

**Cabinet  
EXECUTIVE**

Item No

NBC/NCC Portfolios:  
**Health and Environment NBC/Sustainability NCC**

NBC/NCC Directorate:  
**Community Services NBC /Sustainability NCC**

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Cultural Quarter/Living Quarter  
Strategic Framework.

**The Northampton Cultural  
Mile**

1. **Recommendation(s)**
  - 1.1 The Executive note the content of this report.
  - 1.2 The Executive endorse the Cultural Mile concept and that it be embodied accordingly in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) and in Local Transport Plan (LTP2).
  - 1.3 The Executive endorse the continued development of Partnership working between Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council, in order to help realise central area regeneration projects and meet shared objectives for the future of Northampton.
  - 1.4 The Northampton Borough Council Executive note the resource and capacity implications of implementing any aspect of the Cultural Mile concept and agree to consider this as part of the current visioning and prioritisation exercise. That Northamptonshire County Council similarly considers the Cultural Mile concept and objectives as key considerations in resource prioritisation.
  - 1.5 The Executive approve the formation of cross authority members steering group to oversee the project development for the Cultural Mile concept.
  - 1.6 The Executive will strongly urge and request that the UDC, when in place, considers the Cultural Mile concept and developing plans as a key part of its own plans for partnership and future investment.

## 2. **Summary**

- 2.1 The report provides an overview of the recent work undertaken on behalf of Northampton Borough Council in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council by BIG Architecture, part of the Alsop Group.
- 2.2 The project funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Growth Area Funding, recognised the importance of developing the notion of a Cultural Quarter / Living Quarter within the context of supporting the revitalisation of central Northampton as part of the growth agenda for the town.
- 2.3 The 'advocacy' document identifies 10 key areas for possible Cultural interventions within the town.
- 2.4 The project has identified the need to work in partnership to achieve greater recognition for Cultural development to be at the heart of the regeneration agenda. There is a need to raise the profile, identify external resources, widen access and increase participation in cultural activities.

## 3.0 **Background**

- 3.1 Following the successful funding application with Northamptonshire County Council to ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) for Growth Areas Funds, the Architects practice BIG, part of the Alsop Group, were appointed in February 2004 to develop a vision for a Cultural Quarter and Living Quarter within a key central area of Northampton. The working brief included the preparation and delivery of a creative consultation process and a strategic development framework to support the projects delivery.
- 3.2 The project was identified as important in the context of Northampton being identified as part of a growth area designated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Sustainable Communities Plan. The project therefore presented a unique opportunity to identify and address future cultural development needs to support the proposed growth, protect and enhance the present fabric of the town and optimise the value of the town's historic assets.

## 4.0 **Developing the Vision**

- 4.1 The 'Cultural Mile' vision developed, following research, discussion and cultural mapping. It is not a quarter as such; other towns and cities in the region and the country are developing these. What is considered more appropriate for Northampton is to build upon the town's existing assets. These are comprised of architectural heritage, the cultural buildings, the landscape and key stakeholder organisations. What is proposed is the designation of a swathe of the town centre linking the River Nene to the Racecourse Park as the 'Cultural Mile'.
- 4.2 The Cultural Mile is seen as the 'Glue'. The glue that connects both the existing attractions and sites for new opportunities, and that highlights Northampton's landmark buildings. It also connects the market places to the open spaces, and it reinforces the setting for a vibrant and diverse town centre with a more broadly based town economy.

## 5.0 **New Opportunities – possible interventions**

5.1 Ten Key sites for possible interventions have been identified.

1. Nunn Mills – Becketts Park
2. St Johns
3. Albion Place
4. Angel Street
5. County Hall
6. Abington Street
7. Market Square
8. Lady's Lane area (Indoor Market)
9. The Mounts
10. Racecourse Park

5.2 Some concepts have been put forward for how these sites could be developed, but some are contrary to long-established planning policies and accordingly need to be tested against this criterion as the new planning context develops. The majority, however, are potentially projects of merit and shall need to be provided with a policy basis in the emerging Local Development Framework. Each project would then require individual consideration and evaluation in terms of feasibility (economic and otherwise), funding sources and project management.

