2014 (a 74% increase). However, employment in both the Library and archives sub-sector (-40 jobs, 80% decrease) and Film, TV and Music sub-sector (-10 jobs, 17% decrease) have declined significantly.

Cultural and creative businesses

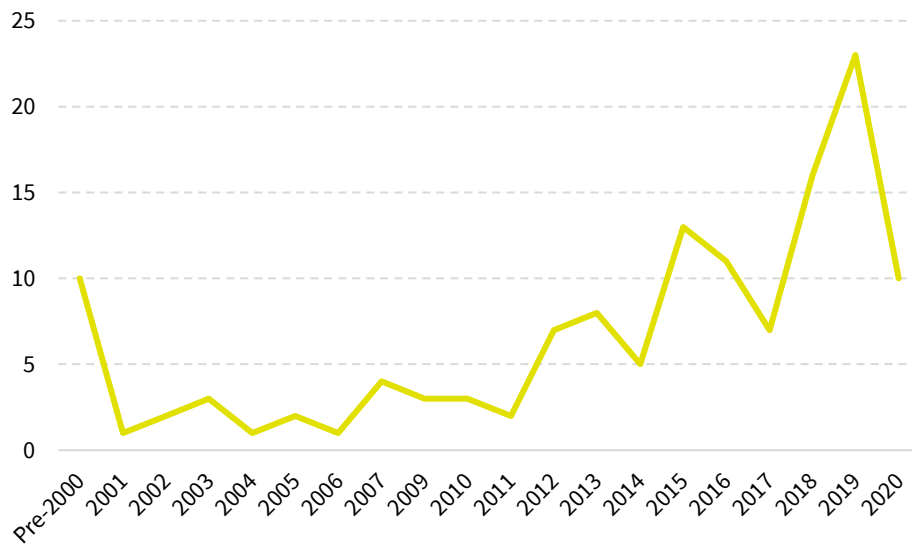
5.14 In 2020 there were 137 creative and cultural businesses in Dudley. Figure 5.3 shows a small concentration of cultural and creative businesses central to the map, around Kings Street, which could be evidence of an emerging cluster area.

Figure 5.3 Location of Cultural and Creative Businesses in Dudley



Source: Companies House, 2020

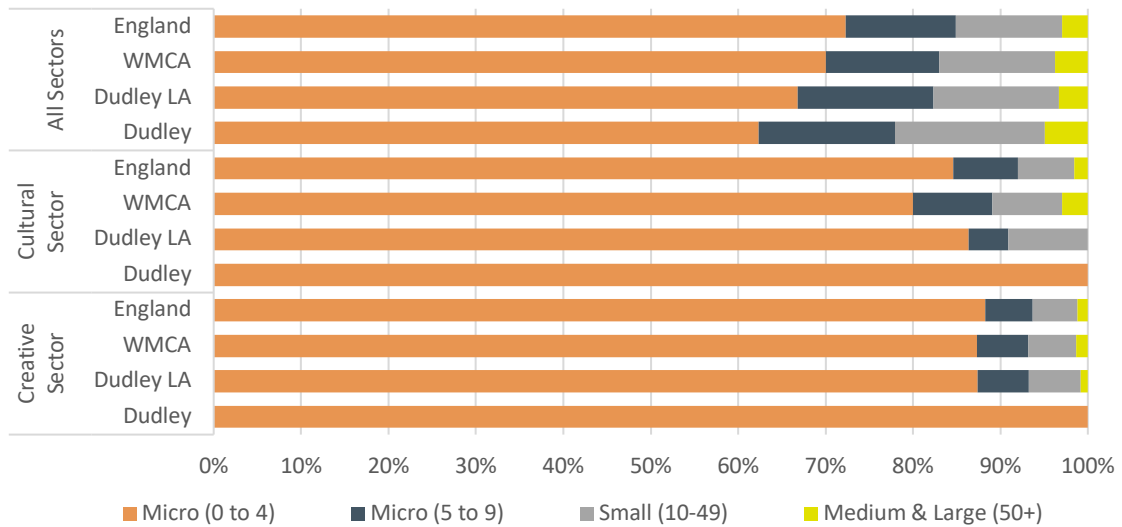
Figure 5.4 Date of Incorporation of Cultural and Creative Businesses in Dudley



