



# VIBRANT IPSWICH

transforming Ipswich's culture and leisure scene

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TRANSFORMING IPSWICH

# FOREWORD

By Councillor Judy Terry, portfolio holder **CULTURE & LEISURE**

The first statement of its kind in the history of the town, Vibrant Ipswich sets the strategic vision for the local cultural sector. The Council recognizes the contribution that cultural services make to improving the quality of life for local residents and this is reflected in the Council's vision Transforming Ipswich, which identifies Vibrant Ipswich as a key priority. The Council is committed to culture - demonstrated by it spending above the typical level: 27% of overall spending compared with the typical 20% by other district councils.

We have listened to a wide-range of very committed people and groups, all of whom, knowingly, or unknowingly, have helped us to formulate this vision. We acknowledge their contribution and welcome their future involvement in further developing our proposals.

Although some may be critical of it, our ambition has been widely welcomed. However, this is not merely a series of aspirations, but intended as a working document, capable of revision and, inevitably, improvement and updating, as plans are progressed and new opportunities arise.

We acknowledge decades of under investment in buildings, provision and our cultural heritage needs to be overturned. Investment in the cultural infrastructure and increasing access and participation are our primary focus, in relation to issues over which the Council has control.

With this vision for the future, we aim to recover a reputation as carers for our heritage, and investors in whole-life learning and enjoyment for everyone. We also aim to encourage and facilitate talent wherever it is found across the cultural and leisure spectrum – by supporting both individuals and groups, and developing a comprehensive range of events in which people of all ages can participate, either actively or as observers.

I thank everyone for their conscious and unconscious contributions. We all recognise that there is even more to be done, but this is a courageous and exciting start for Ipswich as we translate ideas into realities and bring wider access to all.

I take this opportunity to thank officers for their significant contribution and support in reaching this important stage – producing Ipswich's first cultural strategy.

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# INTRODUCTION

Culture lies at the very heart of what makes Ipswich the place it is today - a town with a rich heritage dating back to Anglo-Saxon times yet with a modern vibrancy enriched by a diverse and multi-cultural community. Ipswich is thriving but if it is to sustain the levels of growth envisaged in the future, it must ensure that the quality of life is preserved and enhanced. To do this Ipswich's potential as an attractive location to live in and to visit needs to be exploited as fully as possible.

In its broadest sense, the cultural sector provides a range of opportunities and experiences that enrich our lives and includes:

architecture and design, art, the built environment, dance, diversity, faith, heritage, landscape and wildlife, lifelong learning, media and film, museums and archives, music, parks, play, open spaces and allotments, recreation and leisure, sport and theatre

## **Culture, in all its facets, has a key role to play through:**

- provision of leisure opportunities and activities;
- improvement of the town's cultural status and ambition;
- generation of further economic growth in the cultural and tourism sector;
- promotion of cultural activity as a means of reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, improving health and generating community well-being, by involving people of all ages in all sectors of society; and
- Inspiring Learning for All

Ipswich Borough Council through its own vision has set out key aims and objectives to enrich and protect the town's historic

assets and cultural offering and thereby contribute to making Ipswich a vibrant town for its residents and visitors. This builds both upon the feedback received from local people through public consultation and upon work with key local partners. Ipswich Local Strategic Partnership, one-Ipswich, a group representing key organisations working with communities in Ipswich, has similarly recognised the contribution that the cultural sector makes to its primary aim to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of the town. Its partners on the Culture and Learning Subgroup share the Council's commitment to achieving a co-ordinated and focused guide for the future growth of the cultural sector and have played an important part in formulating the future strategic direction. The Council is also keen to further develop its role within the Suffolk Cultural Pathfinder pilot, alongside other partners.

The Council's cultural vision for the future of the town is not one that will be achieved overnight. In particular, many of the town's cultural assets are suffering from a lack of investment over many years. A key challenge will be to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between protecting, conserving and making the most of the town's existing cultural assets whilst developing new ones to sustain the town's development in the future. Alongside this will be the aim of increasing participation and widening access to the broad range of cultural and leisure based opportunities on offer across the town.

**This document sets out the Council's cultural vision for Ipswich, its existing cultural assets and its future cultural enrichment.**

# DEVELOPING PERFORMING ARTS & ENTERTAINMENTS

A wide-range of opportunities exists across Ipswich covering all aspects of performing art. These opportunities are reflected in the success of the recently launched Ip-art initiative, which has revitalized the local arts scene over the past three years. Ipswich's rich and diverse history for music, that reaches across all music forms, plays a major part of the Ip-art festival through the ever-popular Ipswich Music Day. The local music scene is further enhanced all year round with pubs and clubs featuring some of the area's top local bands on a regular basis. On the classical music front the Civic Concert programme continues to bring some of the country's top classical musicians to the town, providing inspiration and helping to raise the profile of our local orchestras and choirs.

