



HOUSING INNOVATION TO SUSTAIN CREATIVE PRACTICE IN HACKNEY WICK AND FISH ISLAND

NOVEMBER 2022

ABOUT THE REPORT

FUNDERS

Hackney Wick & Fish Island Community Development Trust: The Hackney Wick & Fish Island Community Development Trust (HWFI CDT) was formed in 2017 and aims to preserve the rich cultural life of Hackney Wick and Fish Island by securing buildings for it to flourish in the long term.

HWFI CDT is committed to working together with the community, landlords, public authorities and developers to ensure that the identity and social fabric of the Hackney Wick and Fish Island community is retained, enterprise is supported and change benefits local people.

Between its Board members and partners it supports a critical local eco-system of cultural and community activities that provide enterprise, jobs and skills opportunities for local enterprise and residents. It is not-for-profit with a board made up of business and community leaders working or living in the area.

Palm Lane Estates: Is a landlord and developer with significant land holdings in Hackney Wick and Fish Island. It is a supporter of the arts and has been providing space for creatives since the 1990s.

ADVISORS

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Centro is a Clerkenwell-based urban planning consultancy, relishing change, and delivering development that works for people.

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AUTHOR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hackney Wick and Fish Island (HWFI) is an internationally recognised creative and cultural quarter. It was named one of London’s first Mayorally designated Creative Enterprise Zones in 2018, in recognition of both its contribution to London’s creative economy and the jeopardy the area faced from rising land values and a need to mature and diversify, supporting not only growth but greater inclusion.¹ Organically grown, the area initially attracted artists seeking low-cost space in formerly industrial buildings from the 1990s and has undergone rapid development and change from the coming of the Olympics in 2012. Change has produced widespread concern about the loss of workspace and associated fragmentation of a productive cluster, sparking a cross-sector response from community, creative, public and private actors innovating to sustain the creative ecology of the area. Less developed is a response to the parallel loss of affordable housing in the area, also a product of rising land values and representing an equal threat to the continuation of HWFI’s creative economy. This report seeks to step into the gap by focusing on the housing needs of “local creatives”, a term which this report uses to refer to people who live or work in Hackney Wick and have occupations in the creative industries as defined by Department for Culture, Media and Sport.²

Falling across the London boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets and situated in the Olympic Legacy Opportunity Area (OA), HWFI forms one of the four sub-areas for which the London Legacy Development Corporation holds planning powers. Tasked with meeting both the housing needs of the relevant parts of the four Olympic Growth boroughs and London’s wider strategic housing need, the LLDC was established to deliver the Olympic regeneration legacy and achieve housing targets set at the sub-regional level. In HWFI, the impact of the legacy is complex and the 14,098 homes delivered within the area since 2012 are observed to be poorly matched with the housing needs of local creatives.³

Firstly, the supply of new housing in HWFI is failing to meet the needs of local creatives on low to medium incomes.⁴ Homeownership is out of reach for all but the top earners, intermediate and genuinely affordable options are few. The majority of Londoners unable to buy homes or qualify for social housing predominantly find accommodation in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) but the sector in HWFI – and in London more widely – is contracting, struggling to meet demand, and prices for the homes that are available for rent are rising.⁵

Secondly, standard housing options are failing to meet the specific needs of the creative practitioners that require space to both work and live.⁶ Where informal work-live arrangements were once created in abundance across the area’s plethora of disused warehouses, today the buildings that house these uses are ageing, conditions are worsening and area is subject to both increased competition for space and scrutiny. While the positive, productivity and collaboration-generating aspects of informal arrangements are recognised, authorities remain wary of work-live becoming de-facto residential loft space over time and resistant to projects combining work and live uses. No model that retains the benefits while addressing risks has been delivered in HWFI, but examples are coming forward elsewhere of projects and policy approaches which ensure the balance between work and live is maintained.⁷

As it stands, many creatives face a choice between a home or a workspace. While the former is prioritised, there is evidence that the lack of affordable housing options in HWFI is resulting in workers relocating to areas further afield.⁸ This outcome will heighten long-observed risks of fragmentation to the creative community with the likely consequence that the intended local occupiers of newly

provided, low-cost workspace will be travelling to HWFI from ever greater distances, or not at all. The separation between live and work space is likely to have detrimental impacts on the overall attractiveness and vibrancy of the neighbourhood, and be associated with increased carbon emissions and expenditure in relation to commutes.

While the issue of a “squeezed middle” comprising residents who cannot afford to buy and are struggling to keep pace with rising PRS prices is not unique to HWFI or to creatives, HWFI’s status as an internationally recognised cultural cluster provides a clear remit for focusing on the housing needs of creative practitioners with a view towards sustaining the cluster. HWFI is uniquely positioned to pilot innovative solutions to housing challenges: it is a creative heartland where new approaches to securing affordable workspace are emerging, it additionally benefits from Creative Enterprise Zone status and a policy context which is supportive of innovative housing models. New approaches to delivering i) work-live space which prioritises affordability and implements frameworks to ensure workspaces are continually used for creative practice and ii) community led housing models tailored to facilitate creative production, both have significant potential to form part of a solution.

Projects which fall into these categories, designed and delivered to meet creative living requirements could offer significant neighbourhood benefits, contributing to inclusive place-making, while providing an “anchor” to ensure resident creatives have affordable accommodation in HWFI in perpetuity. While pilot schemes would likely deliver small numbers, they would provide an evidence-base to inform decision-making going forward and have potential to scale. These projects could provide a roadmap for the sensitive and productive refurbishment of HWFI’s warehouses, a next-stage evolution of the informal spaces which underpinned HWFI’s original, organic development into internationally significant cluster, regularised and made policy compliant while retaining benefits including affordability and communal spaces that support cohesion, learning and collaboration.

Figure 1. Buildings old, new and yet to be built exist side-by-side in Hackney Wick and Fish Island. Image credit: Charli Bristow



RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ):

- The GLA should set out its objectives for supporting creative clusters through housing and begin building an evidence base of best-practice schemes and policies to date.
- The GLA and zones should come together to discuss approaches to sustaining creative clusters through innovative housing and develop a strategy for how this work can be taken forward, through planning, housing strategy or other avenues.
- Innovative and non-standard development proposals seeking to combine housing and workspace under one rental agreement are unlikely to meet policy tests of affordable housing or workspace, but typically seek to provide a discount on the combined market price of leasing both types of space. The GLA and zones – in consultation with community and development stakeholders - should develop a framework for assessing the affordability of combined living and working proposals.
- LB Haringey’s Warehouse Living policy DM39 provides a strong precedent and framework for the creation of area-specific policies to legitimise and regularise the continuation and development of mutually supportive living and working creative clusters. The merit of developing such a policy should be explored by LBs Tower Hamlet and Hackney with a view to enhancing HWFI’s Creative Enterprise Zone and providing clarity for future development proposals.

For the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC):

- LLDC’s Local Plan policy H8 supports innovative housing proposals where these “may also enable more wider community needs to be met, such as the potential for shared amenity space or facilitating home-based working” and covers sui generis uses. The application of this policy should be open-minded and collaborative, allowing innovation to flourish where it responds to a defined local need.
- With London’s Community Housing Fund set to close in 2023, further detail on the proposed community-led homes to be delivered as part of East Wick and Sweetwater should be provided to the community as a matter of urgency. Local stakeholders are primed to support the authority and joint-venture partners successfully delivering homes tailored to local need, the opportunity should not be missed.

