

Report of Director of City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 7 January 2020

Subject: Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Chapel Allerton		
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary

1. Main issues

- The Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD), is a higher education institution specialising in contemporary dance. It is one of six affiliate institutions of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, and students can obtain a range of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, validated by the University of Kent. NSCD is an important anchor institution for the city, supporting Leeds key national role in the creative and performing arts.
- NSCD has been based on Chapeltown Road since its establishment in 1985, over which time it has repurposed and refurbished a number of buildings to accommodate its growing needs as an education provider and to maintain its status as a national centre of excellence. It also offers community provision for all ages and abilities. It has a unique presence and contribution to make to the vitality and sustainability of the Chapeltown Road area, contributing significantly to the local economy and driving forward a strong local creative identity which includes other world renowned organisations such as Carnival and RJC Dance.
- NCSD has an ambitious programme to grow its current course provision to support sustainability for the longer term and further raise its profile on a global stage. The NCSD is committed to Chapeltown as a location and would like to meet its expansion ambitions in the area as close as possible to its existing campus.

- Chapeltown Road Corridor has benefitted from significant regeneration investment over the last 15 years through heritage led refurbishment of properties, delivery of new affordable homes, highways infrastructure works and the completion of the Reginald Centre – a joint services one stop hub including job shop, library, health and other community services. There has been a visible uplift in the quality of the built environment, which has supported improvements in the local retail and services offer but some parts of the area continue to cause problems.
- The NSCD has taken considerable steps towards identifying a solution to its expansion needs in a way that would support its continued success as an internationally recognised education institution that has significant positive local impact in Chapeltown. Within the immediate area of the NCSD there are few obvious opportunities for the delivery of the new performance and teaching accommodation it requires. The NSCD has sought the Council's assistance in identifying a site though the Council has no land or assets of suitable size and the densely developed character of the surrounding area means there are few if any private sites available.
- The need for new accommodation is now becoming urgent to enable to enable NSCD to launch new courses by a target date of September 2022.
- This report sets out opportunities for the Council to work with the NCSD in securing its future in Chapeltown through acquisition of a suitable site and thereby supporting it as a key partner in the city's wider cultural ambitions up to and beyond 2023.

2. Best Council Plan Implications ([click here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- Culture - supporting NSCD will contribute to the aim of improving the quality of lives and growing the economy through cultural and creative activities. Additional studio and theatre provision will enable NSCD to offer more opportunities to support community and Leeds wide dance performances and events and contribute to the aim that culture can be created and experienced by anyone, enhancing the image of Leeds through expanding talent retention and artist development supported by Arts Council funded programming.
- Health & Well Being – supporting the sustainability of the NSCD will enable more people to engage in the performing arts contributing to healthy and active lifestyles.
- Child Friendly City – supporting the NCSD to expand will provide new education pathways that will contribute to improvements in educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes. It will also contribute to improving social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing for young people accessing provision at the school. The school's dance provision already includes more than 400 participant attendances per week contributing to the aim of making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in.
- Safe, Strong Communities – supporting the continued presence and contribution of NSCD to Chapeltown will assist in partners responding to local needs and building thriving, resilient communities through a sustainable range of local education and community provision as well help in promoting community respect and resilience.
- Inclusive Growth – Assisting the NSCD to expand will support local growth and investment, helping everyone benefit from the economy.

3. Resource Implications

- The Council is not currently proposing to commit any financial resources to the NCSD expansion plans. Officer time is being committed to working in a collaborative way with the school in identifying solutions required to meet its ambitions. Should further financial implications be raised through this work, a further report will be brought to Executive Board to follow up on the recommendations below.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- a) Confirm its support to Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) as a key anchor cultural institution in the city and in its plans for expansion;
- b) Confirm its support in assisting the NSCD to remain and meet its ambitions within the Chapeltown area, in recognition of its important role in the local community;
- c) Agree that the Council continues to work collaboratively with the NSCD in securing a site for expansion and if appropriate receive a further report at the earliest opportunity setting out whether there is a case for the Council to use its statutory powers in land assembly.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the important role the Northern School of Contemporary Dance plays as a cultural anchor institution in the city and collaborative work underway with the Council to secure its sustainability and growth as a key stakeholder based in Chapeltown.

