

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thurrock set for landmark artists' studio building

A pioneering project to create permanent affordable artists' studios in the Thames Gateway beyond east London has now been given the go-ahead. The studios are the next phase in the development of High House Production Park (HHPP) in Purfleet, Essex, a centre of excellence for the creative industries and already home to the Royal Opera House Production Workshop and the National Skills Academy backstage training centre (opening mid-2012).

In the last two weeks planning permission has been secured for the studios and Arts Council England has announced the inclusion of the project in its new capital programme.

The £2.4 million scheme is a partnership between High House Production Park Ltd, who will own the building, and East London-based charity Acme Studios, who will run the studios. The three-storey standalone building, sited next to the ROH workshop, will consist of 44 studios, including four work/live units. It is due to open in Summer 2013 and will provide much needed space for artists in the area. The architects are Colchester-based HAT Projects who have just completed the newly-opened Jerwood Gallery in Hastings.

This new project has benefited from a ground-breaking two-year government-funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between Acme and Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. The KTP has enabled new and extensive research into contemporary artists' studio practice, including in-depth interviews, to feed into the designs and specifications. The high-quality studios have been designed with great care to ensure not only that artists' practical needs are met but that the building itself will be an inspiring place to work and visit, reinforcing the professional status of its artist tenants.

The target rent is £8.50 per square foot per year (£91 m² per year) which is considerably lower than the current average for artists' studios in London.

Jonathan Harvey, Chief Executive, Acme Studios, says, 'The project provides a great opportunity to develop the rich potential for the studios to become a centre for visual arts activity in the Thames Gateway, beyond our traditional base in east and south east London. The quality of the studios, the Park's emphasis on making, and the potential for active collaboration with the Royal Opera House and National Skills Academy, makes this a very significant new resource for local artists, both sides of the estuary, and for those wishing to relocate from East London.'

Tom Grieve, HAT Projects, says, 'Working with Acme has been a fascinating process, learning from their research into artists' needs and evaluation of their existing studio complexes. We've tried to instil some of the best qualities of these spaces into this new-build project, using robust materials to create a range of studios, within which artists can feel at home and have the freedom to experiment. The exterior uses simple, raw materials - sheet metal and common fletton brick - to create a distinctive identity without imposing its presence too strongly.'

Tony Hall, Chairman of High House Production Park, says, 'I'm delighted that these studios will be opening alongside the Royal Opera House Production Workshop and the National Skills Academy. The studios will add to the creative ecology of the High House Production Park which will become a hub of artistic excellence in the region. Locating skills training together with affordable studio space and the ROH workshops will enable exciting collaborations and attract creative businesses to the area.'

Notes for editors:

Acme Studios is England's leading developer of affordable artists' studios. It has pioneered new models of studio development and ways of working with commercial developers, housing associations and local authorities. In 2012, Acme will open 49 studios at Matchmakers Wharf, Homerton, E9 in partnership with Telford Homes Plc and 27 studios at Stratford High Street, London, E15 in partnership with Genesis Housing Group. In addition to the HHPP scheme Acme is working on two new-build studio partnership projects in London (in SW9 and E2) totalling over 50 units, to open over the next two years.

Acme has been involved in the creation of artists' studios at the High House Production Park since early 2007. Acme carried out an initial demand study in 2007, followed by an in-depth feasibility and demand study in 2010 which provided a blue print for the current scheme. For more information contact Jack Fortescue, Communications Officer, jack@acme.org.uk or visit www.acme.org.uk

High House Production Park Limited is

This project is the latest phase in the development of the High House Production Park in Purfleet, Essex, as a centre of excellence for creative and cultural industries and wider community use. For more information visit www.highhouseproductionpark.co.uk

HAT Projects are a young architecture practice founded by Tom Grieve and Hana Loftus. For more information, visit www.hatprojects.com. HAT Projects are appointed as architect and lead consultant, with Momentum Engineering (structural and civil engineering), Skelly & Couch (M&E engineering) and Pierce Hill (quantity surveying).



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