The different characteristics of private and community-led and non-standard development proposals should be recognised. Community-led projects are likely to be subject to governance arrangements designed to protect the benefits and beneficiaries of proposals, this should give confidence to planners that benefits of proposed schemes and endure will be delivered.

For developers:

- Innovative and non-standard proposals led by private actors and seeking to meet local policy tests should learn from innovative creative housing projects delivered to date, for example the House for Artists in Barking and Dagenham. Partnering with experienced creative workspace operators and implementing transparent management arrangements can provide confidence to planners that projects will continue to promote a genuine interrelationship between living and working elements of a scheme, addressing the risk of a de-facto conversion to purely residential use over time.
- Innovative and non-standard proposals should consider establishing partnerships with community-led groups or developing covenants such as those implemented by community-led housing projects to protect the proposed benefits of schemes in perpetuity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hackney Wick and Fish Island (HWFI) is an area which has undergone pronounced and successive waves of change in recent decades. In the late '90s and early 2000s it underwent a transformation from under-utilised sites of post-industrial decline to thriving creative heartland, renowned as Europe's densest concentration of artist studios. An organic, grassroots movement, the inhabitation of the area by artists saw industrial buildings brought back into use as "creative factories" and kick-started the reimagining of the area as a regionally and internationally recognised creative cluster.⁹ With the coming of the Olympic Games to East London in 2012, the area has increasingly been under a spotlight and land values have climbed. The low-cost space which initially attracted creatives has been subject to pronounced rent increases, with commercial rents rising 200% between 2012 and 2016.¹⁰

Local authorities and communities have recognised the impact of rent increases on the "fragile" creative ecosystem and intervened to ensure the area continues to attract and retain creative businesses and talent. Grassroots endeavours have included a plethora of creative workspace projects – including "meanwhile" initiatives on land ear-marked for development and longer-term projects with public and private partners - the formalisation of business-to-business networking and the creation of a Community Development Trust.¹¹ Public-sector approaches include a planning framework designed to retain and bring forward new workspace, direct and partnership delivery of new spaces, repurposing of public sector assets for creative uses and the establishment of one of London's first Creative Enterprise Zones.¹² Efforts to stem the flow of creatives from the area have largely focused on the creation and retention of creative workspace, complemented by business support and skills and training opportunities for local people. A key issue which is largely absent from the debate is housing at price points "local creatives" - a term used throughout this report to refer to people who live or work in Hackney Wick and have occupations in the creative industries, as defined by Department for Culture, Media and Sport - can afford.¹³

HWFI is part of the Olympic Legacy Opportunity Area, designated for growth by the London Plan (2021), with substantial capacity for new homes, jobs and infrastructure. The OA works to meet London-wide targets and oversees delivery with the core aim of supplying the volume of new homes London requires.¹⁴ There is a mismatch observable in the supply of new homes compared with the specific demand from local creatives (see Section 4). As evidenced by the typologies designed and managed by pioneering creatives in HWFI's late 90s heyday, the spatial preferences of creatives often include elements which are absent from standard housing provision.¹⁵ In particular, what creatives devised for themselves often combined live and work uses under one roof and one rental agreement, avoiding the need to finance a studio space in addition to a home. Work-live projects today are widely viewed as a tactical approach used by developers to secure planning permission for residential accommodation where zoning would not otherwise allow, but there is clear need for revised models – with appropriate governance and management arrangements – to deliver living and working space for low income creatives who would otherwise be at risk of displacement from the area. This report uses the term "work-live" rather than "live-work" to underline that the focus of such spaces should be to facilitate creative practice rather than a style of living.

This report presents the context of HWFI before undertaking quantitative analysis of both affordable workspace and affordable housing delivered since 2012. It makes the case that while affordable workspace is subject to a policy framework which implements stringent protections and catalyses the delivery of new spaces, design and delivery of affordable and appropriate housing for creatives is less developed. The report explores how HWFI's informal work-live spaces have historically enabled creatives to live in the area and the role these spaces play in

inclusive placemaking. It takes account of the challenges facing the work-live model and identifies precedents in London for retaining the benefits while addressing past pitfalls. The report then reviews the ability of alternative housing models including contemporary warehouse living and community led housing to step into the gap, providing affordable space for the target demographic of low-income creatives that require space to both work and live.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

Approach

This report seeks to answer two core questions:

- 1) Is housing in HWFI affordable for low-income creative professionals that require spaces to both work and live?
- 2) How could innovation—in terms of improvements to existing space and delivery of new—support the spatial needs of low-income creative professionals that require space to both work and live?

The report first provides quantitative analysis of affordable workspace and housing delivery in the HWFI sub-area of the Olympic Legacy Opportunity Area before exploring case study examples of work-live and community led housing models.

Housing and affordable workspace data

Data on the delivery of affordable workspace and housing is primarily drawn from the LLDC's Annual Monitoring Report 2022. This is supplemented with data from public sources including the LLDC's Local Plan 2020-36 and research undertaken by the Greater London Authority's Housing and Land team.

Analysis

Analysis on the affordability of housing is based on definitions set out in the London Plan 2021. Analysis of affordability of workspace is based on the definition provided by the Mayor of London's Artists' Workspace Data Note 2018.



Figure 2. The view along Hackney Wick's Wallis Road in 2010. Image credit: [Diamond Geezer](#), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

2. HACKNEY WICK AND FISH ISLAND IN CONTEXT

2.1 A CREATIVE HEARTLAND

Over a thousand businesses are based in Hackney Wick and Fish Island (HWFI), with many operating in creative sectors including music, performing and visual arts; film, TV, radio and photography; design; advertising and marketing and publishing.¹⁶ Across the UK and internationally, the area is synonymous with counterculture and the creative grassroots, accommodating thousands of individual artists and freelancers. From the 90s to mid-2010s HWFI was widely regarded as being home to “the largest concentration of artists in Europe, inhabiting over 600 studios”.¹⁷ Many of these studio spaces existed in former warehouses and industrial buildings, often organised by collectives and sub-divided into areas for both living and working.

While the area’s concentration of artists is widely observed to have decreased over the past decade, creativity endures and manifests in the built environment. The area is home to blocks of creative workspace, a theatre, multiple music venues and event spaces. Its walls are home to internationally renowned street art, a destination for artists local and global. While the pandemic of 2020 disproportionately impacted the creative industries and presented a host of new challenges for the area, HWFI’s workspaces proved resilient and only one dedicated creative studio block shut its doors over the period—illustrating the continuation of strong local demand.¹⁸

2.2 SPATIAL BOUNDARIES

Part of the Lower Lea Valley, HWFI is bordered by the A12 and River Lea, and intersected by Hertford Union Canal. The location can be viewed as peripheral to central London, sitting at the boundary of two local authorities, LB Hackney to the north (Hackney Wick) and LB Tower Hamlets (Fish Island) to the south. The authorities have reduced planning powers in the HWFI today due to the creation of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), the body tasked with delivering the regeneration promise of the London 2012 Olympic Bid. The body was created to deliver the physical legacy of the Games, to “transform and integrate one of the most challenged areas in the UK into world-class, sustainable and thriving neighbourhoods.”¹⁹ As such, the LLDC carries out all the planning functions normally undertaken by a local authority and is also a significant landowner and a developer.

