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Cork City Consultation Portal

<https://consult.corkcity.ie/en/user/login?destination=node/add/submission%3Fc%3D5184>

**RE: Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028.  
Observations by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaón**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to the publication by Cork City Council of the draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028, the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon, respectfully request that Cork City Council takes into consideration this submission in finalising the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028.

The following submission has taken into account, the provisions of the draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028, emerging trends and spatial considerations regarding 'arts and culture', and, the role of the Development Plan in the facilitation and preservation of *the arts and culture* in Cork City through the provision of mandatory planning objectives.

The Role and Function of the Arts Council | An Comhairle Ealaíon

The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaón is the Irish government agency for developing the arts and it operates as an autonomous body under the aegis of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The Arts Council has a role and function in the Development Plan process as a Prescribed Body.

The Arts Council works in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life.

The role and purpose of the Arts Council, as defined by the **Arts Act 2003** is to:

- stimulate public interest in the arts,
- promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts,
- assist in improving standards in the arts,
- furnish advice or information to a public body in relation to any matter connected with its functions, whenever the Council considers it appropriate or is requested to do so by the public body concerned, and
- cooperate with a public body in relation to any matter connected with its functions, whenever the Council considers it appropriate.

Under these provisions, the Arts Council has a material and distinctive contribution to make in the formulation of spatial policy for our evolving society.

### **Arts Council Policy and Strategy**

The Arts Council is guided by its own strategy '**Making Great Art Work, 2016 - 2025**', which sets forth a vision for Ireland in which the Arts are valued as; central to civic life; as a hallmark of local and national identity; and as a sign and signature of our creativity as a nation.

The **Making Great Art Work Strategy** seeks to ensure that funding is spent strategically and reflects the long term interests of the public, and signifies the Arts Council's role as an expert agency for the arts.

Despite the impact that the Covid-19 has had on the Arts sector, the effects of the pandemic have demonstrated that the arts, music, film, literature, theatre, culture and entertainment are essential to the wellbeing of the country.

The Arts Council is currently preparing its own '**Spatial Policy**', which will forefront the importance of place and spaces where people live, work and come together for cultural participation, as an essential component of life satisfaction and fulfilment living in Ireland today. The Spatial Policy will highlight the Arts Council's key role as a Prescribed Body in the Irish planning system and set out a clear vision for how it endeavours to see the arts and culture more strongly integrated into spatial development frameworks, and land uses planning policy.

In advancing this approach, The Arts Council has made a submission to National Government during its current review of the National Development Plan (in February 2021). In that submission, the Arts Council have confirmed that the Arts have become more integrated into citizens' lives; there are

strong examples of this in the national Creative Schools programme, wellbeing initiatives, arts and health, creative Ireland initiatives and the vital role the arts play in the night-time economy. In concert with these, The Arts Council submitted to National Government that the arts should now become more integrated into the principles of spatial planning for people and places through appropriate and effective provision and use of public open spaces.

### **Emerging Trends and Spatial Considerations for the Cork City Development Plan**

Planning for arts and culture means more than the development of tangible infrastructure and services such as theatres, libraries and museums or the preservation of cultural and built heritage. Arts and culture can play a contributing role to the social and economic development of places by creating vibrant places to live and creating social cohesion through festivals and events, community cultural activity, tourism interest and local identity and association with a particular place.

The provision of arts and culture in formal and informal spaces, for example, in the built and natural environment such as parks and open spaces, can make a significant contribution towards social, cultural and physical wellbeing to the community. Within a broader perspective, the definition of cultural diversity has been defined by UNESCO as;

*“A set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”*

(UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity)

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the Arts sector in Ireland, with live entertainment and many cultural events still postponed over a year after the pandemic began. The pandemic has also influenced how public spaces are viewed and used by society. During the pandemic and in its aftermath, such spaces, designed, configured and equipped to a high standard, are critical to public enjoyment and reengagement with cultural events and live entertainment.

