

M<sup>c</sup>ADAM

THE ARTS COUNCIL  
Artist Campus | Dublin Port

FEEDBACK AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS  
RE FEASIBILITY DESIGN FROM SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

24 May 2024

# Introduction

The following document reports findings from a process of engagement with artists and arts practitioners, as part of a landmark project to develop an Artists Campus at the old Odlums Mills site in Dublin Port. The development of the Artists Campus project is being advanced by Dublin Port Company in a unique partnership with the Arts Council. It forms part of an overall masterplan for the Odlums Mills site being developed by Dublin Port Company.

## Engagement objective

The primary objective of this project was to introduce potential end-users and those with relevant expertise in terms of workspace provision to the site and to gather their feedback on the feasibility design developed by Grafton Architects. It was also considered that some of the feedback may inform or support the pending Preliminary Business Case to Government.

## Engagement process

65 artists and arts practitioners across a range of art form and arts practice areas as well as 32 Arts Council team members participated in ten focus groups from 26 March – 18 April. Each focus group included a tour of the relevant Odlum buildings led by a member of the design team from Grafton Architects who shared details the feasibility design for each space, followed by a semi-structured facilitation discussion at the Sub-Station led by this consultant.

# Focus group participants

## 19 March Arts Council

Deirdre Behan, Strategic Development  
Monica Corcoran, Strategic Development  
Toby Dennett, Strategic Development  
Imelda Dervin, Key Performing Arts  
Maretta Dillon, Film  
Joey Kavanagh, Communications  
Bea Kelleher, Theatre  
Ciara Joseph, HR Director  
Stephanie O'Callaghan, Arts Director  
Maeve O'Flaherty, Visual Arts  
Regina O'Shea, Festivals  
Sean O'Sullivan, Visual Arts  
Fionnuala Sweeney, Film / Architecture

## 26 March Performing arts

Paul Curley, Theatre-maker  
Linda Geraghty, Creative Producer, ex  
Meitheal  
Wayne Jordan, Theatre Director  
Tom Lane, Composer  
Lynette Moran, ANU, Live Collision,  
Field Arts  
Oisín O Cualain, Diatribe  
Maura O'Keeffe, Once Off Productions  
Observer: Adrian Colwell, ADI

## 27 March Visual arts

Sarah Browne, Artist  
Gerard Byrne, Artist  
Clare Langan, Artist  
Barbara Knezevic, Artist  
Kate Strain, Kunstverein Aughrim  
Felicity Clear, Independent Studios.

## 28 March Arts Council

Cathal Murphy Data Protection  
Doireann Ansbro, Public Policy  
Triona Ni Dhubhir, Festivals  
Eilis Lavelle, Visitor Visual Arts  
Lisa McLoughlin, Head of Dance  
Victoria O'Brien, Dance Advisor  
Danielle Lynch, Festivals  
Clare Power, Visual Arts  
Ben Mulligan, Collections  
Karen Hennessy, Aosdana  
Aideen McCole, Head of MDA  
Adam O'Keeffe, Circus Advisor  
Catherine Boothman, Creative Schools  
Eoin Dara, Collections  
Val Connor, Visual Arts Advisor  
Paul Flynn, Traditional Arts  
Mary Ellen Greene, Creative Schools  
Laura Ivers, Circus  
Aisling Nic Artain, Irish Language

# Focus group participants

## 9 April Performing Arts

Lina Andonovska, Musician  
Michelle Cahill, Creative Producer  
Dan Colley, Theatre Maker  
Miranda Driscoll, Creative Producer  
Tadgh Kinsella, Musician  
Luke Murphy, Choreographer  
Brian Rafferty, Irish Aerial Creation  
Centre

## 10 April Visual arts

Evelyn Broderick  
John Graham  
Cliona Harmey  
Caoimhe Kilfeather  
Isabel Nolan  
Niamh O'Malley  
Lorraine Tuck

## 11 April Workspace providers and others

Valerie Byrne, Cork City Council  
Siobhan Bourke, TV and Film producer  
Helen Carey, FireStation Artists' Studios  
Aoife Concannon, Improvised Music  
Company  
Sheila Creevey, Dance Ireland  
Loughlin Deegan, formerly The Lir  
Susan Early, Graphic Studio  
Vanessa Fielding, The Complex  
Clíodhna Shaffrey, Temple Bar Gallery  
and Studios  
Marc Mac Lochlainn Branar  
Gavin Murphy, Pallas Projects  
Chandrika Narayanan Mohan, Writer and  
Arts Consultant  
Niamh O'Donnell, Irish Theatre Institute

