

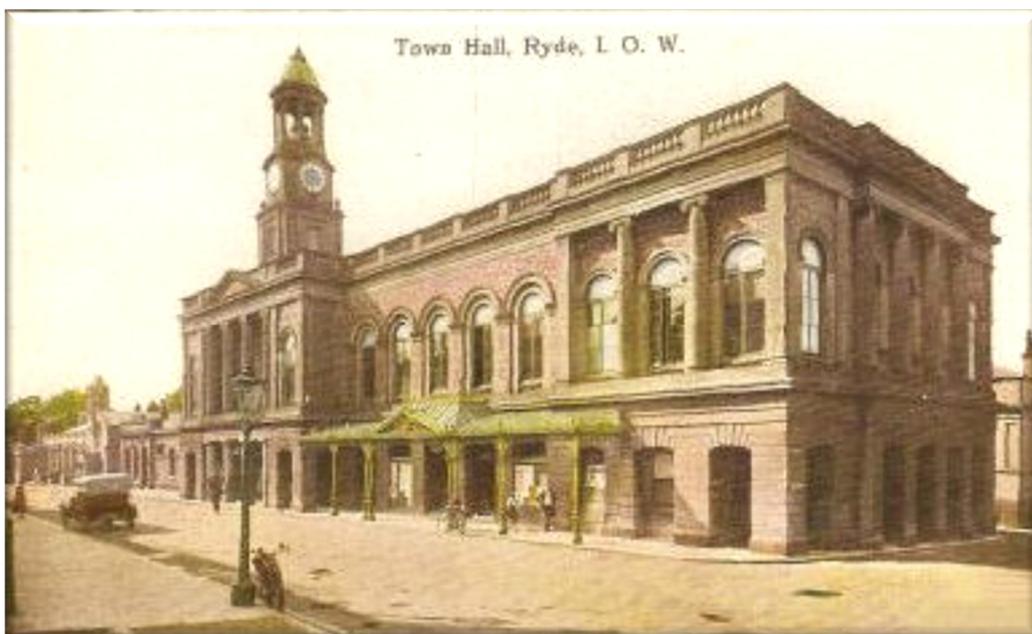
# CREATIVE RYDE:

## ACQUIRING AND DEVELOPING RYDE TOWN HALL AS A LANDMARK CULTURAL CENTRE

FEASIBILITY STUDY – FINAL VERSION

RYDE EMPTY BUILDINGS GROUP

28 FEBRUARY 2019



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## INTRODUCTION

This report is the outcome of a Feasibility Study undertaken by a sub-group of the “Ryde Empty Buildings Group”. This sub-group was particularly interested in Ryde Town Hall (RTH) and is referred to in this report as the RTH Working Group.

The members of the RTH Working Group included Abi Wheeler, Carol Jaye, Christopher Simmons, all residents of Ryde, and were supported by the Isle of Wight Council’s Regeneration Department through Ken Dueck of Tractioneers Ltd, an Isle of Wight business development consultancy.

The RTH Working Group had started with developing a grant funding proposal for acquiring RTH and turning it into a landmark cultural centre for the Isle Wight that included spaces for makers’ units, small offices, digital and production areas, a café, occasional markets and exhibition space. However, the group was advised that the bid was unlikely to be successful as there was no clear route to ownership of the building.

Becoming increasingly concerned at the continuing decay that this architectural and historical landmark building was suffering, the RTH Working Group, with financial assistance from the Isle of Wight Council, decided to explore potential routes to acquiring RTH and to deepen their understanding of the feasibility and sustainability of establishing their “Creative Ryde” vision within the building.

At the time of writing, there are ongoing and positive negotiations with the owner of RTH and other parties. The RTH Working Group is hopeful that these will soon result in a new opportunity to revitalise RTH.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is a report on the work and considerations addressed by the Ryde Town Hall Empty Buildings Group during a study into the feasibility of acquiring Ryde Town Hall and turning it into a landmark cultural centre in the heart of Ryde.

The Group considered the central location of the building between upper and lower Ryde, its historical importance in relation to the birth of Ryde as a proper town and the spatial organisation of the building in the light of the Group's Creative Ryde Vision. This vision was to establish a home for the Creative Industries, providing studio spaces, small offices, co-working or maker spaces and equipment sharing facilities where small-scale makers, digital, design and other Creative Industry businesses would like to work. Ideally these facilities would be located alongside publicly accessible spaces such as bookable teaching or meeting rooms, café services and perhaps a gallery or market space where makers could display and sell their products.

In order to assess the building, it was necessary to establish contact with the current owner and this has been achieved. The Group has consequently formed the view that the building is well suited to being divided into four discrete spaces: the Theatre Space (or the first and second floors together with the two ground floor entrances/exits); the Studio Space (the ground floor and lower ground floor to the West of the Clock Tower); the Market Hall (the ground floor to the East of the Clock Tower) and the Caretaker's Rooms (three floors to the rear of the building and accessed from Market Street). Further, these four spaces would potentially suit different but complimentary Creative Industry or associated organisations and should be sold on 999-year leases subject to a freehold that serves as the protection for the building and its uses for posterity. The freehold ought to be held by a publicly accountable body such as Ryde Town Council.

The Group also undertook a market assessment which demonstrated that Ryde town centre has a very low provision of office space, which restricts town's ability to attract knowledge-based employment into the centre and thereby make the whole town more resilient. A survey of artists and studio spaces also indicated that there is a lot of support for creating new studio spaces in Ryde but a fairly weak demand for studios from established artists. There was more concrete demand for rooms that could be booked by artists to teach craft and art skills and for more gallery opportunities.

A review of co-working and maker spaces on the mainland provided ideas for how such provision might work for Ryde and in particular in Ryde Town Hall. The examples found in towns and cities along the South Coast indicated that Ryde has a large enough population to support a maker space but it does lack the presence of a higher education establishment whose graduates could provide users. Nevertheless, the Isle of Wight College in Newport could fulfil this role as the Group has not found any other maker space provision on the Isle of Wight. Ryde's gateway position in relation to Portsmouth might also provide some opportunities to attract users from there.

The Creative Industries often lead the regeneration of an area and, according to the Office for National Statistics (2016), the Isle of Wight has 295 businesses providing over 830 jobs in this sector. This is a lower percentage of all businesses than the equivalent for the UK but, given the shortage of suitable space for Creative Industry businesses in Ryde centre the Group considers that Ryde Town Hall could provide an incentive for some of these to move into the town centre and also attract start-ups.

The Group has looked at the Isle of Wight Fashion and Textiles sub-sector in more detail, identifying Redfern and Sons as an important Victorian and Edwardian antecedent and the many small businesses that operate in this sub-sector today. The study notes the significant levels of interest in studying Fashion and Textiles as a subject among high school students at Island Innovation VI Form College and undertook a survey of students to find out whether they continued Fashion and Textiles studies at university level or had found work in a relevant field. Most respondents were still studying but expressed concern that they would not be able to find relevant employment on the island or would not have access to the necessary machines and facilities if they wished to become self-employed.

In reviewing the feasibility of setting up a Fashion and Textiles maker space, the Group have put forward a business model for a venue that includes 8-workstations, 2 hot-desks, a bookable classroom/meeting room and a small office / supplies shop for a venue manager. The typical model of monthly membership fees with pay-as-you-go access to workstations, equipment, machines, teaching/meeting space breaks even at 50% usage, and assuming about 30 annual members. Start-up funding would also have to be found for renovation, equipment and machines but the initial calculations suggest this maker space should be explored further with potential users.

In conclusion, the Study Group believes that Ryde Town Hall can be re-purposed as a Creative Industries centre, with a mix of leasehold buyers, one of whom could create a successful Fashion and Textiles maker space.

## BACKGROUND

Reviewing the location, history and layout of Ryde Town Hall is an important prerequisite to understanding the current potential for turning the building into a landmark cultural centre for Ryde.

### Location

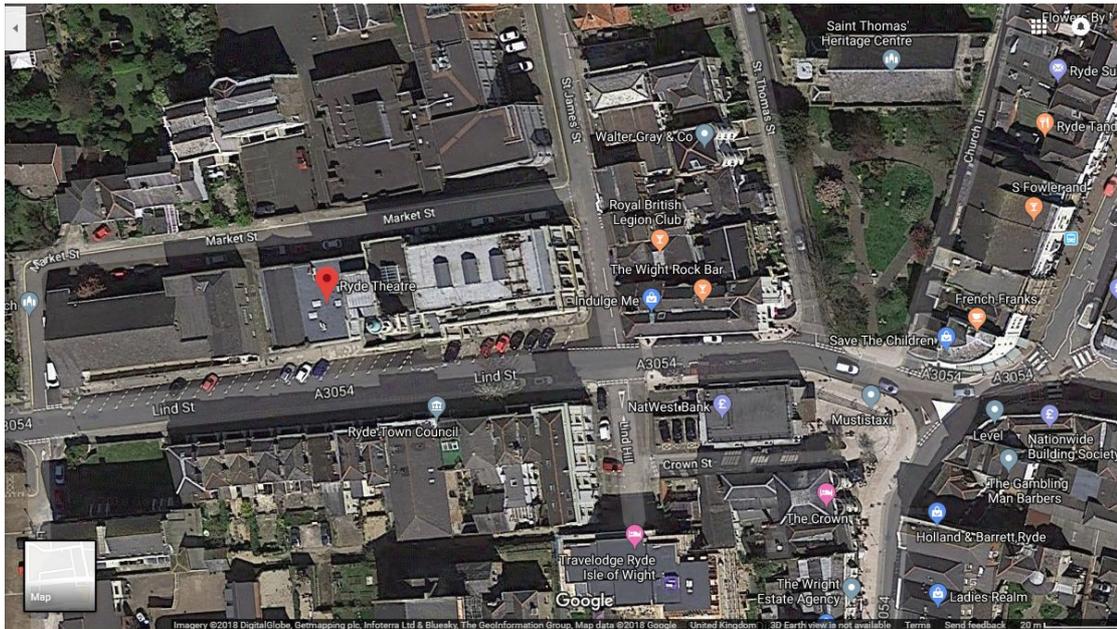
Grade II listed Ryde Town Hall is strategically positioned on Lind Street, between upper and lower Ryde and near the junction of Lind Street with St Thomas Square, Union Street, Cross Street and the High Street. The property is bounded by St James' Street to the East and Market Street to the North.

Lind Street, together with St Thomas Square and Cross Street effectively form the boundary between upper and lower Ryde. Union Street runs down from St Thomas Square to the Esplanade and the High Street runs into upper Ryde from St Thomas Square. Union Street and the High Street form what has been called the “commercial spine” of Ryde.

The OpenStreetMap map of Ryde below indicates the location of Lind Street and Union Street as primary routes through Ryde.



The following Google satellite view of Ryde Town Hall (marked as Ryde Theatre) provides a closer view of its location in relation to St Thomas' Square, Union Street and the High Street.



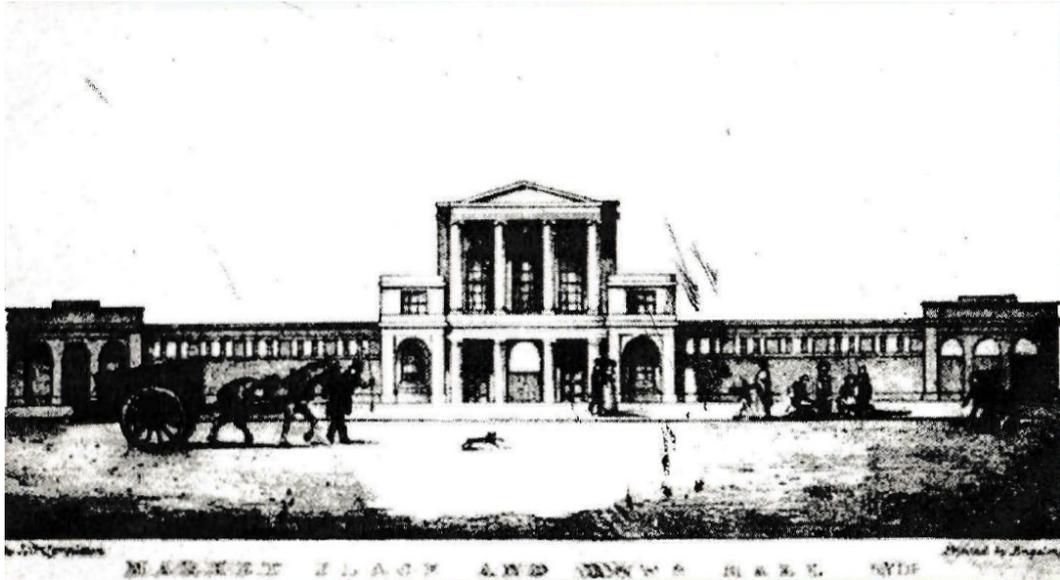
## History

Ryde Town Hall was one of three landmark buildings (Brigstocke Terrace, St Thomas' Church and Ryde Town Hall) to be erected between 1827 and 1832 that symbolise the formal establishment of Ryde as a town in 1829.