Live entertainment for all tastes is on offer at the Ipswich Regent, whilst the Corn Exchange provides a varied programme of concerts, shows and exhibitions, encompassing both amateur and professional productions. Although theatre and drama are well catered for, in particular at the New Wolsey, from the professional performers' point of view, more could be done to support local amateur dramatic organisations. Council arts officers will work with these organisations, helping and assisting development of the art form where possible: for example helping to establish a Drama Festival or short play competition and assisting with identifying new opportunities for performance space.

Public consultation on how the Council should support and deliver Arts and Entertainments in the future was carried out in 2004.

The continued provision and enhancement of arts and entertainment opportunities was overwhelmingly supported by 9 out of 10 questionnaire respondents. The Ipswich Regent was seen as the highest priority for the Council and its partners to invest in, although both the Corn Exchange and New Wolsey Theatre were also shown to be of high priority. There was ongoing concern at the under-investment in facilities that has been evident over recent years and a key priority for the Council is to secure future funding for improvements. This may involve working with a range of external partners, with the overall aim of widening the variety of product on offer and access to it by the wider community.

Exciting new facilities are also on the horizon, including the East of England's first purpose-built dance house in Cranfields Mill on the Waterfront, being developed by Dance East. This will not only provide a beacon for arts activity but also raise ambition and further enhance the company's already strong links with the Ipswich community.

The Council will also develop opportunities to promote local talent across all age groups and cultures within the artistic and musical spectrum, by facilitating public exhibitions, concerts and other events.

The Council will seek to maximize opportunities for new performance and exhibition spaces, for example redundant churches and other non-traditional locations – the bandstand on the Cornhill being a recent example of a successful pilot.

## **Theatre**

The impact of theatre on the local economy is significant. According to the Arts Council England's (Economic impact study of UK theatre April 2004), in addition to the theatre ticket purchase;

**"Every audience member spends on average £7.77 on food, transport and childcare when they visit a UK theatre outside the West End"**

Although Ipswich has two professionally run theatres each offering complementary programmes that attract sub-regional audiences, the town also has other smaller but no less important theatrical organisations such as the Eastern Angles and Red Rose Chain. Red Rose Chain has an international reputation for its work, particularly with 'hard to reach' groups.

There are many local amateur arts organisation that exist in Ipswich that rely on public buildings for exhibition or performance space. All these arts organisations offer variety and added value to the town's cultural mix.

### **Ipswich Regent**

The Ipswich Regent Theatre, Grade II Listed, contributes considerably in this respect but has had little capital investment since it reopened in 1991, apart from essential roof works undertaken in 2003, the removal of asbestos and a comprehensive structural survey. Facilities at the theatre are limited with poor stage facilities and fixed auditorium

seating that restrict opportunities for expanding the theatre's use. The proposed University Campus Suffolk and subsequent large student base is just one example of the need for flexible facilities with an auditorium capable of providing standing capacity for rock/pop/youth audiences for up to 2,000. To overcome the theatre's constraints, multi-million pound investment is needed in the medium-term to bring the building up to modern standards, whilst being in sympathy with its status as a listed building. The Council will explore opportunities for partnership working in order to attract the necessary financial investment.

However, securing such investment will be dependent upon improving the overall financial performance of the theatre. This will be achieved by continuing to review the programme to focus on live music, comedy and mainstream entertainment, hosting an annual professional pantomime at Christmas, improving the efficiency of the bars, kiosk operations and other areas and developing external support through a 'Friends' scheme and commercial sponsorship.

The Council is committed to retaining the theatre as a live entertainment venue for the town and improvements to the efficiency of the overall operation will enable a realistic capital investment programme to be developed over the next few years. In the meantime, further improvements have been made to boxes, dressing rooms and the main entrance and a new cloakroom provided.

### **Key Actions**

- **Maximise the opportunity for music promotions, comedy & mainstream entertainment**
- **Improve the operation and efficiency of service catering areas including bars & kiosk**
- **Develop a professional pantomime season**
- **Secure commercial sponsorship deals**
- **Develop audience through marketing initiatives, including introduction of a 'Friends' scheme**

### **New Wolsey Theatre**

Since opening its doors in 2001, the 400 seat New Wolsey Theatre has been producing, co-producing and hosting a wide-range of productions that include drama, dance, children's shows, poetry, world music, classical music, opera, musical theatre and a hugely successful home-grown rock'n'roll panto, which achieves 96% occupancy during its seven week run.

The New Wolsey's programme is high quality, diverse and accessible to all sections of the community.

In 2003 it won the Arts Council England/ Eclipse Theatre Award for its pioneering work in addressing issues of racism in theatre.

It places outreach, education and audience development at the heart of its activities, hosts the annual Black History Month, hosts the Chinese New Year Celebrations and it is recognized as a unique and invaluable resource at the heart of the community it serves.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Work in partnership to ensure essential repair and development work is completed**
- **Increase access to the theatre by the local community through service level agreement objectives**

### **Corn Exchange**

The Corn Exchange, Grade II Listed, alongside the Town Hall, lies at the very heart of Ipswich and fulfills a vital community role. The Council, following extensive consultation, supports retention of the building for entertainment uses.

