

Artists to get permanent studios on former toys factory site

Planning permission has been granted for 49 purpose-built artists' studios as part of a landmark mixed-use development on the site of the former Lesney Matchbox Toys Factory in Homerton, E9. The development by Telford Homes Plc in partnership with Acme Studios, is located to the north of the main London 2012 Olympic Park, less than 200 metres from the International Broadcast Centre which will become a focus for creative industries after the Games. The development comprises 209 residential units which will become available for sale (40% will be affordable) or as social housing, artists' studios and commercial space for community, office and retail use. There will also be improved access to the River Lee Navigation with moorings for residential and commercial boats.

Homerton is adjacent to Hackney Wick, an area that has become synonymous with artists in recent years. Acme Chief Executive Jonathan Harvey said, *'Acme Studios is delighted to be establishing more affordable studio space in a part of London which has the highest concentration of artists' studios anywhere in the world, but where so many of the buildings are short-term and of poor quality. Our scheme will create a permanent and high-quality resource for artists which will contribute to Hackney Council's commitment to encouraging creative industries in the borough and, through public engagement, bring real benefits to new residents and existing communities.'*



Block A of the new development at Lesney Matchbox Toys, Homerton, E8, which with the glass trapezoid, will include 49 purpose-built affordable artists' studios.

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Telford Homes worked closely with Acme throughout the planning process and quickly understood the needs of artists and the benefits they would bring to the project. Acme will receive studios built to its specifications at a price that will guarantee affordable rents. David Panton, Acme Director Property Development, said, *'Telford Homes has enthusiastically embraced the presence of artists' studios in the scheme. Acme is excited to be working in partnership with a residential house builder with a genuine commitment to East London and to creating a mixed-use development which will be an enjoyable place to live and work.'*

Hackney Council was determined to encourage and maintain employment on the site which falls within a Defined Employment Area. The commercial space including the artists' studios, which form part of the section 106 agreement, will result in a greater number of jobs than the previous factory. Acme's studios make up more than half of the commercial element and will be 100 percent occupied from day one, acting as a powerful magnet for other organisations and businesses. John Fitzgerald, Telford Homes Joint Group Managing Director said, *'Including artists' studios within a new development creates a natural conduit to local communities. Artists' studios hold a natural attraction and by having them integrated into the heart of the development, we will attract other creative and commercial businesses to the area.'*

Acme has a long-standing commitment to public engagement and one of the studios will be devoted to the Hackney Studio Residency, an award for an artist whose work naturally involves local people. The studios are the final part of a major grant to Acme from Arts Council England's Grants for the arts – capital programme, which will contribute towards the creation of 180 permanent affordable artists' studios across London.

Work is underway and the target completion date is July 2012.

ENDS

Notes for editors

Founded by Jonathan Harvey and David Panton in 1972, Acme Studios is a London-based charity which provides affordable studio space, residencies and awards for non-commercial fine artists. Acme has had a presence in Hackney for almost 40 years and manages 50 studios at Orsman Road, N1, the only permanent studio building in the borough. Acme has pioneered new models of mixed-use developments with commercial house builders and social housing providers including:

- 50 studios at the Galleria, Peckham, SE15 with Barratt Homes.
- 21 studios at Leven Road, Poplar, E14 with Swan Housing Group.
- 12 studios at Harrow Road, NW10 with Catalyst Housing Group (opens 2010)
- 15 studios at Stratford High Street, E15 with Genesis Housing Group (opens 2012).

In total, Acme manages over 400 studios in existing buildings across London.

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