The foundation stone of Ryde Town Hall was laid in 1830 and the building was formally opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1831. It was a key fulfilment of an 1829 Act of Parliament passed to make improvements to the town including the creation of a single town council and "for paving, watching, lighting, cleansing and otherwise improving the Town of Ryde, in the Isle of Wight, in the County of Southampton; and for establishing a Market within the said Town." <"The Early Years of Ryde Town Hall", by Diana Wood, Ryde Historic Society, 2011>

The Town Hall and Market House was designed by the architect James Sanderson of London who had already designed St Thomas's Church (built 1827) and Brigstocke Terrace (built 1827-29). Thomas Dashwood, who had built Brigstocke Terrace, also built Ryde Town Hall.

The original building was comprised of a central corn market at ground level and above it was the Town Hall. To the west of the corn market was the fish market, butchers shops and a fresh water pump. To the east were fruit, poultry, vegetable and dairy produce stalls. A cattle market was held at the front of the building. The Town Hall was comprised of a larger "elegant" room (44 x 26 ft) connected by sliding doors to a smaller meeting room (15 x 20 ft) where the Town Commissioners met monthly. The two rooms could be opened up to form one meeting hall 60 feet long that, by 1848 was often used for balls and concerts in addition to fortnightly Petty Sessions.



*Figure 1 Ryde Town Hall as it was first built 1831.*

In 1856 it was proposed to enlarge the Hall by adding waiting rooms on the west side and another room on the east side with connecting folding doors. A staircase to connect the refreshment room and kitchen was to be added on the north-east side along with hot water heating. The capacity was accordingly increased from 300 to 500 persons plus an orchestra area to hold another 50.

The clock tower and a new assembly room were put out to tender in 1867 and the addition of these resulted in the external shape of the building as it exists today. The New Town Hall was opened on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1869.

On 6th June 1933, a fire caused extensive damage to the Town Hall. <Ryde Social Heritage Group> The cause is unknown but it spread by way of the organ and organ loft, to the floor of the hall and the furnishings, including several valuable pictures. The only parts which escaped complete destruction were the Small Hall, Council Chamber and offices.

In repairing the damage, improvements were also made to the facilities including a kitchen and servery, dressing rooms, a hardwood dancing floor and moving the War Memorial from inside the hall to the current outside location at ground level to the front of the building. The organ that had originally been donated by residents for the Jubilee of Queen Victoria was also replaced with a Walker instrument that is still in situ. The halls were officially re-opened on 1st June 1934, by the Mayor, Alderman E. Hayden.

By 2008 the Isle of Wight Council was considering whether to invest in Ryde and Shanklin Theatres, or to seek redevelopment of the sites, either with or without retaining the theatres. <Cabinet Meeting, 20 January 2009>. Consultants retained by the Council estimated that bringing Ryde Theatre up to modern standards would require an investment of £1,819,320. Other options costed by consultants (all options were to retain the theatre as a venue) were:

**“Option A: £1,400,000**

- Refurbishment and repair to existing fabric.
- Refurbishment of the Venue.
- Conversion of part ground floor to form Bar/Restaurant (shell only).
- Conversion of part ground floor to form Retail Units (shell only).
- Refurbishment of Council Offices/Council Chambers.

**“Option B: £1,400,000**

- Refurbishment and repair to existing fabric.
- Refurbishment of the Venue.
- Conversion of part ground floor to form Bar/Restaurant (shell only).
- Conversion of part ground floor to form Studios/Workshops (shell only).
- Refurbishment of Council offices/Council Chambers.

**“Option C: £2,150,000**

- Refurbishment and repair to existing fabric.
- Refurbishment of the Venue.
- Conversion of part ground floor and construction of upper floors to form 19 Micro Flats.
- Conversion of part ground floor to Retail Units (shell only).
- Refurbishment of part ground floor for Council Offices.

**“Option D: £2,150,000**

- Refurbishment and repair to existing fabric.
- Refurbishment of the Venue.
- Conversion of part ground floor to form Studios/Workshops (shell only).
- Refurbishment of part ground floor for Council Offices. “

Ryde Town Council supported a proposal that the Council invest and develop Ryde Theatre but according to Arthur Lloyd’s “Theatres of the Isle of Wight”, the Isle of Wight Council closed the theatre in April 2010. Some parts of the building were retained for Council offices but by 2012 the whole building was placed on the market. A sale price of £400,000 was initially agreed but the preferred bidder withdrew and in January 2013 it was agreed to sell the building to Phantom Productions Ltd of Gibraltar for £300,000 <I.W. Council Delegated Decision Report, 31 January 2013>.

The report also stated that this would create a saving of £41,500 a year – their costs for maintaining an empty building. It was reported at the time that the new owner intended to create a performance venue with recording studios in the building but this failed to materialise. Discussions between the new owner and prospective buyers had taken place in 2015 but in 2018 the building was still standing empty.

In the intervening years, we understand the Council's lease on the public conveniences on East side of RTH has either lapsed or was not agreed. We also understand that there are no continuing obligations to keep the historic organ in the theatre or to allow public access but the Council does have the remainder of a 999-year lease on the war memorial to the front of the building.

## External Views



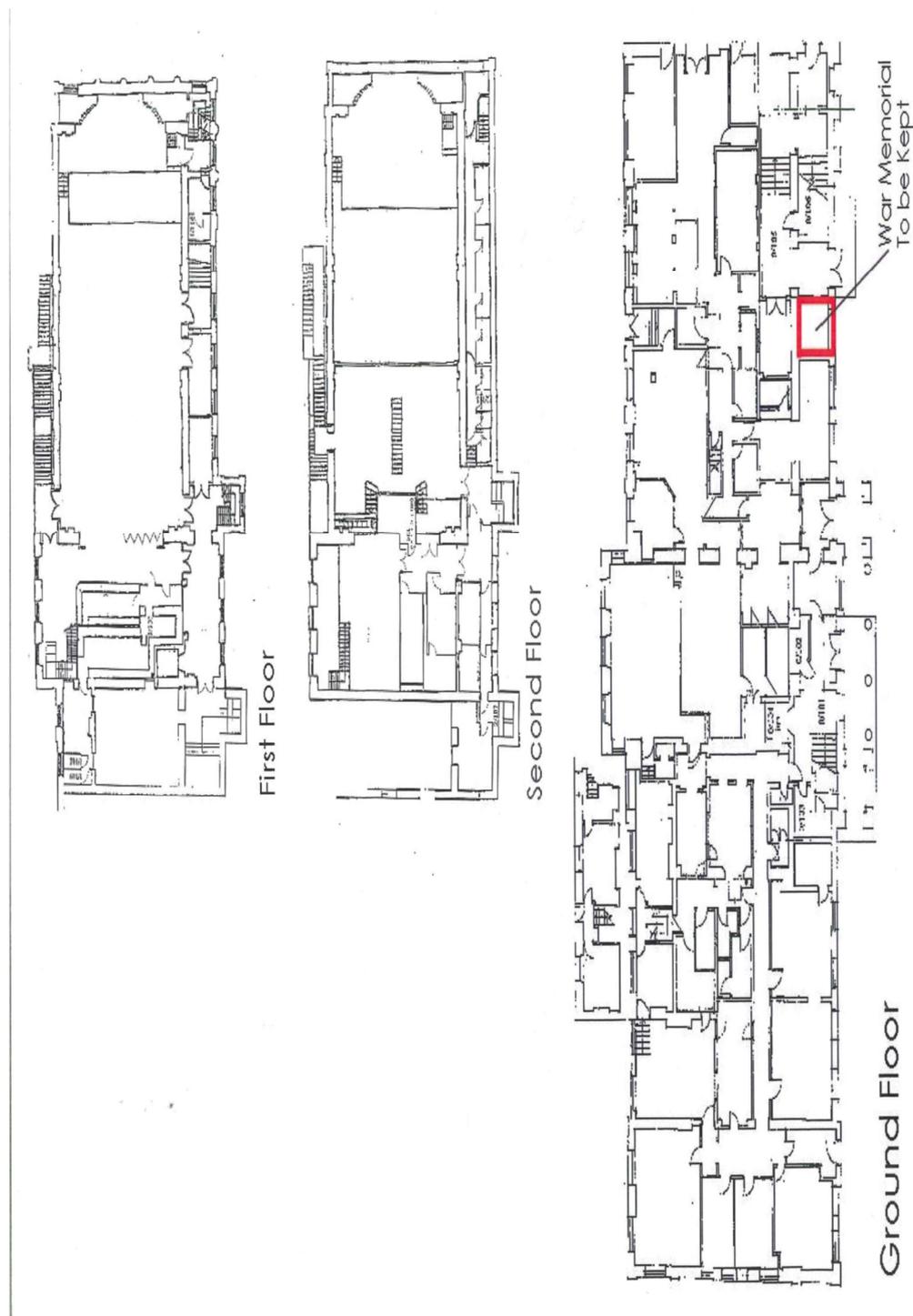
*Figure 2: Ryde Town Hall viewed from the south east.*



*Figure 3: Ryde Town Hall viewed from south west.*

## Internal Space

According to the information produced by Gully Howard, who marketed Ryde Town Hall in 2012, the Net Internal Area (NIA) of the building is 1,565.27 m<sup>2</sup> (16,848.43 ft<sup>2</sup>). This is divided as follows: Ground Floor 711.78m<sup>2</sup> (7,661.54 ft<sup>2</sup>); First Floor 563.2m<sup>2</sup> (6,062.23 ft<sup>2</sup>); Second Floor 290.29 m<sup>2</sup> (3,124.66 ft<sup>2</sup>) – excluding internal stairwells and similar internal spaces.



## Internal Views of Ryde Theatre



Figure 4. The balcony and stage of Ryde Theatre in 2009. Source: Mark Price, Theatres Trust



Figure 5. The auditorium of Ryde Theatre in 2009. Source: Mark Price, Theatres Trust

## THE CREATIVE RYDE VISION

The inspiration for the Creative Ryde vision has come in part from seeing how the creative industries have provided a foundation for regeneration in many towns and cities in the UK and elsewhere. It is often the creative industries that bring new life to run-down areas, begin to draw people back into localities, create a sense of local pride and potential and attract new investment.

Town centres across the UK and in other countries are also facing huge challenges due to the changing economics of retailing. This is a challenge that has been felt and responded to in Ryde along Union Street, Cross Street and the High Street over a period of some years but the pressure for change continues to grow as consumers rely increasingly on online purchases, supermarkets and “out of town” shopping centres. But, even though people are not supporting retailers in the “high street” as they used to, they still want an attractive town centre to visit, where they can experience shopping, eating, drinking and other sociable activities that can’t be delivered by online shops, supermarkets or out of town shopping centres. Attractive town centres help to provide stronger community identity, community ties, as well as the confidence and inspiration to try new economic activities. The challenge for Ryde is to make a successful transition to a “new”, attractive and more sustainable town centre, while retaining the architectural heritage that makes it special.

The Creative Ryde group sees an opportunity to re-vitalise Ryde town centre with the addition of studio spaces, small offices, co-working or maker spaces and equipment sharing facilities where small-scale makers, digital and design businesses and other creative industry businesses would like to work.