## 16 April Mix of those working in the arts

Maria Fleming, First Fortnight, NCFA  
Ian Maleney, writer/editor  
Helen Meany, arts consultant/ Ireland's  
National Dance Company  
Sara Murphy, art fabricator  
Mari Rampoozi, trapeze artist  
Jenny Traynor, former Director, Dance  
Limerick  
Nidhi Zak, poet

# Focus group participants

17 April

Mix of those working  
in the arts

David Bolger, CoisCéim;

Rayne Booth, visual arts curator and  
producer

Michelle Browne, visual artist

Elaine Hoey, artist and curator

Trish Lambe, Gallery of Photography

Gay McKeon, Na Piobairi Uileann / Music  
Generation

Lorraine Maye, Cork Midsummer Festival

Willie White, Dublin Theatre Festival

18 April

Artists with a disability  
or learning difference

Tobi Balogun, multidisciplinary arts,  
movement director, fashion designer

Louise Bruton, writer and arts and  
disability journalist

Cecelia Bullo, visual artist

Alan James Burns, curator and artist

Ali Clarke, movement/dance/circus

Sinead Dunne Finnegan, Run of the Mill  
Arts

Jody O'Neill, theatre, animation,  
multidisciplinary arts

Mark Smith, Actor, Run of the Mill Arts

Observer: Pádraig Naughton, Arts and  
Disability Ireland

ARTISTS CAMPUS

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# Context

# National policy context Project Ireland 2040



Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be".

## Vision

....a society in which every person counts, and in which all our people are served by the advances of science and technology – a creative and just society in which the human dimension is always paramount.

# To local context: Dublin Port Masterplan 2040



Dublin Port Company's development plan sets out how it will **'enhance the life of the Port-City and its citizens'**.

**'Its twin objectives are to provide port capacity to handle an annual cargo throughput of 7 million gross tonnes by 2040 while, at the same time, reintegrating Dublin Port with Dublin City'**.

**'This integration must be meaningful and enduring with a real recognition of the interdependence that exists between the port, the city, and its people'**.

From Arts Council / Dublin Port Company Memorandum of Understanding, August 2022



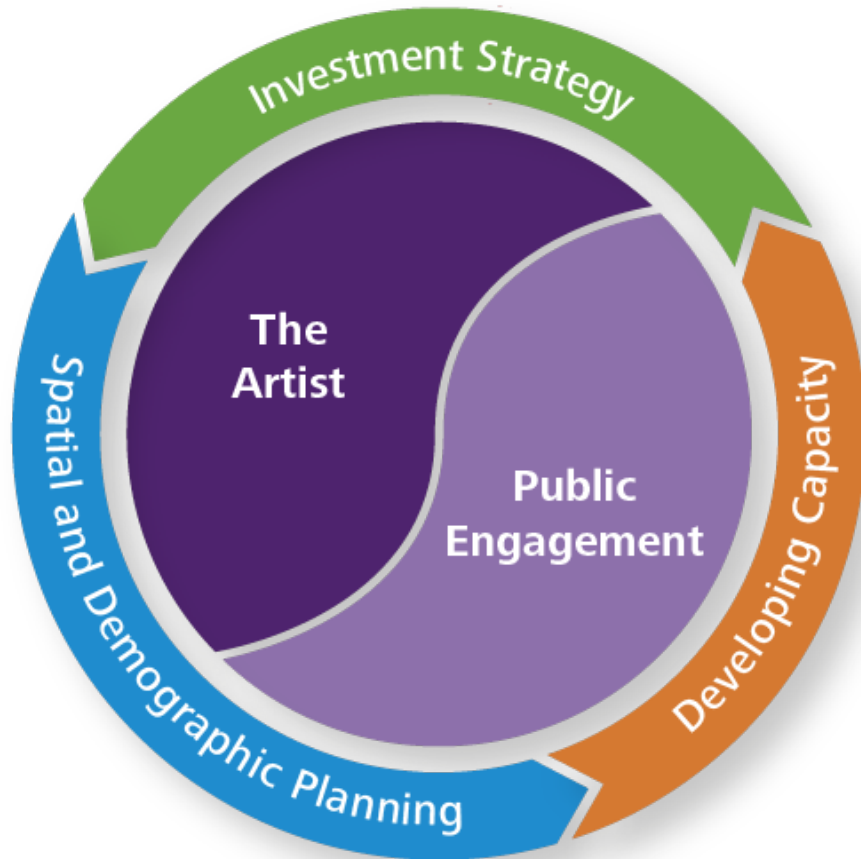
# Dublin Port Company Masterplan to Flour Mill Masterplan



“ Dublin Port Company has developed a vision, using culture as a key catalyst, for the adaptive re-use of (the Odlum Flour Mill) buildings, which would be made available and affordable to the citizens of Dublin. ”

From Grafton Architects Design Proposal and Architects Vision

# Arts Council | Making Great Art Work 2016 - 2025



**GOAL: Artists are supported to make excellent work which is enjoyed and valued**

We will ensure our investment strategy and our strategic partnerships create **an environment in which artists can make work of ambition and quality.**

We will attend especially to the conditions which facilitate the making of work - from conception to production to public presentation - and to the many contexts in which artists make work.