5.3 These projects could address the identified need for additional offices, town centre residential accommodation, increased niche retail offer, the conversion of mono functional spaces into dynamic layered multi-functional spaces and continued improvements to the public realm.

5.4 An initial high-level analysis of the town planning consequences/policy issues of each of the ten suggested interventions is presented outlined in Appendix A.

## 6.0 **Raising the Profile**

6.1 The emerging vision was publicly revealed at the 'Party in the Car Park' on the 29<sup>th</sup> March. The event, held on floor 10 of St John's multi story car park, attracted several hundred local people. On show and up for debate was a film of the proposed vision, a loop of images outlining the highs, lows and potential of Northampton, and an exhibition by the graphic and fine art students from University College Northampton. The public were invited to comment on the proposals on a 25m long blackboard, providing a strong endorsement for the vision and encouragement for some of the ideas to be progressed.

6.2 The car park exhibition was adapted for showing at the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery in Guildhall Road for a six week period with over 18,000 visitors to the museum during its residence. This has been followed by a range of consultation / information presentations to:

Northampton Town Centre Partnership Spring Conference  
Northampton Theatres Board, Voluntary Sector Forum and the central Area Partnership and 3 NBC Forums to-date.

## 7.0 **'The Cultural Mile' a concept**

- 7.1 The 'Cultural Mile' should be seen as setting a starting point, to be developed incrementally and sustainably as the town expands. The intervention areas outlined within the project's strategic framework have been considered within the following timescales; 0-2 years, 2-5 years and 5-10 years and should inform the strategic thinking of NBC, NCC and the emerging Urban Development Corporation, as well as other agencies at local, regional and national levels. Particularly important is the master planning of the town centre, possibly through an Action Plan for the LDF.
- 7.2 Some of the possible interventions may not currently be fully viable or sustainable, but the 'Cultural Mile' project is about providing a vision and raising the profile of the cultural agenda for the town. Some current potential projects (Greyfriars redevelopment, Deringate/Royal refurbishment, Market Square) should be viewed in this context and should be seen as potential building blocks for developing the wider vision, cultural capacity and the identity of the Cultural Mile.
- 7.3 Currently in production is a short booklet detailing the proposals for the 'Cultural Mile'. This will provide an advocacy tool to continue the 'Conversation' and will also highlight a number of key providers within the town and their contribution to the Cultural / Social well being of Northampton. It will form a key resource in the marketing effort which will be undertaken in the coming period

## 8.0 **Developing an Implementation Framework**

- 8.1 Lead Officers of the County Council and the Borough Council have met to discuss an initial way forward to develop an Implementation Framework. The following template captures some of the early actions and longer-term issues / opportunities.
- 8.2 It is important to stress that, while the processes that are outlined below are essential to secure co-ordination, good project planning and good communication between the two councils and the key partner agencies, the processes are a means to an end. The end is about outcomes that benefits the town, its communities and its businesses, using the whole Cultural Mile concept to frame and demonstrate a shared vision for a number of significant tangible projects.
- 8.3 The suggested approach to lead member engagement is for the Leaders of both Councils, with the appropriate Portfolio Holders, to lead, steer and champion the Cultural Mile 'project', supported by The Head of Cultural Services and the Head of Planning, Transportation and Regeneration from Northampton Borough Council and by the Director for Sustainability and the Director for Community Services from Northamptonshire County Council. They will be responsible to the Lead members for delivering the evolving projects from the Cultural Mile concepts.