Ryde Town Hall was identified as an empty building ideally suited to provide some of this space, particularly on the ground floor. At the same time, the upper floor with its theatre, could provide a home for compatible cultural activities.

The group is strongly committed to protecting the Grade II listed building as a landmark building in Ryde with access for the public in at least some areas.

Their vision has formed the basis for this Feasibility Study.

## RE-IMAGINING RYDE TOWN HALL: CONFIGURATION OPTIONS

After reviewing the floor plans, establishing contact with the current owner and visiting Ryde Town Hall, the working group was confirmed in its view that the building was potentially an ideal fit for a refurbished cultural landmark in the town, providing accommodation for a variety of small maker or design businesses as well as a publicly accessible exhibition space with a café and occasional markets. Potentially local arts organisations might be able to take space in the building and the upstairs could provide exhibition and performance space.

However, the working group also realised that it would be very difficult for a community group to put together a timely bid within the context of the commercial situation or take on the costs of acquiring and renovating the whole building. As a result, it chose to promote and test the market with a proposition to divide the building into four long-lease (999-years) properties, subject to an over-arching freehold that would guarantee certain protections for the landmark building. The four leasehold areas it agreed to promote were based on spaces associated with existing entrances and internal divisions. The four areas are:

### Studio Space

Approximately 292.5 m<sup>2</sup>.

This is comprised of the original Ground Floor market area to the West of the Clock Tower and has been partitioned into rooms. This area has been used for Council offices in the past and already has toilet and kitchen facilities. This could be attractive to a creative industries organisation able to fund the purchase and restoration of this entire space, either for their own use or potentially to sub-let in whole or in part to smaller creative industry businesses / organisations.

This area has its own front and rear entrances and has already been divided into rooms that might be suitable as studio spaces (see photograph of floor plan following). Alternatively, some or all of the partition walls could be removed, and the internal space could be re-configured to provide larger open plan spaces, rooms with shared machinery / resources and so on. Not shown is a Lower Ground Floor storage space to the left rear of the building. The rooms and corridors highlighted in yellow are currently common areas including toilet facilities and a kitchen. The area highlighted in orange to the bottom right of the photograph would not be part of the Studio Space.

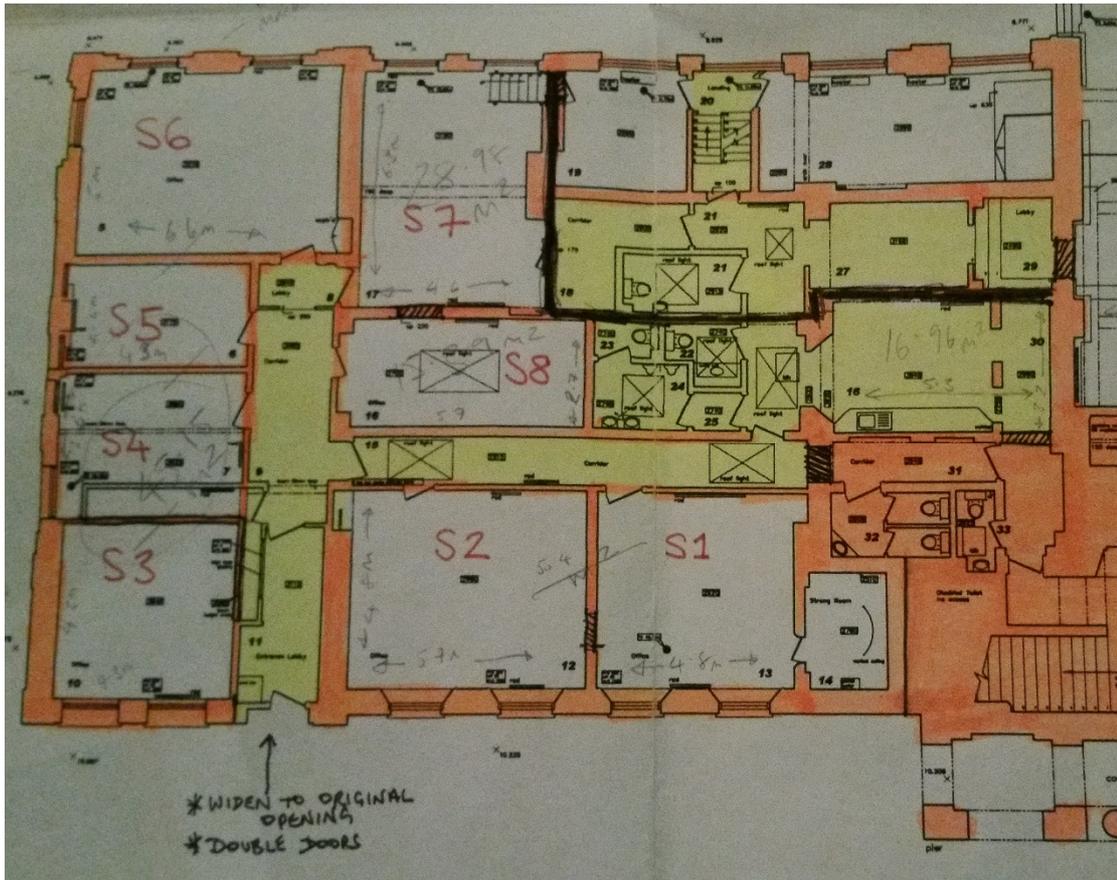


Figure 6: Studio Space

## Market Hall

Approximately 350 m<sup>2</sup>.

This is comprised of the original Ground Floor market area to the East of the Clock Tower and underneath the Theatre. This space has fewer partitions and could quite easily be reconfigured to provide a more open space suitable for markets, gallery & exhibition space, a café and classroom / meeting / workshop rooms.

The Market Hall has a high-ceilinged, large-windowed area to the left and rear of floor plan. This could be an extremely attractive workspace with natural lighting. Alternatively, it could also be a gallery or exhibition space or even a café or restaurant. The rest of the area has had a false ceiling installed that could be removed to expose the timber support structure, raise the ceiling height and enable better use of the natural light from the windows to the rear (North) of the building. The non-load bearing partitions could also be removed to open up the space for markets and/or create more appropriate spaces for meetings, workshops, teaching, exhibitions and a small café. The rooms/staircases highlighted in orange would belong to the Theatre Space (with some potential variation to the area on the bottom left of the photograph). The corridors and toilets highlighted in yellow are currently common access areas. We understand that the toilets accessed from the street to the right of the photo are no longer public toilets and could be altered to provide entrances from indoors rather than the street.

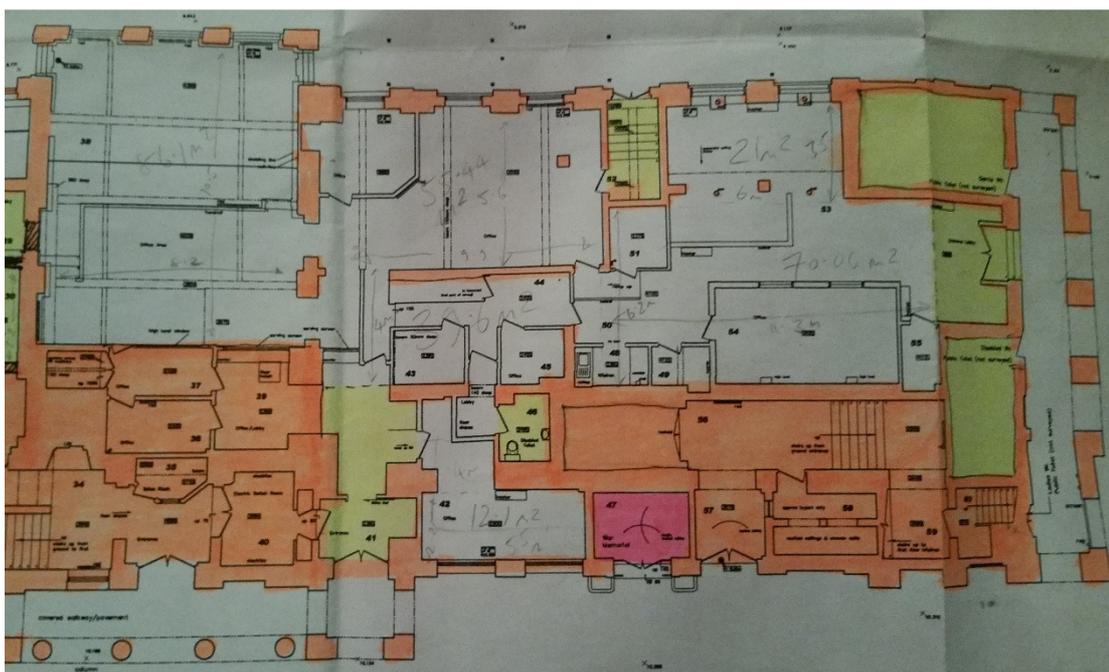


Figure 7: Market Hall

## Theatre Space

Approximately 845 m<sup>2</sup> not including the gallery in former Council Chamber or the mezzanine seating in the theatre or entrances from the ground floor. The entrances add 157.5 m<sup>2</sup> for a total of 1,002.5 m<sup>2</sup>.

This is comprised of the First and Second Floors, including the former Town Hall Chamber, Kitchen, Bar, Theatre and Ground Floor Entrances.

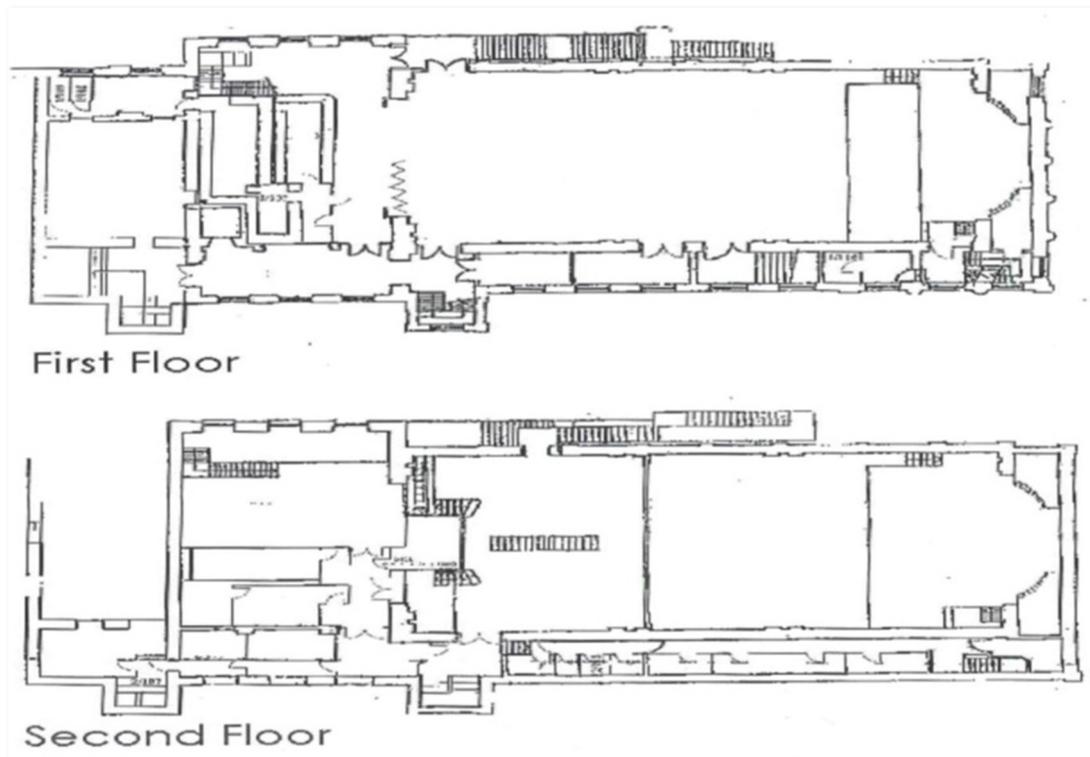
For brevity, we have called the first and second floors, together with the two ground floor entrance staircases, the Theatre Space. However, there are two historically significant spaces here: the Theatre and the original Ryde Town Hall chambers. The clock tower is also part of the Theatre Space. Together, these elements of the building represent the founding and expansion of Ryde as a recognised town from 1829.