There is, however, a need for significant investment to carry out essential repairs, address Disability Discrimination Act legislation and to generally bring the Corn Exchange up to modern standards. The building has enormous potential and sympathetic development could see it fulfil a wide-range of uses, both existing and new. Identifying the building's development potential with the aim of attracting investment from commercial partners will also help reduce the annual revenue cost to the Council.

It is acknowledged that any redevelopment of the Corn Exchange will result in disruption to users in the short term and potential changes in use particularly in relation to the Robert Cross level of the complex will require other suitable venues to be identified for activities such as art exhibition. Establishing a town centre public gallery and exhibition facility in the Town Hall is one way of addressing this important issue.

Utilising one or other of the remaining redundant churches and working with other facility owners would provide alternatives for housing arts groups and/or their activities. The Council will act positively by supporting and working with arts groups to identify suitable alternative facilities where possible.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Identify building development potential**
- **Assess proposals for redevelopment**
- **Seek investment partners**
- **Explore opportunities to utilise alternative venues such as redundant churches**

## Cinema

Ipswich has a strong history for commercial cinema stretching back many years and is currently home to one of the country's most successful multiplexes. The town also has a very successful Film Society, which was first established in 1935, and the screening of Specialized Cinema has been provided in Ipswich from Ipswich Film Theatre since 1976. The role of film is recognised as an art form in its own right but also as an educator and source of information and social enlightenment. However, cinema exhibition technology is at a crossroads with the emergence of new models utilizing Digital Projection Systems. This coupled

with the concentration of screens into fewer hands has impacted on programming policies.

To respond to this rapidly changing environment, the Council proposes to continue support for the mainstream commercial operators and to explore new opportunities for expanding access to specialized cinema in the town through partnership working. In the short-term the Council has piloted specialized movies on a weekly basis at Suffolk College (using low definition DVD projection). Other partnership opportunities are also being explored.

### Key Actions

- **Develop partnership opportunities with a range of organisations**
- **Work with Ipswich Film Theatre Advisory Committee and Ipswich Film Society to establish a new way forward for specialized cinema in Ipswich**

## Special Events and Festivals

Ipswich has an impressive annual Special Events and Festival programme including music concerts in parks and Ipswich Town Football Club, the Arts Festival events, Ipswich Music Day and other community events such as the NIA Project 'Black Africa Month' and the Scouts annual Firework display.

The Ip-art festival and New Wolsey Theatre's Pulse Festival complement Ipswich's economic expansion by reinvigorating the cultural growth of the town. Three Ip-art festivals have already been held since 2003 offering a celebration of visual and performing arts, literature, film and music. The Ip-art festival offers good opportunity to take arts and cultural events into the community by utilising a variety of differing venues such as, parks, open spaces and redundant churches thus

breathing new life and vibrancy into the town's cultural offering. A children's festival is to form an extension to the festival season.

Further development of the New Wolsey annual 'Pulse Festival' has secured funding from Arts Council England East for its work in promoting young and talented artist from around the area as part of the Escalator project, the Eastern Region's Artists support scheme. The Pulse festival organisers intend to build the festival's influence and continue to put Ipswich on the map by featuring some of their work in the Edinburgh Fringe as part of the feeder group.

In addition to these two already successful arts festivals the Council also proposes developing a 'Winterfest' in the run-up to

Christmas – a new festival initiative incorporating seasonal attractions on the Waterfront. The Council recognizes the town's importance in the region in relation to

the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will seek to introduce an annual Sports Festival linking into the run up to the games.

**Key Actions**

- **Work with partners to develop & sustain the annual Ip-art festival**
- **Work with partners to launch a Children's Festival**
- **Establish the 'Winterfest' pre-Christmas festival**
- **Further develop the wider events and facilitate groups to realise their objectives in the best interests of Ipswich residents**
- **Develop opportunities for people of all ages to maximise their artistic and musical talents**
- **Identify and utilise a variety of venues such as parks, open spaces and redundant churches for arts activities**
- **Develop an annual Sports Festival linking into the London Olympics and Paralympics 2012**



# DEVELOPING MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Ipswich Museums Service currently comprises Christchurch Mansion, a Tudor Mansion set in its own grounds, and the historic High Street Museum. Long-term lack of investment has created a number of problems that need to be overcome by instituting a planned programme of improvements, development and expansion, in order to widen access to the town's historic collections, much of which has been in storage for decades. This programme will build on the draft Museums Service Development Plan 2004 and incorporate the outcomes of public and professional consultation, including the input of the East of England Hub Museums and the East of England Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (EEMLAC), both of whom have indicated a willingness to support the further development of Ipswich Museums and Galleries in a sub-regional context.