2.3 OLYMPIC LEGACY

The Olympic legacy comes with challenges and opportunities. The site of the Games, a former industrial estate, is now the 500 acre Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Remediated and thriving, the Park has Green Flag status and hosted 2.71m visitors in 2021. Whereas venues created in other Olympic host cities have gone on to lie dormant, the London Games’ stadia are open to the public. A new cultural quarter, East Bank, brings global brands BBC, Sadler’s Wells and the V&A together with campuses for University College London and UAL’s London College of Fashion, the development is projected to bring an additional 1.5 million visitors to the area each year, creating 2,500 jobs and generating an estimated £1.5 billion for the local economy.²⁰ Ahead of the district’s completion, LLDC programme such as STEP and East Summer School are working to highlight potential career pathways and training opportunities to local young people from the Olympic Growth boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.²¹ By the end of the LLDC’s current Local Plan period (2020-36), 24,000 new homes are projected to have been delivered within the vehicle’s planning boundary.²¹

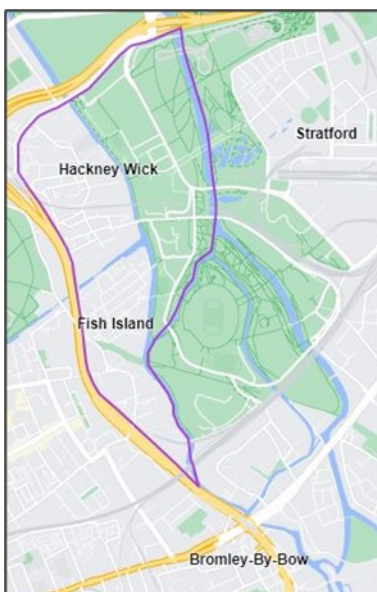


Figure 3. HWFI in context, to the west of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

For residents of HWFI and other pre-existing neighbourhoods though, the impact of the legacy is laden with tensions. New opportunities and spaces have been delivered but prices have climbed. While the need for increased housing delivery is undisputed, much of what has been delivered across the Legacy area is

unaffordable for residents on average incomes (see Section 4). The problem is not unique to Hackney Wick nor to creatives, but the London Games promised a legacy that would deliver “regeneration of the area for the direct benefit of everyone that lives there”.²³ In this context, the tensions have been subject to scrutiny and protest.

2.4 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

2.4i Opportunity Area

HWFI is within the Olympic Legacy Opportunity Area (OA). OAs are locations with significant capacity for development including new housing and commercial space, linked to existing or potential improvements in public transport capacity. The Olympic Legacy OA manages growth across the area primed for redevelopment by the Games and responds to the opportunity associated with the eastern section of the Elizabeth Line.²⁴ As a planning authority guiding development of an OA, the LLDC is tasked with meeting the identified need for housing within the Olympic Growth Boroughs (LBs Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest) and helping to meet London’s strategic housing need. The London Plan considers the Olympic Legacy OA to have capacity for 39,000 new homes and 65,000 jobs, and the 2021 Plan set the LLDC a ten-year target of 21,540 net housing completions.²⁵

HWFI is one of four sub areas within the LLDC’s planning boundary but contains nearly 40% of the all the designated employment land. As such, policies have been created protect the “creative and cultural industrial uses that support the continuation of Hackney Wick and Fish Island’s entrepreneurial and enterprising work culture”.²⁶ Much of this work relates to the retention of existing industrial and commercial space, discussed in further detail in Section 3.

2.4ii Neighbouring clusters

The Olympic Legacy OA is bordered by the Lee Valley - part of the Crossrail 2 North OA - to the north and areas including Poplar Riverside and the Royal Docks to the south - part of the Thames Estuary North and South OA. This context is also a source of both opportunity and risk. The risk takes the form of rising land values and increased competition for space, the opportunity lies in the convergence of growth corridors and similarly focused regeneration strategies. The Royal Docks is an Enterprise Zone, with a focus on fostering growth of small businesses and cultural organisations, the Lee Valley supports industries similar to those present in HWFI. The wider Olympic Park area is an Inclusive Innovation District, working to deliver “better urban futures through innovation, creativity and collaboration.”²⁷ The wider East London area is home to the Fashion District, with spaces in locations including Leyton, HWFI and Poplar. Taken together, this convergence represents a diverse and extensive cluster of creative and innovative practice.

2.4iii Creative Enterprise Zone

In 2016, HWFI’s joint authorities (LBs Hackney, Tower Hamlets and the LLDC) bid for the area to become of London’s first six Mayorally designated Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ) and the zone was first Accredited in 2018. CEZs are an initiative under the Good Growth strand of the Mayor’s Culture Strategy, designed to stem to the flow of creatives from the capital by securing affordable creative workspace, providing support to creative businesses and fostering inclusion within the creative industries by making employment, skills and training opportunities accessible to Londoners from diverse backgrounds.²⁸

The HWFI Creative Enterprise Zone’s 2018 Action Plan described HWFI as an “archetypal” zone.²⁹ Home to an internationally recognised, organically evolved creative cluster, development has brought fast-paced change. While incoming neighbours including internationally significant cultural institutions bring opportunities, research ahead of the Action Plan found over 30% of creative



businesses surveyed were considering relocation due to rising rents. Concurrently, local residents observed to not be engaging with the local labour market and the Action Plan noted that HWFI needed to “genuinely embrace local talent of all backgrounds to build the future creative economy”. The Action Plan set out a roadmap across the CEZ programme’s four pillars of Space, Skills and Support, Community and Policy for HWFI to “mature, stabilise, diversify and grow to be increasingly impactful”.³⁰

For many years HWFI existed in relative obscurity, hard to reach from central London, severed by busy roads and canals, and unattractive to speculative developers. In this period, grassroots activity thrived and the creative ecosystem flourished, with artists attracted by low-cost space and the freedom to act largely unobserved in converting and transforming the area, subdividing warehouses, providing local services and creating an abundance of unregulated, internationally renowned public art.

HWFI today is an area grappling with its identity. Operating under the radar and pursuing informal solutions to space-based challenges is increasingly difficult. In this context, local communities and businesses have innovated, and the public sector has stepped in through policy and programmes designed to sustain and grow the area’s creative ecosystem, all the while fighting an uphill battle against rising land values and competing interests for space.



Figure 4. Hackney Wick station forecourt in 2021. Image credit: Amber Joy.

3. AFFORDABLE WORKSPACE IN HACKNEY WICK AND FISH ISLAND

3.1 BACKGROUND

Despite its status as a significant creative cluster regionally and internationally, HWFI has marked fragility and it is not the only area facing the threat of fragmentation through loss of space. In 2014, the GLA's Artist Workspace Study reported concerns regarding a "gradual exodus of artists out of central London and the attractiveness of other global cities that offer more space at cheaper rents."³¹ It found that 30% of the current artist studio provision could be lost between 2014-19, displacing 3500 artists.

