

Vision and Benefits

Doncaster's new Central Library, Museum, Archives and Art Gallery building.

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tom fleming / creative consultancy /

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1. Introduction

Doncaster is developing a new building to house its archives, library, museum and gallery. This vision and benefits paper describes what the **Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre**¹ will be and how it will be vital to the economic, social and cultural regeneration of Doncaster.

Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy² were commissioned by Doncaster Borough council in the summer of 2017 to produce this vision. It is based on interviews and meetings with staff, partners, businesses and wider members of the community.

In this paper, we set out the vision for the building, how it will deliver for local people, businesses and visitors, and the benefits it will bring to the town.

This comes at a vital time for Doncaster, as the town undergoes its most important urban regeneration for generations which will see transformation and improvement to the town's gateways, commercial areas, parks, riverside and more. Economically, the National College for High Speed Rail and the proposed University Technical College reinforce the way that Doncaster is gearing up for a revitalised economic future, with a higher skilled, higher wage economy. As with its Yorkshire comparators such as Leeds, Hull and Sheffield, Doncaster knows that the competition for jobs and investment requires bold strategic vision and long-term planning.

As demonstrated in other towns and cities, new civic and cultural buildings can have a transformational impact. They can reinvigorate

a place, bringing confidence and energy, a new look, a fresh identity. We see this in places such as Margate, where the Turner Contemporary Gallery has anchored the regeneration of the seafront and instilled a new sense of purpose to the town. Such buildings can, indeed must, also deliver new types of value: convening different communities, operating as a hub for a range of services and experiences, and positively impacting on the health, wellbeing and prosperity of a place. We see this in Chester, where the Storyhouse co-locates a library, theatre and a range of social and cultural spaces, mixing old and new architecture to provide a rich and engaging interface with local communities.

There is an ever-growing body of evidence that shows museums and libraries bring very real economic benefits to local areas. A new study for Arts Council England³ estimates that, for every £1 of public funding of the arts and culture, £5 of tax is contributed by the arts and culture industry. A recent study showed that museums alone generate £1.45 for the economy, a return of £3 for every £1 of public investment.

Research for the Local Government Association found that investment in arts and culture boosts the local economy in five ways: attracting visitors, creating jobs and developing skills, attracting and retaining businesses, revitalising places and developing talent. Studies looking at museums show that they make a sizeable impact on placemaking and regeneration, local pride and identity. They support and promote local businesses, including by providing networking, team building and sponsorship opportunities⁴. Arts Council England also points to the role arts and cultural infrastructure has for an innovative and high growth economy – giving a platform and community for creative talent to thrive⁵.

¹ A working name for building used in this document.

² www.tfconsultancy.co.uk

³ Cebr report for Arts Council England, November 2017, Contribution of the arts and culture industry to the UK economy.

⁴ See Economic Impact of Museums in England, Arts Council England 2015.

⁵ Arts Council England, June 2017, Exploring the role of arts and culture in the creative industries.

But we also see lots of missed opportunities, where stylish new architecture delivers form over function; or where the distinctive needs of a place are not sufficiently embedded within the vision and structure of a development. In Doncaster, we are mindful of the risks of investing in new infrastructure, but we are confident of the positive impact it will bring. This is because we have undertaken extensive work to build a shared vision, we have learned from success and failure elsewhere, and we know that with a unique mix of uses housed in a fantastic building, the many strengths of the borough can combine to generate something unique, special, created and made in and for Donny.

"We already have assets that many cities across the country would aspire to, such as our East Coast Mainline railway station, superb motorway links, the UK's fastest growing international airport outside London, the Yorkshire Wildlife Park, our world-famous racecourse and the new National College for High Speed Rail. With these and other assets attracting major investors and many household names, we are clearly conducting business as a city."

Ros Jones, Mayor of Doncaster, Doncaster Urban Centre Masterplan



Storyhouse, Chester – a new place for culture and learning which connects different functions, heritage and contemporary, consumption and production.

Image by Julia Chandler/Libraries Taskforce

2. The Vision

What is the New Culture and Learning Centre?

