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## Introduction

**Regeneration of Dover Town Centre is a strategic priority of the Council as set out by the adopted Corporate Plan, Economic Growth Strategy and Tourism Strategy, as well as the emerging Local Plan.**



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In July 2020 Dover District Council applied to the Future High Street Fund for £3.2m to build a Creative Centre and undertake improvements to the A20 underpass. The objective of this government funding stream is 'to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves experience and ensures future sustainability'.



In May 2021 Dover District Council were awarded a grant of £3.2m and Dover District Council has committed a further £1.7m of match funding to provide a total budget of £4.9m to deliver this project.



In support of this Dover has been given Priority Status by the Arts Council in its "Let's Create" strategy. An aspirational strategy aiming to provide communities in every corner of the country with more opportunities to enjoy culture and celebrate greatness of every kind.

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## Lifecycle of Bench Street



1900 | Aerial Photo, 1932.  
© Britain from Above



Radical overhaul of the site and its adjacencies.  
North of the site cleared, new single building  
to NE. Construction of the Discovery Centre  
underway. York St./A20 road upgrades.  
River Dour Revealed.  
Historic Aerial Photo, 1990.  
© Google Earth



Pedestrianisation of  
Bench Street and underpass  
created. Demolition of building NE for car  
park. Demolition of tower block replaced  
with warehouse shopping and car parking.  
Aerial Photo, 2022.  
© Google Earth



1900 | Harts c1910-20.



Harts c1940-50s.  
© Dover District Council



Former Castle Amusements 2023.



Centurion House - built in 1976 and  
demolished in 2015.



Bench Street towards the A20. 2023.

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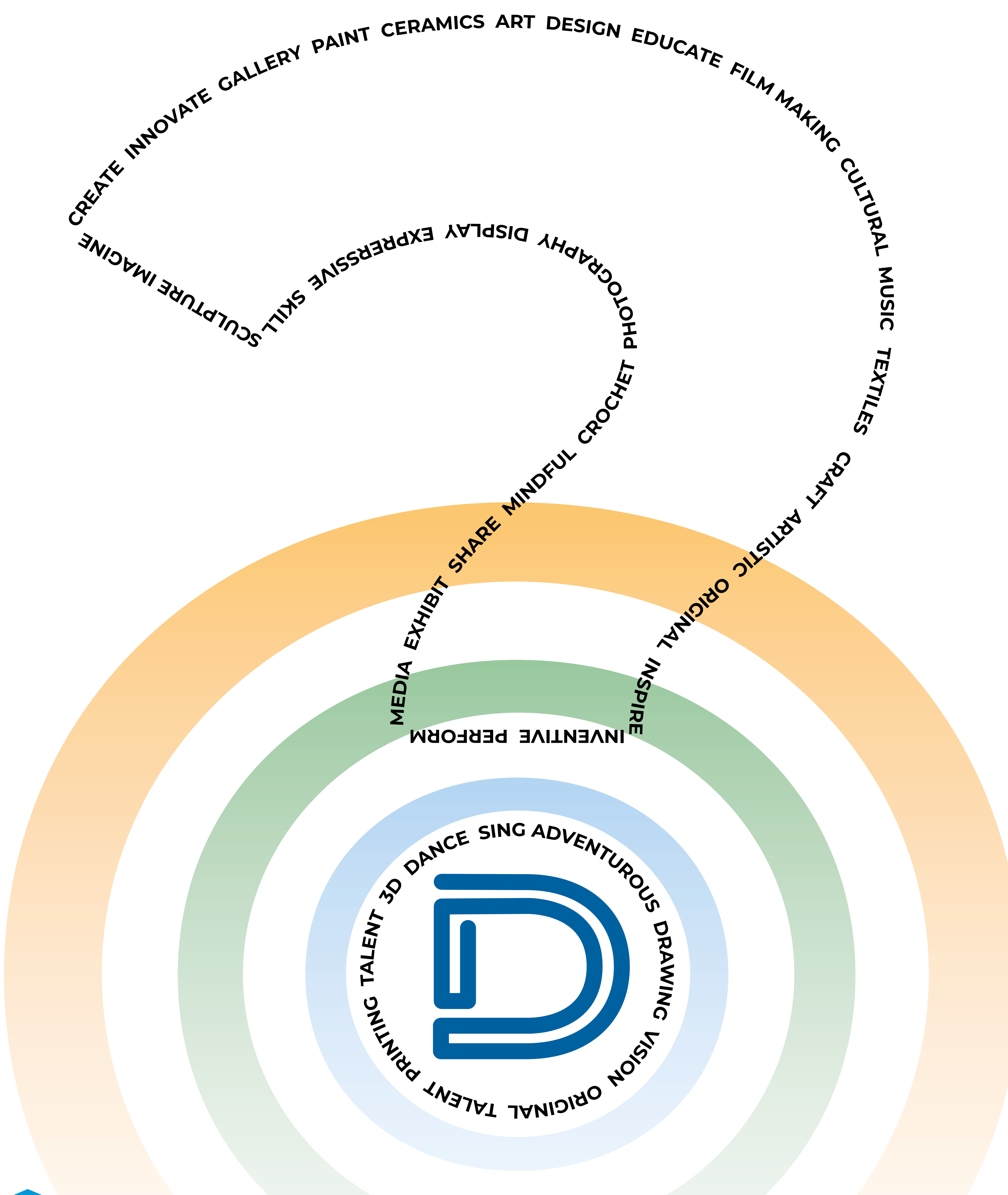