Museums provision is critical with regard to enhancing quality of life by stimulating inward investment and through activities that engage with our communities. Specifically the Council is set to develop more gallery space in the town, in particular within the historic Town Hall. Long-term aspirations include the re-display of the Ipswich Museum complex, developing it as a centre for learning and with an increased emphasis on interactivity, as well as developing a new heritage attraction at the Waterfront. Further gallery enhancements are in progress within Christchurch Mansion, bringing more items from store onto public display. It is also the Council's intent to provide a new central store to improve access, conservation and research.

All of these developments offer real opportunities for increased partnership working, linking with sub-regional partners and with University College Suffolk and

Suffolk College, the County Record Office, Ipswich Transport Museum, Suffolk Museums Partnership, as well as our local communities.

The Council is committed to supporting the wider Lifelong Learning agenda, whether as part of formal learning provision for schools or informally through family and community learning events and activities. Museums are being encouraged to adopt the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council 'Inspiring Learning for All' framework, which aims to encourage partnership working and consultation as part of developing enhanced services.

Although major cutbacks five years ago seriously disadvantaged the service and prevented it from taking its rightful place in the Regional Museums 'Hub', Ipswich Museums now hold Full Registration status. However, significant investment will be required to qualify for the new Accreditation standard operated by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. Accredited museums must adhere to published minimum standards in how they care for and document their collections, how they are governed and managed, and on the information and services they offer to their users. Key benefits of Accreditation include:

- **encouraging museums to reach minimum levels in museum management, user services, visitor facilities and collections care**
- **fostering public confidence in museums as institutions which hold collections in trust for society and which manage public resources responsibly, for both present and future generations**
- **providing a benchmark for grant-making bodies, sponsors and donors wishing to support museums.**

### **Key Actions**

- **The Council will endeavour to ensure that the Museum Service achieves Accredited status in early 2007**
- **The Service will use the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Inspiring Learning for All framework in developing improved service provision**

### **Christchurch Mansion**

Once a family home, Christchurch Mansion is an impressive Grade 1 Listed Tudor Mansion, located in its own historic parkland; a few minutes walk from the town centre. It is of outstanding historic architectural significance and considered a local and national treasure and asset to the town, enjoyed equally by tourists and the local population.

The Mansion houses some of the fine and decorative arts, furniture and costume collections, which are displayed in a series of room settings reflecting periods in the Mansion's history. The collections are of significant local, national and international importance, including an extensive fine art collection of oil paintings, watercolours, drawings, prints and sculptures by East Anglian artists from the sixteenth century to the present day. A key aim is to get more of these collections out of storage and on display, with a focus on 'the birth of Impressionism', for which many of these artists can take credit.

The collection is particularly rich and includes substantial holdings by Suffolk's

two world-renowned artists Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable. Ipswich Museums Service is an acknowledged local and national centre for the study of these artists' early work, and has more early Constable oil paintings than any other British collection outside London.

Christchurch Mansion has suffered from continual under investment. The Grade 1 Listed building requires major investment to bring it up to current disability access requirements and visitor expectations. Gallery displays need refurbishment and updating. To meet these needs a planned programme of investment is being undertaken. In early 2005 Christchurch Mansion underwent essential maintenance and gallery improvements, including improved access for the disabled and developments to the cafe on the ground floor. A second phase is planned for early 2006, which will create some new period rooms, enhanced space for activities and continued disability access improvements. Over time, the Mansion should reflect its family connections more closely.

### **Key Actions**

- **Two year programme of disability and access improvements**
- **New period room displays to create a 'family feel'**
- **Infrastructure maintenance and decoration**
- **Feasibility assessment for new gallery and restaurant**
- **Develop opportunities for learning by developing links with local and national Art History faculties, as well as local schools and University College Campus Suffolk.**

### **Town Hall Galleries**

The Council is committed to developing more gallery space in the town, in particular within the historic Town Hall, Grade II Listed. It is proposed that this space will focus on Ipswich social history, celebrating the community of Ipswich - past, present and future - and promoting a sense of identity and pride in Ipswich, its history and achievements. The new displays will also engage with all members of the Ipswich community, an on-going dialogue open to partnership and participation with local organisations, groups and industries.

These new galleries will play to the strengths of the Town Hall, its location on the Cornhill, at the very heart of the town, and its function of overseeing the development of the community of Ipswich from 1200. The displays will be a celebration of the community of Ipswich through time, thematically organized, rather than chronologically. They will include large

dramatic settings, evoking the feeling of actual streets and interiors as well as conventional displays focusing on individual specimens of costume, fine art, topographical prints, photographs, decorative art, archive records and other material. Also included will be interactive elements for younger visitors.