Source: Companies House, 2020

- 5.15 The majority of the current cultural and creative businesses in Dudley were incorporated since the turn of the millennium, with only 7% incorporated before 2000. The majority of businesses (56%) have been incorporated since 2015, with 16% incorporated in 2019. This highlights the relatively young nature of the businesses and suggests a growing sector in Dudley.
- 5.16 The strongest sub-sector in Dudley is the IT, software and computer services which accounts for 39% of all businesses in the area. The sub sector also has the strongest historical roots in the town with 40% of the pre-2000 businesses, which is the largest proportional share of the early incorporated businesses. Additionally, the sub sector accounts for 43% of the businesses incorporated since 2018 which suggests that the sub sector is still thriving. Other notable sub sectors include arts (14%), advertising and marketing (11%) and publishing (7%).
- 5.17 Data from the UK Business Count shows the number of employees hired by businesses in the cultural sector and the wider economy. This figure below shows that all of the cultural and creative businesses in Dudley are micro entities with 0 to 4 employees. However, this data only measures those who have registered for VAT or PAYE.

Figure 5.5 Business Sizes of Cultural Businesses, 2020



Source: UK Business Count, ONS, 2020

Cultural Infrastructure

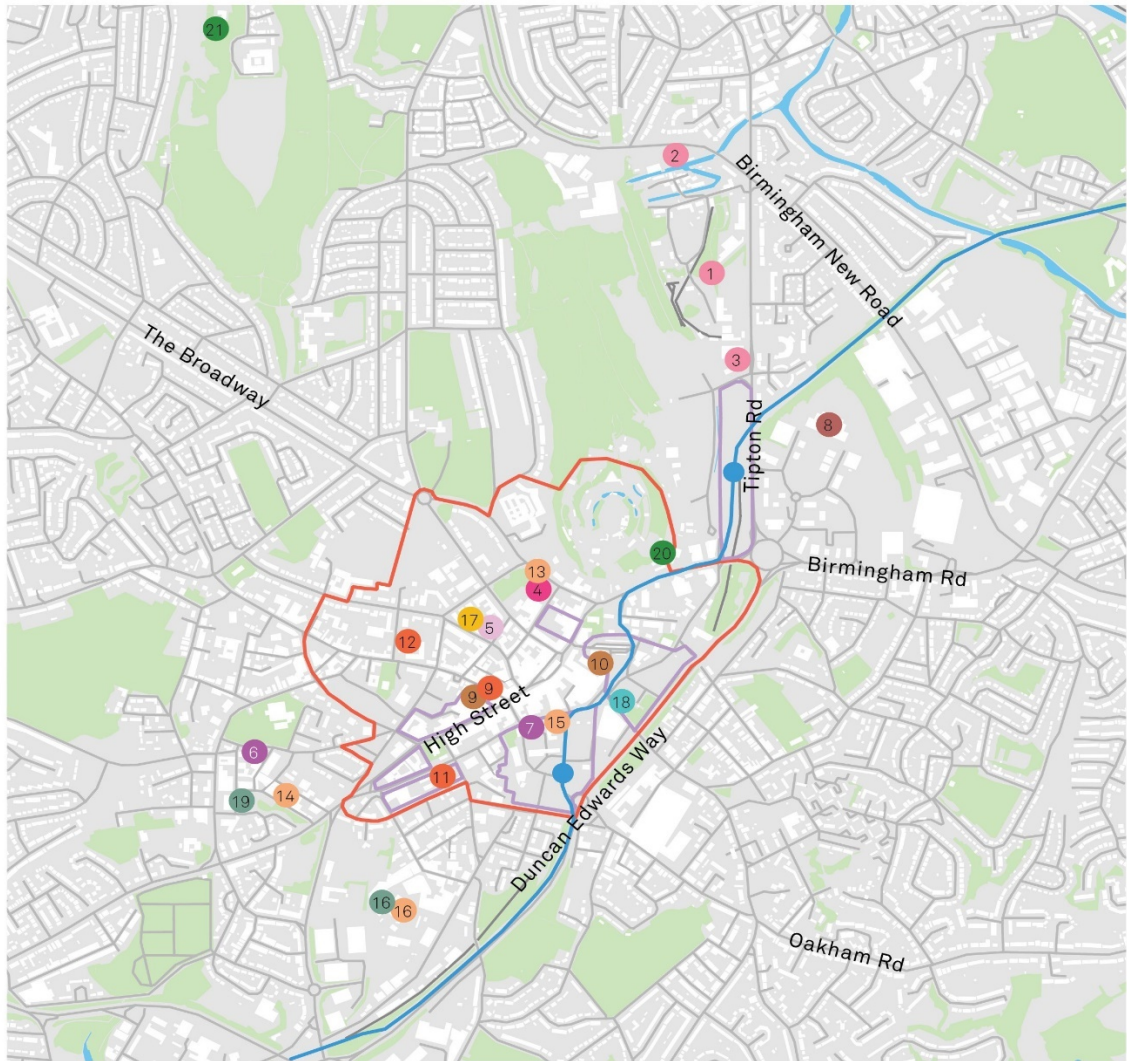
- 5.18 The study area includes the town centre, a cluster of visitor destination including a zoo and an open-air museum to the north of the town centre, and surrounding residential areas. The study area also includes some core employment locations – Dudley Central Trading Estate, part of Coneygre Industrial Estate, and clusters of warehouse or factory buildings on Hall Street and Vauxhall Street.