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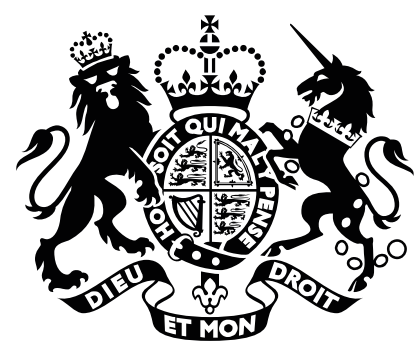


# What does Creative mean to you?



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## Findings from previous engagement

Results from earlier engagement in 2021 with the Creative sector in Dover indicated the Creative Centre should provide the following accommodation:

- Main Flexible Space – for exhibitions, functions, gallery, meetings, and presentations.
- Studio/making spaces on the first floor (where applicable)
- Circulation/stairs to upper floors
- Retail
- Café
- Kitchen with preparation space and store
- W/Cs
- Buggy store
- Equipment store

Our Stakeholders asked us to think about the following design considerations:

- Glazed street frontage to maximise view in and out of the space
- Equipment required to support the activities in the space
- Easily moveable display mountings for multi-purpose use of the space
- Easily stacking furniture
- Suitable lighting, Wi-Fi, I.T. and audio-visual equipment
- Maximise use of natural light
- Attractive interesting aspect to the northern end of the building to attract visitors from surrounding areas
- Maximise links to the Bench Street frontage
- Control of noise breakout to residential areas (where applicable)