	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>MILESTONES</b>
1.	Publish the Key 'advocacy' document	Big Architecture NBC	Complete early July 2004
2.	Investigate the establishment of a joint planning team – key support people in both councils	NBC AND NCC	Early July 2004
3.	Arrangements for Lead Member engagement/Steering Group	NBC & NCC	July 2004
4.	Develop joint project plan, this will have generic content planning, finance and service cycles.	Joint planning team. NBC/NCC	Late August 2004
5.	Identify within the project plan revenue and Capital expenditure requirements to support the development of the 'Cultural Mile'	Joint planning team. NBC/NCC	Late August
6.	Ensure that early investment opportunities are identified.	All	On-going
7.	Identify and implement early wins.	All	On-going
8.	Ensure that the 'Cultural Mile' concept and principles are bound into the UDC development activity.	All	Autumn 2004
9.	Ensure 'Cultural Mile' principles, potential and proposed intervention areas are identified within the Northampton Local Development Framework.	NBC	Completed June 2004
10.	Factor 'Cultural Mile' fully into development of the 2005 Local Transport Plan (LTP)	All	On-going
11.	To produce an audit / checklist of existing and planned activity to identify opportunities for branding and to show strong partnership working	All	Autumn 2004
12.	Quantify cost and seek support for the capacity required to link activity and ensure delivery of the implementation plan.	All	Autumn 2004
13.	Develop a joint marketing and engagement strategy	All	Autumn 2004
14.	Formalise Cultural Stakeholders Forum (part of LSP sub-group structure)	NBC	July/Aug 2004
15.	Organise a ½ day workshop with all key service areas within both councils	All	Sept/Oct 2004
16.	Engage with regional 'project champions' – GOEM, EMDA, ODPM, DCMS, Heritage Lottery, English Partnerships etc.	All	Sept/Oct 2004
17.	Develop proposals for the UDC to be 'housed' in a shared office / cultural space.	All	Sept 2004
18.	Identify opportunities for shared service delivery	All	on-going

## 9.0 **Conclusion**

9.1 As stated in the conclusion to the report to Executive on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2004, the 'Cultural Mile' concept does give the unique opportunity to explore the synergies between different development initiatives. To work on a collective approach to the future development of the town. To create a strategic framework for the delivery of quality cultural facilities that will strengthen Northampton's role, function and status not only locally but as a major destination.

## 10.0 **Resource Implications**

10.1 The implementation framework highlights the need to identify the criteria against which future revenue and capital expenditure would be expected to be made, in support of the development of the Cultural Mile.

10.2 Furthering the Cultural Mile concept on an individual project basis would necessitate a significant expansion of Northampton Borough Council's interventionist and regeneration activities. It is recommended that the expansion of such a role is examined as part of the current budget/service prioritisation exercise currently taking place,

10.3 Urban Development Corporation – It is very important the Cultural Mile concept and objectives form an integral part of the evolving UDC objectives and investment plan. Both Councils will work extensively with Government Departments and Regional Agencies to ensure this commitment is realised.

## 11.0 **Social Impact**

11.1 Promoting leisure and cultural opportunities, through strategic development of Cultural Resources.

11.2 Strengthening the economic base through the raised profile of the cultural sector, enhanced opportunities for inward investment. The potential creation of new cultural artists and performers, and developing a local, regional and national profile as a town embracing arts and culture.

11.3 Promoting community safety through providing a safe and secure environment to enjoy activity, and reducing anti-social behaviour through enhanced provision.

11.4 Engaging with community through enhanced promotion and access to a broad range of cultural provision and opportunities for further consultation.

## 12.0 **Consultation**

12.1 Consultation has been carried out with a wide range of people and organisations as part of this project. This is currently on going.

Northamptonshire County Council  
Northamptonshire Partnership  
Future Northampton Group  
NBC Planning and Regeneration

Strategic Resources  
Northampton Theatres / Roadmender  
Town Centre Partnership  
Arts Council  
GOEM / DCMS  
Heritage Lottery  
English Heritage  
Arts / Sports / Heritage organisations  
General Public

### 13.0 **Background Papers**

Cultural Strategy for Northampton  
Arts Strategy for Northampton  
BIG Architecture – Northampton Proposed documents  
MKSM Study

### 14.0 **Co-ordinating Author and Contact Officer**

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