

SECTOR SUPPORT FUND FINAL REPORT

SECEN Creative Workspace Masterplan and Prospectus

1. INTRODUCTION

SECEN's first Prospectus identified a lack of appropriate workspace for the creative sector as a barrier to growth. Creative industries can lack visibility. Flagship buildings which bring many microbusinesses under one umbrella not only support those businesses but tell a story about the impact of the creative industries on the local economy. They send a clear signal that creative microbusinesses are welcomed and valued in the region and are immediate docking stations from which creative businesses can seek out the ecosystem of complementary businesses, business support and collaborations they need to survive. Furthermore, open workspace can lend authority to individual company brands, supporting marketing and promotion campaigns.

This South East Creative Economy Network work package was specifically designed to address a gap in suitable available workspace for the Creative Cultural and Digital Sector pan-SELEP. It set out to:

1. Produce a refreshed South East Creative Economy Prospectus to describe exemplary pipeline projects alongside complementary work packages addressing skills and business support needs.
2. Deliver a Creative Open Workspace report and toolkit to accelerate the pipeline of open workspace projects
3. Create Cultural planning policy guidance that could be adopted by local authorities to support the inclusion of creative workspace in new developments and the re-purposing of under-used buildings as creative workspace.
4. Identify a minimum of three Creative Enterprise Zones and increase Business rate yield
5. Create new workspace
6. Generate new jobs
7. Create a SELEP-wide pipeline of investment-ready open workspace projects

Methodology for the final evaluation

This evaluation has been undertaken by the Project Manager.

2. OVERALL REFLECTIONS ON PROJECT DELIVERY

Project Outputs	Project Outcomes	Benefits as set out in the SSF Application Form	Actual Benefits Delivered
Refreshed Prospectus.	<p>SECEN Statement of Intent endorsed by SELEP December 2021 and published.</p> <p>Used to underpin the successful Create Growth Programme bid.</p> <p>Prospectus relevant to all SELEP local authorities</p>	SELEP Prospectus	<p>Prospectus (Statement of Intent)</p> <p>Audit of existing tools which approximate to the toolkit with options appraisal for SECEN content for a toolkit</p>
Workspace Masterplan	Draft Masterplan to inform decision making/planning	Report	Draft Masterplan
Refresh research baseline data	Refreshed baseline data incorporated in Masterplan to underpin rationale/narrative	Refreshed baseline data	Refreshed baseline data
Cultural Opportunity Zones paper	New model to test and predicate funding bids on	Identify a minimum of three Creative Opportunity Zones or similar	Identification of three geographical typologies
Map specification	Map options appraisal and specification, improved understanding of costs and implications of an infrastructure map	Map specification	Map specification
Toolkit	Options appraisal for development of a workspace toolkit, greater	Toolkit	Options appraisal and scoping for a toolkit

	understanding of the range of possible approaches		
Planning policy guidance	Draft planning policy guidance and dialogue with some planners on viability and value of such guidance	Develop cultural planning policy that can be adopted by local authorities to support the inclusion of creative workspace in new developments and the re-purposing of under-used buildings as creative workspace.	Not achieved
Pipeline projects (min 9) identified	Not achieved	Create a SELEP-wide pipeline of open workspace projects Minimum 9 pipeline projects identified	Not achieved
Finance vehicle and initial pot (target £5m) in place	Not achieved	Investment strategy and finance vehicle identified with initial ring-fenced cash/loan secured of £3m - with estimated match funding of a minimum £3m.	Not achieved
		Research and present existing and new options for financial and governance models	Not achieved
		New workspaces purchased, adapted and in use, match funding of minimum £1:£1 attracted by a £3m finance vehicle	Not achieved

The South East Creative Economy Network was keen to develop a narrative to inform the development of the Industrial Strategy through the production of an updated Prospectus. Alongside this, the membership had identified the need for a workspace masterplan to set out the case for workspace and help to inform decision making (including influencing planning policy).

The two tasks were addressed separately with the time imperative of the Industrial Strategy meaning that the Prospectus was the more urgent of the two tasks.

A steering group made up of SECEN members and chaired by Sarah Dance (Kent SECEN co-Chair) appointed Celia Davies to develop the Prospectus. The Prospectus consultation used the structure of the Industrial Strategy pillars to create the content for the document. On reflection, it would have been better to have approached the content development in a way that built on SECEN's expertise, with a retrofit to the Industrial Strategy pillars, rather than using them as a starting point. In the long run this was the approach we took and the resulting document is proving to be a useful tool for advocacy, profile raising and to underpin funding bids. It is also giving us a route map of priorities for the future.