Key specialisms

- 5.19 The town of Dudley positions itself as a regional heritage and leisure destination, with several popular tourist attractions including the *Black Country Living Museum*, *Dudley Canal and Caverns* or *Dudley Zoo* and *Castle*. The *Black Country Living Museum* is a visitor destination of national significance and also a key filming location for the popular BBC drama *Peaky Blinders*. In 2020, the Black Country was awarded UNESCO Global Geopark status celebrating the area's geological and historical heritage as a key location which helped shape the industrial revolution. Several sites in and near Dudley town centre are part of the geopark's network. Dudley is a popular day-trip destination with predominantly family-oriented offer. At the moment, Dudley does not have a developed night-time economy that would encourage longer stays or more challenging cultural offer that would appeal to a wider spectrum of visitors.
- 5.20 Dudley's local cultural assets have relatively modest programming and Dudley's residents often choose to travel to Birmingham or Wolverhampton to participate in culture. A large number of grassroots cultural facilities including pubs and social clubs in Dudley have closed, and Dudley's high street has experienced a significant decline. The proximity of Birmingham and Wolverhampton also poses significant challenges to the viability of the existing or future cultural consumption spaces in Dudley. Furthermore, visitor facilities such as the *Black Country Living Museum* are not well integrated with local needs or cultural appetite and as such are often not appreciated as a valuable cultural asset by Dudley's residents.

- 5.21 The wider borough as well as Dudley are home to a very significant number of grassroots and amateur cultural organisations, with a particular strength in performing arts and music. However, there is a cliff in terms of participation, with significant sections of Dudley's population not perceiving creative careers as something 'for them'. Large number of private dance and drama schools as well as an excellent school-based mass music education programme across the borough are helping to bridge this gap. Building on the primary and secondary school offer, *Dudley College of Technology* provides qualifications in disciplines across music, performing arts, production and art and design.
- 5.22 Last year, a state-of-the art industry-led music institute *Resonance* opened in Brierley Hill, offering degree-level qualifications in performance, production and music business. Resonance brought several important industry partners in the area, including *Total Solutions Group*, *SSE Audio*, or *M2 Studios*. The *Resonance* facilities are also home to the Council's *Dudley Performing Arts*, and a popular *Black Country Radio*. As a unique music hub, Resonance aims to be a catalyst for Black Country's existing strength in music and performing arts.