# Memorandum of Understanding | August 2022

**The Arts Council and Dublin Port Company  
working in partnership to deliver high standard,  
flexible and adaptable working space for artists**



## COMMON PURPOSE

... by working together, we can strengthen and secure a critical piece of national, cultural infrastructure within Dublin city.

# Dublin Port Company and the Arts Council MoU | Shared goals and principles

## Goals

- To achieve an **exemplar, flagship campus** to support artists in their work
- To invest in the Campus as an integral **part of a national infrastructure** of artists workspace
- To place artists and their creative actions **at the heart of the docklands**
- To embed the Campus into the **broader cultural life** of the overall **Flour Mill development**
- To ensure a flexible, agile space which will support experimentation and development within and across artforms and between artists and others.
- To provide an overarching **framework of values, principles and strategic priorities** that will guide and inform the project during all phases, from feasibility to completion
- To **secure capital investment** to realise the successful construction and fit out of the Campus based on the principals below
- To establish an **appropriate governance structure** to ensure the successful delivery of the Campus
- To **optimise our shared investment** to ensure we are applying resources in the most equitable and efficient way possible
- To effectively **integrate key principles** of this agreement into relevant **future planning / development strategies** of Arts Council & Dublin Port

## Principles

- A commitment to ensuring
- A determination that the returns on public investment in the Campus **benefit as many artists as possible**
  - A **diversity of artists** within the Campus, to include **diversity of artforms and practices**
  - A **non-for-profit ethos** to the Campus
  - A **diversity of contexts and types of participation**, most particularly social and cultural diversity
  - **Quality of provision** so that the **best possible artistic outcomes** are secured within the wider contexts of **cultural value and the public good**
  - The **sustainable repurposing and reuse** of existing buildings and heritage structures to achieve the desired accommodation needs to the Artist Campus
  - An **approach that avoids extravagance and indulgence** in the building design and the specification of materials, fixtures, and furnishing.

# Artists Campus | Feasibility Study by Grafton Architects

## Artists Campus at Odlums Flour Mills, Dublin Port

Feasibility Study Report



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# Overall sentiment

# Overall sentiment about the Artist Campus

The 'top of mind' impressions of the site, design and opportunity were very positive, with overall sentiment characterised by enthusiasm and anticipation

Q: What three words or ideas express your takeaway impression of the Artist Campus?

## Transformative opportunity

Ground-breaking, visionary, a game-changer, full of potential, possibilities, an exemplar, feasible, international.

## Enthusiasm

Exciting, fantastic, inspiring, brave, confident, essential, wonderful, amazing, freedom, welcoming.

## Inclusive

Community, communal, collaboration, integrated, social, democratic (place & art-form) multi-disciplinary.

## Scale of building and ambition

Big, height, impressive, ambitious, abundant, aesthetic-leading, exceeds expectations, rhizomatic, spatially exciting, streetwise.

## Literal

Artist-focused, modular, flexible, light, low carbon. eco-friendly, industrial, remote (*away from immediacy of city centre seen as a positive*).

## Queries and reservations

Remote, isolated, safety, access, too much open space, how will it be managed? who for? when will it happen?  
< 8% of impressions

FINDINGS

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# Positive perceptions



# Perception: a flagship opportunity

**Participants were impressed by the ‘flagship opportunity’ created by Dublin Port Company in partnership with the Arts Council**

- Participants commonly expressed their admiration for Dublin Port Company in seeking to create an Artists Campus as part of the Flour Mills development and overall masterplan for the Port. They were impressed by Dublin Port Company’s investment to date, by the partnership with the Arts Council and by the involvement of Grafton Architects.
- Participants praised the vision and ambition for the Campus and believed it to be credible and achievable. They celebrated the value placed on artists and the commitment to creating a workspace for artists, without compromise on quality or function.
- Everyone recognised the Artists Campus as a unique development, providing a much-needed facility that ‘does not exist elsewhere in Dublin’ or indeed in Ireland and which would create ‘game-changing’ opportunities for artists, for the area and for its local communities.
- Many participants had experience of working in other European cities where the docklands or other industrial areas have been transformed for social and cultural use. As such, they recognised the feasibility as well as cultural and civic potential of the plans for the Flour Mill.
- Participants commonly saw that this development has the potential to be ‘an exemplar within Ireland’ and to ‘act as a catalyst’ for other such developments nationally. Many also looked forward to the Artists Campus attracting international attention and, perhaps, international artists.