Doncaster's new Culture and Learning Centre, to be built on the site of the former Doncaster High School for Girls, and incorporating its historic frontage, will be a new centre for creativity, discovery and learning. Bringing together, on one site, the town and borough's archive, museum, library and gallery as well as a crèche, café, makerspace, rail heritage, conferencing centre and more, the new building will be a hub for the whole community and a destination for visitors and businesses at the heart of the regeneration of the town centre and borough.

Why is it being built?

The town's existing Archives, Central Library, Museum and Gallery are no longer fit-for-purpose. The archives are housed in an old school in an inaccessible location, which means they cannot be opened up and utilised as a dynamic resource for the town. The central library is very dated in design and feel; and it lacks the capacity, technology and agility required to inspire new generations and engage the needs of a changing community. Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, while housed in a fine 1960s structure, requires considerable repairs and disproportionate investment so it meets modern standards. Bringing everything together in a modern and efficient building will deliver considerable savings and ensure the sustainability of services for the foreseeable future.

More than this though, it ensures that services and facilities meet the changing needs and expectations of residents, businesses and visitors while providing a destination and hub for the whole community. By bringing together and effectively merging previously

separate services, it reflects the way that knowledge, learning and experiences are changing and developing.

It also provides the opportunity to bring together the best of Doncaster – the civic creativity of the town. This includes the energy and ideas of our businesses; the innovative social and cultural practice of our organisations; and the aspirations and ambitions of our changing communities. It can be a router and amplifier of all that is good in the borough, a platform for exchange and a place that nurtures a more confident, outwardly-facing, generous and open community.

Evidence shows that visiting museums and libraries brings real health and wellbeing benefits. A recent study⁶ found that Library usage is associated with higher life satisfaction, higher happiness and a higher sense of purpose in life. A major survey⁷ of 10,000 people found that those who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60 per cent more likely to report good health compared to those who had not. Other studies show that people place a higher value on visiting museums than other forms of cultural activity – one study found that people valued the experience of visiting museums at £3,200 a year.⁸

⁶ The Health and Wellbeing benefits of Public Libraries, Arts council England 2015

⁷ Healthy Attendance: The Impact of Cultural Engagement and Sports Participation on Health and Satisfaction with life in Scotland 2013



The new **Stadt (City) Museum in Ghent, Belgium**, has at its heart an interactive digital map of the city – enabling citizens to participate in the way the city tells its story. *Image courtesy of Stadt Museum.*

The building is also a vital contributor to the large-scale and ongoing regeneration of Doncaster Urban Centre. This Doncaster masterplan sets out how the town centre will, step by step, be transformed, creating a more connected, attractive, ambitious and viable place. It includes improving the gateway of the train station, the market place, a new canal-side and improved setting for the Minster. Health and wellbeing is an important aspect, with the opening up of the town's parklands and making the town better to cycle and walk through.

⁸ Museums and Happiness, the value of participating in Museums and the Arts, Fujiwara, 2015

The Culture and Learning Centre will be a vital development in the civic and business district, joining the existing Cast Theatre and Civic building, as well as the proposed new University Technical College. This fabric of spaces will form one coherent place, providing a new public face for the town and borough. Collectively, they will join forces to maximise Doncaster's economic potential and innovate to address its challenges. Together, with a new Culture and Learning Centre as an anchor, they will give new heart and soul to a Doncaster that is optimistic, inclusive and on the up.

What will be in the building?

The four-story building will be a destination and hub for the whole community. A place expressive of the distinctive qualities of a changing Doncaster. In its content and design, it will be focused on Doncaster, its people and its story, past present and future. The lower-ground floor will dramatically showcase the town's ongoing relationship to the railways, through two train tracks leading into the building which will house two engines connected to the town. One of these will be a 'live project', undergoing restoration, while the other will be a proud example of the town's engineering past.

There will be space, for the first time, to properly display some of the treasures from the unique Hall Cross collection of railway memorabilia. Also on this floor will be a dedicated space for the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry Museum. A purpose-built amphitheatre will provide room for small-scale performances outside.

The ground floor will house the main library and integrated children's library. The main library will be a highly attractive and creative space, allowing users to access information and stories through books and digital media in a seamless fashion. While there will be computers, the emphasis will be on helping users to make

more of their own digital devices. Helping residents access legal, financial and health information will be a priority, with the library building confidence and the types of fluency needed to survive and thrive. Printed books will be central of course, with easy to use signing out procedures as well as book clubs and book sharing. There will be a large, highly flexible enterprise space which will be able to house people starting businesses, carrying out personal or professional research and state-of-the-art equipment in a makerspace, with exhibitions of products made in this space by residents, small businesses and entrepreneurs. It will also house a commercially run crèche as well as the café and shop.