2. Background information

- 2.1 The Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD), is a higher education institution specialising in contemporary dance. It is one of six affiliate institutions of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, and offers courses that chart pathways into the dance profession and link to pre-professional provision. The school has an Outstanding rating from Ofsted.
- 2.2 Courses range from a one year Certificate in Higher Education in Contemporary Dance as an access programme, through the BA (Hons) Dance – Contemporary to three strands of Masters level postgraduate provision – VERVE Performance Company, the Postgraduate Placement Scheme, supporting dancers placed in companies in the UK and Europe and the MA in Dance and Creative Enterprise, supporting self -producers, producers and artists wishing to evaluate and further develop their practice.
- 2.3 The school also offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts Learning and Teaching in Higher Education for professional teacher artists which is currently being delivered in London.
- 2.4 Currently there are around 250 full time students per year. In addition, there are approximately 250 weekly attenders of other classes offered for all ages and abilities. There are around 65 pre-professional students aged 13-19 attending a part

- time Centre for Advanced Training course for young talent drawn from Leeds and across the wider Yorkshire region (over 50% of places are supported by Department of Education funding on a means tested basis to widen participation).
- 2.5 For this year's intake there were 518 undergraduate applications for 90 places (6 applications for every place) and 194 postgraduate applications for 30 places (6.5 applications per place). Applications over the last three years have risen consistently by approximately 9% in both areas a rise in applications for the period 2020/21 is expected as new programmes begin to recruit.
- 2.6 NSCD provides access to education for a wide range of students, 22% come from low participation areas, 27% of students fall in two or more categories defined as widening participation, 21% of students are BAME and 27% of students have a disclosed disability. Overall 62% of students are eligible for financial support. However, overall NSCD's student retention and progression rates are excellent.
- 2.7 Approximately 70% of students come from the UK, 20% from the EU and 10% from other overseas locations. The diversity of the artistic student and staff community which is from many different backgrounds and countries of origin is highly valued by the school.
- 2.8 NSCD is an important anchor institution for the city, supporting Leeds key national role and reputation in the creative and performing arts. It is the only conservatoire level Higher Education provision for contemporary dance in the North of England and outside London so competes with institutions in London, Europe or other international providers.
- 2.9 NSCD was established in Chapeltown in 1985 in a Grade II Listed former synagogue on Chapeltown Road. NSCD own the freehold of the land after Leeds City Council gifted it to the school. Between 1987 and 1997, a series of phased developments were carried out which extended the site to include the adjacent Brandsby Lodge also a Grade II Listed Building. This resulted in the creation of four new dance studios and additional teaching facilities, and was completed with funding support from the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England and the Foundation for Sports and the Arts.
- 2.10 The buildings have been carefully maintained, with regular additional investment to maximise space usage in accommodating a growing work force and increased student support provision with the current estimated cost of rebuilding the facilities being approximately £15m. The school is continuing with an active programme of maintenance and repair and is currently planning to invest in an upgrade to the Riley Theatre to provide an improved audience welcome and experience, within the constraints placed on it by its Listed Building status.
- 2.11 The NCSD and the listed buildings it occupies has a prominent position within the Chapeltown Conservation Area, which has a high quality stock of late Victorian and early Edwardian buildings. This part of Chapeltown Road also provides a local centre with important retail and services. It has benefited from substantial regeneration investment in recent years including:

- Heritage led initiatives for conservation standard refurbishment projects. Funding bodies have included Heritage England, Heritage Lottery Fund and LEGI alongside investment from the Councils capital programme.
- Significant commitments from Unity Housing Association in establishing its offices, delivering the Chapeltown Enterprise Centre, the delivery of new

affordable housing and working with the Council to manage and sustain the Leeds Media Centre, which has received further recent commitments from the Council to support its development as creative workspace.