## In participants own words

*This kind of partnership is a huge step forward and very positive. It is making something unique and essential happen.*

*The plans are very assured, there is a real vision and confidence here*

*This could be a national flagship project that will provide the inspiration and influence for others*

*... an invaluable infrastructural investment, which could expand artists practices over generations.*

# Perception: a transformative project

## Participants believed the Artists Campus would be 'transformative' for artists and for art in Ireland

- Participants generally considered the Campus to be 'transformative', not only in terms of substantially increasing workspace capacity in the city but also in terms of advancing arts practice.
- They saw the Campus enabling work of scale and ambition, 'unrealisable elsewhere'. They believed it would inspire new ways of working and collaborations across practices.
- The multi-disciplinary nature of the campus was applauded. It was seen to be a further distinguishing, and highly valuable aspect of the development and to be future-focused, consonant with the evolution of arts practice.
- The aim to not only build a physical space but also to build a community of artists and practitioners, was also highly valued and thought to be critical to the success of the project.

## In participants own words

*Spaces define and confine what we make. (The Campus) holds the potential for work to explode!*

*It's going to be so valuable – and unique - to have different artforms cheek by jowl at work*

*The ambition of the campus matches our ambition. It will allow us to fulfil our potential for international excellence.*

*It's a spectacular space for artists to dream and the potential to play is phenomenal*

# Perception: an inspiring location

**Participants really liked the authenticity of the Dublin Port location and the buildings, finding them ‘evocative’ and ‘imaginatively fresh’.**

**Some wondered about future transport links and ‘after-dark’ working**

- The location of the Artists Campus on the Odlums Mill site in Dublin Port was generally found to be ‘full of creative possibilities.’
- For most, Dublin Port was known but unknown. The area was recognised as an essential part of Dublin but was unfamiliar to nearly everyone apart from small number of artists and organisations who had worked with Dublin Port Company or in the area previously.
- Participants were generally interested and excited to be in the port area and were fascinated by its history, current activity and future plans for the Mill site.
- They were very keen to make connections within the communities in and around the port itself and had an affinity with Dublin Port Company’s aim of connecting back to the city itself.
- Participants liked that the Mill had itself been a place of work – and would continue to be so in a different guise.
- They enjoyed many of the original features of the buildings and were pleased that, as far as possible, many would be retained and even used, but now for a different purpose. The industrial aesthetic suited their sensibility.
- Some considered the Odlums Mills site as ‘surprisingly close’ to the city. Others found it ‘a little remote’ but liked ‘the sense of remove’. Some participants queried plans in relation to public transport and private parking facilities. Some also raised some concerns about safety after dark, given the plans for the Campus to be a 24/7 facility.

## In participants own words

*There is a real sense of purpose to the location and the buildings which is exciting and inspiring.*

*It's very positive that the original architecture is respected and maintained.*

*The location is great. It's central and, very practically, will be easy for transporting and loading equipment. It's accessible.*

*It's easy to visualise the success of the artists' campus here. It feels like a good fit for the area and for artists.*

# Perception: a welcome approach

## Participants valued the openness of the approach taken by Dublin Port Company, the Arts Council and Grafton Architects

- Everyone was highly appreciative of the opportunity to be introduced to the site and to be walked and talked through the feasibility design.
- They valued the 'refreshing' nature and tone of the 'conversation' facilitated by the Arts Council and Dublin Port Company, who attended most of the tours. Participants also commended the generosity and openness of approach evidenced by Grafton Architects on the tour.
- In general, participants felt there was respect and 'empathy' for artists and for the process of making art.
- Dublin Port Company and the Arts Council were urged to continue such open engagement with potential end users.
- The partner organisations and Grafton Architects were also encouraged to engage with those expert in their field re the specialist fit-out of spaces.

## In participants own words

*It is very encouraging to be invited to contribute views at this early stage.*

*The articulation of Dublin Port Company's vision and understanding of our needs is impressive.*

*Please continue to talk with us. We want to be involved in decision-making.*

*It's fantastic to feel respected and trusted in this development.*



# Headline view of strengths re feasibility design

**Participants liked many aspects of the feasibility design but singled out the following for mention**

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Grafton Architects' design aesthetic, their 'response to the original architecture', attention to detail

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The commitment to use of sustainable materials and consideration of the campus's eco credentials.