3.2 POLICY INTERVENTION

Recognising the importance of HWFI's creative ecology for delivering economic and social value, the LLDC intervened comparatively early to implement policies intended to stem the displacement of workspace. Strategic Industrial Land is subject to stringent protections and outside of the SIL the LLDC's first Local Plan (2015-31) required redevelopment projects to -at a minimum - "maintain or re-provide equivalent industrial floorspace within B2/B8 Use Classes; or b) Maintain or re-provide equivalent employment floorspace within B1 Use Classes" (Policy B1). In circumstances where the proposed development would result in the loss of an existing business from the site, policy B1.5 further requires the applicant to produce a Relocation Strategy detailing how suitable alternative premises which meet the businesses' requirements will be found and what support will be provided to the business by the applicant. The HWFI Supplementary Planning Document (2018) went on to provide detailed guidance on Relocation Strategies, the guidance has been enhanced and included in the revised Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, to be adopted 2022.

Alongside efforts to stem the loss of commercial space, the LLDC has worked to bring forward new employment space on its own land and across its wider planning boundary. The LLDC-led Hackney Wick Central masterplan will bring forward 29,908 sqm employment space (Class B1a, B1c) including 8,500 sqm affordable workspace with capped rents, 4,493 sqm retail uses (Class A1-A4) and 2,318sqm community space (Class D1/D2).³² Across the wider area, approximately 22,500 sqm of affordable workspace has been permitted since 2012 and much of this new space will be delivered in the HWFI sub-area.³³

3.3 AFFORDABLE WORKSPACE INNOVATION

In addition to developing to policies that secure employment space, local authorities have delivered new workspaces through a range of approaches. LB Hackney has converted two of its own buildings – including the Old Baths, Figure 4 - to house at-risk businesses through the Wick Workspaces project.³⁴ LB Hackney recognised that for the re-provision of space mandated by policy to be meaningful to current businesses, there must be "decant" space into which businesses can move while construction is underway. Businesses facing eviction have been prioritised for space within Wick Workspaces projects, by 2020, 30 small and medium enterprises were supported to stay in the area.³⁵

HWFI is also home to London's first Creative Land Trust project. Creative Land Trust is a charity set up by founding partners the Mayor of London, Arts Council England, Bloomberg Philanthropies and Outset to help tackle the loss of affordable workspace in London. It set out to develop a new financial and operating model to secure affordable workspace in perpetuity by buying buildings outright and generating return through long-term affordable rents. Its definition of affordability is informed by the Mayor's Artist Workspace Data

Figure 5. Hackney Wick Underground, a community-led creative hub making use of an LLDC-owned site on a meanwhile basis. Image credit: Charli Bristow



note, setting thresholds at average of £12-15/sq ft and not more than £19/sq ft total cost to the end user (inclusive of service charge).³⁶ Its first acquisition was 33,000sqft ground and lower ground floor space which will provide 180 studios for artists and creative practitioners at Stone Studios, 80-88 Wallis Road in Hackney Wick.³⁷ Creative Land Trust has selected CELL Studios as the site's operator. CELL has operated studios from the site since 2004 and its artists tenants faced displacement when redevelopment of the buildings commenced.³⁸ The return of CELL to the site followed an open procurement process but speaks to the appetite across the public sector, charities and industry to ensure continuity in the area's modern context.

There is a total of 2.5 million sqft commercial floor space, defined as office (32%) and industrial (68%) in HWFI and within this there are at least nine workspace providers operating dedicated creative studios.³⁹ Many of the creative workspace providers have a longstanding connection to HWFI and are committed to retaining a presence in the area despite the uncertainty connected to sites that are earmarked redevelopment. In response to ongoing uncertainty, Grow, The Yard, Stour and Creative Wick founded the HWFI Community Development Trust in 2011 with the core purpose of "securing ownership of buildings and spaces in HWFI for the benefit of the community". Since its inception, it has supported the Hackney Wick Central Masterplan application to permanently protect affordable creative workspace; been part of the successful bid team to the GLA for Hackney Wick and Fish Island to be designated as a Creative Enterprise Zone; and secured funding from the LLDC's Community Infrastructure Levy to support the early stage start-up development of the organisation. In 2021, with a revitalised Board and business plan, it went on to secure funding from the Mayor of London to pilot a "circular high street" project in the Wick and funding from the LLDC to understand, record and map the property and land asset base in the LLDC estate and portfolio.⁴⁰ While there are clear examples of the local community, creative sector and public partners working to secure affordable workspace in the face of substantial challenges, the spaces which combine working and living uses have been given less consideration.

Figure 6. The Old Baths, an LB Hackney-owned building, refurbished by the borough to support creative production. Image credit: [Peter O'Connor](#), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.



4. HOUSING IN HACKNEY WICK AND FISH ISLAND

The following section explores the demand for, and supply of, housing in HWFI. It seeks to define creative housing need in terms of affordability and spatial requirement and takes account of the housing need in the area's boroughs and the Olympic Legacy OA. The specific requirements of creative housing need compared with the types of housing currently historically available in HWFI and new homes being delivered in the OA.

4.1 CREATIVE HOUSING NEED

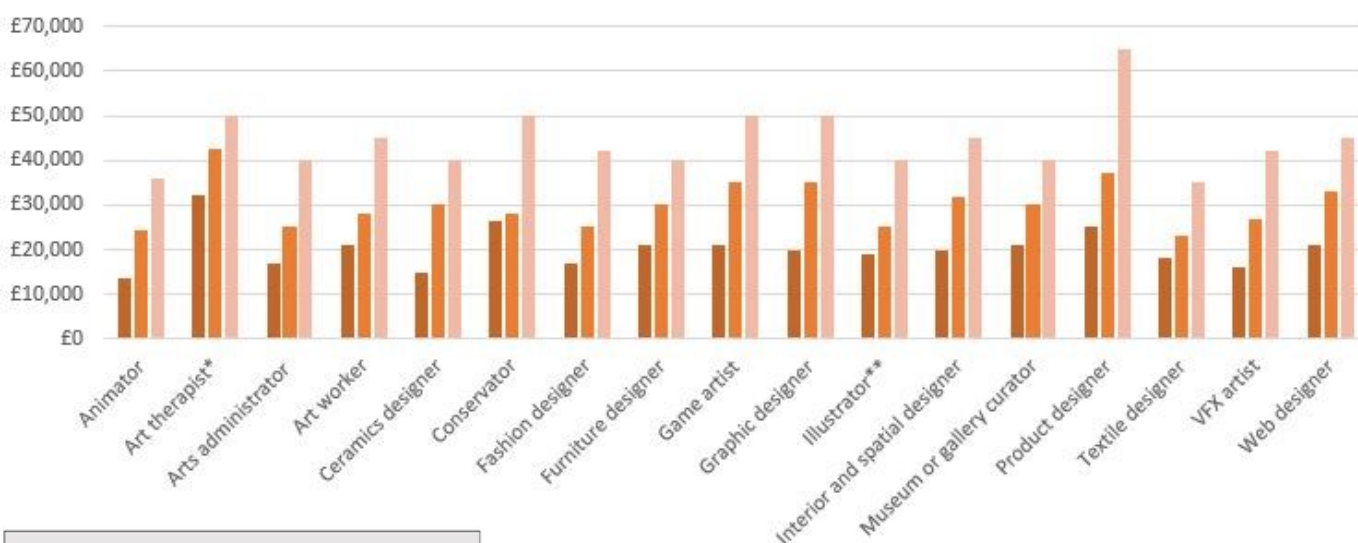
4.1i Creative livelihoods

To understand where HWFI's creatives fit into assessments of housing need and their ability to access the market offer, it is necessary to understand their earnings. The term "creative" is notoriously broad and slippery, in terms of both the job profiles it encompasses and the demographic profiles of individuals in those professions. The difficulty in understanding circumstances is compounded when considering many of the "individuals" considered will also have children or other dependants and live in a range of household structures, this report takes earnings of individual creatives as its starting point.