### **Contribution of Arts and Culture toward Proper Planning**

The provision of Arts and culture can contribute toward community and societal development in a number of ways including for example;

- **Place-making and psychological well-being:** *Arts and cultural assets including venues and the public realm (formal and informal public accessible spaces and buildings), can contribute toward place making by creating places where people want to go, interact, and to live near offering distinctive sense of place and personal satisfaction.*
- **Creation of Stronger Communities:** *Arts and culture infrastructure can contribute toward social capital by facilitating the space and locations in which communities can mix, integrate and bond, and can enable informal social engagement.*

- **Physical and Economic Value:** *High-quality and engaging spaces and arts and culture activities can assist in area renewal/regeneration and attract visitors to boost economic activity and prosperity.*

The ‘**Life Worth Living**’ (The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce<sup>1</sup>) November 2020, sets out a number of recommendations on how best the arts and culture sector can adapt and recover from the unprecedented damage arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, and, the importance of outdoor public spaces to access arts and cultural events in the aftermath of the pandemic. ‘**Recommendation 9**’ of the taskforce report promotes the development of a capital improvement programme to ‘Re-imagining our Public Spaces’ that includes:

1. *a targeted and accelerated public realm capital improvement programme to fund local authorities to adapt, equip or otherwise improve public spaces for cultural and events activities, taking account of public health guidelines and of the needs of the local arts community, to include a competitive fund that would encourage the development of spaces of regional strategic importance by local authorities; and*
2. *a targeted fund to incentivise the Private Sector to activate appropriate private spaces for public attendance at artistic, cultural and entertainment events.*

Under these recommendations, Local Authorities are encouraged to prioritise place making projects and encourage/incentivise private sector with large spaces/buildings in creative activation or facilitation of spaces of local or regional scale for public enjoyment.

### **Planning Obligations for Arts & Culture**

The provision of cultural and arts infrastructure, like any social capital, requires planning and foresight commensurate with identification of need and tangible outputs. The provisions of Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) set the basis for spatial planning for the arts by requiring each Development plan to include objectives for:

- ***the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;***
- *the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.*
- *the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;*
- *the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;*

(Bold Emphasis Added)

At a regional level, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region acknowledges that the region has a distinctive and rich arts and culture sector which is of intrinsic value to the people and communities. In addition, the RSES sets out that a vibrant arts and culture sector can contribute to the vitality of the region, making it an attractive place for visitors, workers and investors. The Strategy seeks to promote the development and preservation of arts and culture in the region through a number of policy objectives, for example;

*RPO 191: To develop a vibrant cultural and creative sector in the Region as a key enabler for enterprise growth, innovation, regeneration, place-making and community development, health and well-being and support measures under Culture 2025, Creative Ireland Strategy 2017- 22 and the Action Plan for Rural Development.*

*RPO 192 Local Authority Development Plans, Local Enterprise Community Plans and Local Area Plans should include cultural policies and objectives supporting the sustainable development of enabling infrastructure including:*

- *Workspaces for cultural uses;*
- *Delivery and optimisation of high-speed broadband to support the digital media and remote working;*
- *Support investment in training and education initiatives for cultural employment opportunities;*
- *Provision and upgrade of cultural facilities;*
- *Support the adaptation and bringing back into use of heritage buildings;*
- *Where large scale housing is planned, to ensure adequate provision is made for a range of community facilities including cultural facilities.*

*RPO 194: To advocate for investment in infrastructure and initiatives that develop the role of arts, heritage, culture within our Region and communities and assist delivery of actions under arts, heritage and cultural strategies in our Local authorities, including funding streams outlined in Project Ireland 2040 Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027 and Heritage 2030.*

### **Observations on the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028**

The Arts Council acknowledges and supports the comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the function and value of arts and culture set out in Chapter 8 of the Draft Plan in supporting the cultural industry and in placemaking, and, its acknowledgement of current creative arts strategies. The forthcoming Cork City Arts Plan which is in development should be called out specifically as the legislative arts planning instrument for the City.

This would bolster the specific recognition that arts and culture can help “*to underpin a city’s sense of place and enhances its quality of life and attractiveness as a place in which to live and to visit*” (Section 8.12), as well as, the acknowledgement by Cork City Council of the “*important contribution of the arts to the city’s unique cultural identity and the potential of the arts and creativity as a driver of social and economic development*” (Section 8.14).