The theatre could be restored for use as a performance venue or be part of a flexible conference and events centre. Adjoining the theatre is a bar area and a kitchen that also has access to the old Town Hall Chambers. On the second floor are the dressing rooms for the theatre, access to the clock tower and to the mezzanine seating level for the theatre. The Theatre Space as a whole could be of interest to a conference/functions business, an entertainment business or an educational organisation. The original Ryde Town Hall quickly became an important functions and entertainment venue and a modern interpretation of this could be a fitting tribute to this history.

Access to the Theatre Space is via the two entrances/exits at ground level and so can be treated as a self-contained element of the building. Accordingly, the working

group saw this as being taken by one buyer who could see the potential in the upper two floors, while maintaining the historical value of the Town Hall and Theatre and ideally providing some public access to this space.

Floor plan information for the Theatre Space follows.



*Figure 8: Theatre Space*

### Caretaker's Rooms

Approximately 108 m<sup>2</sup>.

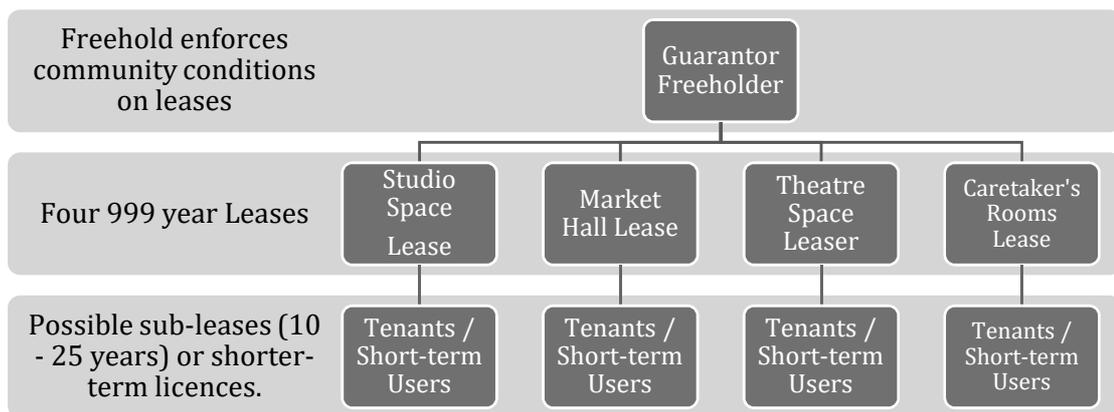
To the rear of the building are several rooms, each on a different storey and accessed from a stairwell that opens into Market Street. These were once the accommodation for a caretaker and his family. They could be utilised as small offices, studios, individual maker spaces or for building management purposes. The Google Maps Street View image below provides a better understanding of this space.



*Figure 9: Caretaker's Rooms*

## PROPOSED OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE

In order to protect the historical value of the building, provide some level of public access and create commercially attractive purchasing options, the working group proposed the ownership structure portrayed in the diagram below. The Freehold is a legal instrument to be set up as part of the purchasing process. The Working Group suggests that the Guardian of the Freehold should be Ryde Town Council or similar publicly accountable body.



## MARKET ASSESSMENT

In order to evaluate the feasibility of establishing Ryde Town Hall as a physical hub for the Creative Industries with a focus on the Fashion Design and Textiles sub-sector, the RTH Working Group reviewed existing commercial property provision in Ryde and studio provision on the Isle of Wight. The group also reviewed the co-working and maker space market in the UK, with special focus on South Coast towns. In order to understand whether there might be enough demand for the Creative Ryde vision, the group evaluated the extent and make-up of the local Creative Industries sector. It analysed the local Fashion and Textiles sub-sector in some detail, conducting surveys among Isle of Wight artists and Fashion and Textiles students and researching businesses and individuals associated with the industry here and nationally. The Working Group also approached several individuals and organisations with a view to gauging market reaction and identifying potential buyers of long-term leases, tenants, supporters and influencers.

### Commercial Property in Ryde

The Ryde postcode (PO33) has a little over 1,200 commercial properties. After excluding those in St Helens, Havenstreet, Wootton and Fishbourne, there are around 920 properties remaining. This includes commercial properties in Binstead and at “edge of town” locations such as Westridge and Nicholson Road Business Park. Setting aside Beach Huts (116), the types of commercial property that predominate in Ryde are: Shops (293), Workshops (66) and Offices (64). The next largest categories are Stores (buildings used for storage - 30) and Self-Catering Holiday Units (29).

The streets in Ryde with the most commercial properties are: High Street (148) and Union Street (109). Ignoring Beach Huts again, the streets with the next highest numbers of commercial property are: Esplanade (45), Nicholson Road (37), Smallbrook Lane (28), Cross Street (27), Monkton Street (25), Brading Road (24), Cothey Way (23), East Street (20), George Street (18) and Ashey Road (18). Rink Road (14), Lind Street (13), Star Street (11) and Marlborough Road (11) also manage to reach double digits.

The High Street, Union Street, Esplanade, Cross Street, George Street, Lind Street and Star Street are at the heart of the town (total 371 properties).

Monkton Street, East Street and Rink Road represent a cluster of commercial properties on the East side near the railway line (total 59).

Nicholson Road (37 properties) is a business park on the South side of Ryde, whereas Marlborough Road, Cothey Way and Brading Road represent the commercial development leading out of town towards Westridge and the Tesco Superstore (total 58 properties).

The 28 Smallbrook Lane commercial properties are mostly rural types such as land used for storage (19) and stables (3).

Of the 293 Shops, 125 can be found in the High Street and 76 in Union Street. Other concentrations can be found in Cross Street (25) and the Esplanade (15). There are also 2 “Superstores”: Co-operative in Anglesea Street and the out of town Tesco on

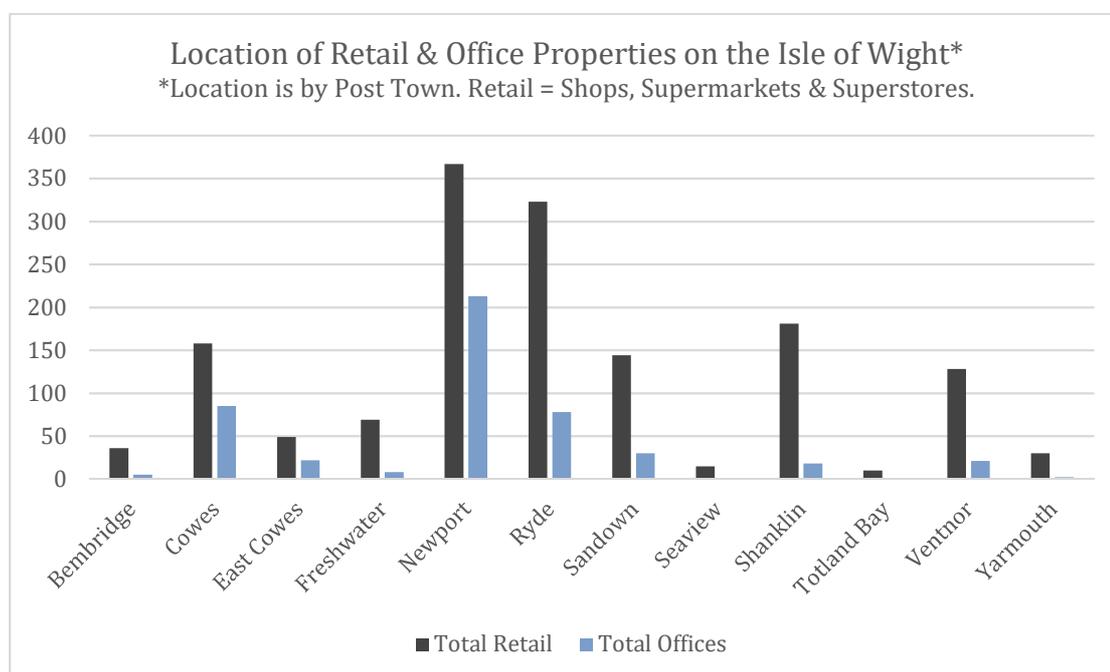
Brading Road. Some of the 15 Kiosks are also retail properties (e.g. the 7 Kiosks in the Royal Victoria Arcade in Union Street).

Workshops are clustered around East Street (12), Monkton Street (11) and Rink Road (8) on the East side of town. On the outskirts of town there are 13 Workshops in Nicholson Road and 4 in Cothey Way near Tesco. These locations account for 48 of the 66 Workshops. Workshops sometimes include an Office. There are only 10 workshops in the town centre: George Street has 2 and the others are dotted one per street in Albert Place, Green Street, Hill Street, Melville Street, Newport Street, Park Road, Union Road and Union Street.

Office space is limited to 64 properties in Ryde as a whole. The highest number of offices in one street is on the edge of town in Cothey Way (14). After that we have the town centre streets such as the High Street (9), Union Street (8). George Street (5), Lind Street (3), Thomas Street (3), and Union Road (3). There are another 4 offices on Nicholson Road in the Business Park.

It is possible that some properties that are designated as Shops are being used as Offices but it would require a street survey to identify whether this is a significant feature.

The graph below compares the presence of Retail and Office properties in Isle of Wight Post Towns (i.e. Ryde includes all PO33 properties) and clearly shows the relatively low number of Office properties in Ryde compared to Newport.



Stores (buildings used for storage) may also be of interest for a studio / co-working / maker space initiative. The Depository in Nelson Street, for example, is classified as a Store. Of the 30 buildings classified as Stores, there are 11 in the town centre. 3 can be found in the High Street, 2 in Benett Street, 2 in Newport Street and 1 each in Nelson Street, St John's Hill, Union Street and West Street.

Further afield, there 4 Stores in East Street and 2 in Monkton Street. Another 4 can be found in Nicholson Road.

There are also 18 Warehouses in Ryde but none are in the town centre. There is one in East Street, 3 in Rink Road and 11 in Nicholson Road. Cothey Way, Brading Road and Ashley Vineyard each have one. The latter also contains an Office.

### **Studio survey**

From a review of the Isle of Wight Arts Society membership, feedback from artist members of the Society, Internet research and local knowledge the Working Group determined that most artists and craftspeople have set up home studios.

There are four buildings where studios can be rented: Jubilee Stores in Newport (7 studios), the Depository in Ryde (up to 6 studios), 141 High Street in Ryde (3 studios) and Binnel Studios in St Lawrence which houses 8 artists.

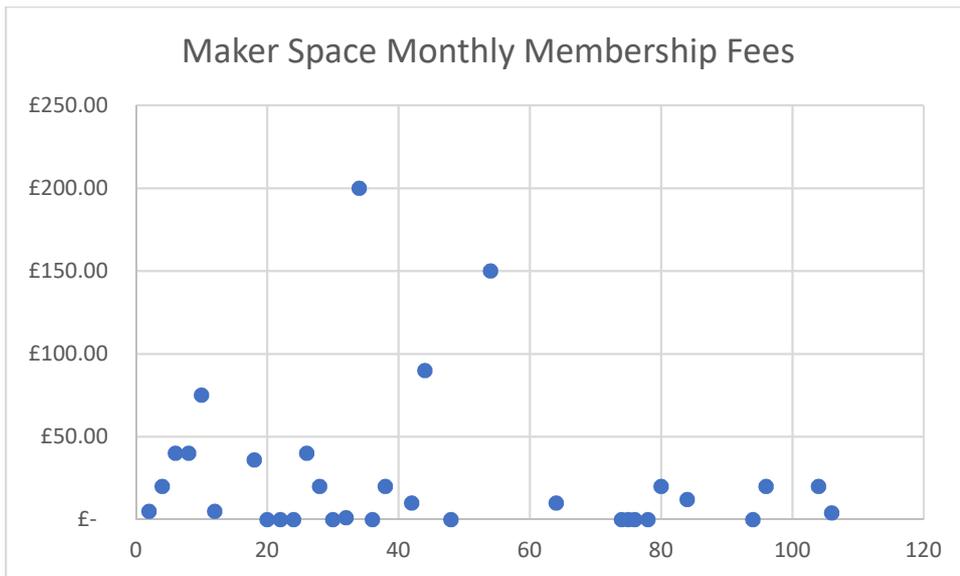
Studio spaces have been priced at around £110 to £125 per month on the island, with variable inclusion of services such as electricity, water and broadband. Ryde also has a photography studio in Union Road which is available to hire at £15 per hour.