DCMS defines the creative industries as those "which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property".⁴¹ It considers the following 11 industries as aligning with this definition: Advertising; Architecture; Art & Antiques Market; Design; Designer Fashion; Film & Video; Interactive Leisure Software; Music; Performing Arts; Publishing; Software & Computer Services; Television & Radio. Wage profiles across these industries are incredibly varied, but sources have produced estimates across industries, for salaries at different career stages.

Figure 7 is drawn from careers advisors Prospects' estimates for salaries across a range of creative careers.⁴² From this data the averages in Table 1 have been produced for salaries at different stages of a creative career. While the averages broadly align with wider trends across employment sectors, the variance within creative disciplines is marked.

Figure 7: Estimated creative salaries by level of experience



	Entry	Experienced	Senior
Median	£20,000	£30,000	£42,000
Mean	£20,253	£30,000	£44,412
Variance (highest to lowest salary)	£18,806	£19,500	£30,000

■ Entry ■ Experienced ■ Senior

It should be noted that the variance shown in Table 1 does not account for outliers wherein highest and lowest salaries can go far from the average. For example, Prospects notes that while an average salary for a senior designer can reach more than £45,000, design directors can earn up to - and sometimes more than - £75,000.⁴³ Prospects does not provide an average salary for professions such as visual artists, actors and musicians noting that fees for performances are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Where research has been done into the creative earning potential of artists' careers, the picture is bleak. The Artist Livelihood study in 2016 found that the mean average total income for artists across the UK in 2015 was £16,500, with income from artistic practice only accounting for 36% of total income (£5,000). The majority of artists (69%) have other jobs to supplement their income.⁴⁴

With these caveats noted, the averages shown in Table 1 broadly align with estimated median annual household incomes in the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, £35,140 and £34,930 respectively.⁴⁵ These are household rather than individual income figures, individual average incomes will be lower. In addition, Tower Hamlets and Hackney have been subject to pronounced population change in recent years and an increase in very high salaries will be impacting averages. In stark contrast, Trust for London, a charity, notes that 51% of children in Tower Hamlets and 45% of children in Hackney lived in households with an income of less than 60% the UK median after housing costs have been subtracted in 2020/21.⁴⁶

Working from Prospects' estimates, it can be assumed that local creatives in the middle stage of their careers could be earning between £30,000 and £36,000 but entry level creatives and professionals such as artists, musicians and actors are likely to be achieving substantially lower incomes. Creative households with children are likely to be facing even greater challenges.

4.1.ii Affordability and creative livelihoods

A range of factors make affordability the top priority for delivering a form of housing that meets the needs of HWFI creatives. As discussed in the previous section, creative salaries are incredibly varied and entry-level roles in a range of creative fields may only be earning between £13,000-£17,000 per annum. This is problematic given Imperial College London puts the minimum cost for living in "reasonable comfort" in London at £18,009pa in 2022-23.⁴⁷

The failure of creative salaries to keep pace with the cost of living continues to impact the attractiveness and diversity of the sector, building on long-standing issues of exclusion. A respondent to the 2018 Arts Pay survey noted low salaries are "unsustainable in London unless you come from a wealthy background." 2018's *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries* report found the sector to be "marked by significant exclusions of those from working class social origins". This intersects with other characteristics, particularly gender and ethnicity, with women and people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities facing additional barriers when working to access, sustain and grow creative careers.⁴⁸

While wider reforms to pay, inclusion and welfare in the creative industries are both needed and called for, in London a large proportion of the cost of living is taken up with rent.⁴⁹ Interventions to deliver affordable housing for low-income creative practitioners could deliver on multiple policy objectives, levelling the playing field in terms of finance for creatives already working to overcome barriers to entry and success.

4.1.iii Space to work and live

Beyond the core issue of access to affordable housing which could provide a springboard for low-income HWFI residents to take on – and progress in – roles which have low entry salaries, there is a case to be made for housing which

Combines spaces to live and work in HWFI. Public engagement in HWFI in 2021 found the majority of respondents to be working in the cultural and creative industries, with many describing themselves as freelancers, self-employed or the founders of start-up businesses, many of whom have spatial needs beyond housing.⁵⁰ For this demographic, the business of sustaining a creative livelihood is hampered by challenges in relation to space. Respondents to the 2021 engagement work noted the difficulty of sustaining rent of a studio or workspace in addition to their residential space. With rents on a seemingly unending upward trend, many had taken the decision to remain working in the area but looked to areas such as Barking and Ilford to access affordable residential space.⁵¹ Moreover, unaffordability in the housing market often forces a choice between home and work space, with the majority of people choosing to “opt for a home” at the expense of dedicated workspace in which their business and/or practice can grow.⁵²

This is in contrast with the Hackney Wick and Fish Island of a decade ago when the “majority of artists and creative practitioners” were found in “work-live” units.⁵³ Richard Brown’s report *Made in HWFI: the live-work collectives* observed that at this time, work-live arrangements were “easier to manage because, if organised well, artists can share a functioning work space without needing to pay another



Figure 8. Warehouse living in HWFI, 2021. image credit: Amber Joy.

4.1iv Collaboration, collectivism and opportunity

Models which bring living and working arrangements together offer multiple benefits in addition to the cost saving potential noted above. A report commissioned by the LLDC in 2014 found that the collective occupation of creative workspace had led to “distinctive shared studio typologies that make spaces more affordable, collaborations more frequent and the neighbourhood more active”.⁵⁴ Education and training are provided by and for residents, grassroots networks foster pathways to opportunities and employment. HWFI’s ‘factory complexes’ are observed to “work like creative business incubators, where many young people have been able to test ideas and develop their careers as professionals”.⁵⁵

While HWFI has changed and evolved significantly between 2014 and present day, creative respondents to Creative Wick’s 2021 research into creative housing highlighted similar preferences. 85.7% of the study’s interviewees agreed that creative practitioners have particular housing needs, including: space to create and network, flexibility to adapt the space, fewer noise restrictions, light and ventilation, and affordability/support mechanisms.⁵⁶ Over the pandemic, artists living in conventional housing who lost access to studio space missed out on “access to specialist equipment, missed interaction with other artists and spaces to display work”.⁵⁷ This indicates that the spatial and social requirements of creative practitioners remain largely the same today as they were a decade ago. These needs could be met by combined work-live space, but the availability and condition (see Section 5.1) of these spaces has declined.

