



# **The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery**

## Development Prospectus & Vision



‘Beautiful forms and compositions are not made by chance, nor can they ever, in any material, be made at small expense. A composition for cheapness and not excellence of workmanship is the most frequent and certain cause of the rapid decay and entire destruction of arts and manufacturers.’

Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795)



## Celebrating the Ceramic Heritage of The Potteries



I am delighted to present to you our vision for the renewal of The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery (PMAG) at the heart of Stoke-on-Trent.

Our City will always be inseparable from its rich and defining ceramic heritage which can be traced to the medieval period. The collective towns that form the modern City have been referred to as ‘The Potteries’ for over 250 years reflecting the importance of North Staffordshire as the centre of the British pottery industry by the mid-eighteenth century.

Our story has many layers and connections. The growth of pottery production was heavily reliant upon the mining industries and the local availability of suitable varieties of coal for firing kilns. The pioneering canal network, which not only enabled white clays to be imported from far away but also facilitated the delivery of finished goods, connecting Stoke-on-Trent to the world. And the narrative extends right through the twentieth century with the enrichment of wonderful craft ceramicists and the advent of advanced manufacturing with ceramics now used in many industrial goods and processes. ‘Made in Stoke-on-Trent’ is a backstamp found in every part of the globe.



It is these extraordinary industrial achievements of international significance that is at the heart of our ambition to celebrate the unique manufacturing heritage of Stoke-on-Trent and share our story with a twenty-first century audience. Our vision for the renewal of PMAG will enable us to tell the full story of our past and excite people about our future. The museum will become the hub of an International Centre for Ceramics, spanning the extraordinary collections across The Potteries and beyond, underpinned by excellence in education, research and curatorial expertise.

We cannot achieve this transformation alone. It will need support and commitment from all who feel an affinity with The Potteries, to lend our expertise, our resources and our voice to make this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity happen. Please join us on this fantastic journey ahead.

**Councillor Abi Brown, Leader – Stoke-on-Trent City Council**





‘The chief beauty about time is that you cannot waste it in advance. The next year, the next day, the next hour are lying ready for you, as perfect, as unspoiled, as if you had never wasted or misapplied a single moment in all your life. You can turn over a new leaf every hour if you choose.’

Arnold Bennett (1867–1931)



## The Cultural Ambition



Stoke-on-Trent has a once in a lifetime opportunity to deliver a transformational cultural programme which includes ambitious plans for the development of the City’s Cultural Quarter. At the heart of this vision will be an exciting redevelopment of The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery which will celebrate our City’s reputation for both technological and manufacturing innovation. Stoke-on-Trent was the first authority in Britain to build a post-war museum which opened in 1956. It was the first phase in an ambitious project to house and display all the City’s collections in one building. The second phase of the City Museum & Art Gallery was completed and officially opened by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales on 3rd June 1981.

The transformation has already begun and plans are underway for the exciting co-location of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service in 2023. This will increase audience access to our collections and power-up collaborative inter-disciplinary work, to deliver enhanced educational and research outcomes. This co-location will be followed by further phased development of the museum and surrounding location to drive forward the City’s presence on the international stage by maximising the impact of our Designated Collections, including our world-renowned ceramics. The museum will become the heart of the City Centre’s Cultural Quarter, creating a distinctive hub to better welcome a growing stream of visitors.



## The History of the City’s Museums

The development of the City’s museums and their collections can be traced back to the early 1830s with the gift of ceramics by the pottery manufacturer, Enoch Wood, to the Pottery Mechanics Institute Museum in Hanley. In time, five of the six towns would have their own museum or cultural institution but following World War Two these were eventually amalgamated into The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery we know today.

The second museum in the City was the Stoke-upon-Trent Athenaeum which was founded in 1848 and like the Pottery Mechanics Institute Museum, it housed important collections of British and foreign pottery. In 1878 the Athenaeum was relocated into a new purpose-built home based on the legislation passed some years earlier, that enabled a 1d rate to be levied for museum upkeep if local ratepayers agreed to this at public meeting. The first museum in North Staffordshire to take advantage of this legislation was the Wedgwood Institute, Burslem, which was opened on 21 April 1869.