### **Co-working and Maker Spaces**

Co-working and Maker Spaces (including FabLabs, and Hacker Spaces), have been a rapidly growing feature of urban property markets for at least five years in the USA and continental Europe. The London School of Economics' Business Review reported that there were at least 156 co-working spaces in London in 2017 – roughly one space for every 45,000 inhabitants. In the South of England, these types of mutually supportive, flexible work spaces have not developed as quickly but are becoming more common.

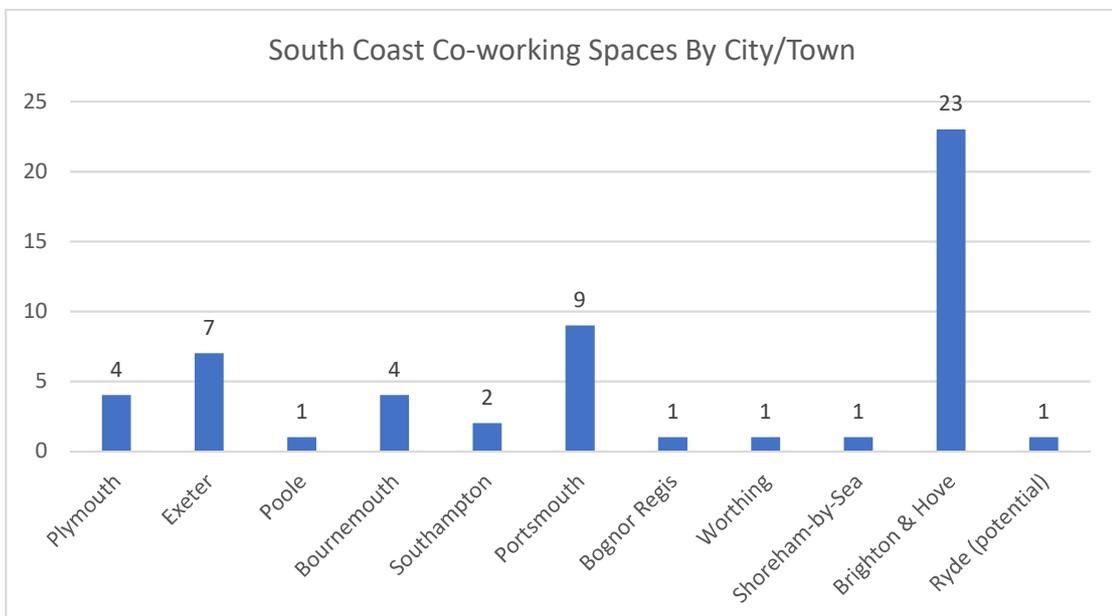
Co-working Spaces tend to emphasise desks, offices, event and meeting spaces while Maker Spaces, FabLabs and HackerSpaces focus on work benches/tables, tools, machines and equipment for making things. However, the term Co-working Space is often used as an over-arching term that includes Maker Spaces.

A survey of UK Maker Spaces in 2015 found 97 spaces. Twenty of these were in London. Along the South Coast there was one in Eastbourne, two in Brighton, one in Southampton and one in Exeter. Pricing varied widely as can be seen in the chart below.



The data visualised in the chart above indicates that around 10% of spaces had no monthly fees. Some of these only asked for donations and others only had project fees or resource usage fees. Where a monthly membership fee was charged, it was mostly below £50. Generally, the monthly membership included some access to basic resources but specialist equipment or heavier usage incurred additional charges.

Our own online research (November 2018) for co-working and maker spaces along the south coast of England identified 54 spaces. See chart below.



Brighton & Hove is the leader by some margin with 23 such spaces and is probably demonstrating the strong influence of London on its economy.

Another factor that appears to influence the creation of co-working and maker spaces is the presence of a university although Southampton with two universities seems to be out of step with this in only having 2 venues.

Population is likely to be another factor in the viability of co-working and maker spaces but it is not enough on its own. Of the South Coast towns and cities, Brighton does have the highest population (273,400) and has one co-working or maker space for every 11,887 people. But Southampton, with the second highest population (253,651) only has two co-working spaces (one for every 126,826 people). At the other end of the scale, Shoreham-by-Sea has one space for a population of 20,547 and Bognor Regis has one space for a population of 24,064. The table below shows this analysis in more detail.

### South Coast Co-working/Maker Spaces by Town/City

City / Town	Spaces	Population (2011)	Pop / Space	Universities
Plymouth	4	234,982	58,746	1
Exeter	7	129,800	18,543	1
Poole	1	147,645	147,645	1*
Bournemouth	4	187,503	46,876	1*
Southampton	2	253,651	126,826	2
Portsmouth	9	238,137	26,460	1
Bognor Regis	1	24,064	24,064	1**
Worthing	1	100,200	100,200	1***
Shoreham-by-Sea	1	20,547	20,547	1***
Brighton & Hove	23	273,400	11,887	3
Ryde (potential)	1	32,072	32,072	

\*Bournemouth University has its main campus in Poole.

\*\* Bognor Regis has a University of Chichester campus.

\*\*\* Worthing has Worthing College as well as a MET University Campus. The latter also has a campus in Shoreham and Brighton.

The population of Ryde suggests it could support one co-working or maker space if it was imaginatively managed. Its weakness is a lack of higher education establishments and bringing a provider of higher education into the town would be a positive factor. Maintaining good links with the Isle of Wight College and nearby universities (e.g. Portsmouth, Chichester) may help to make this possible.

According to [www.deskmag.com](http://www.deskmag.com), the UK co-working market is sharply divided between London and the rest of the country (article by Carsten Foertsch, 3 Oct 2018).

More than half of all UK co-working spaces provide less than 50 desks and 5,000 square feet. The UK's average number of members per desk is 1.39 – somewhat higher than in other countries - and 42% of co-working spaces are run by a company that operates at least two locations. These companies also tend to lease their locations for at least 10 years. In the UK a third of all spaces are for a niche group.

80% of co-working spaces target individuals and 66% target micro businesses with less than 10 employees. Very few co-working spaces show an active interest in companies with more than 10 employees.

Financially, only 39% of Britain's co-working spaces are profitable. This reflects the recency of many spaces (27% are less than a year old) and the fact that co-working spaces are often part of a broader business model to develop investment and to attract longer-term tenants.

The standard model for co-working spaces is to enrol "Members" on a monthly fee and they are then charged a usage fee for specific facilities/resources (e.g. a desk, a machine, tools, studio, etc.). Some facilities and resources may be included in the monthly Membership fee.

Globally, the median number of Members per co-working space is 45 but a third have less than 25 and half have less than 50. The trend since 2012 has been towards larger memberships. In 2012 two thirds of spaces had less than 50 Members.

For reference, only 14% of global co-working spaces are located in areas with less than 50,000 local inhabitants. 40% are in areas with 1 million or more local inhabitants but 59% also have another space within 2 km. Only 14% of spaces are in a town or city that has only one space which seems to map across to the 14% of spaces in locations with less than 50,000 inhabitants.

The global financial picture for co-working spaces is slowly improving with 38% losing money in 2012 but only 25% doing so in 2018. Profitable spaces have edged up from 39% in 2012 to 42% in 2018. In between are the "breaking even" spaces which account for one third in 2018. However, there is some way to go since 82% of spaces are "for profit" and only 13% are non-profit.

The global picture shows a growing percentage of revenues (27% in 2018) coming from office rentals. Desk rentals account for 32% of revenues, memberships 10%, renting meeting spaces 10%, and renting event and class spaces 8%. The other 13% comes from virtual office services, sponsorships, sale of food and drinks, sale of tickets to internal events and public donations.

### **Creative Industries on the Isle of Wight**

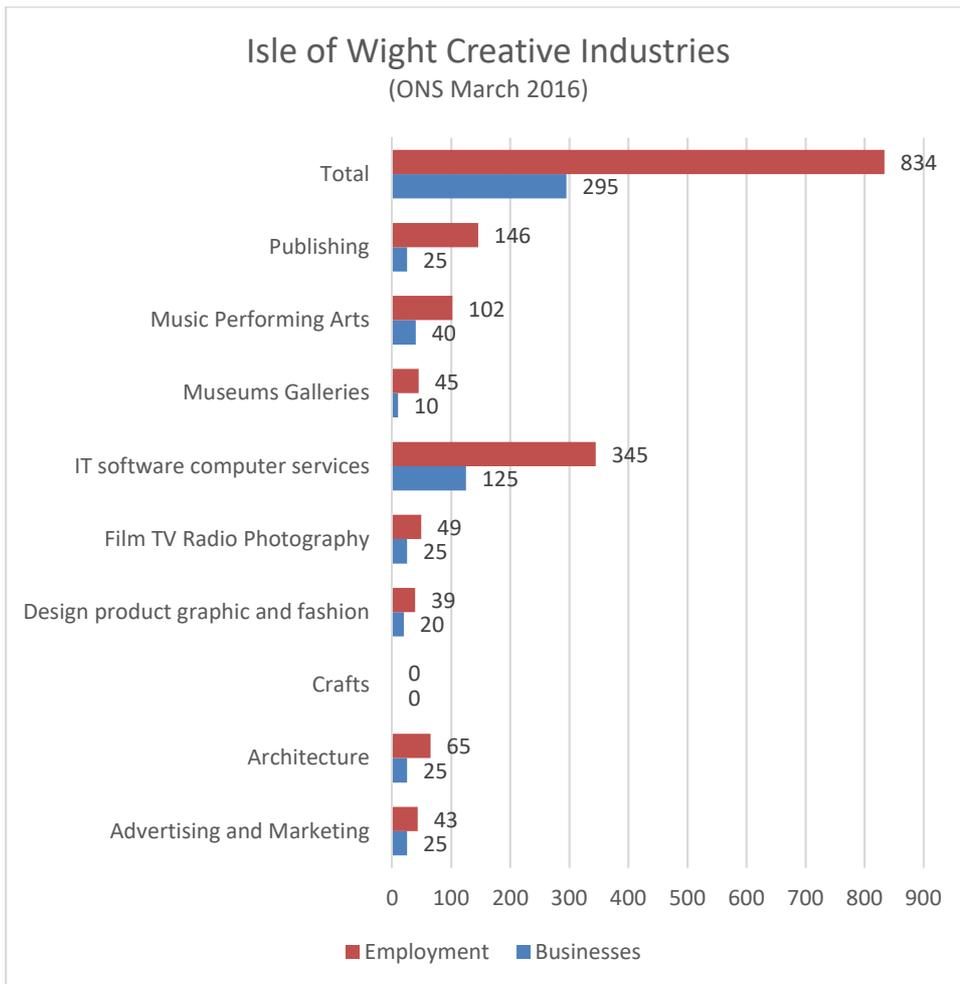
Providing space for and attracting the Creative Industries has been at the heart of many of the most successful regeneration projects in the UK and elsewhere. The definition of "Creative Industries" has been the subject of some debate but the

current definition of Creative Industry Occupations used by the UK Government is set out in the following Table.

Creative Occupations Group	Description
Advertising and marketing	Marketing and sales directors Advertising and public relations directors Public relations professionals Advertising accounts managers and creative directors Marketing associate professionals
Architecture	Architects Town planning officers Chartered architectural technologists Architectural and town planning technicians
Crafts	Smiths and forge workers Weavers and knitters Glass and ceramics makers, decorators and finishers Furniture makers and other craft woodworkers Other skilled trades not elsewhere classified
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	Graphic designers Product, clothing and related designers
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	Arts officers, producers and directors Photographers, audio-visual and broadcasting equipment operators
IT, software and computer services	Information technology and telecommunications directors IT business analysts, architects and systems designers Programmers and software development professionals Web design and development professionals
Publishing	Journalists, newspaper and periodical editors Authors, writers and translators
Museums, galleries and libraries	Librarians Archivists and curators
Music, performing and visual arts	Artists Actors, entertainers and presenters Dancers and choreographers Musicians

Bearing in mind that these are occupations rather than businesses and that, for instance, people in marketing roles can be found in many different industry sectors, counting the number of Creative Industry businesses and employees can be challenging.