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The inclusion of a fabrication space

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The generosity of design of the studio spaces

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Courtyard studios and communal area

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The majority of the building being on a horizontal plane with accessibility a priority consideration

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Entrance canopy and practical entrance/ exit routes for equipment

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24/7 access

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The consideration re light, blackout facility. heat, sound proofing

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Mezzanine

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Integration of studio spaces alongside technical facilities

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Outdoor space for street art, spectacle and music

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The scale and possibilities of the Provender Mill and Animal Feed Store

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Design conducive to collaboration and networking, offering scope for 'new communities of practice'. '

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Aspects for further consideration

# Headline views of what needs further consideration

In headline, participants judged the following aspects of the site or feasibility design to merit further consideration

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Need to consider and be clear about whether the campus is a **public or private space** and **how campus interacts** with other spaces on the site and in the Port and with local communities

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**Workspaces need to be better defined.** One size does not fit all practices.

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Campus was seen to be 'weighted towards the visual arts' but may need **more consideration of other forms of practice** e.g. participatory arts.

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The spine and the **shared spaces considered 'too generous'** and unlikely to work as envisaged.

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Features on the campus that ensure its **inclusivity and accessibility**, including childcare provision

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Ensuring the largest spaces are **invitational rather than intimidating**

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**More variety in size of spaces**

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**More storage!**

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.Need better understanding of what is possible and optimum in the **fabrication space** e.g. height may be restrictive, more wall space preferred.

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**More thought needed re ancillary spaces** e.g. toilets, showers, discrete meeting rooms, office spaces, pods.

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**Greening of the campus** with planting and the creation of attractive outside spaces

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**Soundproofing** and acoustic calibration in and between workspaces essential.

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**Transport**, parking, **safety** at night-time

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## FINDINGS

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### Thinking about the campus

- Public or private
- Access and accessibility
- Building a community and a positive environment

# Thinking about the campus as a public or private space

**Most, but not all, participants considered the campus to be a dedicated private workspace, open to the public by invitation**

**But also, a part of the community, not *apart from the community***

- Participants consistently queried the private v public-facing purpose of the campus and were aware that clarity about this role was necessary to inform design decisions.
- Some celebrated having a safe, dedicated workspace for artists. Others saw the potential of spaces within the campus as venues for public-facing events.
- Most participants liked and were motivated by the idea that the campus was a private workspace, to which the public may be invited e.g. for signature events on the cultural calendar such as Culture Night, Open House Dublin, or for work-in-progress showings.
- It was also anticipated that artists working in participatory or socially engaged practice will want to engage with non-arts professionals on the campus. It was considered that the campus should support such practice and welcome members of the public as artists or co-creators.
- Many participants were keen to stress the importance of the campus being understood and integrated within the locale and with local communities, including that within Dublin Port itself. It was considered that a programme of engagement begin as soon as appropriate to introduce the campus and build mutually supportive relationships.

# Key findings: access and accessibility

**Those developing and designing the campus were urged to think carefully and act ambitiously to make it fully accessible**

Don't just abide by statutory requirements, aim to lead by example

- Access to and the accessibility of the campus were common themes in all feedback.
- While some found the location of the campus 'central', others looked forward to improved public transport links and queried bike and car parking and street lighting.
- The ambition for secure access to the site on a 24/7 basis was strongly approved. Grafton were encouraged to continue to take account of the need to facilitate the movement of large-scale pieces into and within the campus.

In aiming to make the campus fully accessible, Grafton, Dublin Port and The Arts Council were urged to 'think beyond physical disability' and to consider the following:

- The provision of quiet spaces, perhaps 'movable pods on wheels'
- Wayfinding within the building
- Controllable lighting levels
- More than one lift (so if one breaks down the other remains useable)
- Avoid platform lifts
- Sliding sensor doors, rather than touch buttons
- In terms of equity, have no inaccessible spaces i.e. mezzanines
- Appropriate number of accessible toilets

# Thinking about the campus as a community

**Participants looked forward to a positive campus community and suggested the culture and conditions necessary for its success**

- Participants liked the Arts Council's intention not only to create a physical infrastructure to support artists in the making of work but also to create an environment and a community in which they may thrive.
- They aspired to it being multi-generational, inclusive of people and of artform and arts practice.
- As such, a number of people spoke of additional facilities such as a creche and of creating a pet-friendly space and cautioned about the reliance on communal spaces to create community.
- It was noted that to build a sense of community and create a positive culture takes time, needs cultivation and on-going management. It was also pointed out that amidst a variety of tenures, some more enduring tenancies or residencies will need to be offered to artists and organisations if a community is to be achieved.
- The well-being of people at work was frequently mentioned. Participants believed that the campus should offer artists and arts practitioners warmth, comfort, safety, access to green spaces within and outside the building and have a positive food culture with excellent kitchen or catering facilities.
- The growing number of artists engaged in environmental practices was noted and it was recommended that provision is made for a garden or other space where such work may take place.