Figure 5.6 Cultural Infrastructure in the Dudley Cluster Area



KEY

Performance & exhibition space

- 1. Black Country Living Museum
- 2. Dudley Canal and Caverns
- 3. Dudley Archives and Local History Centre

- 4. Dudley Evolve Theatre

- 5. Dudley Town Hall

- 6. Dirty Rockers
- 7. Yo Old Foundry

- 8. Showcase Cinema Dudley

Community, participatory & education space

- 9. CoLab Dudley
- 10. Artspace Dudley

- 9. CoLab Dudley
- 11. African Caribbean Community Network
- 12. Dudley URC Church

- 13. Dudley Evolve
- 14. The Jewels Academy
- 15. Roy Jevons Music
- 16. Apollo Audio & Drums

- 17. Dudley Library

Creative open workspace

- 18. David's Cave

- 16. Apollo Audio & Drums
- 19. The Basement Studios

Environment, heritage and outdoor space

- 20. Dudley Zoo and Castle
- 21. Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve

Strategic context

- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension
- Proposed metro stop
- Town Centre
- Opportunity Site

Source: We Made That

'Hard' cultural infrastructure

- 5.23 Key cultural assets in the town centre and immediate surroundings are predominantly focused on Dudley's visitor economy, and to a lesser extent on local cultural consumption. While there are some significant cultural and creative production spaces in the wider borough, there are only few in Dudley. Key visitor economy assets in Dudley including the Zoo and Black Country Living Museum are located to the north of the town centre. Other cultural infrastructure including cultural consumption and creative education spaces is concentrated in the town centre, with very few facilities in the surrounding residential areas. While there are some significant cultural and creative production spaces in the wider borough, these are from the most part not located in Dudley.
- 5.24 The *Black Country Living Museum* is an open-air museum that tells the story of one of the very first industrialised landscapes in Britain. Set across 26 acres, it includes over forty carefully reconstructed shops, houses and industrial areas that represent the Black Country's story. Registered as an educational charity, the museum is a major attraction for the region. It is set for a £23m expansion 'Forging Ahead' - a new historic 1940s-1960s development, new learning spaces and a brand-new visitor centre, taking the museum's story up to the closure of the Baggeridge Coal Mine in 1968 which brought about the end of a unique era for the Black Country.
- 5.25 Other cultural and heritage assets forming part of the visitor landscape include *Dudley Zoo and Castle*, *Dudley Canal and Caverns*, *Priory Ruins* and *Dudley Archives and Local History Centre*.

Dudley Zoo is an often-undervalued asset spreading across 40 acres within the grounds of *Dudley Castle*, containing a number of listed Tecton Group buildings. The Zoo recently received a new entrance, and future plans include the refurbishment of the iconic Tecton building and the erection of a new mixed-use facility which could be used for activities, training and education, meetings and conferences.

- 5.26 Among important community-oriented cultural assets in the town centre are the *African Caribbean Community Network Centre* at Abberley Street, Council-run *Dudley Town Hall* with regular programming featuring comedy pieces, music and tribute acts, and Dudley Library. A significant cultural asset of the town centre is *CoLab Dudley*, a ‘social lab’ and a ‘hub for doing’ on Dudley High Street. Based in a retail unit, it has an exhibition and performance space, a small coworking/studio space for local creatives, and a community and learning space. *Dudley College of Technology’s* Evolve Building is a creative education hub also used by local community. The facilities include a 180-seat theatre, glass and ceramic studio, a photographic studio, video editing suite and darkrooms.
- 5.27 Outside of Dudley town centre, Sturbridge and its *Glass Quarter* are a key cultural centre in the borough. The *Glass Quarter* includes museum spaces, glass-making workshop and creative workspaces. Stourbridge also has several live music venues, a rehearsal complex and music studios. The *Resonance* music hub in Brierley Hill features three state-of-the-art recording and production studios, a radio station, rehearsal rooms, a video-production suite and a number of educational facilities.