In 2014, Brown noted that the ecology of creative factories was “fragile, based on a precarious relationship between occupants, landlords and local authorities”.⁵⁸ Today, regulation has tightened and land values have climbed. The motivation for landlords to facilitate the creation of creative factories in the early 2010s was primarily rent generation in an otherwise overlooked area. With better connections, infrastructure and a substantial push to build homes post-Olympics, the area is infinitely more desirable and under a spotlight. In this context, there is a need for a new approach, in which space suited to creative need can be delivered through a combination of market development and community-led models, supported by planning.

4.2 WIDER HOUSING NEED

4.2ii Strategic housing need and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

As an Opportunity Area, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP OA) has a key role in helping to meet the identified need for housing within the Growth Boroughs and as well as helping meet London’s strategic need for new homes. The London Plan (2021) sets a ten year housing target of 21,540 (2019/20 -2028/29).⁵⁹

The London Legacy Development Corporation anticipates exceeding this target, with its Local Plan 2020-36 estimating 24,000 homes will be delivered over the plan period. This would take the total number of homes delivered across the Olympic Legacy OA area to 33,000 by 2036. For the Plan period, a minimum affordable housing threshold is set at 35% across the area, 50% for public sector land in accordance with the London Plan 2021.

LB Hackney

In statistics:

Population: 259,200 (5.3% growth since 2011)⁶⁰
 Housing waiting list: 12,800⁶¹
 Homeless households: 3,000⁶³
 House price increase: 71%, 2013-18⁶³
 Private rent level increase: 36%, 2011-2018⁶³
 New homes required: 13,280 by 2018/29⁶²
 Growth in dwelling stock: 13.1%⁶³

LB Hackney’s Housing Strategy paints a picture of a borough working hard to keep pace with demand. Between 2008-2018, LB Hackney had the fourth highest rate of growth in dwelling stock in London but affordability of homes remains a pervasive challenge. House prices have grown by 71% in the space of five years. Increased desirability - combined with population growth across London – has put pressure on supply, leading to significantly increased prices for available homes to buy and rent.⁶⁴

LB Tower Hamlets

In statistics:

Population: 310,300 (22.1% increase since 2011)⁶²
 Housing waiting list: 19,000⁶⁵
 Homeless households: 2,000⁶⁴
 House price increase: 61%, 2011-2018⁶⁶
 Private rent level increase: 47%, 2013-2022⁶⁷
 New homes required: 34,730 by 2018/29⁶⁸
 Growth in housing stock (2008-2018): 23.7%⁶⁸

Between 2008 and 2018, LB Tower Hamlets had the highest rate of growth in dwelling stock in London (23.7%), but like in Hackney – the challenge is providing homes that are affordable for residents on low to median incomes. Tower Hamlets’ housing strategy notes that housing affordability is a top concern for residents with many expressing concern that the development of high value housing in the borough is promoting gentrification and pricing out less affluent communities.⁶⁹

4.3 HOUSING SUPPLY

4.3i Housing delivery in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

In the Olympic Legacy OA, housing delivery targets have been subject to substantial change over time and have recently come under scrutiny due to the spotlight of the 10 year anniversary of the Games. London's Olympic bid aimed to deliver regeneration which was a "model for social inclusion", building "30,000-40,000 new homes", including a substantial quantum of affordable housing to be made "available to key workers such as nurses or teachers".⁷⁰

Across the entire Olympic Park area, a total of 14,098 homes have been delivered within the LLDC's redline since 2012. 30% (of a 35% target) of these are defined as "affordable", with 46% social/affordable rent (against a 60% target) and 54% intermediate (against a 40% target) tenure split.⁷¹ Although the LLDC estimates 33,000 homes will have been delivered by 2036, demand outstrips supply for affordable and intermediate homes.

It is unlikely that the types of new housing delivered will substantially contribute to reducing the flow of low-income creatives from HWFI. Creatives eligible for social housing face long waiting lists and for the vast majority of Londoners who do not fall into "high need" groups prioritised for social housing and cannot afford to buy on the open market, the choice is between the private rental market or intermediate housing options. Across the entire LLDC area, 1,807 intermediate homes have been delivered since 2012.⁷² Beyond the core issue of insufficient volume, standard housing models are unlikely to deliver the flexibility or affordability needed meet the needs of the target demographic for this report, creatives who also require workspace (see Section 4.1).

4.4 GAPS IN HOUSING PROVISION

The need for an increased supply of affordable and intermediate housing is undisputed and is the core gap in supply at local, regional and national levels. While the term 'housing crisis' is widely used, the challenge is not simply supply of new homes but supply of homes at affordable price points. London Councils' interim report - [Delivering on London's Housing Requirement](#) – renames the problem an *affordable* housing crisis. The report goes on to describe an "affordability paradox":

[T]he situation persists where house prices are high in the capital and set to continue rising in the medium to long-term. Meanwhile, wages have not kept pace with this rise, which has left housing unaffordable for the vast majority of Londoners. Consequently, there is a huge demand for sub-market and lower mainstream housing options. Yet, market delivery is focussed on the upper mainstream price bands that are affordable to higher earners, while significantly under-delivering new homes that are affordable to households that are most locked out of London's housing market. [New] forecasts provided by Savills show that, left to its own devices, the market will not correct these imbalances.⁷³

While targets set out in the new London Plan 2021 (52,000 new housing completions per year) were widely heralded as ambitious, the London Councils report cites estimates from Savills that an even higher level of delivery is needed. Savills suggest that between 90,000 and 100,000 new homes are needed each year if affordability is to be improved.⁷⁴ Across the spectrum, delivery is falling behind the targets, with MHCLG currently estimating 41,718 new London homes were delivered in the year 2019/20. For affordable homes, the figures are stark: while 42,500 sub-market homes are estimated to be required each year, only 7,900 have been delivered on average per year over the five years since 2015/16.⁷⁵

To date, the growing number of Londoners that are unable to buy in the capital have resorted to long-term renting, often on insecure terms and at increasingly unaffordable price points. This market too is in crisis. While issues of sub-standard

quality, safety and security have been widely observed in the PRS for many years, the sector is now undergoing a crisis of supply.⁷⁶ Recent Government figures show that the quantum of private rented housing in London has fallen by 85,000 over the past five years. Research carried out by Capital Economics and commissioned by the National Residential Landlords Association estimates London requires approximately 83,000 new rental properties a year over the next decade to accommodate 1.8 million new households. The report notes that demand is likely to increase further, with 12% growth forecast in the 15-24 cohort in London: a demographic that will soon be searching for their first accommodation outside of the family home.⁷⁷

4.4i Unable to buy

The property website RightMove states that the majority of homes sold in Hackney Wick over the last year were flats, selling for an average price of £513,928. Terraced properties averaged at £622,500, with semi-detached properties fetching sale prices of £681,500.⁷⁸