A steering group made up of SECEN members and chaired by Joe Hill (East Sussex SECEN co-Chair) appointed consultants We Made That to deliver the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Creative Open Workspace masterplan.

We Made That, in collaboration with Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy and PRD were tasked with delivering the following outputs on behalf of SECEN:

- Testing the feasibility of a cultural infrastructure map
- Production of a cultural infrastructure toolkit that will help expedite development of creative workspace.
- Specialist support for the realisation of at least three creative workspace sites
- A Creative Workspace Masterplan for the SELEP region
- Scoping and testing the opportunities and challenges of introducing 'Creative Opportunity Zones' in the region

The brief made an assumption that a feasible model for a map would be identified and a further commission would lead to the development of the map which in turn would generate significant mapped data to underpin the other outputs. When it became apparent that a map was not affordable during the lifespan of the project, alternative methodology was established to deliver the outputs. On reflection, at this stage in the project it might have been wise to have severed the existing contract and re-think our approach.

The project has suffered from a series of setbacks:

- The Project Manager was on long term sick leave which delayed the start date of the project
- The Pandemic then took hold and the steering group paused the project so that they could take stock of the relevance of the project.
- The map proved to be unaffordable as presented by the consultants in their options appraisal

- When the map proved unachievable the steering group took a pause to consider next steps and consequently lost the consultancy “slot”, this led to ongoing delays in delivery
- Consultancy capacity was compromised by paternity leave
- The two outstanding reports were lost due to a software failure. Penultimate versions of the report have now been recovered.

The lesson we have subsequently learned:

- It would have been wiser to commission the map feasibility first and independent of the other tasks. This would have ensured that when it became clear that a map was unaffordable we would have revisited the other tasks and may well at that stage have concluded that at least some of the tasks needed to be descope. We would also have used the procurement of consultants to identify alternative methodology and made an informed decision based on a range of choices.
- Writing the brief was took a long time and revealed the complexity of what we were setting out to achieve. In future we will recognise this as an indication that we were trying to achieve too much in one package and we should have approached the task incrementally.
- We came to a mutual agreement with the consultants to descope outstanding tasks - this decision should have been taken earlier

In December 2022 we reluctantly concluded that given the unresolved outstanding issues we could not guarantee completion by March 2023 and so we agreed to return some of the SSF grant.

We are now commissioning another company to deliver closing stages of the work, however we could not guarantee completion within SELEP’s timescales and therefore negotiated a reduced grant to cover some of the work achieved to date.

Key barriers and enablers

(Please provide details on enablers and barriers to the delivery of the project)

Table 1

Enablers	Barriers
SELEP flexibility	Pandemic
Steering Group expertise and commitment to the process	Original brief proved too ambitious with too many interdependencies
Peer Challenge Groups commitment and expertise	Unable to develop the map so consequently did not have an audit of built cultural infrastructure which hampered achieving the other outcomes
ESCC and KCC Officer commitment	Did not have full geographical coverage on the steering group

Consultants found alternative approaches to deliver the outcomes	Shared Prosperity Fund not at the levels that were initially expected and by being distributed at district and borough level has increased the challenges for strategic investment planning.
Create Growth Programme bid - this has generated data sets which have given us additional confidence in the data we have gathered during this project.	Staff sickness
	SECEN finite officer capacity and the need to deliver other priorities
	Software failure
	Ongoing challenge of capturing data on the creative industries

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

(What have been the key achievements and outcomes? Please include any Unexpected Outcomes)

- The Prospectus (Statement of Intent) which was endorsed by the Strategic Board in December 2021. This represents 1/3 of the original direct outputs set out in the original submission. The value of this output is estimated at £60k and is calculated against KCC, ECC and ESCC carrying out the work independently at £20,000 each. This information will also be available to second tier districts and borough authorities. The Prospectus was used to underpin the successful bid for the Create Growth Programme which secured £1.275m for the SELEP region with access to a national £7m finance programme and the development of an Investor community.
- Creative Opportunity Zones Report includes the identification of types of cultural zones and as with the prospectus will be valued at £60,000, against the three SELEP areas (KCC, ECC and ESCC), or indeed a Local Authority/District carrying out the work independently. We plan to use it to work with specific areas on their development of cultural industries.
- Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) bid for the Cultural Development Fund (CDF). TEPC was successful with their bid and the resulting delivery programme (£4m) will be complementary to this work.
- Map specification - if we wish to fundraise to produce a map we now have a specification in place for what we would want
- Cultural Opportunity Zones paper - as a practical response to the non-delivery of the map we developed an alternative approach by adopting typologies that could be adopted/applied where there is both interest and opportunity'.