The first floor will house the main museum collection and a discovery centre which connects local studies and the town's archive for the increasing numbers people researching their family histories, alongside the museum resources. People's stories will be brought to the fore. There will be eight spaces for the main collection, offering an immersive visitor experience. The second floor will house the Art Gallery which as well as showcasing the existing collection will be temperature and humidity controlled to allow it to take high-quality touring exhibitions from national arts institutions, meaning that residents won't have to travel to London to see great art, but experience it on their doorstep. Equally, the ambition is that people in future will travel to Doncaster to experience great arts and culture.



Watershed, Bristol – a 'router and amplifier of cultural ideas, creativity and technology' (Dick Penny, Managing Director). Watershed combines facilities such as cinema screens, café bar, workspace / lab; with social and cultural programmes that connect across the city and beyond. *Image Tom Fleming.*



DOK Library Concept Centre, Delft, The Netherlands

The Delft Concept Library, known as 'DOK', is widely seen as the setting the agenda for innovation in a modern library since it opened a decade ago. According to Arts Council England (*Envisioning the Library of the Future*), *"almost every kind of innovation can be found in this one 'future-proof building'"*.

There is much to learn for Doncaster – for example, it is the public library of a medium-sized town and it has an innovative business model, in its case charging a membership fee with exceptions for those on low pay or who cannot pay. An estimated 25% of the population are estimated to be members. Crucial to its future proofing is that the library does not think in terms of different types of media but rather as all media presents a different way of accessing and sharing stories.

The library is seen as the 'guide' for information in an age when information can be accessed anywhere it provides an 'accessible, attractive and enriching' environment. It has Tank U, a download station where users received suggested new content to inspire or surprise them. Staff view their role as part of an 'entrepreneurial library' where their role is to help generate and test new ideas for services and engagement.

"By daring to introduce opening listening station pods for people to listen to music, we showed people that the main priority was their comfort. With video games, a rotating art collection, a piano, exciting programs, toys for children, a brightly-lit room for graphic novels, a café and an entire room in vivid red dedicated to romance novels, DOK became an inspiring and fun place."

A Giant Step Away From The Stereotypical Library, AAT VOS Creative Guild.

Images courtesy of DOK.

What will be the business model for the new building?

The new building will be supported by a business model as innovative and sustainable as the building itself. Potentially Run and managed new and innovative ways, whilst always accountable to the Council and its partners, the building will be a true partnership between the public, corporate and not-for-profit sectors, blending revenue streams and connecting agendas. Aspects of the building including the crèche, café and private hire spaces will provide income which will support the delivery of the archives, library, museum and gallery.

The council will seek commercial partners to sponsor elements of the building and its programmes, as well as embrace technology and commercial partners keen to invest in social innovation.

Trusts and Foundations will be attracted to run pilot programmes through the building, making the most of its social capital and strategic value through its commitment to enhancing the wellbeing and life chances of communities. In this way, the Building will operate as an innovation platform or testbed for social innovation – e.g. on the grand issues of our day such as environmental change, social cohesion, ageing and human capital in a second machine age.

Through bringing services together, staff will be encouraged to work entrepreneurially, in the way they support visitors and in how they can help support the building and the wider Council and partnership services.



Turner Contemporary, Margate, which is developing as a thriving creative and learning hub for the town. It has successfully developed a 'mixed economy' business model. In 2016, it generated a turnover of £45m (£45m from donations and public investment; the rest from rent and admission for special exhibitions). *Image courtesy of Diamond Geezer.*

How will the building benefit businesses?

Currently Doncaster town centre lacks attractive locations for business meetings proportionate to business growth, with many businesses preferring to meet outside the area. The Culture and Learning Centre will provide an attractive space for meetings, hot desking, research and more. It will borrow from and adapt best practice elsewhere, including the British Library's successful Business and IP Centre and a range of creative hubs and design centres, in providing the environment, services and value-added that businesses need to succeed.