The concept is strongly supported by the Regional Museums Hub and EEMLAC, and to progress this exciting new development the Council will look for financial assistance and support from The Heritage Lottery fund and private charitable foundations, possibly linked to Ipswich Museum complex re-display development. In the project's development stage the Council will consult and involve the community on ideas and pilot projects on the use of the space and display concepts, which could include the unique Ipswich Charter Hangings.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Undertake pilot projects over one to two years, including community consultation**
- **Draft major project bid for development of town hall galleries and refurbishment of Ipswich Museum complex.**
- **Produce new Town Hall Galleries, celebrating the community of Ipswich; past, present and future and promoting a sense of identity and pride in Ipswich, its history and achievements.**
- **Explore new partnership working opportunities**
- **Establish a permanent home, possibly in the Town Hall, for the Ipswich Charter Hangings**

### **Ipswich Museum**

Opened in 1847, Ipswich Museum is one of the oldest provincial museums in Britain. It moved to its current purpose built building, Grade II listed, in 1881. It houses displays on archæology, world cultures, and the natural world, including geology, mounted animals and birds - some of international standing. A key display is the Victorian Natural History Gallery, which recreates the atmosphere of the early museum.

Today the museum is a popular venue with local families. Current focus is on developing community links and joint working in areas of the town's historic, natural and diverse cultural environments.

Opportunities exist to explore joint working with the Suffolk College, Suffolk Institute of Technology (SIT) and the proposed University Campus Suffolk.

Given its evident popularity with children and extended families, the Council is keen to develop the learning/educational appeal of the Museum with a discovery-‘hands on’-interactive approach in the displays.

This interaction would focus on themes relevant to the collections and help deliver the potential for informal learning: -‘The Natural Environment’ (looking at climate change, biodiversity and town and countryside wildlife), ‘The Built

Environment’ (our Anglo-Saxon Inheritance and the history of our built heritage) and ‘The Cultural Environment’ (including the Diversity agenda). Such a presentation would be unique in Suffolk and provide an additional leisure asset for Ipswich, especially improving the quality of life for families and young people in the town, who would be encouraged to ‘adopt’ specific displays and participate in developing new ones.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Develop the complex through a redisplay of galleries based on interactive discovery.**
- **Develop the learning/educational appeal especially for families and young people, including further development of the interactive programme with schools**
- **Explore opportunities for new partnership working (SIT, Suffolk College, University Campus Suffolk), considering future use by these of the Ipswich Art School complex.**

#### **Waterfront Development**

Part of the long-term development of the Ipswich Waterfront is the opportunity to develop a new gallery, exhibition space and visitor attraction. The gallery and exhibition space would provide a focus for exciting and innovative partnership working opportunities with University Campus Suffolk, as well as a focal point for cultural activity and a showcase for the Council’s collections of local and national significance.

A waterfront attraction could act as an innovative bridge between tourism, arts and heritage and would complement the area’s

other cultural developments and define Ipswich as a destination for tourism. Such an attraction would provide a landmark visitor centre and a flexible space spotlighting local, regional and international displays that would attract the widest possible range of visitors from within the Ipswich community and beyond.

Together, the developments would create a première visitor attraction in the East of England region, able to deliver diverse programmes of exhibition, learning and community activities.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Identify suitable sites on the Waterfront**
- **Undertake feasibility study on any proposals for waterfront developments and identify external funding**
- **Work closely with the Waterfront Attractions Group regarding development proposals**

### **Collections Storage/Documentation and Access**

Whilst it is desirable to increase the proportion of collections on display, many items remain in store. It is also evident that some of the stores are inadequate and hard to access, in particular those in the Mansion. The Council's collections are used for research purposes to support the work of individuals and local organisations.

In order to ensure both staff and public access for research it is the intent of the Council to review its collections storage and consider options for creating a local central store with public research facilities and improved conservation. Opportunities for partnership will be sought.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Review existing and future collection needs**
- **Identify suitable storage options and undertake feasibility study.**
- **Seek additional resource to help improve access to collections.**

### **Visual Art**

The Museums Service's fine art collections are amongst the finest in the region with several works of national and international significance. Of particular note are the works of John Constable and Thomas Gainsborough. The pre-eminence of these two artists in the history of British art is well established. The history of British landscape painting could not be written without reference to them. They helped to construct a particular image not only of Suffolk, but also of England. The particular strength of the Ipswich Collection is that the work of these two masters can be seen

within the context of the English and Dutch portrait and landscape traditions that helped to form their unique visions. It can also be appreciated through the eyes of their followers and in hindsight, from later and contemporary artists portraying the East Anglian scene.

Currently, the Council's art collections are either included within the period room displays or held in storage. The Wolsey Art Gallery is to be converted, in order to use this premiere space for display of the permanent collections.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Redisplay the Wolsey Art Gallery with artworks from the permanent collections, together with selected decorative art items.**
- **Increase the number of fine art works on public display**

The Contemporary Visual Arts programme has, hitherto, been delivered by Ipswich Museums Service based in the Wolsey Gallery and 'The Room Upstairs'. There has long been a need to refocus and further develop this innovative programme. Consequently this function will move from

its fixed location in Christchurch Mansion and be delivered as an 'Out of a Gallery' programme from any number of appropriate venues across the town, which could include churches such as St Mary at Quay.