- Delivery of the Reginald Centre, a joint services one stop hub including job shop, library, health and other community services.
 - Highways investments including heritage standard public realm improvements, reconfiguration of parking, additional crossing points, south bound bus lane and a north bound cycle path.
- 2.12 There has been a highly visible uplift in the quality of the built environment, which has supported improvements in the local retail and services offer, with very few vacant properties. The area does however still have some prominent pockets of under-utilised land and neglected buildings in private ownership which are having a negative impact on the local centre and conservation area and detract from the improvements and wider regeneration benefits so far delivered along the Chapeltown Road corridor. If such sites continue in a neglected condition they will detract from the sustainability and impact of recent investments and undermine the social and economic potential the corridor can have locally and for the wider city.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 The NSCD has ambitious plans to build upon its status as a centre for excellence, which include expanding on the current offer of undergraduate courses, raising its international profile and extending its outreach programme to include more young people from marginalised communities to access new skills and career paths.
- 3.2 In the first phase of the School's long term expansion plans it proposes to launch four new courses, one in 2020 and three in 2022. To enable this there is a requirement for three additional studio spaces, social space and a lecture room.
- 3.3 The plan to add new courses will support the common core identity of the school, enriching and nurturing the creator/performer portfolio of existing programmes. These include Contemporary Urban Dance, Dance Education, Lighting and Stage Management programmes. Recruitment to these courses would increase the student body to around 340 students by 2022. The school aims to increase overseas student recruitment in this period and has secured American Federal loan status to support growth and interest from the USA on top of current recruitment from Singapore, China, Australia and other parts of the world. The school aims to give talented artists the training, freedom and encouragement to fulfil their creative and professional aspirations in successful careers.
- 3.4 Increasing the offer and range of opportunities would also allow the school to improve its competitiveness, financial stability and resilience ensuring a sustainable future through accessing a wider range of funding opportunities as well as increased income from additional students.
- 3.5 NSCD is currently in a strong and stable funding position, with healthy reserves and a substantial cash balance which has been set aside over a period of years to contribute towards the planned expansion of facilities. Its provision of intensive training and high levels of student contact hours also means it receives specialist top up funding from the Government. However it has been indicated that there may not be any further rounds of specialist funding after 2019/20. The School has planned ahead to accommodate this eventuality and remains financially stable in the short to medium term. However in order to secure a thriving and fully

sustainable future it needs to attract more international students and introduce new courses to carefully and incrementally increase overall student numbers.

- 3.6 The school has previously engaged the services of specialist consultants to investigate the potential to expand on its current footprint in order to meet the additional space requirements set out above. Due to the constraints of the site as well as extensions previously built a further programme of expansion on this site would be severely limited. The nature of the property market in this area also means that the underlying value of the existing NSCD site is substantially less than the value of the assets in which it has invested considerably over the years, thereby making a full relocation financially unviable. The school must therefore develop new facilities beyond its current footprint.
- 3.7 Through this work the school has considered and reaffirmed its commitment to Chapeltown. In the longer term the school is actively exploring the potential of an additional and complementary satellite provision in a city centre location, which would improve public accessibility and visibility for performance space, perhaps with synergies to other cultural facilities. However the importance of such a nationally and internationally renowned organisation to the Chapeltown area is recognised and along with RJC Dance and the Carnival there is a strong local artistic hub which elevates the creative social and economic worth of the area, resonating strongly with the Best Council Plan and the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy.
- 3.8 Furthermore as the school does not have in house accommodation the majority of students privately rent, shop and use services within the Chapeltown area. Although an in depth analysis of the net worth of this to the local economy has not been undertaken, modelling estimates indicate the local benefit could be up to £2m per annum.
- 3.9 Alongside consideration of on-site expansion and relocation outside the area a further option is to identify a site or building within Chapeltown for the school to purchase to realise its ambitions to expand and grow. This would realise the benefits of its long term investment and commitment to the area through its existing campus, ensure its course provision is effectively delivered in the same location as the current offer, reducing the travel requirements for students and staff, and enable the school to maintain efficiencies in its estate management
- 3.10 There is now a critical time pressure emerging in regard to identifying and securing an appropriate estates solution to meet the school's needs, which would enable new space provision to be available for teaching courses from 2021.
- 3.11 A comprehensive review of the council's portfolio of land and assets has been undertaken with NSCD and its architectural and property advisory team, but there are no viable options in regard size, location or current availability. The search was widened to look at local sites in private ownership and a site at 133-135 Chapeltown Road (Plan at Appendix 1) has been identified as having potential for the school's requirements. There are no other appropriate sites either in private or public ownership which are suitable for NSCD within Chapeltown at this time and therefore a need to move quickly if this singular opportunity is to be realised.
- 3.12 HM Land Registry, as at mid-December 2019, records the site being in the ownership of the same person of Leeds residence since 1998. This site has previously been in use as a petrol filling station and identified through the Council's Derelict and Nuisance Programme due to its neglected and overgrown appearance in a prominent position on a main arterial route, within both a local centre and conservation area. An enforcement notice under s215 of the Town and Country Planning Act was served on the owner in October 2010 due the adverse effect of