It will give space for businesses and ideas to grow and encourage networking, project-based co-working, and access to tailored

facilities such as makerspaces, specialist databases and literature. It will also showcase the best of Doncaster's businesses past and present. Above all, it will be a highly visible sign of the changing face of Doncaster as it offers a distinctive environment for innovation and competitiveness that both complements the offer elsewhere in the Yorkshire region, and offers something uniquely transformational.

How will it relate to the rest of the Civic Quarter?

The building will draw much of its success from the way it relates to future partner organisations and other elements within the civic quarter. It will complement the work of Cast in growing the audience for the arts, providing interactive spaces for the development, presentation and showcasing of cultural work, including aspects of the Cast programme, and wider arts and cultural programming. It will work closely with Cast, DCLT and the Point (the home of Doncaster Community Arts) and strategic partners in developing festivals, events and maximising the benefit of learning programmes and activities for the whole community. It will work closely with the civic centre in ensuring that people have access to the information they need to access council services.

The Building will also play a convening role for the emergent and informal arts and creative life of Doncaster and environs. Working with partners in the community, education and cultural sector, it will be a place to meet, exchange and co-create. It will welcome the borough's writers, performers, musicians, artists, designers and gamers; developing networks, exploring new narratives, and generating a new creative scene and economy that makes waves nationally.

Doncaster – Improving health and wellbeing at the centre of the Borough strategy

"Life expectancy in Doncaster is improving...there are still issues in terms of the number of people suffering from poor health...In particular, lifestyle factors (such as increasing physical activity) and an ageing population (adapting the provision of services and housing to meet the needs of an increasing number of older and vulnerable people)."

The Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre will have an important role in delivering the goals of Doncaster's Health and Wellbeing Strategy - in particular, the aim to *"develop and release personal, community, state, private and third sector assets to increase community self-help and increase the effectiveness of co-production."*

The building will help by encouraging and enabling self-help, building community cohesiveness and building social capital and social networks. Compared with conventional approaches, increased social cohesion and social networks can reduce fatal heart attacks by 25% in men. There is growing evidence the arts have a real impact on health and wellbeing:

- An 'Art on prescription' scheme, part of social prescribing, which involves people experiencing psychological or physical distress being referred (or referring themselves) to engage with the arts in the community shows has shown a 37% drop in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions. This represents a saving of £216 per patient.
- Of 2,500 museums and galleries in the UK, 600 have health and wellbeing programmes.
- After engaging in the arts 79% of people in a poor area of London ate more healthily, 77% engaged in more physical activity and 82% enjoyed greater wellbeing.

3. What the Culture and Learning Centre will do for Doncaster

1. It will be for everyone

A place for all the communities of Doncaster and our guests. A confluence for our collective imagination. A place which is genuinely inclusive and aspirational; where anyone can follow their path, and find a role. A place which is serious and playful, which challenges by inspiring. A place which confidently evokes the qualities of Doncaster and makes them relevant, meaningful and of value to the sharpest of minds and most demanding of audiences.

Spaces which provide something for the whole community are becoming rarer, and yet bringing people together has never been more important to the health of towns and their residents. Third spaces - places which aren't 'home' or 'work' which provide opportunities for people of all ages to gather and interact connected to institutions that people trust and feel safe in are less common than they were.

Doncaster is a very large, diverse and geographically spread-out borough, which makes developing this space where people can share the experience of their collective history as well as gain the skills and knowledge to help them prosper now and in the future even more important.

'*This is for everyone*', the words so memorably live tweeted by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, at the launch of the London 2012 Olympics, describe not just the spirit of his invention but of what all public spaces should be. Through its combination of immersive visitor experiences, local history and

archives, doing and thinking spaces as well as room to, relax and enjoy such as the café and auditorium, Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre will be genuinely open and engaging for all.



Museum of Modern Art, Medellín (MAMM), Colombia MAMM's concept is 'the museum as a hub' – whereby museum space is conceived as a place with increasing involvement with interdisciplinary projects and partnerships. This is "embodied in exhibition programmes, experimentation labs, encounters, gatherings and workshops" (MAMM CEO).

MAMM has had a transformational impact for the city: driving the renewal of the district where it is located; growing diverse audiences for culture; critically engaging with the main social and cultural issues of the country; and instilling a sense of confidence and pride.