In response to the need to develop new venues for visual arts there is the opportunity to establish an artist run space supported by Visual Arts, Ipswich. The contemporary visual arts programme will require a temporary base, which will be offered within the Town Hall, prior to a final

relocation to an inspiring new venue on the Waterfront, close to the University campus, where it will host high quality touring exhibitions as well as home-grown projects of local, national and international importance.

#### **Key Actions**

- **As an interim move, relocate the contemporary Visual Arts programme to the Town Hall, prior to a final relocation to a permanent venue, near/on waterfront.**
- **Delivery of town wide 'Out of a Gallery' programme from appropriate venues**
- **Continue to develop the 'More than a Visit' visual art study programme for young people with links with Suffolk College and Schools.**

#### **Arts Development**

The Council seeks to progress its ambitions through the establishment of a new Arts Development Officer post. The Arts Development Officer focuses on both the visual and performing arts in Ipswich to nurture audiences and enrich the lives of all residents in the town and its sub-region. The post is an advocate for the arts, establishing effective partnerships across art forms, supporting the development of visual arts activity and taking advantage of public art opportunities. The appointment of an Arts Development Officer enables the Council to progress the broader arts agenda and deliver the visual arts to a wider audience. Arts Development will enable the development of long-term partnerships with arts providers and

stakeholders to widen the variety of artistic product on offer and access to the wider community. The Arts Development Officer will maximize the benefits of existing partnerships, for example through projects such as Amplifier. In addition, public art adds to the vibrancy of any environment, and the Council will actively encourage the provision of art to enhance all areas of the town.

The Arts Development Officer is supported by an Arts Projects Officer, to develop the Visual Arts, Ipswich Programme, organize and implement a marketing strategy and develop audiences across the arts for Ipswich.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Develop an Arts document that dovetails with the Cultural Strategy**
- **Support the provision of public art works across the Town; implementing a Public Art Plan**

### **Other Opportunities**

The Council recognises the considerable contribution made by a diverse range of organisations through the provision and interpretation of many of the town's tourism and heritage attractions. The Council will seek to enhance the co-ordination of and collaboration between a range of local providers -public, independent and voluntary- through the further support and development of groups such as the Ipswich Attractions Group and the Ipswich Heritage Group.

The Ipswich Attractions Group includes Council run facilities Christchurch Mansion, Museum and the Tourist Office and many attractions such as the Orwell Lady, All Fired Up, Ipswich Tourist Guides, Ghost Walks, Unitarian Meeting House, Clifford Road Air Raid Shelter and Ipswich Transport Museum. Attractions within the town and those within the close proximity of Ipswich, which are members of the Ipswich Attractions Group, provide a further offering as an outlet for Ipswich people for lifelong learning. The work of this group

and also the Ipswich Heritage Group will help underpin many of the proposed cultural initiatives and strengthen opportunities to seek external funding.

The Council has also recently joined the Suffolk Museums Partnership, which it hopes will bring mutual advantages and enhance our existing provision.

At a community level, Ipswich has a diverse and multi-cultural community that enriches the town's cultural life. Members of minority ethnic groups have grown from 4.5% of the resident population in 1991 to 6.6% in 2001. This proportion continues to increase year on year. The growing mix of different cultures and faiths generates new opportunities and energy within the community, adding diversity to aspects of daily life through artistic expression, social activity and spirituality. Hand in hand with this growth will be a continued need to promote respect and understanding between different groups in order to realise wider community benefits.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Develop and sustain the Ipswich Attractions Group and Ipswich Heritage Group**
- **Support the Cultural Pathfinder initiative through developing reminiscence activity**
- **Develop further joint initiatives with the Ipswich Transport Museum and Suffolk Record Office.**
- **Increase partnership working with our diverse communities**

# DEVELOPING PARKS & OPEN SPACES

Ipswich has a uniquely rich 'green lung' heritage, with its 1200 acres of parks and open spaces, ensuring residents are better provided for in terms of space per head of population than most other towns of equivalent size. The town's inheritance of historic parks is on a scale normally associated with much larger conurbations. Balanced with being at the forefront of urban renaissance and regeneration, Ipswich, therefore, has the advantage of being an organic town - undoubtedly a key ingredient in its attractiveness and quality of life.

At its heart is the river and its corridor. Much neglected during the twentieth century the river corridor is one of the most important landscape and wildlife features in Ipswich. Organisations such as the River Action Group have worked to produce the Ipswich River Strategy, which sets out how the river corridor can be developed to improve opportunities and access by local people.

With an estimated 5 million visits each year, the Council recognizes the popularity and value of the town's parks and open spaces. They are increasingly popular as venues for a wide-range of cultural activities and organised events every year including important civic events, local community events and major events of regional, national and international significance. They also provide reservoirs for collective memory, containing burial places, monuments, memorials and water features and act as unique showcases for contemporary sculpture, as well as wildlife conservation.