In the 1880s the Pottery Mechanics Institute Museum was amalgamated with the Hanley Corporation Museum, which had been housed in the Town Hall, and these collections were brought together to form the North Staffordshire Technical, Art & Industrial Museum which opened on 7 November 1890. This new institution was also the original

home of the City’s natural science collections which were formed by the North Staffordshire Field Club in 1908.

The collections housed at Longton’s Sutherland Institute and Tunstall’s Victoria Institute remained in those towns until the outbreak of the Second World War. When, with the exception of the Hanley Museum, all of the City’s museums closed during the war years and in the post-war period it was decided to build a central museum and concentrate the City’s collections in one location.





# Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future

In the post-war period the City had ambitious plans for its globally significant collections and on 13th October 1956 the first large new British museum built since the Second World War was opened to the public at Broad Street, Hanley. The building was designed by local architect J.R. Piggott and was intended to be the first phase of a larger civic centre development comprising museum, art gallery, library, town hall, and gardens. When it was opened the site was still screened by the pottery works that had occupied the site since the early eighteenth century.

The construction of this building realised the long-held ambition to bring all the specimens and artefacts amassed by the six towns together into one single museum collection: a decision for which the 1950s press was eager to offer congratulations ‘upon having made so good a start with the provision of an up-to-date museum and gallery.’

The museum was significantly extended in the 1970s and in 1982 the director, Arnold Mountford, proudly accepted the Museum of the Year Award on behalf the Council which, despite difficult economic circumstance, had steadfastly recognised that cultural investment was key to unlocking the regeneration potential of the City.



# A Collection of Global Significance

By the time the new museum and art gallery was completed in 1982 the traditional manufacturing industries of Stoke-on-Trent were beginning to suffer from the national trend of economic decline. An impact felt most keenly amongst the local population was the reduction of employment in the ceramic factories that had previously dominated both the City landscape and global markets. However, the museum's Designated Collections extend far beyond a world class collection of decorative and archaeological ceramics. When viewed in their entirety the archaeological, natural science, fine art, and social history collections have the potential to come together and provide a seamless narrative of the development of one of the world's pre-eminent industrial cities.

Ultimately, the museum collections can be seen as an organic and living storyboard charting the development of the City and its contribution to societal change. They are also a window through which industrialisation can be explored including its impact upon the natural sciences and the developing climate emergency, providing a safe space that not only educates but also encourages positive environmental change. Our investment will celebrate our cultural identity and diversity through the creation of a must visit destination that educates and inspires whilst continuing to grow our collections and document our extraordinary heritage.



# Curatorial Excellence & Cultural Ambassadors

The museum has a proud and distinguished reputation for curatorial excellence and has been the centre for UK ceramic research for over 150 years. This knowledge has been amassed through the careful study of the collections as well as documentary, archival and archaeological material enabling the development of a detailed history of local manufacturers, their products, and scientific processes that has global reach.

However, curatorial expertise extends far beyond the ceramic collections and includes subject matter experts in fine art, decorative art, archaeology, natural sciences, and social history that provides an intellectual resource serving local residents, as well as students, and researchers. It is this knowledge that is at the very heart of the museum and enables the creation of a vibrant formal and informal education programme. Curators don't just simply manage and protect the collections on behalf of the City for future generations, they are also responsible for ensuring physical and intellectual access so that they can be enjoyed and appreciated by everybody. Their research not only increases our understanding of the past but also contribute towards ongoing scientific research in the fields of archaeology and natural sciences.

PMAG is also committed to working with health and wellbeing organisations, offering a wide variety of volunteering placements and opportunities to engage with the collections.



Participation with our cultural services provides an opportunity to connect with like-minded people, connect with our shared heritage, and explore life from a different perspective. Museums and galleries not only provide knowledge, they also make a significant contribution to improving physical health and mental wellbeing and we are committed to continuing to provide services that support the needs of all our visitors and residents.



# Inspiring & Educating

The collections continue to inspire and educate modern audiences and the museum and art gallery offers an extensive range of education programmes that utilise the collections to animate the National Curriculum for local school children and provide course content for university students and adult learners. The museum also organises a wide variety of temporary exhibitions drawn from both its own holdings and travelling exhibits that benefit those in formal education, City residents, and visitors alike.