The graph following is the Office for National Statistics' count of Creative Industry businesses and employment on the Isle of Wight as of March 2016 – the most recent figures available.



The figures for Crafts businesses (above) was withheld by ONS due to confidentiality rules and the employment figure for Design (product, graphic and fashion) includes the employment in Crafts.

Included in these figures are one-person businesses, some of which may have no local customers, are home-based and therefore have no local profile. Nevertheless, having 295 local businesses in the Creative Industries does represent a reasonably strong local platform. These 295 businesses represent 5.4% of the 5,444 live local business units as of April 2018, which is similar to the manufacturing (5.8%) and health (5.1%) sectors. On the other hand, the UK percentage of Creative Industry businesses is 10.5% which may suggest room for growth or structural impediments.

The purpose of this evaluation was to try and understand whether there might be enough demand for facilities and accommodation from the Creative Industries, and in particular from the Fashion Design and Textiles sub-sector to make Ryde Town Hall a viable hub for this sector.

### Fashion & Textiles on the Isle of Wight

Given the RTH Working Group's vision – to create a hub with maker space facilities for people working in Fashion Design and Textiles – we explored this sub-sector in some depth. Our research uncovered some remarkable historical antecedents and a wide-ranging scope of activity in this sub-sector.

## Redfern and Sons

Not many people are aware that Cowes was the birthplace of a renowned fashion house that emerged from a tailor's shop in Cowes High Street and expanded to London, Edinburgh, Paris and New York, providing haute couture to European royalty, including Queen Victoria, and other wealthy clients. This fashion house is also credited with designing the first sports-specific clothes for women (yachting, horse riding and tennis apparel) and the first women's uniforms for the Red Cross.

John Redfern (1820-1895) started his Cowes tailoring business in 1855 after initially working in his father's draper's business. He targeted the wealthy Cowes yachting set and by the early 1890s, as John Redfern & Sons, had expanded to London, Edinburgh, Paris and New York. After his death, his son Ernest and business partner Charles Poynter (who had added Redfern to his surname at some point) took over the business as Redfern Ltd. In addition to locating shops close to their wealthy clientele, the company also operated a mail order business.

The Cowes shop, which at one point employed around 80 women tailors was closed in the early 1900s. The Paris headquarters was closed in 1932, re-opened again in 1936 but then finally closed in 1940.



*Figure 10: Redfern Coat and Skirt ca. 1908. V&A Museum*

## Artigiano

Another Isle of Wight business name associated with the Fashion Design and Textiles sub-sector on the Isle of Wight is Artigiano. This company was formed in 1995 by Claire and Glyn Locke as a mail order business specialising in Italian styled clothing and accessories for women.

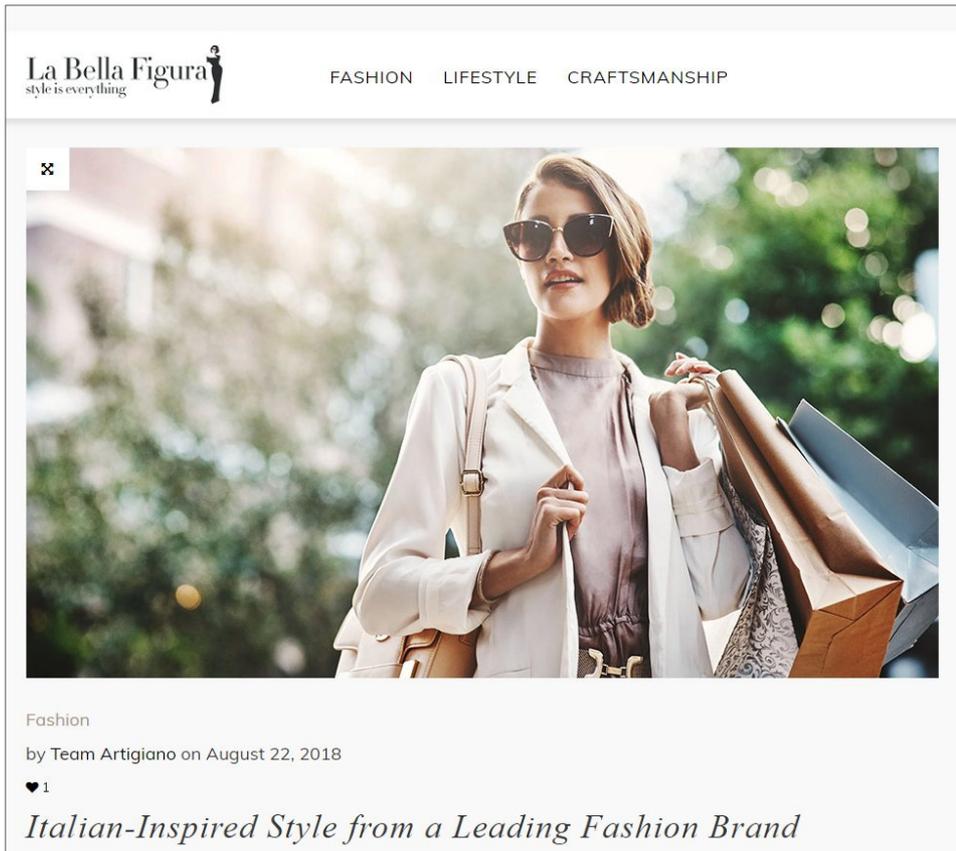


Figure 11: Artigiano website page (January 2019)

In 2001, Artigiano opened a new call-centre, marketing office and design studio fashioned from two re-purposed agricultural buildings. By 2006, when the business was sold to Scotts Limited for a reported £28 million, Artigiano was employing a workforce of 122. After the sale, the new owners began to rationalise the operations of the Group and in 2013 the order fulfilment and warehousing activities in Cowes were moved to Swindon, with the loss of 35 local jobs. A small (12 person) Scotts Limited call handling team was to remain on the Isle of Wight but the Artigiano brand was subsequently sold to Klingel Mail Order of Germany in 2016.

#### **TeeMill Tech Ltd. (formerly Rapanui Clothing Ltd.)**

In 2009, two Isle of Wight brothers, Mart and Rob Drake-Knight, set up Rapanui Clothing in a shed, offering sustainably sourced T-shirts with overprinted designs that reflected their ecological concerns and interests in surfing. The business followed an online direct marketing model although it experimented with physical retail outlets as well.

The experience of providing mini online shops inserted into the websites of major retailing brands led Rapanui to re-position their business as a supplier of a complete online store and supply chain solution for other brands who saw the value in selling responsibly sourced T-shirts and other garments under their own brand name and offering customer choice in personalising the garments with their choice of overprinting designs. The re-positioning was accompanied by a change in name to TeeMill Tech Ltd, although the Rapanui brand continues as the clothing brand for the business. The TeeMill Tech website claims over 15,000 start-ups now use their

technology and the growing business is now located in Freshwater. As of February 2019, the business employs 50 people.

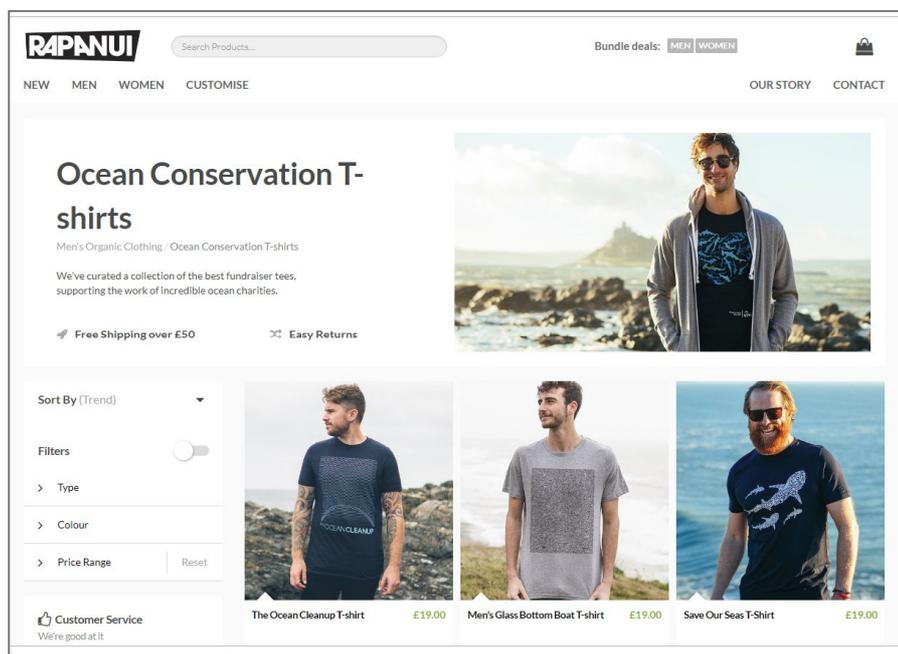


Figure 12: Example of a Rapanui Product Page

Redfern, Artigiano and Rapanui are the largest Fashion Design enterprises to have been established on the Isle of Wight to date. All three demonstrate the importance of innovation and reaching a national and international market to achieve significant growth.

However, there are many smaller businesses based on the island who also make a living from the Fashion Design and Textiles sector. The table below lists those that we have discovered, including those engaged in “industrial textiles”. We have found some evidence of individuals with textile craft skills, e.g. pattern cutters, moving between the “fashion” and the “industrial” areas of activity.

The table has been grouped into sub-types of activity and the names of businesses and individuals are in alphabetical order within each sub-type. The table contains those businesses and people identified during the RTH Working Group’s period of research and is not necessarily a complete listing.

#### Other Fashion & Textiles Businesses

Name	Activity	Location
Clothing & Accessories (26 Businesses)		
Annabella Designs	Wedding and formal gowns	Ventnor
Anne Ginger	Soft Furnishings	Lake, Sandown
Bridal Treasures	Alterations service & off-the-peg wedding gowns	Cowes
Claier Stitch & Sew	Sewing, alterations	Newport

Cloth & Comfort	Alterations service	Ryde
Costume Workshop	Design and hire of theatrical costumes	Shanklin
Karen Dornellie	Bridal shop. Designs Bridal veils.	Newport
Karen Field	Freelance Creative Pattern Cutter	Cowes
Forget Me Not Designs	Bespoke wedding dress & gown design service	Ryde
Kevin Garlick Shoes	Handmade period and vintage shoes	Ventnor
Hellerslea Fabrics	Textiles, haberdashery	Newport
IDML-Fast Stitch	Embroidery services	Newport
Isle of Sweets	Craft activities, supplies and Sweet Shop	Shanklin
Isle of Wight Textiles	Textiles, haberdashery	Shanklin
King Textiles	Embroidery & overprinting services	Newport
Knit-Knacks	Yarns, knitting supplies	Sandown
Meraki Leather	Handmade leather accessories	Ventnor
Mrs Hedgehog's Knit Bits Wool Shop	Yarns, knitting supplies	Cowes
My Little Making Company	Sewing & alterations, soft toys and blankets	Ryde
New Carnival Company	Design and creation of carnival costumes	Ryde
Jordan Norrington	Tailoring services. Has BA in Costume Production.	Newport (also at Bridal Treasures)
Osborne's	Alterations service and menswear	Ryde, Newport, Shanklin
Seasafe Systems	Marine Clothing (including own design incorporating life jacket)	Cowes
Sew in Love	Handmade textile decorations for weddings	Newport
Sew Mobile	Assume sewing, alterations	Ventnor
Sewing, Repair, Alteration	As name suggests!	Ryde

Shademakers	Design and creation of carnival costumes	Ryde and Wroxall
Elizabeth Smith	Bridal gowns, prom dresses in own and other's designs	Ryde
Smock Project	Designer Smocks	East Cowes / London
Stitch in Time	Alterations	Newport
The Stitching Elmers	Fabrics, yarns, embroidery - do workshops	Ryde
Katrina Marie White	Seamstress, children's clothes	Ryde
West Wight Alpacas	Sell yarns made from their Suri Alpacas	Wellow
Wyatt & Jack	Wallets, bags, totes made from reclaimed beach textiles	Bembridge
Yarns for Ewe	Yarns, knitting supplies	Newport
Industrial Textiles (10 Businesses)		
Cowes Canvas Company	Upholstery & Canvas Covers	East Cowes
Cowes Sailmakers	Sailmaker	East Cowes
Island Canvas	Canvas covers	Ventnor
Gurit Ltd	Textiles for composites	Newport
Paul Newell Sails	Sailmaker	Bembridge
Ratsey & Lapthorne	Sailmaker	Cowes
Ryde Upholstery	Upholstery services	Ryde
Sailcare Company	Sail repairs	Cowes
J Shirlaw	Upholstery & Canvas covers	Cowes
Solent Sails	Sailmakers	Cowes
Other (2 Businesses)		
Georgina Grose Ltd	Handmade, bespoke textile lampshades.	Alverstone
South Coast Flagpoles	Design and supply flags and flagpoles	Ryde

Consumer Fashion Design and Textiles businesses are concentrated in Newport and Ryde, the two largest towns, whereas the industrial textiles businesses are concentrated

in Cowes, which reflects the connection between Cowes, yachting and the making and repair of sails.