Ipswich has over 100 wildlife sites, ranging from internationally important special protection areas, through sites of special

scientific interest and county wildlife sites, to numerous local wildlife sites. The Council will continue to work with others to maintain and enhance these valuable locations.

Parks provide local schools and colleges with a living, breathing, fully interactive and continually changing outdoor classroom, a wonderful resource with which to support curriculum activities and lifelong learning for the whole community. This is evidenced by the millions of Ipswich schoolchildren, college students and members of the public who have used the parks for formal and informal education over generations.

The Council is keen to enhance their social value by widening access and promoting play, sporting events and entertainments. In particular, with their unique setting, the town's parks have extraordinary potential as venues for live music and entertainment. Yet at the same time the Council recognises their environmental and historical value, with hundreds of ancient trees forming a backdrop, and will seek to ensure that enhancements are sympathetic to their existing context.

Parks help to maximize the potential of the town to support inward investment and economic growth, and the Council is committed to investing in these key assets to ensure the rich legacy is sustained over the long term. Work is being undertaken to achieve Green Flag status for each park.

In particular, the Council will work in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver the Ipswich Parks Restoration Project - a phased long-term project focused on the restoration of Christchurch, Holywells and Chantry Parks, which will see £4.5 million invested to restore and develop



Christchurch Park by December 2006. In addition to physical improvements, the project will enhance the links between the park and Christchurch Mansion through improved interpretation and provide opportunities for other educational initiatives with organisations such as Suffolk College. Further phases will develop proposals for the town's other two main historic parks. Within Holywells, for example, it is hoped to create a Butterfly house and Café within an extended and restored orangery and orchid house.

Over the next 12 months the Council will also deliver The Liveability Project - a £3.7 million Government sponsored project to make Ipswich cleaner, safer and greener. This will see significant investment in parks and open spaces for the benefit of local communities.

Ensuring communities have access to local open space is a key priority evidenced by such projects as Cobham Road Recreation Ground - a £250,000 project in partnership with the Countryside Agency, ODPM Living Spaces Programme and local community to regenerate a local park in South East Ipswich. New developments will also ensure appropriate open space provision,

including £2 million of investment in green space provision and a major extension to Orwell Country Park alongside 1200 new homes at Ravenswood. The Council would like to encourage greater access to the country park by supporting the provision of a visitor centre.

In addition, the Council intends to identify a small area of woodland for child-centred hands-on learning.

Access to the wider countryside from within Ipswich will also continue to be supported through the Greenways Countryside Management Project - an ongoing long-term urban fringe countryside management project in partnership with the County Council and surrounding district councils. The Project exists to protect and enhance the countryside, landscape and open space across an area of about 100 square kilometres in and around Ipswich for the benefit of wildlife and local people, who can become practically involved through engaging in voluntary conservation work.

The Council is keen to develop a series of ethnic gardens to reflect the many cultures in the town. An African garden project is in progress.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Implement the £4.5 million Heritage Lottery Fund project in Christchurch Park**
- **Progress plans for the restoration of Holywells Park and creation of a Butterfly House**
- **Deliver improvements to parks and local open spaces through the Liveability Fund**
- **Improve access to Orwell Country Park by exploring options for the development of a Visitor Centre**
- **Provide appropriate green space as part of future developments at Ravenswood**
- **Regenerate Cobham Road Recreation Ground**
- **Continue to work in partnership with the Greenways Project to improve access to the countryside by Ipswich people**
- **Appoint a Tree Inspection Officer to protect ancient tree stock**
- **Seek opportunity for a child-centred woodland area**
- **Develop a series of ethnic gardens**

# DEVELOPING SPORT

## **Sports Centres and Swimming Pools**

The town provides a wide-range of high-quality sporting opportunities and facilities. The Council's sports centres and Crown Pools are ranked around the top 10% nationally under the QUEST quality accreditation scheme – the benchmark for excellence in sports provision. However, the facilities themselves are in need of further investment if they are to increase participation and widen access. It is these two main drivers – investment and increasing participation – that provide the focus for the strategic development of sport across the town. With the successful London bid to host the 2012 Olympics there is no better time to realize the enormous benefits that sport can bring to Ipswich and its residents. A sports consultation will identify changing needs and expectations.

Ipswich has been very successful in developing partnerships and attracting external funding to develop and enhance the Council's sports facilities, including the football facilities at Gainsborough Sports and Community Centre, Ipswich Gymnastic Centre, Northgate Athletics Track and a new bowls facility at Whitton Sports and Community Centre. School sport has also seen a boost with investment in facilities at Copleston Sports College and Chantry High School in particular.

In addition, private investment has greatly added to the sporting mix on offer in Ipswich, particularly in the fitness sector, for example Gym and Trim, Fitness First and Next Generation. Ipswich also boasts one of the most successful football clubs in the east of England, Ipswich Town. The club has developed a modern stadium, with high quality conference and catering facilities, and the ground has played host to

international matches. The club has a leading reputation nationally for its work with the community through its Community Trust.