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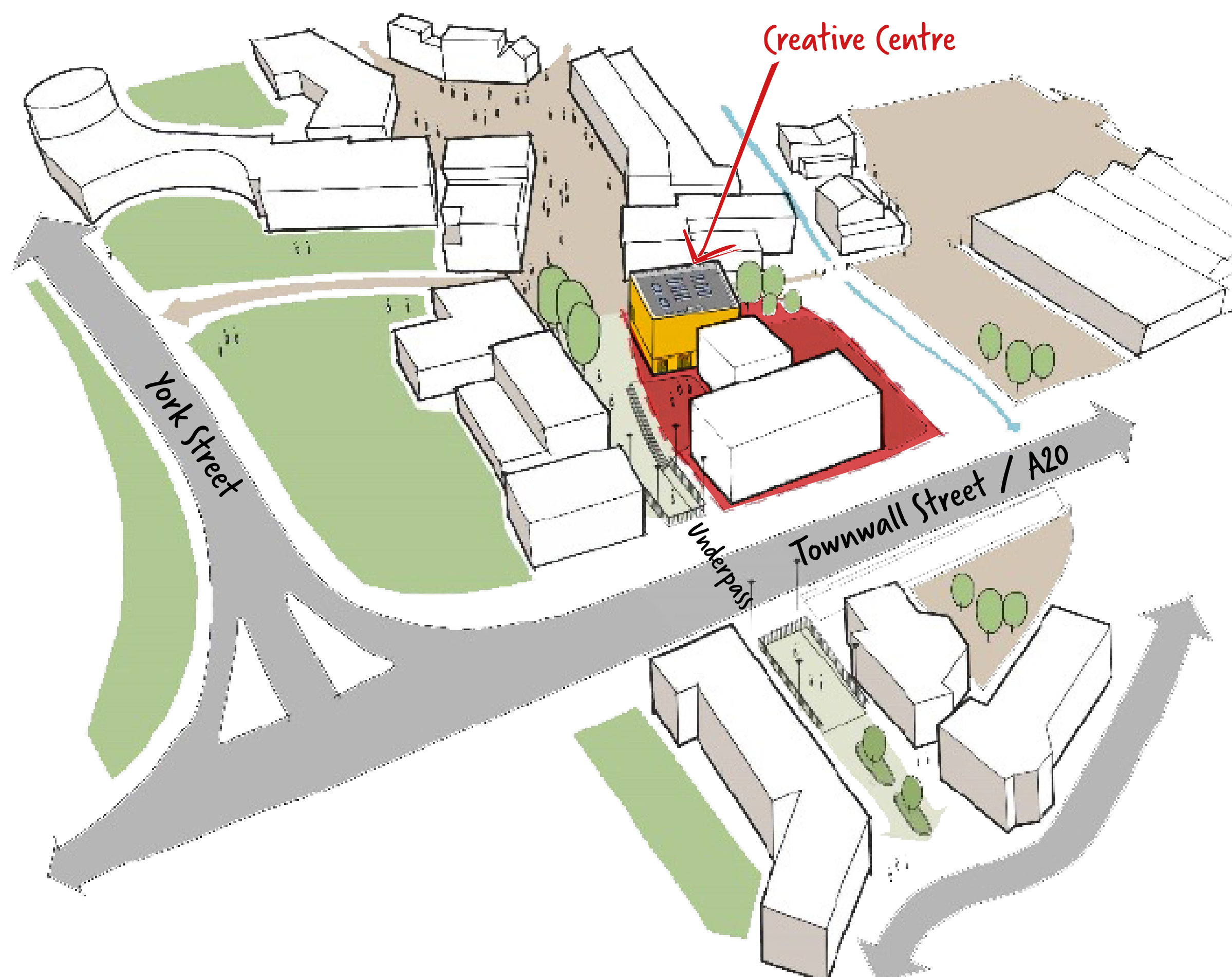
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## Overview



## Proposed Site View



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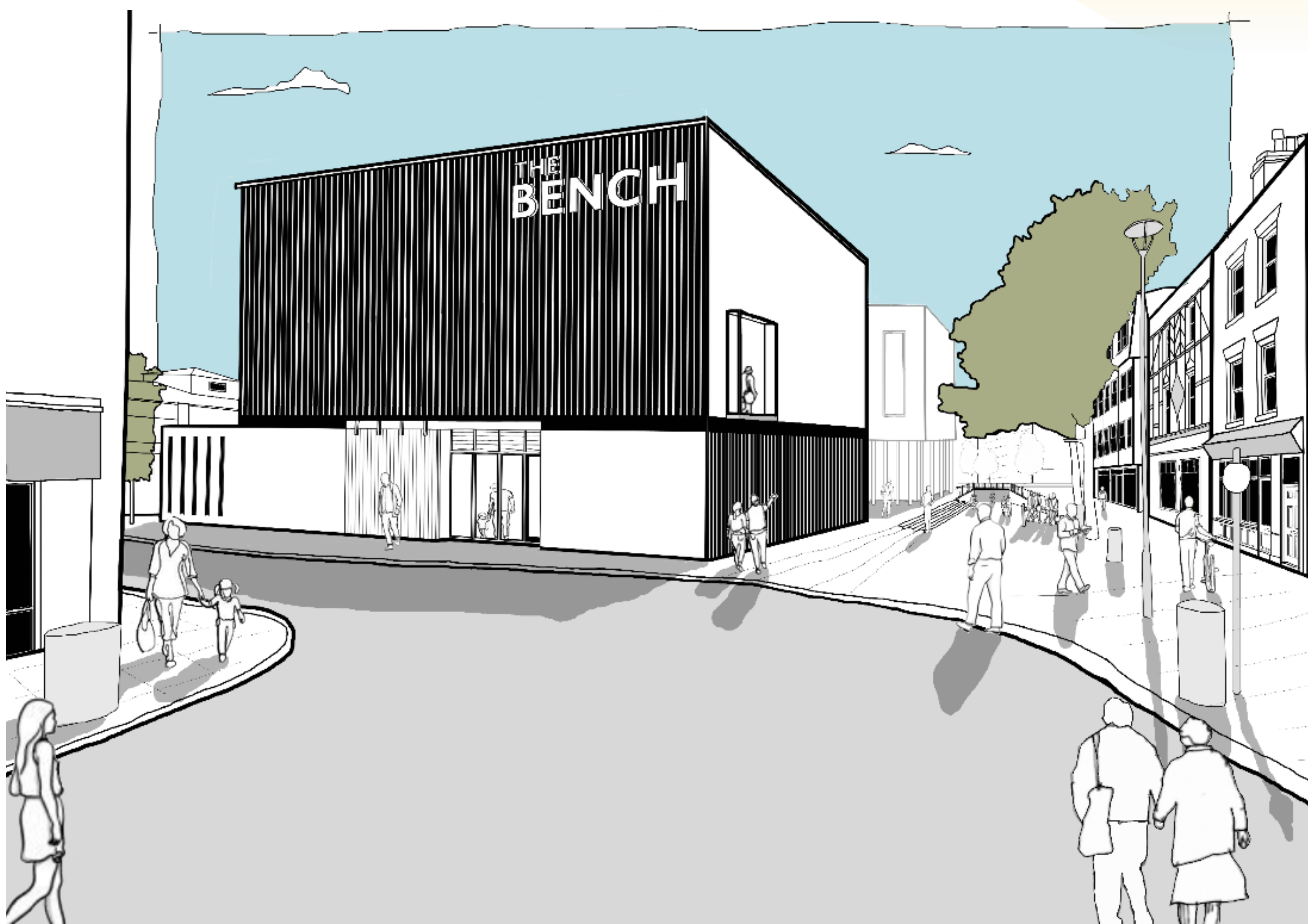