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Thinking about 'the spine'





# Thinking about the 'spine'

Participants shared the view that the 'spine' needs to be reconsidered, believing it will not be used as currently envisaged

If the area doesn't have a solid purpose, it will have an 'airport vibe'

- The idea of the 'spine' connecting the campus was considered 'philosophically great'. Its potential to be 'an inviting community space', to support networking and the bringing together of people and practices was recognised.
- However, the spine was generally viewed as 'too generous' and, citing experience of other studios and workspaces with communal areas, participants did not believe it would work as envisaged. They considered it would be 'underutilised' or become vacant space.
- Participants explained their work practices tend to stay behind the closed door of a studio or rehearsal room and anticipated meetings being held there. As such, they wondered 'if the extent of the communal space was necessary' for the resident population of the campus.
- Grafton were urged to 'keep the flow' of the spine, to 'make it slimmer' and to 'treat it differently' so that it may better support campus

residents and to attract non-resident artists and practitioners.

Participants put forward the following suggestions to utilise the space currently afforded to the spine :

- Locate campus administration and support offices there e.g. like a nurses' station.
- Provide more formal hot-desking facilities including e.g. kiosks.
- Provide bookable meeting rooms
- Use it to provide additional storage per studio/workspace
- Expand footprint of studios into the spine
- Treat the spine as three distinct spaces rather than one, creating zones for formal working and informal gathering.

In reconsidering the spine, some participants also cautioned that care is taken to consider and allow for the movement of equipment through the campus.

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# Thinking about the studios / workspaces



# Thinking re the definition of spaces

**While participants applauded the idea of flexible, multi-functional spaces they commonly saw the need for greater definition of spaces and zoning of the campus to create an optimum work environment**

- The engagement with practitioners across art forms confirmed the need for a variety of workspaces in terms of size, shape, light and acoustics, floor and wall covering and tenure (which is outside the scope of this work).
- It was commonly felt that the impetus to create flexible, multi-functional spaces, whilst well-intentioned, might ultimately compromise the efficacy of spaces, making them sub-optimal for artists across all disciplines.
- 'One size does not fit all' was a common refrain.
- From experience e.g. in Project Arts Centre and elsewhere, spaces that are meant to exist multi-functionally rarely do and will take on their easiest or most obvious incarnation.
- Participants recommended that the campus itself be considered multi-functional, and while offering some 'generalist', multi-functional spaces also have more 'specialist' workspaces that are defined and equipped to meet the needs of a specific art form e.g. sprung floors for dance .
- The Arts Council was urged to make what was acknowledged as being difficult decisions in this regard, including a decision re the use of the Animal Feed Store whose concept was judged to be less well thought out.
- It was understood that this development responds to an evidenced deficit of artists' studios, in particular. However, participants from other disciplines spoke of similar challenges citing the lack of mid-scale rehearsal spaces and of large-scale spaces for opera, aerial and spectacle work.
- At the same time as encouraging greater definition of spaces, in a tricky binary participants also encouraged the Arts Council to leave scope for the campus, and some spaces within it, to evolve and find their use.

# Thinking re size of studios / workspaces

## Increased options re size of studios / workspaces sought

- The feasibility design currently embraces 45 studios / workspaces (discounting the Provender Mill, Animal Feed Store, 'Spine space' and specialist rooms).
- There are 20 large studios / workspaces of approx. 50m<sup>2</sup>, 4 medium of 26- 32sq<sup>2</sup> and 21 small studios / workspaces of 15m<sup>2</sup>.
- In general, the size and the design of the studios / workspaces was very well received, particularly by visual artists or those with a solo, small group practice. However, they were not considered big enough for the performing arts, unless for 'early stage' or developmental work.
- There was demand from both visual and performance artists for a 100m<sup>2</sup> studio or workspace (the equivalent of a medium-sized dance studio).
- One group determined the optimum studio / workspace offering to encompass spaces of 100m<sup>2</sup>, 50m<sup>2</sup>, 30m<sup>2</sup>, 15m<sup>2</sup>, and smaller office space.
- There was a degree of scepticism about wall removal, to expand / contract the studios/ workspaces. In participants experience, once a space is established in one form it tends to gain a permanence as such.
- One participant, though in favour of a sustainable product, had had an unsatisfactory experience of building with hemp and expressed caution.

# Thinking re features of the studios

**There was a mix of views about other features of the studios notably re the mezzanine, door placement and storage**

- The mezzanine feature divided opinion. Some saw it as a valuable addition to the studio space, for others it was unnecessary.
- With storage already an issue on site, some participants wondered where it would be stored if not required.
- Artists with a disability expressed their preference that there would be no inaccessible spaces as a matter of principle and fair practice on the campus.
- Other features that provoked comment included the windows to the courtyard. Artists did not want to be 'on display' and some were keen to limit the glazing there to create a corner in the studio.
- A number of artists preferred the idea of a door to the courtyard rather than to the internal spine.
- Participants were keen to consider how the height of the studios may be used to best advantage. Most did not need or see any advantage to the height in the spaces. Some wondered about its utilisation for additional workspace or for storage, perhaps being achieved on a pulley system.
- Other comments concerned details in relation to the provision of a Belfast sink, the number and placement of sockets, storage, floor / wall materials and a request for manually opening windows.