In other sports Ipswich has also achieved recognition on the national sporting map with Ipswich Ladies one of the top clubs in women's hockey and the Ipswich men's hockey team recently promoted to the national league. Gymnastics, karate and swimming are all areas of excellence. There is also the potential to further develop other sports, for example sailing, which benefits from Ipswich's river and estuary location.

In spite of this success, there has been significant under-investment in the Council's sports facilities for many years. A key priority is the need to invest further in existing assets and to improve and develop others to meet the requirements of modern service delivery. A programme of investment will see improvements to swimming provision in the town. The potential to develop new water space will also be explored. Other planned improvements include the extension of the Ipswich Gymnastic Centre at Gainsborough Sports and Community Centre, to provide an extended range of activities and facilities, and the enhancement of football provision at Whitton Sports and Community Centre, with additional grass pitches, artificial turf pitch and changing accommodation. Both of these developments will be achieved through successful external funding bids.

The Council will also seek to encourage people who feel excluded from sporting activities because they cannot participate, to become involved as volunteers or supporters.

The future of some facilities, however, does remain less secure. Broomhill Swimming Pool, Grade II Listed, has been closed now for a number of years and whilst its retention as a seasonal swimming venue is desired by many, the cost of restoration in order to bring it back into use runs into millions of pounds. The Council is supporting the work of the Broomhill Pool Trust in its efforts to re-open the pool.

### **New Opportunities**

The successful London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic bid provides a unique catalyst to develop sport in the town.

The Council wishes to secure additional facilities for the future well-being of the town and is working in partnership with a range of organisations to promote the development of purpose-built off-road cycling facilities at Ravenswood. This would provide an exciting yet safe environment in which to encourage existing and new cyclists into the sport, including a designated safe area for children to learn to ride and learn about road safety.

New opportunities will also emerge as the University Campus and Further Education College Projects gather pace and further sports provision will be explored to meet the needs of the expanding student population. In addition the university could act as a 'sporting hub' providing a centre of excellence for the sector across the county. With a university community comes enhanced cultural, sporting, entertainment and leisure provision, which will create a real buzz around the Waterfront. In this context, the Council will look to explore the potential of Fore Street Pool.

Just outside Ipswich, the proposed Snoasis development has the potential to transform the sporting landscape and significantly boost the local economy. The site has some 123 hectares and will provide indoor

and outdoor winter sport facilities including skiing slopes, bobsleigh runs and ice rinks for use all year round, together with a number of other retail and leisure facilities.

It is one of the most significant development proposals ever made in Suffolk and is expected to positively affect Ipswich through inward investment, job creation and enhanced national and international profile.

### **Sports Development**

Beyond the facilities infrastructure, it is probably the impact upon human and social capital where sport will make an ever-increasing contribution.

A key driver is the need to increase significantly levels of sport and physical activity amongst the general population. Increased participation will make a significant contribution to people's physical and mental health, helping to reduce health care costs and improve well-being amongst both young and old. Sport also provides opportunities and experiences that add to quality of life, enabling people to learn and develop as individuals. Equally sport is a vehicle for fostering social inclusion, community cohesion and a key contributor to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

In all these areas the Council will continue to deliver high-quality projects alongside a range of partners including:

- **Community Sports Coach Projects**
- **Active Sports Programme and Suffolk Youth Games**
- **Positive Futures**
- **Sport For All in the Indian Community Project**
- **Inclusive Fitness Initiative**
- **Sporting Rewards**
- **Health Improvement**

The Council has recently appointed Karen Pickering, MBE, as a Sports Ambassador for Ipswich. In developing the 'Team Ipswich' brand the following will be key priorities:

- **Raising the profile of Ipswich through our sporting achievers**
- **Supporting clubs and individuals to succeed competitively**

- **Supporting clubs to attract more participants**
- **Generating community pride in local sport**
- **Establish a Sports Foundation to support emerging talent**

The Council is also exploring opportunities to link culture and sport through film and theatre, with a focus on young people.

#### **Key Actions**

- **Implement a programme of investment to improve swimming provision in the town**
- **Work with Gymnastics in Ipswich to extend the range of activities and facilities at Ipswich Gymnastic Centre**
- **Improve the provision of artificial and grass football pitches at Whitton Sports and Community Centre**
- **Develop an off-road cycling facility at Ravenswood in partnership with Ipswich Bicycle Club**
- **Work closely with the new Suffolk College / University Campus Suffolk project to provide enhanced sporting opportunities for the town**
- **Continue to ensure that sport makes an appropriate contribution to achieving wider Council objectives and community benefits**
- **Develop culture through sport projects**
- **Establish an Ipswich Sports Foundation**

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Ipswich Charity Concert Committee  
Ipswich Decorative & Fine Art Society  
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The Ipswich Society  
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Wolsey Theatre Club

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This information can be made available on audio tape, braille or alternative formats upon request from the above telephone number

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প্রয়োজন হলে অনুগ্রহপূর্বক উপরের ঠিকানায়

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