### Textile Artists

As part of a survey of Isle of Wight artists, we have identified 34 Isle of Wight artists who claim to work with textiles as a medium or as part of their work. Most of these can be found on the Isle of Wight Arts website. The activities of these artists range from making embroidered, knitted and crocheted gifts, to creating novel printed textiles, to making items of clothing or incorporating textiles, thread and stitching in pieces of art depicting scenes of nature, portraiture or other themes.

An analysis of the location of these artists shows that the largest number (7) are in Newport, followed by Cowes (4). Brighthstone, Freshwater, Ryde and Sandown all have 3 artists working with textiles. See chart below.



These figures do not suggest that there would be enough demand from Ryde and East Wight textiles artists to take up many new studio and maker spaces. However, our research does indicate that a combination of Fashion & Textiles businesses and Textile Artists, supplemented by other Creative Industry businesses could provide a critical mass for a new maker space. Indeed, the contribution of textile artists in teaching others the techniques involved in textile art would be an important component in developing the relevant skills base on the island. There is considerable interest among textiles artist in a new gallery and bookable teaching space at RTH. The textile artists in Ryde (3), Bembridge (2), St Helens (1), Hale Common (1) and Sandown (3) might be interested in showing their work there because of proximity. The success of the gallery would, however, be dependent on displaying a broader range of work than just textile art.

### **Fashion & Textiles Education on the Isle of Wight**

The Island Innovation VI Form Campus and the Isle of Wight College, both in Newport, offer Fashion and Textiles education as part of a portfolio of courses that can lead to a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design. However, Island Innovation places greater emphasis on the Fashion and Textiles courses and has around 50 students enrolled after two years of offering this option. Around 70% of the students go on to higher education after completing studies at Island Innovation.

We were interested in the employment success that these students might have experienced after graduation, so we advertised a survey to current and past Isle of Wight students of Fashion and Textiles on social media to collect some of these experiences.

Eleven people responded to the survey. Eight had attended Island Innovation VI Form Campus, one had attended Carisbrooke High School and one had attended Ryde School. We do not have the high school information for one respondent.

Eight are students attending higher education institutions on the mainland. The institutions attended include Southampton Solent University, Brighton University, London School of Fashion, Fashion Retail Academy and the University of Westminster. Of the remaining three, one is working in London (self-employed) in costume design, one has had an extensive career in fashion design but subsequently pursued a career change and lives on the island, while the last one is working part-time on the island, after completing at Island Innovation in 2018 and is interested in going on to higher education.

We asked what resources they felt they needed to move forward in their career and nine said "Further Academic Training", nine said "Further Professional Training" and nine said they would like "Business Start-up Support". Seven said they would need shared access to workspaces and equipment and seven said they would need a studio for themselves.

Three people said they had found it harder than expected to find work in a relevant field but, given that most respondents are still students, the challenge of finding relevant work is still in the future for most of them. One respondent expressed a concern that there would not be any relevant work on the Isle of Wight.

In conclusion, the level of interest among high school students in Fashion and Textile Design is noteworthy and suggests that there will be a supply of qualified employees or self-employed practitioners if there are local opportunities for them.

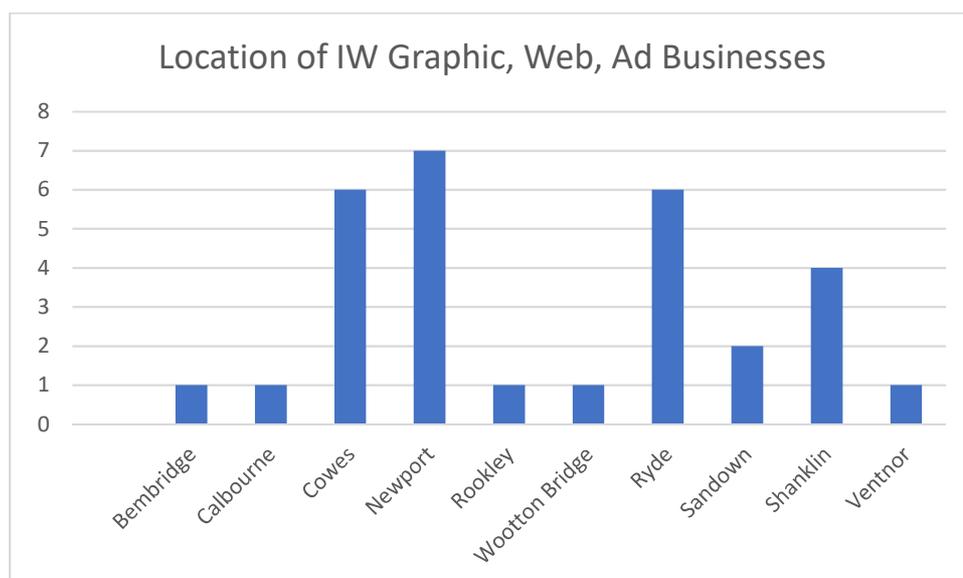
### Other Fashion and Textiles Connections

During this study, we have identified several individuals who have had a remarkable career in Fashion and Textiles Design and now live on the Isle of Wight. In addition, we have identified some young people from the Isle of Wight who are now embarked on careers in the sector, ranging from journalism to clothing design. We have not had an opportunity to interview these individuals but some might be supportive of new initiatives in Fashion and Textiles on the Isle of Wight.

### Other Creative Industry Sub-sectors.

The Working Group agreed from the outset that Ryde Town Hall would probably best suit a mix of Creative Industries businesses, organisations, artists and craftspeople. Other types of business that could be attracted to taking studio or small office space in the building would include graphic designers, website developers, advertising and marketing consultancies, digital businesses, software developers, photography and videography practitioners, perhaps even architects. The theatre space could suit a cinema, conference business or music organisation. The Working Group received some informal expressions of interest from mainland business and educational organisations who said they would like a flexible working or meeting space in Ryde.

The island's graphic design / web design / advertising and marketing businesses tend to overlap considerably in their offering and all are small businesses. Currently there are about 30 such businesses on the island and are concentrated in Newport, Ryde and Cowes



In separate work undertaken by Tractioneers, just over 100 technology businesses have been identified on the island. The majority of these are clustered around Newport and Cowes. Ryde only has around 10 of these businesses and it would

benefit the town's economy to grow this sector but suitable accommodation is scarce in the town centre.

A similar story applies to Architectural firms. Our research identified 16 Isle of Wight businesses in this field (cf. 25 by ONS in 2016) but none are located in Ryde town. Of these, six are in Newport and East Cowes and Cowes have five together. The nearest firms to Ryde town are one in Seaview and one in Wootton Bridge. The majority (ten) of the architects work from home offices which suggests this is a preferred approach to working by local architects.

We have identified nearly 30 professional photographers on the Isle of Wight, not including artists who use photography. Six of these photographers are based in Ryde. We have identified only three studios but there are likely to be more "home studios".

Music, performing and visual arts organisations represent another important part of the Creative Industries. The Isle of Wight is home to several recording studios, successful musical artists and promoters although their businesses are not always based on the island. Platform One College of Music is an educational institution in Newport, offering up to degree level courses that are awarded by the University of Chichester. The two carnival companies (included in Fashion and Textiles above) also cross over into this category. Given the relevance of a stage to some of the music organisations, we have approached them to explore potential interest in the Theatre Space at Ryde Town Hall.

Consideration should also be given to the potential use of some of the space for historical purposes. There could be permanent or occasional exhibitions relating to the history of Ryde or fashion or seaside holidays, to name a few possibilities.

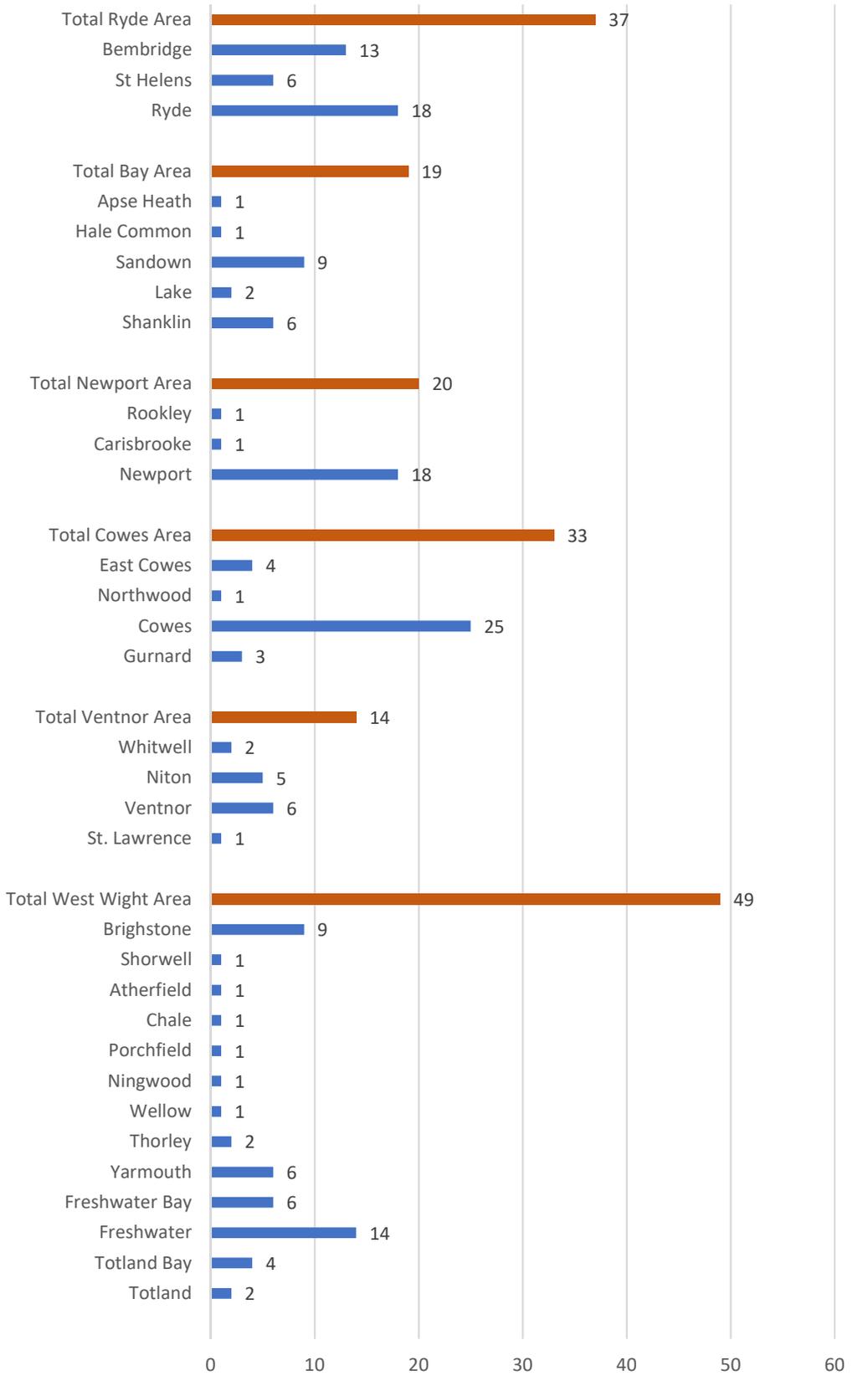
### **Isle of Wight Artists Survey**

In order to gain some insight into the potential demand for additional studio space, maker space or gallery space in Ryde, we undertook a survey of Isle of Wight artists.