That said, and mindful of the Strategic Objectives SO7 (‘Heritage, Arts and Culture’) and SO9 (‘Placemaking and Managing Development’), the Arts Council wish to make the following observations for consideration in finalising the Development Plan;

## 1. Clarity in Development Plan Objectives

The Arts Council welcome the provisions of **Objectives 8.11 – 8.16** which seek to facilitate the provision of arts and culture. These are broad, from a strategic level (Objective 8.15 ‘Cork as a City of Culture’), to a detailed level (Objective 8.16 Arts and the Public Realm’) and include ‘Corks Cultural Capacity and Strategic Arts and Culture Objectives. Whilst these supportive objectives are welcome, it is difficult to understand; what level of facilities are required and where; how it is intended to implement those objectives; and what is the measure for monitoring the success of those policy objectives by the Council as part of any review mechanism.

For example, in reference to the Section 8.15 of the Draft Plan, it is difficult to understand from the Development Objectives, how the Development Plan will as stated:

- ***Support the sustainability of the arts and cultural sector through post-pandemic recovery;***
- ***Develop the arts and cultural needs of the expanding city demographic; and***
- ***Support arts and cultural development that is representative of the full diversity for the city's population.***

(bold emphasis added)

Furthermore, it is unclear from the draft plan, where the responsibility lies for the provision of such infrastructure, whether it is the responsibility of the local authority, by private developer in certain development instances, or by way of other entity. The Arts Council is mindful that in some other local authority areas, development plans have sought to consider fiscal measures for the provision of such community infrastructure through the formulation of Section 48/Section 48 development contribution levies as a practicable means of implementation and assigned responsibility.

## 2. Greater Synergy between Development Plan Objectives

In parallel, the Arts Council note Objective 3.14 of the Daft Plan ('Community Infrastructure and Services) states that it is the objective of the Council:

*to Work with our communities and infrastructure providers in facilitating the development and provision of a range of accessible, socially inclusive, multi-functional and diverse community facilities throughout the city”.*

In the context of emerging spatial trends and experiences of the recent pandemic, the provision of space and quality in urban environment - as essential community infrastructure - has never been more important. Providing spaces for arts and culture as part of urban development, expansion and regeneration, can contribute to placemaking, it can facilitate engagement of people and communities, and, it can enhance the aesthetics of public realm and quality of environment. With this in mind, the Arts Council suggest that the Development Plan gives greater acknowledgement to, and recognition of the importance of arts and culture as essential community infrastructure and thus greater synergy between policy objectives 3.14 and 8.11-8.16.

### **3. Responsiveness to and Collaboration with other Strategies**

The Arts Council is mindful of the ‘Street Smart- a street arts toolkit for Cork City’ prepared jointly by Cork City Council and the Arts office. This resource toolkit was developed during the recent experience of the Covid 19 pandemic where street arts emerged as one of the few viable options for engagement in cultural life in the city at a time of considerable restrictions. In light of this resource, The Arts Council would welcome every effort by the City Council to acknowledge this resource and incorporate key aspects of it, with the development framework or development management provisions of the Development Plan insofar as practicable and implementable in terms of community infrastructure and/or placemaking.

### **4. Future Planning for Arts and Culture - Formulation of a Spatial Framework**

The Arts Council would welcome if the policy approach for the provision of arts and culture infrastructure detailed in Chapter 8 of the Development Plan was informed by an evidence based assessment.

This approach is not only recommended in the draft Development Plan Guidelines (August 2021) which states, *the development plan process should, at the initial stages provide, and ultimately be based on an evidence-based approach to the determination of requirements for new social, community and cultural facilities*”, but, would also be consistent with the provisions of Objective 3.16 of the Draft Plan which states that it is the objective of the Council; *To explore the preparation of a city-wide community infrastructure audit and health-check over the life-time of the Plan*”.

Furthermore, whilst the provisions of Objective 3.16 are welcome in principle, The Arts Council respectfully submit that such community infrastructure should be ‘informed’ by such an assessment rather than the much more vague suggestion in Objective 3.16 that such an assessment might be ‘explored’ during the life-time of the Plan.

In order to assist this approach, a county register of arts and cultural assets could be established, and could include infrastructure such as arts centres, museums, heritage buildings, or townscapes, or public spaces and locations which either individually or collectively, contribute to access to, and/or provision of arts and culture.

This information could be used to generate a baseline database of arts and cultural assets and their spatial distribution/concentration across the county based on the type of activity, level of provision, and key attributes. This information can inform locational decisions and future needs and can inform other service providers interested in co-location of service and activities.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission in due course.

Yours faithfully,



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