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Thinking about the Provender Mill,  
Animal Feed Store and third 'maybe' space



# Thinking about the Provender Mill

**Participants were divided in their ambitions for this 'fabulous' space: keep it as a unique singular space or maximise the opportunity it affords and create two spaces**

- The Provender Mill wowed all participants as a truly unique space. Most recognised its outstanding potential as a rehearsal or development space primarily for the performing arts.
- The height of the space and load bearing roof was seen to offer significant scope for aerial, circus and spectacle work, though the space was considered not wide enough for trapeze work.
- Participants advised that the acoustics of the space be very carefully considered to ensure its efficacy for the performing arts.
- Some participants, including those from the performing arts, urged consideration of dividing the space. They proposed either a

retractable floor at mid-level or splitting the space one-third/ two-thirds with the bigger space towards the roof and the ground floor space either as a second performance space, for storage or for support services.

- It was noted that, for the Provender Mill to work effectively as a space serving the performing arts, it would need appropriate technical capabilities, loading doors, proximate toilets and shower facilities as well as space for other production supports such as admin, costume etc.

# Thinking about the Animal Food Store

Participants were very impressed by Animal Feed Store but perhaps less sure about how it may best be used

- Participants recognised the Animal Feed Store as another exceptional space though slightly eclipsed by the Provender Mill.
- They picked up on the ambiguity of the design render and were a little unclear about its relationship to the rest of the Artists Campus and to the wider Odlums site. Also, if it was a public or private space.
- Some participants wished to retain the five bays of the structure, whilst others, particularly those involved in street art, were excited about the structured outside space as both a rehearsal and public arena.
- A few participants considered the possibilities of the space for the making or display of large scale visual art work.
- However, given the scale of the space, the proximity to and potential interplay between the Provender Mill and the Animal Feed Store, most participants anticipated that it would best function as a space to support the performing arts and be so equipped e.g. with sprung floor.



# Thinking about the 'maybe' space

Mixed views on the third 'maybe' space with some particularly enthusiastic that it becomes the 'beating heart' of the campus

- Some participants enjoyed the ambiguity of this space and the flexibility of its function. However, most were of the view that its use as part of the spine or as dedicated space should be better determined.
- Two proposals re the use of the space gained currency:
  - 1) As the 'kitchen' or communal eating area with access to the external and 'internal' courtyard. This idea may accommodate the continued flow through the building.
  - 2) As a dedicated 'locked off' workshop or project room where groups may be engaged.

Both propositions in different ways lay claim to the space as the heart of the campus.

Having a dedicated workshop or project space was considered to be essential within the campus to accommodate socially engaged and community practice.



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# Thinking about the specialist spaces and fabrication space

# Thinking about the specialist spaces

**Participants considered it prudent to hold decisions on the nature of the specialist spaces until nearer the completion date**

- Participants were asked to consider the relevance of the specialist spaces or facilities currently proposed for the campus.
- It was generally agreed that the any specialist service offered on the campus needed to be of a standard that at least matched if not exceeded that elsewhere, and preferably complemented or enhanced (rather than duplicating) existing services.
- There were conflicting views about the most appropriate services to have on site.
- However, all agreed that, if possible, the development of the campus proceeds with the specialist spaces held within the design, but their actual use determined at a late stage within the process. This would ensure that the campus offers the most up-to-date and most needed additional services, equipped with the latest technology.
- All participants noted that specialist staff will be needed to support the effective function of the specialist spaces,

# Thinking about the fabrication space

**The inclusion of a fabrication space was very positively received, however clarity is needed about what will be in and out of scope for this space, to manage expectations**

- Participants were surprised and ‘excited’ to learn that the campus would include a fabrication space. This was said to be ‘badly needed’ in the city.
- Participants liked the location. A number expressed the preference for additional wall space, rather than the glazing; others wondered could the space for fabrication be bigger.
- Some participants found the height of the space ‘probably adequate’, others too low.
- Participants spoke of digital fabrication, which was deemed to be important to include, but which would need to be housed elsewhere on the campus
- To manage expectations and optimise the opportunity, participants recommended an audit of what was currently available elsewhere and consideration of what best be ‘fit-for-purpose’ in the space available.