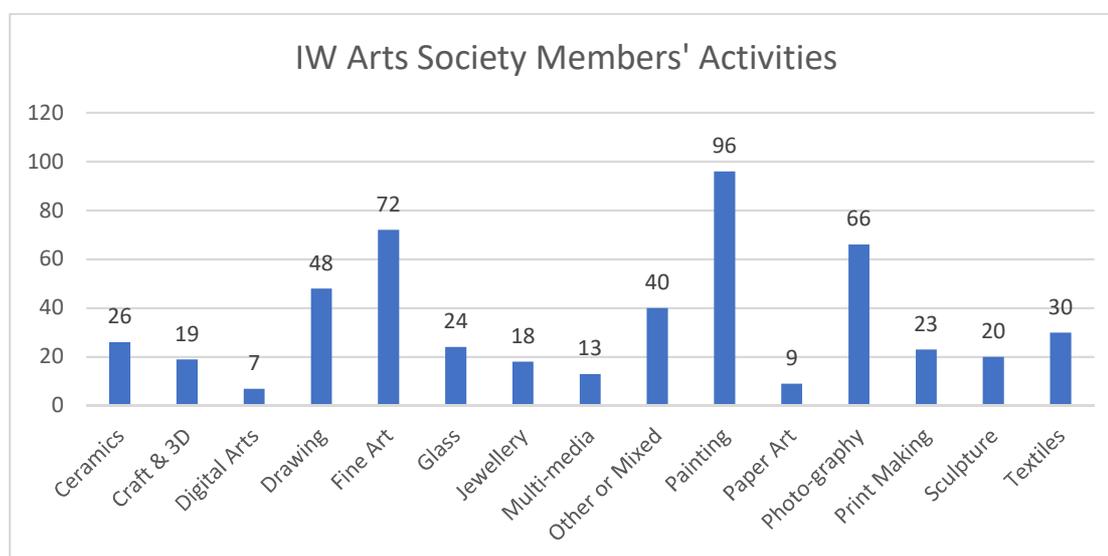
A survey of the programmes for the annual Open Studios event on the island shows at least 255 different artists have participated over the past 3 years. The Isle of Wight Arts Society website (<https://www.isleofwightarts.com/artists/>) lists 171 artists/craftspeople. Many of these take part in the Open Studio event.

Analysing the stated location of these artists shows that the West Wight is the most popular area (49), followed by Ryde (37) and then Cowes (33). Newport with 20 artists and the Sandown Bay with 19 artists are very similar, while the Ventnor area has 14. The chart below shows artist locations by town and also grouped together by area.

## Isle of Wight Artist Locations



The artists are engaged in a variety of activities. The most popular category among the Arts Society members is Painting as can be seen from the graph below:



The Working Group conducted a survey among Isle of Wight Arts Society members to find out how much interest there might be in new studio and gallery space in Ryde. Out of 11 responses, 7 expressed support for additional studio spaces in Ryde. Some of this support was generic rather than a personal interest in taking studio space in Ryde.

Five of the respondents were interested in access to shared space for special projects or for teaching and conducting workshops. Other comments indicated that an additional gallery for artists to display and sell their work would be widely welcomed, even though there are around 10 small galleries dotted around the island in addition to the main gallery at Quay Arts in Newport and the People's Gallery in Ryde's High Street.

The survey response would indicate that most established artists already have suitable studio arrangements, often in their own homes or gardens. However, they would be interested in new gallery opportunities in Ryde and some artists are interested in temporarily hiring shared workspaces with larger work surfaces and access to specialist equipment. Some also saw new studio space being important to help new or expanding artists, particularly in the Ryde area.

### Other Potential Buyers and Tenants

As part of this study, the Working Group has found interest in the building ranging from mainland companies specialising in business workspace development to organisations that have outreach relationships on the island. The former would want to own the whole building and apply their usage formula to the space, while the latter would be primarily interested in a serviced office and meeting space probably hired by the day.

The Working Group sees an opportunity for a café and catering business to take space in the Market Hall of the building. This would be open to the public and provide catering services to the rest of the building. If the Theatre Space was to become a conference venue or performance venue, this could be a higher value commercial opportunity. The old Town Council Chambers, with direct access to the kitchen facilities could also become a dining room for special occasions.

Tenants for studio / smaller office space could also come from business services providers outside of the Creative Industries. Smaller businesses and start-ups in the legal, accountancy and planning sectors could find a Creative Industries hub an attractive environment in which to locate their office.

## A FASHION & TEXTILES MAKER SPACE BUSINESS MODEL

In common with other Maker Space venues, Fashion & Textiles Maker Spaces usually have an annual membership fee. These fees can vary but for textiles seem to cluster around the £15 - £25 per month level and require a 12-month commitment. It is not unusual to see a price incentive to pay for a full year in advance, e.g. 12 months for the price of 10.

The core facility of these spaces is a work-station with a suitable working table and an industrial sewing machine. Other specialist machines and equipment are also made available – ranging from button-holers to steam irons to mannequins. The list of machines usually runs to around 11 or 12 for a 6-station space. A special pattern-cutting table may also be made available. The use of machinery and equipment is typically included in the rental rate for a workspace for textiles spaces. The daily rental rate for work-stations tends to be in the £25 - £35 range. Weekly rates seem to be about 3 times a single day rate and a monthly rate about 3 times a weekly rate.

Usually these venues also have a bookable classroom / workshop room and some project storage lockers. These are subject to additional rental fees.

One example we found also offered a photography studio and vinyl printing facilities to the textile workspace users.

The trend over recent years has been for co-working venues to become much larger and (in the case of maker spaces) to offer a mix of workspace types suitable for different makers, e.g. wood, metal, textiles, electronics and 3D printing. They also offer a mix of private and communal workspaces which might include some open-plan desk and private office space. In these venues, the users of the Textiles workspaces would also have access to a wider range of shared services (e.g. business development support) and facilities.

In developing a business model for Ryde, we started by estimating the space requirements for a basic 6-workstation Fashion & Textiles workspace with one large classroom / workshop space that could be divided into wet and dry areas, some project storage space, an equipment area, a workspace manager office/stores area, a kitchen / break-out area and toilets. The total space required was estimated to be in the region of 110 m<sup>2</sup>.

After making assumptions for rent (we used a working figure of £108/m<sup>2</sup>) and other costs (rates, utilities, cleaning, repairs), usage rates and resultant revenue streams, we concluded that a 6-station venue would make an annual loss in the region of £7,500 without any grant and/or donations support. However, by increasing the workstations to 8 and adding 2 desks the business should be able to run on a break-even basis (£2,600 surplus p.a.) without any grant or donations support if the costs could be held.

These calculations do not include any capital costs for buying equipment, furniture and renovations or any repayment costs for loans made to purchase these items. However, there are grant providers who are interested in supporting workspaces such as this and local feedback has indicated that there is community interest in

supporting such a Ryde Town Hall re-instatement through donations and company sponsorship.

Our next step was to identify an area within the Market Hall space as a potential Fashion & Textiles maker space. This area, currently comprised of an 86 m<sup>2</sup> room and an adjoining space of 55 m<sup>2</sup> (total of 141 m<sup>2</sup>) would provide an excellent, naturally lit working area with room for at least 8 workstations, a 28 m<sup>2</sup> class / meeting room and space for 2 desks, lockers, stores and an office for a manager.

By applying the same assumptions about revenues and rental costs as our previous model but adding proportionately more cost for utilities, rates, cleaning and repairs, our analysis indicated that there could be an annual loss of about £2,000 without any grant or donation support. There would also be room to expand the number of workstations to 10 or introduce another type of space for additional revenues. In our model, one extra workspace would generate an additional £3,000 p.a. assuming demand remained constant.

In conclusion, it does seem feasible to set up a Fashion & Textiles maker space within Ryde Town Hall. It would have to be run well, promoted well and achieve utilisation rates of at least 50%. With grant and donation support, the organisation managing the venue would be able to plan for the future and provide additional services such as business development support, with a view to supporting the success of new designers and craftspeople.

The building itself and the space within it would provide a powerful attraction to emerging and established fashion designers and craftspeople. By creating a lively and supportive maker space, the people working and potentially displaying their work there would contribute to the resurgence of a creative industry with deep roots on the Isle of Wight. At the same time, they would be contributing to the regeneration of Ryde town centre, giving new life to the Town Hall, generating new visits to the town and increased expenditure.

The maker space would only be a part of the range of new activities in Ryde Town Hall but it would be an important part of the mix, benefitting from the other new uses of the building and contributing to the overall success of the building.

What is required at this stage is for people or an organisation who wish to establish a Fashion & Textiles maker space in Ryde Town Hall to take this opportunity and see whether the start-up funding can be obtained to turn this into a reality. They may see additional opportunities in the space identified or they may even wish to take on the whole Market Hall as a business concern, providing public access, event space, catering as well as bookable community meeting spaces and the Fashion & Textiles maker space.

Our business model has been built on an assumed rental cost but purchasing the Market Hall on a long (999 years) lease could help to create a much more resilient business model. The cost to buy can be lower than the cost to rent and the asset acquired creates a substantial value for the owner.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ryde Town Hall is one of three iconic buildings that represent the foundation of Ryde as a proper town. The history of the building, its location and its internal spaces all commend it to being both protected and adapted for a Creative Industries centre. This use of the building, instead of focusing on retail or residential is more appropriate to maintaining the architectural heritage of the building and improving the vibrancy and resilience of the town centre which is currently highly reliant on a retail offering that will continue to come under growing economic pressure.

The cost of refurbishing the building will be a challenge but the potential value of owning a virtual freehold in an iconic restored building in its location will also be significant. The RTH Working Group concluded that offering the building as four clearly identifiable spaces on 999-year leases would be more attractive and manageable for potential local purchasers. Response to date indicates that this an appropriate route to take. Subjecting the leases to conditions contained in an umbrella freehold has also been well-received. The legal guardian of the freehold does, however, need to be agreed. These ideas have also been well received by the owner of the building who originally saw its potential for a music-related business or businesses but would be prepared to sell.

The market conditions in Ryde: the population size, the town's position as a gateway to Portsmouth, the size and level of interest in the Creative Industries, the lack of appropriate accommodation for businesses in this sector, all suggest that there will be sufficient demand for long term and short-term leases.

The specific challenge of creating and managing a successful Fashion & Textiles maker space in the building also seems feasible. We have a relevant history, current practitioners, significant interest in the industry from young people studying the subject, potential mentors and access to national and international markets. Our business model shows that a textiles maker space with eight workstations and 2 desks alongside a bookable teaching/meeting room could break even at a 50% occupancy rate. This definitely merits further exploration with potential users of such facilities, as well as obtaining costs for refurbishment, equipment, machinery and fittings.

The key to turning the Creative Ryde vision into reality is to find the appropriate purchasers of the four long lease spaces. Members of the RTH Working Group have started the process of identifying prospects and one member, Chris Simmons, has taken the lead in engaging with the owner of the building and potential leasehold purchasers.

One more conclusion must be mentioned: the action taken by town residents to come together and explore ways to tackle the problem of empty historic and strategic buildings in Ryde has shown how residents can achieve a great deal of progress in addressing these problems. This approach may yield solutions to other challenges in the town as well.