Through capital investment in new facilities, we will be able to provide temporary exhibition galleries that are compliant with government indemnity and security standards that will enable us to programme travelling exhibitions of national and international acclaim. The Staffordshire Hoard Gallery and the newly developed Spitfire Gallery are just two examples of the significance of our Designated Collections and their ability to inspire new and existing audiences to engage in the heritage of the region.





# The Twenty-First Century Reinterpretation

The historic collections of the individual towns that comprise the modern City of Stoke-on-Trent remain at the heart of community cohesion and have driven the re-generation strategies of successive councils and administrations. From the Pottery Mechanics Institute Museum to The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery of today, these collections have not only told the story of the residents of our globally significant City, but also acted as inspiration for progress and regeneration.

Once again, these historic collections provide us with the opportunity for driving development and ensuring our cultural, technological, and creative heritage remains at the heart of our City's strategic vision for the twenty-first century. Our ambition is to make The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery an internationally significant destination giving tourists and residents alike the opportunity to experience and celebrate our rich and diverse cultural heritage. The institution will be the centre piece of the cultural quarter and act as the gateway to exploring the City's heritage and fascinating history.

In order to achieve this, we are firstly placing the City's archives into PMAG to not only provide better access, but to create a comprehensive 'one-stop' destination for those who wish to engage with our collections.



This improvement in service provision enables us to consider opportunities for engaging innovative modes of interpretation in the permanent galleries that enhance access to the collections and local stories. These will include the previously untold contributions of local individuals to redress their underrepresentation and animate the heritage of the region from a greater range of perspectives.

Not only will we endeavour to dispel historical patriarchal narratives we will also take the opportunity to decolonise our collections and celebrate the cultural diversity of our City and the positive impact of inward migration. Themes such as The History of Settlement,

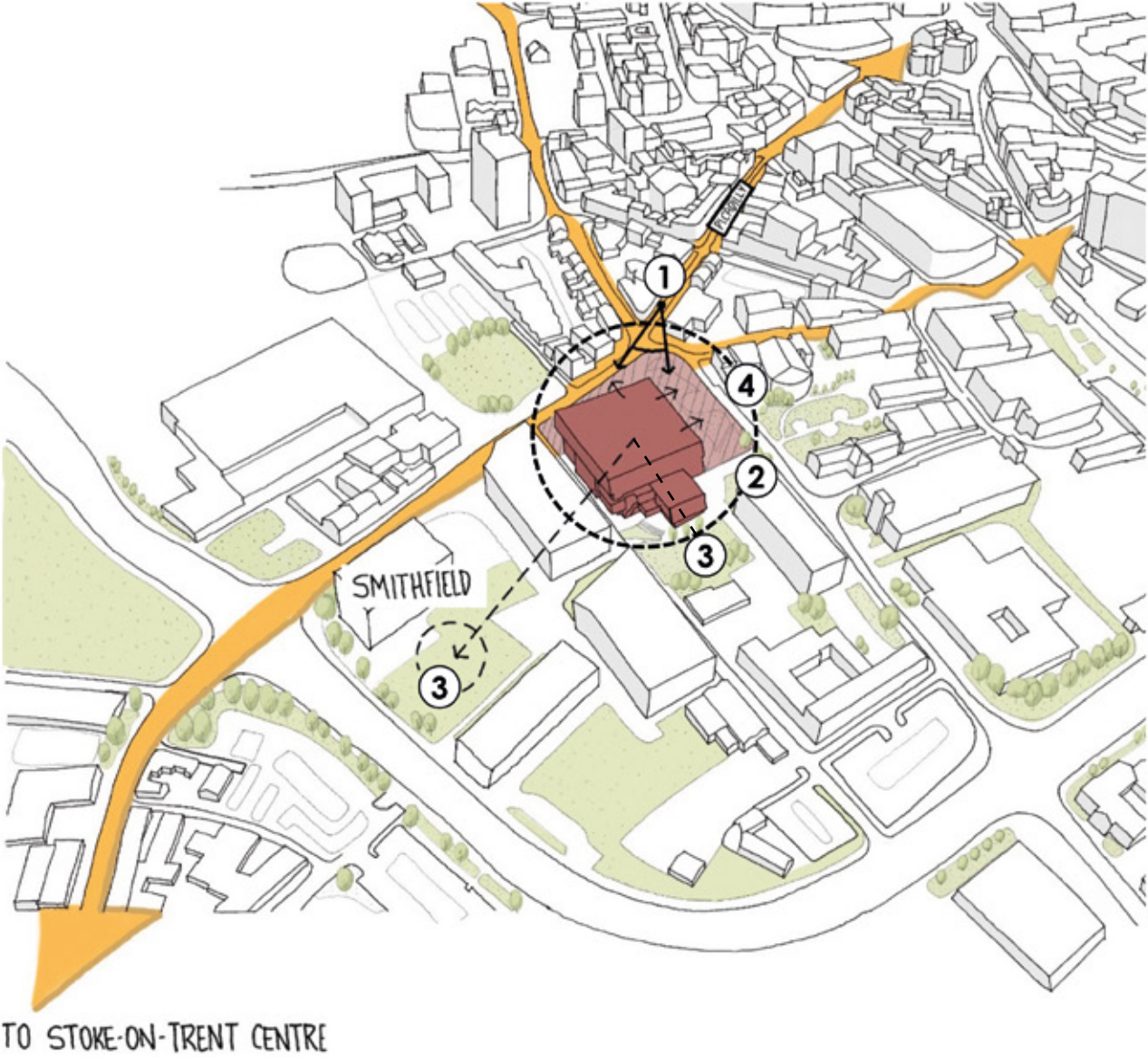
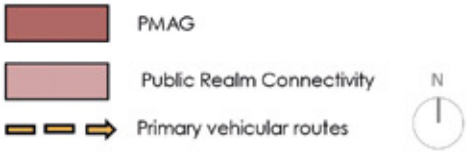
Industry and Transport, Sports, Pastimes, Local Traditions, and Literature will be explored that embody inclusivity and place the City's heritage in a global context from a range of contemporary perspectives.