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## Proposed Front Elevation



## Proposed Rear Elevation



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## Proposed Building Section

### KEY

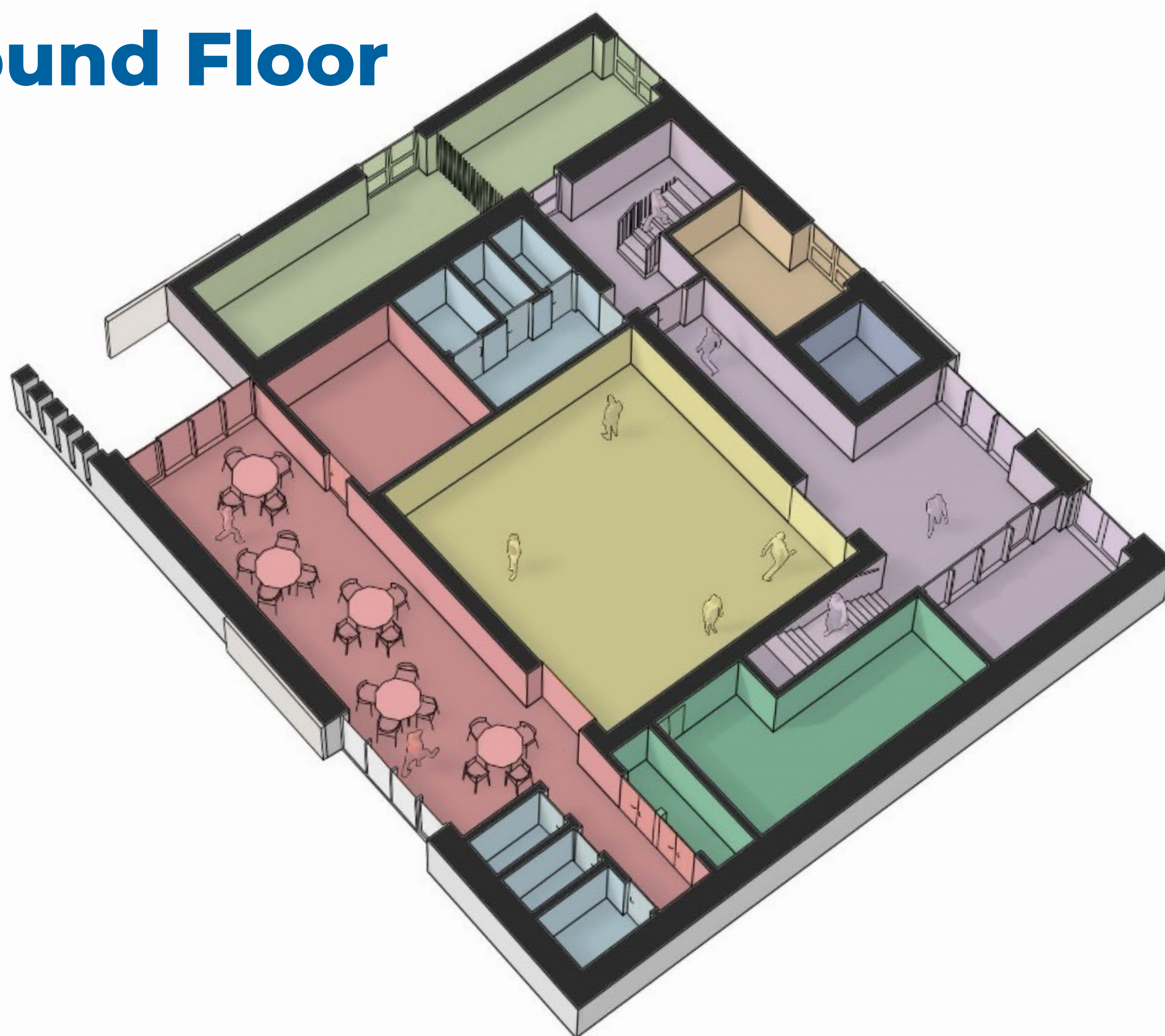
- Cafe
- Gallery and studio space
- Circulation