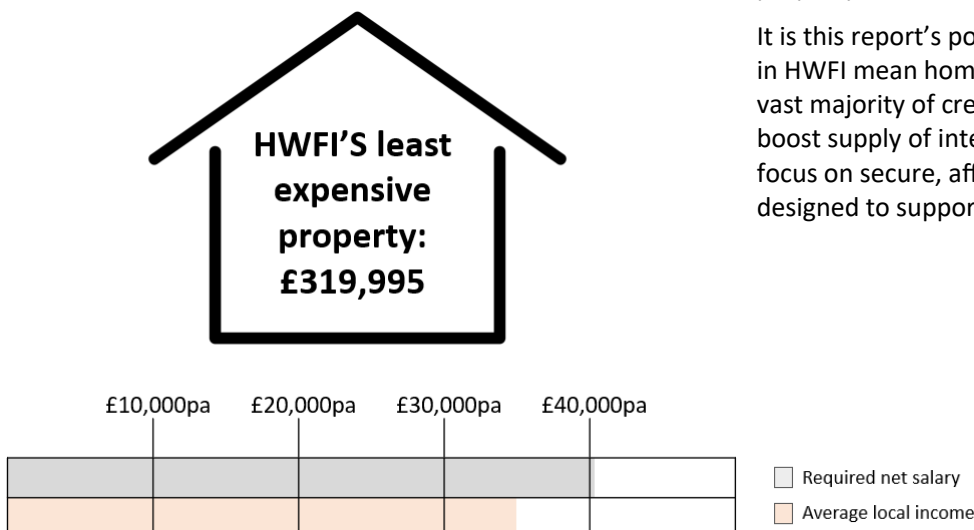
To form a more nuanced picture of the housing market in 2022, analysis was undertaken of properties for sale within a one mile radius of Hackney Wick on the RightMove website. The affordability of these properties for creatives on average incomes was assessed under the formula used by the London Plan. The London Plan states that, for a dwelling to be considered affordable, spend on housing costs (including mortgage repayments, rent and service charge) should not exceed 40% net annual household income. The most and least expensive one, two and three bedroom properties in the area were identified. The mean average property value was then calculated for each size property and a property for sale at a similar price point was identified. From there, the level of net income required for each mortgage to be “affordable” by the Mayor’s criteria was calculated, a table showing the results is provided in the Appendix.

This report considers this average creative salary to be between £30,000-£36,000, average household incomes across the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets are £35,140 and £34,930 respectively (see Section 4.1). The minimum net income required to afford the mortgage on the least expensive 1 bedroom property identified was £40,080, out of reach for local residents on average incomes or the majority of creatives working at below senior level. This is without considering the need for sufficient savings to provide a £32,000 (minimum) deposit.

For creatives on estimated ‘senior’ salaries of between £40,000-£50,000, all but two properties identified in the search were unaffordable. Moreover, three of the properties considered were intermediate, shared ownership properties. Two did not make the rental payment required in addition to mortgage payments publicly available, the one which did required a £42,000 net income for a one bedroom property to be considered affordable.

It is this report’s position that land values and demand in HWFI mean home ownership is unaffordable for the vast majority of creative practitioners and efforts to boost supply of intermediate housing options should focus on secure, affordable rental options which are designed to support creative uses.

Figure 9. HWFI residents on average incomes are unable to afford even the least expensive one bedroom property on the market.



4.4ii Unable to rent? Pressure in the PRS.

Londoners who are unable to buy most commonly occupy private rental accommodation: 26% of Londoners were private renters in 2018, with the number projected to climb to 40% by 2025.⁷⁹ Structural issues including poor living conditions, high rents and insecure tenancies are common and there have long been calls for reform. Compounding these issues now is a lack of supply. London has lost 85,000 private rental properties over the past five years but demand continues to increase.⁸⁰ Average rents reached a record high of £571 per week in October 2022.⁸¹ The mismatch in supply and demand is fuelling rent increases, with Propertymark - the leading membership body for property agents— noting that “high rents are not deterring prospective tenants”.⁸²

It is likely rents would have climbed due to HWFI’s increasing desirability without the supply-side crisis, which is now exacerbating the issue of unaffordability. A search was conducted for the most and least expensive rental properties, encompassing rooms in shared houses; studio flats; one, two and three bedroom houses. As with properties for sale, the mean average between the most and least expensive property was calculated and a property with a similar price-point identified. Full findings are provided in the Appendix.

The search found extremely limited availability of properties within the affordability threshold of creatives on average incomes as defined in Section 4.1. Across all property sizes, creatives on average incomes would only be able to afford the least expensive properties on the market – where competition is steep and increasingly ferocious. It is not uncommon for letting agents to ask prospective tenants to “bid” on rental properties, making offers at over the asking price. Incidents of tenants putting deposits down on properties without a viewing are also increasing as properties at the lowest price points will often be subject to interest from 10s of prospective tenants within a day of being on the market. This is problematic, given engagement work in Hackney Wick in 2021 found 73% of 109 participants to be renting from a private landlord.⁸³

Challenges for professional sharers

The solution for many professionals on low to medium incomes is to live together as larger properties often equate to a lower rental payment per tenant, but here the challenges are also piling up. Multiple analyses have suggested licensing laws designed to protect tenants have impacted the supply of properties for rent by professional sharers.

Hackney and Tower Hamlets have introduced licensing schemes for Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO) that go further than national requirements.⁸⁴ While the additional measures are designed to raise standards for tenants, increased licensing requirements may be contributing to the reduction in HMOs available, with landlords disincentivised to pay for an Additional License and choosing instead to market their property to families, as families fall out of HMO criteria. The issue arose in property searches for this research, with several three bedroom properties featuring notices such as “family home only” or “no sharers”.

Renting in London:

- London has lost 85,000 private rental properties over the past five years
- London’s rent prices reached record highs in November 2022
- Prices in central London have increased 29% in the last year
- An average of 22 renters are competing for every new property
- Renters are spending over their registered budgets to secure a property, at an average of 101%.*

*Box data from references no. 80 and 81



Figure 10 & 11. Finding a home is especially challenging for creatives with “loud” or “messy” practices. Image credits: Wes Hicks (10) and Austin Ramsey (11), licensed under Unsplash.

Challenges for self-employed professionals

For self-employed creatives, the challenges are even more complex. Letting agents commonly require proof that the household income for any given property is 2.3x the rental cost per annum. To evidence this level of income self-employed individuals are asked at the minimum to provide the last year’s tax return, though a longer paper trail may be required. Coming out of a pandemic that disproportionately impacted the creative sector, many creative professionals will struggle to provide proof of income based on last year’s earnings. Some mortgage arrangements are so stringent that landlords are unable to accept self-employed tenants and there is anecdotal evidence of landlords refusing to accept self-employed tenants on the grounds of “risk-aversion”.

4.5 Housing gaps and the impact on London

Much has been written on the importance of creatives to the capital. The Creative Land Trust observes that the loss of these residents represents “a serious threat to the wellbeing and prosperity of a city so reliant on creativity for its success.”⁸⁵ London’s Culture Strategy describes “one of the most culturally rich cities on the planet” with a creative economy employing one in six Londoners and contributing £47bn to the economy.⁸⁶ Culture has benefits for young people, older people and can be “important tool in challenging the stigma and discrimination any groups face, from migrants and refugees, to BAME, older and disabled Londoners”.⁸⁷ For all this, culture is at risk. Housing costs are rising, public services are under pressure and infrastructure is ageing. In a constrained resource environment resulting from over a decade of cuts to public budgets at the behest of Government, planning negotiations can become the sites of trade-offs between social infrastructure including affordable housing, affordable workspace, heritage assets, green space, cultural and community facilities.