The collections have grown and research has improved since the galleries were last put together. It's time for a refresh that will not only do justice to the unique assemblage of artefacts and specimens in our care, but also create a symbol of our aspiration and determination to make Stoke-on-Trent a cultural destination of national and international celebrity using our collections to explore the impacts of industrialisation and subsequent global issues.

## Cultural Quarter

### Wider Site Opportunities

- 1. Improved aspect from Piccadilly
- 2. Improved Connectivity to Public Realm and Enhanced Visitor Experience
- 3. Potential Smithfield Pavillion
- 4. Improved visual connections through to the exhibits for an open and inclusive presence in the city





# The Development Journey

The museum is of strategic importance to delivering our wider vision for the Cultural Quarter within the City and will act as main point of arrival for visitors and the hub of community cohesion. The redevelopment will provide a cultural base that brings together the City's residents, its transformational heritage, its institutions, and its diverse geography. The ambition is to maximise accessibility to the collections and build upon the existing lively programme of exhibitions and educational events to further develop the world-class institution our City deserves. Whilst the journey towards our cultural ambition will be multi-phased and require the securing of external funding to deliver in its entirety we have already made significant progress in achieving our objectives which include:



## (Phase 1) The Redevelopment of the Spitfire Gallery

The local history collection of the museum inspires a strong sense and identity in the City as well as celebrating the creativity and achievements of its people. Taking pride of place within this collection is the Mark XVI World War II Spitfire which represents locally-born R.J. Mitchell's triumph of aircraft design and is now a cultural icon of the City. The aircraft has recently undergone extensive restoration and conservation, returning to the museum in 2021 in a new purpose-built gallery which has been designed to also inspire future generations to explore careers in technology, design, and science.

## (Phase 2) The Co-location of the City's Archive Service

The co-location is a once in a generation opportunity to amalgamate an internationally renowned collection of pottery archives and ceramic library with the museum collections to create an integrated and world-class research facility for the study of ceramics and local history. Work is currently underway ahead of an opening to the public in the summer of 2023.

## (Phase 3) Wrap-Around Extension to The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery

In order to maximise the use of the ground floor of the museum and improve accessibility we are currently working on a capital development bid. This will enable the construction of an extension that will improve existing visitor facilities and enable the provision of a reading room for the study of archive collections.