## Proposed Ground Floor

### KEY

- Cafe area
- Plant
- Circulation
- Gallery space
- Storage
- External Stores
- Toilets
- Lift



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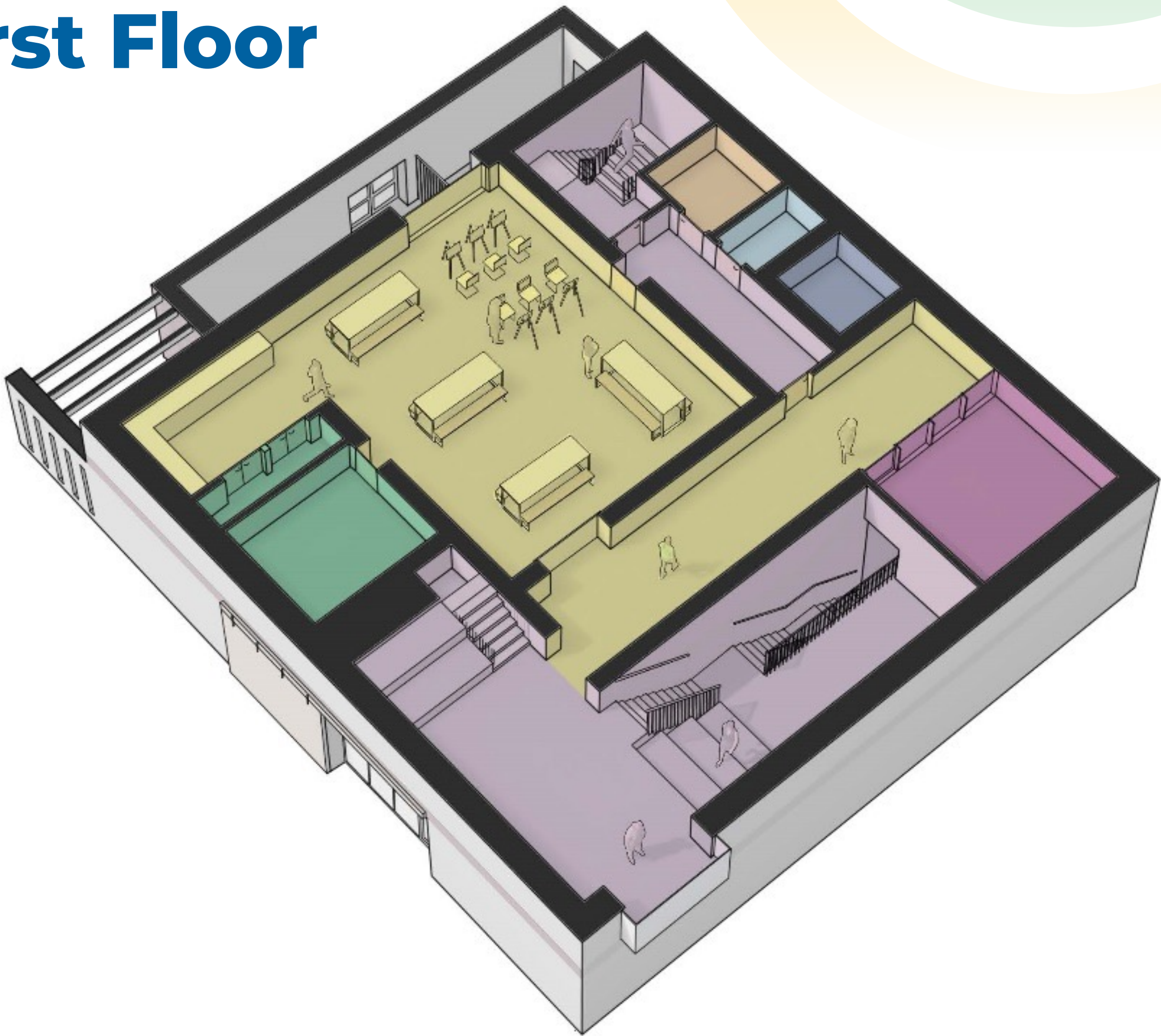
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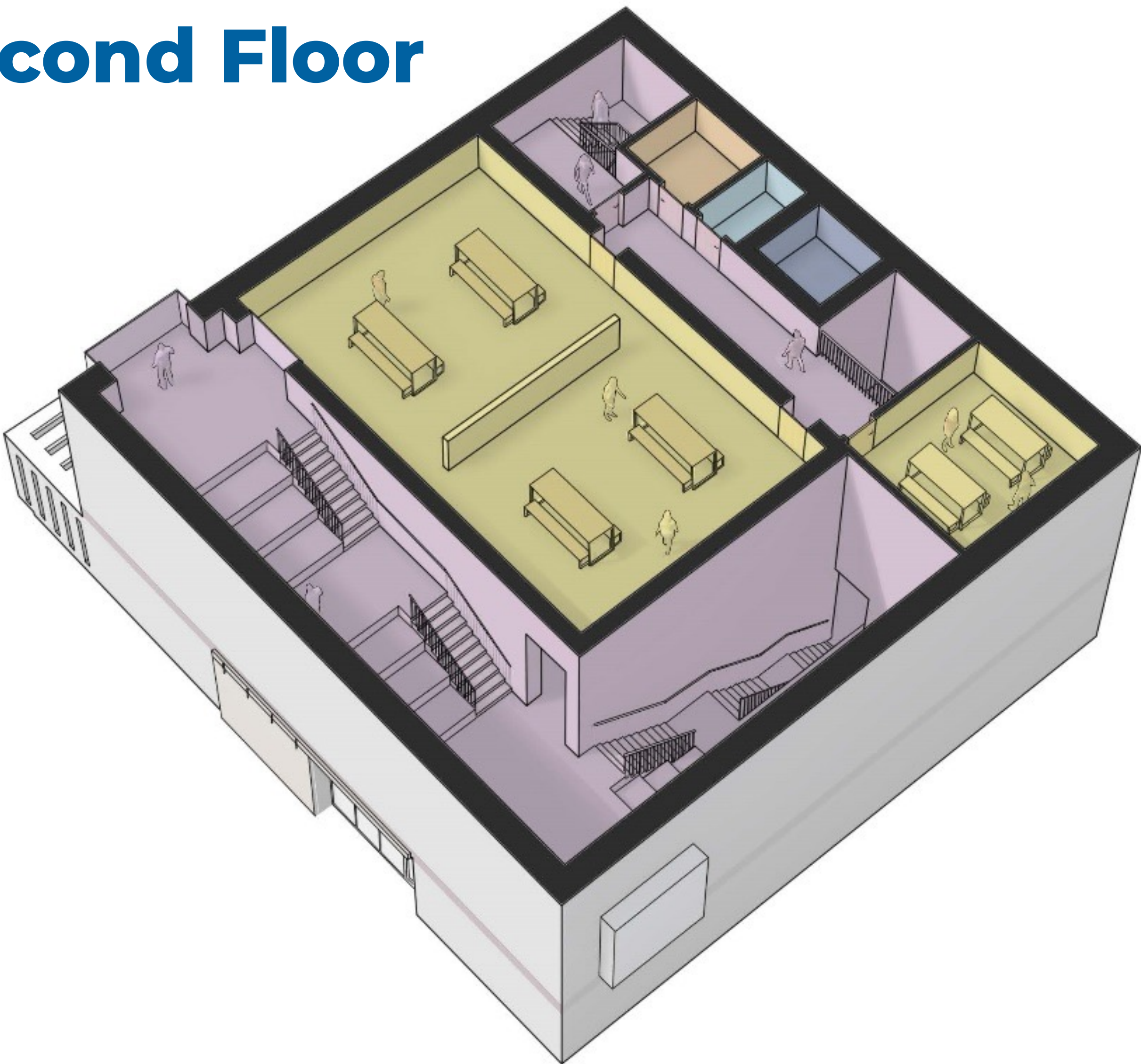
# Proposed First Floor