2. It will contribute to improved health and wellbeing

A place for engagement and fulfilment. A holistic value proposition which is the soul of Donny. A hub for leading edge research, development and delivery for innovation in health and wellbeing. It will re-draw the social contract and be a globally recognised centre for human development, health equality and social impact.

Good health and wellbeing are priorities for Doncaster, the first town in the UK to make healthy active lives part of its core strategy for the future. From the success of the 'Tour de Yorkshire', to the town centre masterplan (which will encourage more walking and outdoor exercise in parks), tackling a major social, economic and health problem takes more than just fine words. As evidence shows, people don't change behaviour when they are told to, they change it when the context makes it easy – hence more people are encouraged to take up cycling if for example, segregated cycle lanes and proper provision for secure storage is made. More than this, healthy active lives are about taking responsibility and making the right individual choices, something the Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre will help deliver.

Spaces which bring people together play a role in lowering health inequalities through enhancing the social characteristics of

⁹ Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017

communities. High-quality built environments, such as the Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre, have a real impact on the way people feel, something captured by Lord Howarth in a Lord's debate in 2017:

'We need environments that support health and help to heal not only the individual but society. When the sun shines, it lifts our spirits. When we are in a beautiful built environment, we feel better. We are happier, saner and more secure – we are more optimistic, and our lives are better'.⁹

Whether it is encouraging people to come together and helping to build social capital (something as valuable financial capital in helping people getting on in life), to equipping them the information, skills and resources they need to make the most of their lives it will be a vital third space between work and home.



Creative and Learning City Programme – Creative Footprint, Obidos, Portugal. This small city has pioneered a holistic approach to participation, learning and wellbeing, with a mix of incubators, co-working spaces, festival programming, and 'third spaces' such as this health and literacy hub.

3. It will provide new opportunities for learning and skills, and help grow the local economy

A place to access and create knowledge. A learning lab and accelerator for civic practice which connects leading edge R&D on the social challenges and opportunities of Doncaster and towns like it, with inventive programmes that build specialist skills in civic entrepreneurship, impactful creativity, and tailored models (such as impact bonds, social prescribing models for culture, and skills and human capital in a robotic age).

Skills and knowledge are vital if we are to tackle the linked problems of low pay and poor productivity which hold back individuals and the economy in Doncaster as they do elsewhere. Not only young people are held back but throughout lives, access to skills and learning which can provide sustainable careers as well as the confidence to enjoy new technology is essential.

A recent review for the European commission explored the way that non-formal education outside the classroom can have a profound effect on young people's skills and employability:

"The purpose of youth work is not to provide jobs, but engagement in the wide variety of personal and social development activities...it helps young people to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are frequently said to be needed in the labour market. These include teamwork, communication, leadership, flexibility and responsiveness..."¹⁰.

¹⁰ Bamber, J. (2014). *Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability*. European Commission Expert Group Report,

Doncaster has a relatively weak knowledge economy and a particularly fragile creative industries sector. Strategically Doncaster is already doing much to tackle the problem of ensuring that current and future generations have the skills the economy requires. As well as big investments in the new proposed University Technical College and the £25 million National College for High Speed Rail, the vision for learning includes several elements that the Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre will contribute to. These include the aim that every child has life-changing learning experiences outside school, something that it will ensure through its Clore Learning Space, Children's Library, crèche, makerspace, and immersive discovery and museum environments. The building will contribute to preparing young people for work by bringing schools, business and the community together through events, informal learning, supporting apprenticeships, and by working closely with partners. Above all perhaps it will contribute to the broader vision of the town becoming a University City with a 'virtual campus' that encourages young people and adults of all ages to pursue higher education and lifelong learning.

St Helen's Library Art Programme

The award-winning Library Arts programme in St Helens shows the way for Doncaster in integrating the arts, skills, health and wellbeing with libraries. The forthcoming programme (in the Arts Council England supported Cultural Hubs programme) includes 'Creative Alternatives' craft sessions: a unique way of improving adults' wellbeing that is endorsed by GPs and other health professionals. Award-winning Liverpool youth theatre company 20 Stories High will return to libraries with HEADZ, a new series of funny, gritty and heartfelt monologues about the everyday lives of young people. The performances have been created by young people for young people, using real and relatable experiences.