the site on the amenity of the local area, which resulted in a Court Order (plus costs) to return the site to a clean and tidy state and to erect appropriate fencing. Subsequently the land again fell into an over-grown appearance and in 2015 contributions from Chapel Allerton Ward Member funds alongside Derelict and Nuisance funding paid for local arts organisation East Street Arts to undertake visual improvements to the site boundary.

- 3.13 The site has previously secured planning permission in 2007 for a 3 storey block of 6 retail units with 12 flats (06/01043/FU) and in 2011 for one 4 storey block of 6 retail units with 16 flats (08/04840/FU). Neither planning approval was implemented. Planning applications in 2009 (09/00696/FU and 09/02703/FU) for a permanent and then temporary car wash were refused on the grounds of being detrimental to the conservation area. The site remains unused.
- 3.14 NSCD views the site of 133-135 Chapeltown Road as being ideally located and of sufficient size to accommodate new studios that could also convert into a studio theatre space to house student assessments, releasing the Riley Theatre for more use as a public facing venue for professional and community dance programming.
- 3.15 NSCD's advisors have made contact with the owners of the site and had two meetings with them and sought to progress proposals for its acquisition, with a written offer made based on the open market value of the site, subject to consideration of abnormal costs. The NSCD advises that it has not been able to establish any substantive dialogue or gain traction in negotiations.
- 3.16 In view of the critical and time-constrained nature of the NSCD's expansion requirements, the high social, cultural and economic value the school delivers to Chapeltown and the wider city and the negative impact of the site on the Chapeltown Road corridor that has been targeted for acquisition, it is proposed that the Council provides further support to the school towards securing meaningful engagement with the site owners, with a view to a negotiated acquisition.
- 3.17 Further to long standing efforts to seek improvements at the site, Executive Board is asked to support further direct contact being made with the site owners and to address continued concerns about the impact of the vacant site on local amenity, and to encourage dialogue with the NCSD in regard to its financial offer, as a means of securing improvements and supporting regeneration of the area.
- 3.18 The Council is not currently in a position to financially support an acquisition or to contribute to any development proposal that may come forward. Nevertheless the important contribution the NSCD makes to Chapeltown and the city justifies the Council using its influence and convening powers to affect a positive outcome through site assembly.
- 3.19 There is no current proposal that the site should be subject to compulsory purchase proceedings. The use of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) should only be considered an option of last resort where negotiations to purchase through private treaty cannot be progressed alongside other legal requirements as set out below. Executive Board is not being asked at this point in time to mandate the initiation of such statutory proceedings but rather note the current status of land acquisition negotiation.
- 3.20 The success of any proposed compulsory purchase action is highly dependent on demonstrating a compelling case in the public interest for the CPO. Human rights and equalities impacts would be key considerations, as would funding and viability, clarity in the specific acquisition powers being utilised, securing planning permission

for the site and being clear on the technical issues, the considerations of options, and other relevant matters such as having the appropriate development agreements in place that would secure the scheme for which compulsory action is proposed, as set out in all appropriate Government CPO guidance and associated legislation