‘Soft’ cultural infrastructure

- 5.28 Dudley Council is working in synergy with Walsall, Sandwell and Wolverhampton on leveraging the region’s heritage and rising the profile of the Black Country as a destination. A key success was the designation of the Black Country Geopark as a UNESCO Global Geopark. The Geopark provides a major opportunity to develop cultural tourism itineraries, connect green and cultural infrastructure, and develop education and knowledge regarding the region’s distinctive geological, industrial and cultural landscape. There are 45 sites in the UNESCO accreditation. The four boroughs are also working together on the Black Country Plan, a planning framework for the whole of the Black Country. With the review of the plan under way, the new Black Country Plan will include a focus on heritage as a cultural resource, alongside a primary focus on skills, employment, transport and housing.
- 5.29 Among the existing culture support networks active in Dudley are the *Black Country Arts Council*, *Creative Black Country*, *Dudley Cultural Education Partnership* and *Dudley Music Education Hub*. Black Country Arts Council is an umbrella membership organisation supporting amateur and professional practitioners and arts organisations across the four Black Country boroughs. *Creative Black Country*, a project funded by Arts Council England through the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme, with a mission to engage audiences in areas where people are less likely to take part in arts and culture. *Dudley Cultural Education Partnership* and *Dudley Music Education Hub* work with schools, local authority bodies, the voluntary and community sector, and other stakeholders to deliver high quality cultural and creative education for all children in Dudley.

Social value

- 5.30 With a decades-long decline of the heavy industry, Dudley is among the most deprived areas nationally. The strong industrial legacy also poses a challenge to cultural participation that goes

beyond affordability considerations, with large segments of Dudley's population not considering careers in the cultural and creative sectors as 'for them'. However, local schools and educational partnerships play an important part in overcoming the resulting gap in creative activity and cultural participation. *Dudley Performing Arts* and the *Music Education Hub* work across nearly all schools in the borough, offering highly subsidized music tuition packages with strong emphasis on inclusion and mass enrolment.

- 5.31 Several schools in and around Dudley including the *Jesson's Church of England VA Primary School*, *Beechwood CE Primary School* and *St Joseph's Catholic Primary School* have some of the best music education programmes and show a strong commitment to provide inclusive, high quality music education as a means to create new opportunities for children and young people in Dudley. The emphasis on music and cultural education works in synergy with programmes at *Dudley College of Technology* and the new Resonance education hub. The co-location of these facilities in Dudley promises to create a pathway into the music industry from primary school through to a degree without a need to leave the borough.
- 5.32 With a significant decline of Dudley High Street, further accelerated by the pandemic, Dudley faces a significant challenge of re-inventing high street as a key social and cultural asset. *CoLab Dudley* is a pioneer in the process, discovering and envisioning new futures for Dudley's high street. Rooted in socially engaged research and experiments, *CoLab Dudley* aims to help create a 'kinder, more creative and connected High Street' that local people desire through both physical and social interventions. Based in a high street shop unit, it also embodies the future by embedding social, cultural and creative uses on high street.

Future Outlook

- 5.33 Although Dudley is rich in industrial heritage, it has struggled in recent years to adapt to shifts in, for example, how people shop and spend their leisure time. In recent decades, industrial decline and associated social and cultural change, have had a significant impact on the local economy, evidenced in high levels of deprivation and in the loss or reduction of key amenities – such as the role and value of 'the high street'. Dudley High Street has seen a significant withdrawal of key shops and requires root-and-branch re-imagination as a post-retail proposition.
- 5.34 The Black Country Plan (which includes Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall)²¹ includes a focus on heritage as a cultural resource, alongside a primary focus on skills, employment, transport and housing. For Dudley, it will be important to leverage heritage and cultural assets as a resource which supports social inclusion, wellbeing, skills and employment agendas; plus also to develop and grow the visitor economy, especially toward generating higher visitor spend and overnight stays.

Opportunities and Challenges

- 5.35 The cultural sector can play a vital role in Dudley: in post-Covid recovery and as a way of diversifying the economic base and providing pathways for employment for local people. Such pathways are, at least in the medium term, most likely to emerge through the spillover effects of investment in culture – such as in the leisure and tourism sector. The reinvigoration of the 'night-

²¹

[https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/bcp/#:~:text=The%20Black%20Country%20Plan%20\(formerly,whole%20of%20the%20Black%20Country.&text=Our%20current%20plan%20covers%20the,our%20needs%20up%20to%202026](https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/bcp/#:~:text=The%20Black%20Country%20Plan%20(formerly,whole%20of%20the%20Black%20Country.&text=Our%20current%20plan%20covers%20the,our%20needs%20up%20to%202026)

time economy' and generation of longer- and higher-spend cultural tourism, are both priorities for the Council. A further priority is on socially engaged and participatory practice, with arts and culture a key enabler for active citizenship and wellbeing.