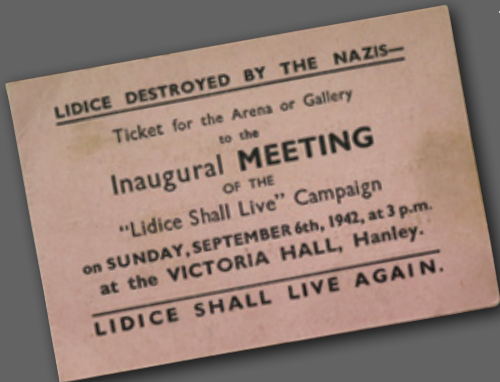


The outcome of our application should be known in early 2023.

## (Phase 4) Re-interpretation of the Collections

The curatorial team are exploring how to improve the current displays and ensure they accurately reflect the rich cultural diversity of our City for a twenty-first century audience. The museum is collaborating with Keele University to tell the little known story of the 1942 Lidice atrocity and Staffordshire University to help us better understand

our manufacturing heritage. We are actively exploring external funding schemes to enable this to be realised whilst improving storage facilities to increase access to reserve collections and provide space for future acquisitions.



## (Phase 5) The Gallery Extension

This is a medium-term ambition to create a further extension to the museum that would give the City dedicated gallery space, housed in a contemporary architectural setting that will complement both the original museum and the Spitfire Gallery.



# The Wider Vision: The City as an International Centre for Ceramics

Our vision for The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery extends far beyond the building and the Cultural Quarter. We envisage PMAG as the hub for the development of our City as an International Centre for Ceramics on a par with other key global manufacturing centres, and participating as part of that wider network.

The plan is to create a strong local network of all of the main collections – public and private – across The Potteries, enhanced by the development of a single digital portal. Working with both universities and key partners such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, Art UK and the British Ceramics Biennial, we would develop the education and research base of the City both with respect to the art of ceramic design and also the science of making, right up to present day.

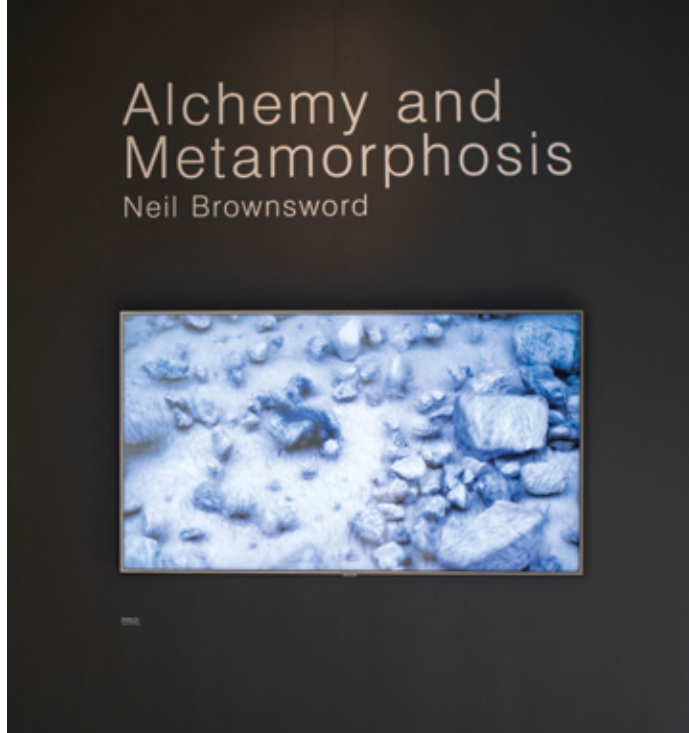
The network would extend to and incorporate current potters, from craft ceramics through to industrial component producers. We will re-engage endangered craft skills and celebrate the intangible heritage of the City. This will help us animate the historic environment whilst protecting our reputation for creativity.

By hosting visiting global ceramic events and exhibitions, PMAG would seek to build partnerships internationally, celebrating The Potteries' contribution to ceramics innovation over the last 250 years.



'It is vital that The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery retains its strength as a regional ceramics hub – recognised and revered as it is globally for its world-class collection of Staffordshire ceramics.'

Dr Tristram Hunt, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum





**For Further Information About How to Support Our Vision Please Contact:**

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*Vis Unita Fortior*  
**‘Together, We’re Stronger’**