- 3.21 Should there be insufficient progress towards securing commitment to development or improvement at the Chapeltown Road site, or further inability to progress any negotiations towards its acquisition by the NSCD, it is proposed that a further report is brought back to Executive Board to set out options in how the Council may support the NCSD's expansion ambitions and its ongoing positive contribution to the proper regeneration of Chapeltown.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 The Council and NSCD have worked closely on a strategy to help meet the school's expansion needs. The school regularly engages with Ward Members on its activities in Chapeltown. Ward Members have received regular briefings on the former garage site as part of the Council's Derelict and Nuisance Programme.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 There are no specific EDCI implications at this stage. An Equality screening form is provided at Appendix 2.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 Culture - supporting NSCD will contribute to the aim of improving the quality of lives and growing the economy through cultural and creative activities. Additional studio and theatre provision will enable NSCD to offer more opportunities to support community and Leeds wide dance performances and events and contribute to the aim that culture can be created and experienced by anyone, enhancing the image of Leeds through expanding talent retention and artist development supported by Arts Council funded programming.
- 4.3.2 Health & Well Being – supporting the sustainability of the NSCD will enable more people to engage in the performing arts contributing to healthy and active lifestyles.
- 4.3.3 Child Friendly City – supporting the NCSD to expand will provide new education pathways that will contribute to improvements in educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes. It will also contribute to improving social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing for young people accessing provision at the school. The school's dance provision already includes more than 400 participant attendances per week contributing to the aim of making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in.
- 4.3.4 Safe, Strong Communities – supporting the continued presence and contribution of NSCD to Chapeltown will assist in partners responding to local needs and building thriving, resilient communities through a sustainable range of local education and community provision as well help in promoting community respect and resilience.
- 4.3.5 Inclusive Growth – Assisting the NSCD to expand will support local growth and investment, helping everyone benefit from the economy.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.6 At this stage there are no specific implications for the Climate Change Emergency. However it is anticipated that should development of the brownfield site be achieved this would be an effective and sustainable approach to locating development and significant educational facilities in an existing local centre, close to residential areas and close to existing facilities of the NSCD, thereby mitigating against the need for additional unsustainable vehicular travel.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 There are no current resource issues for the Council in regard to the matters set out in this report.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 There are no current legal implications for the Council in regard to the matters set out in this report.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The principle risks in relation to the matters set out in this report are currently external to the Council but do have potential impacts on the broader well-being of Leeds residents and the inclusive growth of the city. Should the NSCD not secure an appropriate site in a timely way to enable its expansion and delivery of new courses, this may impact on its longer term sustainability and ability to access funding. Should a solution to the derelict appearance and underuse of the proposed site for acquisition not be found, this will continue to have a detrimental impact on the Chapeltown Road corridor.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The NSCD is an anchor cultural institution for the city and plays a hugely important role in supporting the vitality and cultural identity of the Chapeltown Road area. Its longer term sustainability can be secured by expansion of its current estate to enable the delivery of new courses that embed and develop its global reputation and deliver a range of inclusive growth benefits for the area.
- 5.2 The NCSD has affirmed its commitment to Chapeltown. The Council has a key role to play in working with the NCSD to support and enable its expansion locally and after an extensive search a privately owned site has been identified in close proximity to the existing campus. It is proposed that the Council supports the NSCD in its efforts to acquire the site to support the wider regeneration of the local area.

6. Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- a) Confirm its support to Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) as a key anchor cultural institution in the city and in its plans for expansion;
- b) Confirm its support in assisting the NSCD to remain and meet its ambitions within the Chapeltown area, in recognition of its important role in the local community;

- c) Agree that the Council continues to work collaboratively with the NSCD in securing a site for expansion and if appropriate receive a further report at the earliest opportunity setting out whether there is a case for the Council to use its statutory powers in land assembly.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.