- KEY
- Office
  - Plant
  - Circulation
  - Studio space
  - Storage
  - Toilets
  - Lift



# Proposed Second Floor

- KEY
- Plant
  - Circulation
  - Studio space
  - Toilets
  - Lift



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## A20 Underpass Progress

**The Project Team at Dover District Council has been working with National Highways and Kent County Council to establish the scope of potential improvements to the A20 underpass.**

Including:

- Improvements to the drainage system
- New signage
- Repainting the ceiling, handrails and safety rails
- Repairs to the interior walls
- Repairs to the pedestrian and cycleway surfacing

The underpass structure was completed in October 1994 and belongs to National Highways who have the responsibility of maintaining this infrastructure.

Image of Underpass prior to repairs to the pumps in November 2022



Image of Underpass after repair works to the pumps taken in February 2023



Following collaboration with National Highways on the flooding issue affecting the underpass, new pumps/repair work to pumps was completed in November 2022, which have successfully alleviated the flooding issues. Further remediation works to improve the drainage system will be completed by National Highways.

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## **FAQs**

### **What is a Creative Centre?**

A multi-purpose arts centre for professional creative practices.

### **Why do we need a Creative Centre?**

Dover has been identified as a priority place by the Arts Council under their Let's Create Strategy. One of 54 places across England in which Arts Council investment and engagement is low and opportunity to effectively increase investment and engagement is high. This project will provide opportunities to further develop the Creative Sector within our district in accordance with the Arts Council strategy.

### **Will people still be able to use Bench Street car park?**

The Creative Centre proposes to transform a portion of an existing car park into a high- quality arts and culture centre. It is proposed that Bench Street car park will be closed to the public during the construction works as it will become the site compound. A small part of the car park is likely to be retained for public use when the project is completed.

### **Why don't we renovate and re-use the existing buildings in Bench Street?**

In order to progress the regeneration of Bench Street, Dover District Council purchased numbers 11 and 14 Bench Street in September 2022 following the acquisition of number 15 Bench Street in December 2021. Structural surveys conducted once the Council had access to these properties identified significant structural issues, which mean it will not be possible to renovate them for re-use.

### **Why not use an existing vacant building in the town to host the creative centre?**

It is considered that a new building will have a longer lifespan without any of the potential issues that can arise when refurbishing existing buildings. A newly designed building will allow for optimum use of space with flexible design concepts and circulation creating a space that is fit for purpose. Whilst also benefiting from the latest building standards and energy efficiency regulations.

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## **FAQs**

### **How long will it be before the Creative Centre is completed?**

It is anticipated that the Creative Centre will be completed by the end of Spring 2024.

### **How does the Creative Centre complement the wider regeneration plans for Bench Street?**

The Creative Centre will be located adjacent to the proposed small to medium business facilities and new further education college campus, which will be provided through Levelling Up Funding. It will therefore form part of an integrated approach to regeneration of the area.

### **Who will manage the Creative Centre?**

Several organisations have informally expressed a desire to manage the space, these will be reviewed as project progresses. One of the purposes of engaging with key stakeholders at this stage is to further explore the options for management. The intention is to provide a facility that is accessible and welcoming to all.

### **What happens next?**

The Council will consider the results of this consultation event to finalise the design of the Creative Centre. We will also liaise with other interested organisations to identify an operator for the centre and submit a planning application for approval.

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## Have Your Say

Thank you for joining us at our engagement event on the Creative Centre Project today. If you want to leave your feedback on our project proposals you can access our survey with the following QR code. **Our survey will be open from 28 February - 31 March 2023**



Further thanks to all of the groups and individuals who have given their time to engage and talk to us about our proposed Creative Centre throughout the pre-delivery stages of this project.



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