FINDINGS

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# Thinking about ancillary functions

# Thinking about the ancillary functions

**Participants paid close attention to ancillary functions considering them to be a crucial to get right and key to the success of the campus**

- While the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the campus e.g. toilets, showers, storage, kitchen facilities did not feature significantly on the tour of the site, they were a priority consideration for participants and seen to be critical to the success of the campus.
- Participants asked for more toilets at either end of the campus and consideration for toilets within studios for artists with a disability.
- The need for showers proximate to any potential dance or performance rehearsal space was also considered essential.
- Storage was a recurring theme of the discussions and a particular challenge for visual artists. Some participants expressed a preference for individual storage solutions, within or beyond a studio, and recognised the need for larger communal storage too e.g. sets, props etc. Storage solutions offered included use of the excess space within the spine, the height within the studio and through securing the use of another building with the Port. In ideal circumstances, some storage would be climate controlled.
- The creation of an attractive, well equipped kitchen area or areas or canteen was also a priority for participants. Many viewed it as having the potential to be ‘the hub at the heart’ of the campus.



## FINDINGS

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# Other models referenced during the engagement process

# References

Here East

<https://hereeast.com>

Somerset House

<https://www.somersethouse.org.uk>

Mass MoCA

<https://massmoca.org>

Toynbee Studios, London

<https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/toynbee-studios/>

La Central de Circ Barcelona

<https://lacentraldelcirc.cat/en/>

The Shed New York

<https://www.hudsonyardsnewyork.com/discover/shed>

La Grainerie Toulouse

<https://la-grainerie.net>

The Factory, Manchester

<https://factoryinternational.org>

Mind the Gap, Bradford

<https://www.mind-the-gap.org.uk>

LX Factory, Lisbon

<https://lxfactory.com/en/lx-factory/>

Custard Factory, Birmingham

<https://www.digbeth.com/workspaces/custard-factory>

AND FINALLY

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# Some final considerations

# Priority considerations for Grafton Architects

1. Reconsider the spine
2. Locate the heart of the campus (a focal point around food?)
3. Offer an increased variety of size of studios / workspaces
4. Ensure ease of movement of 'goods' as well as people through the campus
5. Consider how the height in the studios may best be used
6. Relook at ancillary functions across the campus – and consider storage solutions
7. Keep up the good work and engagement with the sector.

# Priority considerations for Dublin Port Company and the Arts Council

1. Maintain the quality and integrity of the development process with informed and transparent decision-making and continued engagement with the arts sector.
2. Don't compromise on the ambition or pursuit of excellence in relation to the development. Lead by example in terms of accessibility.
3. Clarify the vision for and purpose of the campus, particularly in relation to its private/public dynamic.
4. Make 'confident' decisions re the workspaces. Assign specific use as well as pursuing flexibility of use. Don't let design be dictated by numbers. Aim to make the campus the best it can be *as well as* the most it can be.
5. Understand the 'biological' and rhizomatic' nature of a community. Ensure the campus will support 'layers' of age, stage, areas of work, tenancies with roots that spread out laterally to engage and integrate with Dublin Port's communities.
6. Make real the partnership and start a process of engagement with an Artist in Residence from 2025.

# Dublin Port Company, the Arts Council and participants ‘on the same page’

## Goals

- To achieve an **exemplar, flagship campus** to support artists in their work
- To invest in the Campus as an integral **part of a national infrastructure** of artists workspace
- To place artists and their creative actions **at the heart of the docklands**
- To embed the Campus into the **broader cultural life** of the overall **Flour Mill development**
- To ensure a flexible, agile space which will **support experimentation and development within and across artforms and between artists and others.**
- To provide an overarching **framework of values, principles and strategic priorities** that will guide and inform the project during all phases, from feasibility to completion
- To **secure capital investment** to realise the successful construction and fit out of the Campus based on the principals below
- To establish an **appropriate governance structure** to ensure the successful delivery of the Campus
- To **optimise our shared investment** to ensure we are applying resources in the most equitable and efficient way possible
- To effectively **integrate key principles** of this agreement into relevant **future planning / development strategies** of Arts Council & Dublin Port

## Principals

- A commitment to ensuring
- A determination that the returns on public investment in the Campus **benefit as many artists as possible**
  - A **diversity of artists** within the Campus, to include **diversity of artforms and practices**
  - A **non-for-profit ethos** to the Campus
  - A **diversity of contexts and types of participation**, most particularly social and cultural diversity
  - **Quality of provision** so that the **best possible artistic outcomes** are secured within the wider contexts of **cultural value and the public good**
  - The **sustainable repurposing and reuse** of existing buildings and heritage structures to achieve the desired accommodation needs to the Artist Campus
  - An **approach that avoids extravagance and indulgence** in the building design and the specification of materials, fixtures, and furnishing.

THANK YOU...

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