- Penultimate version of the Masterplan/framework for decision making.

During the lifetime of this project many workspaces have been developed and many more are in the pipeline. Equally, some workspaces have been lost due to expiry of leases and potential workspace developments missed due to lack of planning policy, financial vehicles and vision for creative growth. This has reinforced the value of this work. Whilst they cannot be claimed as direct outputs to this project, momentum to develop creative workspace demonstrates the need for this work to be pursued is evident.

4. ANTICIPATED FUTURE OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

SECEN plans to use the map specification in the future to explore partner appetite for developing a cultural infrastructure map. As SECEN'S work matures more data is gathered on the sector and therefore there is more data which could be usefully mapped.

The Masterplan will be completed outside of the scope of this project and will provide a rationale to inform planners, cultural development officers and economic development officers in the support of existing and planning for pipeline creative infrastructure.

Built a relationship with Planners and Planning authorities, sharing knowledge on the available planning levers to support developing workspace. Creative Estuary / KCC have now produced Planning Guidance and template policies for cultural infrastructure that can be adopted by Planning Authorities.

The Cultural Opportunity Zones typologies will be used to underpin local creative zone development, demonstrating a rationale to underpin planning applications and funding bids.

The Prospectus is being used to unlock funding (most recently £1.275m Create Growth Programme, as highlighted above) as it demonstrates a cohesive and focussed approach to creative industry support and development.

5. Project Spend Summary

Summary of spend delivering the project, including details of how the SSF has been applied and confirmation of the match funding used to support delivery

Spend Description	Spend Budget as per Original Application (£)	Actual Spend (£)	Remaining Funding (£)
Total project cost	£70,000		
Prospectus		£12,070.00	
A proposal and project plan for delivering a Cultural Infrastructure Map		£6,110.93	
Task 4 Toolkit: Re-scoping of contents, structure		£2,237.50	
Task 6 COZs: Workshops and draft assessment		£5,193.75:	
Workshops, meetings and client liaison		£4,154.56	
Task 3 Masterplan: Draft and place framework evidence Task 5 Sites: Initial scoping to identify longlist of sites Task 6 COZs: Final assessment		£ 9418.71	
Payment 5: Additional monitoring meetings		£380.00	
Creative Sector Peer Challenge Group		£1600	
Final payment to consultants		£8,333	
Total Spend	70,000	49,498.20	
Total SSF Allocated	49,000	15,000	
Total Match Funding applied*	21,000	34,498.20	
Total Funding	70,000	49,498.20	

Variance in match funding:

Total Matched funding increased: £10,000 additional funding from Creative Estuary (dependent on outstanding outcomes being achieved) and £3,498.20 ESCC underwriting overspend.

Total SSF allocation: agreed reduced amount in the light of delays to the programme and descope a number of the original outputs.

Match funding committed and spent.

2018/19 Arts Council England £13,000

2019/20 Kent County Council £2,000

2019/20 East Sussex County Council £5,498.20 (£3,498.20 additional from original commitment)

2020/21 Arts Council England £2,000

2021/22 Creative Estuary £10,000

2021/22 Essex County Council £2,000

Total Match: £34,498.20

6. CONCLUSIONS, KEY LEARNING AND NEXT STEPS

(Summary of findings, key learning, and next steps where appropriate)

Cost of developing a cultural infrastructure map was estimated at circa £300k. It was unclear from other areas of the country who had developed a map whether the benefits justified the outlay.

Developing planning policy proved complex - this will still be pursued but with more emphasis on sample text rather than on actual planning policy.

Options for toolkit were wider than previously thought, moving forward we will need to first refine our brief before fundraising to complete the task.

Given the shifts in the national funding opportunities (particularly the lower than expected levels of Shared Prosperity Fund), it remains unclear as to how to resource a Cultural Opportunity Zone model.