Impacts recorded to date show that it has:

- enabled the service to reach out to some of the most vulnerable adults in the borough, those suffering from drug and alcohol addictions and mental health problems
- reached families, young people and the wider community through a vibrant arts programme
- expanded the horizons of library staff, showing them the range of events that could be offered through libraries and teaching them the skills to manage the processes themselves
- given staff greater confidence to try different things in their own libraries, leading to an enriched programme of events and activities
- challenged people's perception of what a library is for
- raised the profile of the library service in St Helens, leading to a greater awareness of the role that the library service plays
- raised the profile of St Helens as a major proponent of the arts and innovative creative practice that improves lives and civic identity.



4. How it will work in practice

There are **six values** which will guide every aspect of the building, from the way it looks and feels to visitors, to the way it is staffed and the relationship the building has with its surroundings across the town.

They are:

Value 1: Openness

Doncaster's Culture and Learning Centre will be open in form and philosophy. The unique design, which will allow for the trains to move into and out of the lower ground floor; the atrium which will open each floor up; the accessibility and legibility of circulation spaces which will connect different uses and therefore users; will all encourage exchange and permeability of ideas and activities.

The striking feature of the UK's most popular library, The Forum in Norwich, is its openness. A hugely successful Millennium project, this library has done away with many of the institutional and cultural barriers that put people off - the building is at once a café, a free gallery, an exhibition space, a public meeting spot and so on. For Doncaster, we think openness means a seamlessness of activities and a warm and evocative atmosphere which welcomes people to not just use the building but to participate in its evolution. It will be:

Generous, porous, curated with rather than for the people. A producer of experiences, connecting outwardly to the different communities of Doncaster and to audiences and opinion-formers nationally and internationally. It is, therefore, always in process: the building an enabler of a fluid programme of uses, facilitating exchange, flow and purposeful encounters.

Value 2: Place

One of the worst aspects of too many modern public buildings is a blandness and corporate feel which feels place-less, and ages quickly. The best modern public buildings reflect and grow from their surroundings, or embrace them, as this building literally will. The New Storyhouse in Chester, a repurposed art deco cinema that has reopened as a cinema, theatre, library and restaurant/bar, is a great example of somewhere that responds and grows from its environment. Designed to help bring nightlife back, it is a positive addition to place. For Doncaster, this means creating a building which is:

Expressive of the distinctive personality of Doncaster and its many senses of place; it is embedded. But it is also outward looking – a router and amplifier of the best of Doncaster and the best of the world; with a role to recognise the deep-seated social and educational challenges of the Borough and then to challenge them, imaginatively co-designing services, experiences and platforms which innovate toward a brighter future.

Value 3: Resilience

How to help individuals, communities and towns become resilient, so they can stand on their own two feet and survive ever changing times, is one of the challenges facing public services today. New models of social enterprise that help people start their own community businesses are increasingly seen as important within a new conception of the local economy. Equally, helping towns to

drive-up revenue from visitors and businesses is increasingly important. Libraries have always been hubs and incubators of ideas.

As John Bird, the founder of the Big Issue wrote: “A big mistake that governments make is failing to tap into the skills, talents and abilities that lie just below the surface of people’s needs. They don’t involve “patients in the cure.” For Doncaster, this means:

A demonstrator for the new-found resilience of Doncaster. It houses a portfolio of social and economic testbeds which explore new solutions for a post-industrial economy. Focusing on civic entrepreneurship, creative practice, and third age industries such as robotics; it drives the re-boot system for the Doncaster economy and illuminates ways forward for post-industrial and re-industrialising towns and regions.

Value 4: Inspiring

It is hard to love somewhere you don’t have pride in or have aspiration, if you are not inspired. For this reason, quality and warmth must not be add-ons to this building – they must be fundamental to every aspect of how residents, visitors, staff and volunteers feel. People from Donny have a warmth and communality that other places can only dream of, but too often the surroundings do not let this shine through. This building must do this by being:

A place which reinvigorates. A manifestly re-imagined Doncaster which energises senses of identity and place. It

does this with substance and purpose: the facilities, quality of design and finish, and a set of services, products and experiences which resonate in terms of their social relevance and inspire in terms of their capacity to enable alternative ways of living and working in this transforming town.