- 5.36 **Dudley High Street:** Like many high streets across the West Midlands and nationally, Dudley High Street is in serious decline. This decline has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing the issue and requiring a re-think on the role, purpose and thus mix of the High Street. This includes considering cultural and creative production space as a way of re-energising vacant spaces; of combining social and leisure activities to co-locate uses, and seeing the high street as a living lab for urban renewal.
- 5.37 Dudley High Street / town centre can be remodeled as a hub for cultural production and experience. Its days as a retail centre have passed, which presents a major challenge in terms of re-imagining it as a social and cultural resource. With a fresh vision and plan, it can become an exemplar for a new type of high street – with a focus on diversifying the offer, improving the night time economy, and generating a participatory approach to high street renewal. This builds on the ongoing work of Co-Lab Dudley - an experimental form of social infrastructure located right in the middle of Dudley High Street.
- 5.38 **UNESCO Black Country Geopark:** In 2020, Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall councils received news of their successful application to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network to become England's third European and Global Geopark (after the North Pennines and the English Riviera). The Geopark provides a major opportunity to develop cultural tourism itineraries, connect green and cultural infrastructure, and develop education and knowledge regarding the region's distinctive geological, industrial and cultural landscape. The Geopark can also provide a new strategic narrative for key hubs / centres across the Borough – for example, Dudley High Street could be positioned as a cultural resource where artists and creative enterprises can develop, show and sell their work, inspired by the industrial and geological fabric of the region.
- 5.39 **Young people, enterprise and skills** – with lower than average attainment and skills levels in Dudley, all cultural and creative industries interventions need an education and skills element at their heart. Dudley Business First plays an important role in supporting start-ups and will drive processes of business development as the economy opens-up post-Covid. Dudley can become a centre of excellence for connecting young people to employment in culture and the creative industries, including the range of 'back stage' and technical skills for which there was, pre-Covid, a skills gap. Black Country & Marches Institute of Technology opens in September 2021 and the Castle Hill Vision Phase 2 plans for a new university centre next to the it, offering Level 4 and 5, degree and post-graduate programmes in partnership with the University of Worcester). Resonance is a key regional institution for music education. Based in Brierly Hill waterside, it offers multiple vocational courses and 3 degree-level courses (with a further two from September 2022). The institution can play an important role in nurturing creative talent and, potentially, feeding new creative hubs (such as Dudley High Street (see below)).

Key Recommendations

- **Position Dudley High Street as a hub for creativity and culture.** This can build from the work of Co-Lab Dudley to include the re-purposing of old retail units into different types of creative studio. These studios can draw from the industrial heritage of the Black Country, to include visual arts and crafts. The High Street can become a key feature of the Geopark – a hub for creative making which reflects on the region's industrial heritage. It can also be a hub for creative making which draws inspiration from the region's history

of industrial innovation – e.g. with some studios focus on digital fabrication and contemporary design. To achieve this will require a creative strategy for the High Street and a proactive approach to property acquisition and re-purposing. A critical mass of street-facing creative studios can in turn attract complementary uses such as independent retail, food and drink, evening economy activities etc. A creative / arts market can be programmed to accelerate this change, attracting makers from across the Borough / region.

- **A Public Art / Creative Public Realm Strategy and commissioning programme.** This is to develop an arts and creative itinerary for the Geopark, providing a curated cultural tourism offer which connects the Borough's industrial and geological history to a contemporary creative landscape. It can have at its heart the 'creative engine' – a growing hub of creative studios on Dudley High Street.
- **A Creative Enterprise and Skills programme** – working with the local FE sector and regional HE sector to build technical and entrepreneurship skills in the creative industries. This can be focused through specialisms available in the Borough – e.g. music technology with Resonance. This could involve the development of a music hub on or close to Dudley High Street – e.g. with a studio and rehearsal facility, plus small venue – to connect the reinvigoration of the night-time economy to creative industries development.