Value 5: Partnership

The position of the new building makes it ideally placed to connect with a range of institutions that share with it a common purpose and outlook, including Cast, the Point and the proposed new technical college, as well as schools, academies and Doncaster College. There is evidence that visiting libraries and engaging in activities can help reduce inequalities between learners¹¹: The success of the building will be in how it develops partnerships with these and other local institutions as well as the private sector. In some ways, it will be most successful as a hub which can enable others to achieve what they want to do:

A collective endeavour. Forged through cross-sector and interdisciplinary collaboration. It mobilises a new sense of the civic: intercultural and intergenerational; loyal to collective memories of Doncaster and embracing of demographic, social, technological and economic change. It has enormous summoning power: for strategic partners across key agencies seeking ways to innovate, share and develop common purpose; for enterprises from all sectors keen to access talent and social capital; and for individuals from all communities who are committed to improving their lives. It pioneers new models in civic governance, public/commercial partnerships,

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crowd-sourced investment, and citizen programming. Powered by digital, it champions big and open data, interactive experiences and making.

Value 6: Futureproof

To be a building which doesn't become old or irrelevant within a decade or two presents a major design challenge for partners in Doncaster. Predicting the future is impossible, but designing in flexibility and longevity isn't and the other five values will help ensure this. For Doncaster, this means that the building must be:

A work in progress; never complete; a process. A space which connects our existing practice (how we live, work, communicate), to new possibilities. It is Doncaster's disrupter: prototyping new technologies, brokering relationships across traditional boundaries; and playing a leadership role for the UK in remodelling civic practice.



Creative Factory, Rotterdam, Netherlands. This radically converted grain warehouse has adopted several openness values and tools. For example, it drives a programme of creative employment pathways, providing tailored coaching and skills development for young people from marginalised communities. It provides a mix of networking and showcasing functions, enabling creative talent to access a community and build audiences / markets. It also works with local education and health providers to deliver 'challenge' projects such as in social technology – aimed at improving the life chances of citizens.

5. Conclusion

The answer to the multiple economic, social and wellbeing challenges Doncaster faces will not be found in a single building. However, as has been the case in towns and cities across the world, if it expresses a big vision, connects with a wide audience and is embedded with cultural and civic priorities, it can be the real and symbolic driver of change for the better. To succeed, the building will have to solve the simultaneous equation of being a hub for the whole community while being an iconic visitor attraction. These are not mutually exclusive, but ensuring that it meets the complex needs of different groups of users will require continual care and adjustment.

The Culture and Learning Centre will bring a lot to Doncaster, its people, visitors, businesses, arts organisations, community groups, schools, colleges and more. For Doncaster, it will play a leading place-making role as part of the regeneration and repositioning of the Town Centre as a unique, welcoming and attractive place. For everyone who lives in the borough, it will be the new hub for understanding and exploring their heritage and creatively accessing new knowledge, culture and skills. For businesses, it will bring a new space for growing, meeting, networking and researching. For schools and colleges, it will provide an extraordinary new space outside the classroom for learning.

At a time when the role of local government is changing as funding continues to fall, the Culture and Learning Centre will provide a way of ensuring that the services which people value so highly can be sustainably delivered while keeping them relevant to new

generations. It will bring and continue to bring things that Doncaster has never had before.

The new gallery space will ensure that for the first-time national touring exhibitions will be able to visit the town. The library and discovery spaces will ensure that everyone can access the stories, information and experiences that new technology can enable. The performance space will bring live artistic activity from local cultural organisation to new audiences.

The dramatic showcasing of the town and borough's rich engineering heritage for the first in the centre will bring new visitors as well as linking the past and future. The crèche and café as well as being integral to the building's success, will provide valuable income, helping to sustain its future. The staff will work entrepreneurially across the building and in networks that go far beyond its walls, connecting services and possibilities for all users.

A strong vision is as vital as the foundations if a building is to last the course. The strength of the vision for the Culture and Learning Centre Building is that it has one arm round the past and one around the future. Just as it literally encloses the twin domes of the former High School for Girls, it will help everyone who lives in or visits Donny, understand and embrace a proud heritage, while at the same time being part of a new future.

The Doncaster Culture and Learning Centre at a glance...