Appendix A - SIC Code Definitions

Sector: Creative Industries		
Subsector	SIC07	Description
Advertising and marketing	7021	Public relations and communication activities
	7311	Advertising agencies
	7312	Media representation
Architecture	7111	Architectural activities
Crafts	3212	Manufacture of jewellery and related articles
Design and designer fashion	7410	Specialised design activities
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	5911	Motion picture, video and television programme production activities
	5912	Motion picture, video and television programme post-production activities
	5913	Motion picture, video and television programme distribution activities
	5914	Motion picture projection activities
	6010	Radio broadcasting
	6020	Television programming and broadcasting activities
	7420	Photographic activities
IT, software and computer services	5821	Publishing of computer games
	5829	Other software publishing
	6201	Computer programming activities
	6202	Computer consultancy activities
Publishing	5811	Book publishing
	5812	Publishing of directories and mailing lists
	5813	Publishing of newspapers
	5814	Publishing of journals and periodicals
	5819	Other publishing activities
	7430	Translation and interpretation activities
Museums, galleries and libraries	9101	Library and archive activities
	9102	Museum activities
Music, performing and visual arts	5920	Sound recording and music publishing activities
	8552	Cultural education
	9001	Performing arts
	9002	Support activities to performing arts
	9003	Artistic creation
	9004	Operation of arts facilities

Sector: Cultural Sector

Subsector	SIC07	Description
Arts	9001	Performing arts
	9002	Support activities to performing arts
	9003	Artistic creation
	9004	Operation of arts facilities
Film, TV and Music	1820	Reproduction of recorded media
	3220	Manufacture of musical instruments
	4763	Retail sale of music and video recordings in specialised stores
	5911	Motion picture, video and television programme production activities
	5912	Motion picture, video and television programme post-production
	5913	Motion picture, video and television programme distribution
	5914	Motion picture projection activities
	5920	Sound recording and music publishing activities
	6020	Television programming and broadcasting activities
Radio	6010	Radio broadcasting
Photography	7420	Photographic activities
Crafts	3212	Manufacture of jewellery and related articles
Museums and galleries	9102	Museum activities
Library and archives	9101	Library and archive activities
Cultural education	8552	Cultural education
Operation of historical sites and similar visitor attractions	9103	Operation of historical sites and buildings and similar visitor attractions

Appendix B - Cluster Area defined by MSOAs

Cluster Area	MSOA cd	MSOA nm
Digbeth	E02001876	Birmingham 050
	E02006896	Birmingham 135
	E02006900	Birmingham 139
North Birmingham	E02001850	Birmingham 024
	E02001858	Birmingham 032
	E02001859	Birmingham 033
	E02001860	Birmingham 034
	E02001861	Birmingham 035
	E02001862	Birmingham 036
	E02001866	Birmingham 040
	E02001834	Birmingham 008
	E02001839	Birmingham 013
	E02001842	Birmingham 016
	E02001845	Birmingham 019
	E02006809	Birmingham 133
Dudley	E02002010	Dudley 011
	E02002014	Dudley 015
	E02002009	Dudley 010
	E02002005	Dudley 006
Leamington Spa	E02006525	Warwick 007
	E02006527	Warwick 009
	E02006528	Warwick 010
	E02006531	Warwick 013
	E02006533	Warwick 015

Appendix C - List of Consultees

Digbeth

- Cheryl Jones (Grand Union)
- Lisa Meyer (Capsule)
- Ruth Claxon (Eastside Projects)
- Bennie Gray and Michelle Irving (Zellig)

North Birmingham

- Ammo Talwar (Punch Records)
- Carol Pemberton (Black Voices)
- Keith Shayaam-Smith (Legacy Centre of Excellence)
- Pauline Bailey (Black Arts Forum)
- Karen Daw (Karen Daw Fundraising & Development)
- Neil De-Costa (Birmingham City Council)

Leamington Spa

- Jonathan Branson (Warwick District Council)
- Martin O'Neill (Warwick District Council)
- Craig Spivey (Craig Spivey Creative)
- Martina Bussi (Creative Leamington)
- Chris Knight (Creative Leamington)

Dudley

- Jane Lamine (Dudley MBC)
- Lorna Prescott (Dudley CVS)
- Chris Jones (Dudley Performing Arts)