Inequalities are pronounced between the wealthiest and poorest Londoners and the majority of arts occupations are not ethnically diverse.⁸⁸ There are significant disparities between creatives of different genders and ethnicities at senior levels of all sectors and by one estimate, 87% of the UK’s overall creative workforce is white.⁸⁹ London’s Culture Strategy acknowledges pervasive, structural inequalities and sets out to provide “an ambitious programme of support and investment in infrastructure, skills, promotion and planning” with a view to ensuring London is able to attract and grow the best talent, remaining a cultural powerhouse. It sets out a range of measures for addressing these challenges including the creation of Creative Enterprise Zones providing a strategic framework for growth which “includes all Londoners” at the hyper-local level.⁹⁰ The programme has delivered projects to make training and skills development available to local people from diverse backgrounds; business support packages aimed at supporting growth while fostering inclusive working practices; and brought new affordable creative workspace forward.

As explored in Section 3, public authorities in HWFI have made substantial progress in developing pro-culture policies for retaining creative workspace and securing new projects through planning. While the Creative Enterprise Zone framework includes a KPI for “supporting innovative housing models”, this is an area where there are fewer success stories to point to. Projects such as the House for Artists and LB Haringey’s development of a Warehouse Living policy (see Section 5.1) are valuable precedents for innovation, but there is more to be done. While the decline in affordable creative space has been high on city-wide agendas for some time, housing is a crowded debate. In a land market as competitive as London’s, space is under demand from a range of uses from transport to health, housing to education. These are all important, but for London to thrive as a cultural capital – thereby generating revenue to support other services, supporting positive health outcomes and providing jobs - housing for creatives must be part of the solution. For all the other strands of London’s Culture Strategy to succeed, the city must be able to house creatives.

5. HOUSING INNOVATION

Moving from exploring challenges to solutions, this section provides an overview of two housing models which have the ability to:

1. Provide affordable, clustered living and working spaces, supporting creative practitioners to remain living in HWFI and;
2. Provide a mechanism for re-providing the informal spaces which represent the area's longest-standing accommodation for creatives.

Work-live is spotlighted as a form of development which meets housing and workspace requirements under one roof, with potential to thereby reduce overall outgoings for the target beneficiaries of creatives on low incomes who require both types of space. Community led housing approaches have the ability to i) provide genuinely affordable housing which can be made available to a pre-defined target demographic at the point of occupation and in perpetuity and ii) provide a combination of affordable housing and communal space which could be tailored to facilitate creative uses.

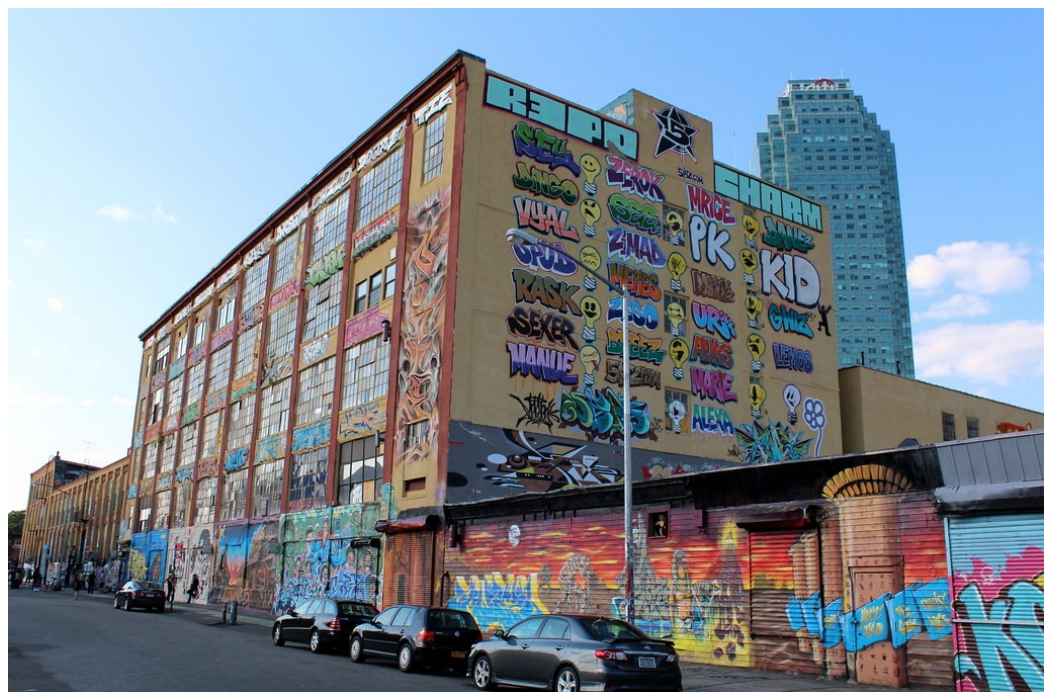
5.1 Work-live

5.1i Background

Work-live as we know it today is widely understood to have emerged in the 1970s with the takeover of under-utilised industrial space in New York.⁹¹ Artists and individuals began converting units – often without permission – into low cost space for creative practice. As the phenomena gained traction, developers became interested. Combined living and working developments were increasingly viewed as a means of revitalising an area, with the approach evolving from “no frills”, artist-led, spontaneous conversions to the deliberately designed, developer-led “loft” homes, converted for monied clientele at the turn of the century.

Mirroring the work-live trend in New York, artists in areas such as Hackney and Deptford began converting post-industrial space in London in the early '90s. As in New York, the grassroots push by creatives to establish low-cost spaces for living and working came to the attention of speculative developers. Initially, developer-led proposals were welcomed by city planners, recognising the ability of projects to meet “multiple employment and housing objectives”.⁹² Authorities went as far as to produce supportive policy on live-work, with Hackney adopting a ‘Live/ Work Policy’ on a pilot basis in 1994, and Special Planning Guidance in 1996.⁹³ These policies were geared to attract investment to otherwise neglected industrial areas, retaining some workspace while diversifying uses. This was successful in attracting investment but soon a trend emerged whereby developers would apply for consent for ‘live/work’ schemes but deliver a wholly residential project.⁹⁴

Figure 12. Built in the 1990s, artists still occupy the Citicorp Building in Long Beach, NY. Image credit: [Wally Gobetz](#), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.



5.1ii Contemporary warehouse living in HWFI

HWFI emerged as a creative district due substantial artist-led conversion activity in the '90s and by 2009, muf architecture identified a plethora of studios clustered in industrial buildings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹⁵ While grassroots work-live projects have delivered a range of benefits for the area - from affordability to enhanced collaborative practice between creative occupiers (see 4.1 Creative housing need) – policy is now resistant to such schemes. The shadow of speculative developers' misappropriation of the model looms large. There have been multiple examples of developers applying to secure planning for mixed-use live-work projects and once completed, marketing the schemes as spacious, high-value residential loft space. The creation of high-end residential offers none of the employment space benefits planners would require to justify permitting mixed-use projects in industrial areas. This gave rise to caution and policymakers since have sought to resist live-work projects. As noted in a study commissioned by the LLDC, the question further work-live projects in HWFI would have to answer is “whether there is potential to capitalise upon the positive aspects of this occupation whilst also addressing issues of unauthorised uses, to build a bright future as the area is redeveloped.”⁹⁴

In HWFI, this question has become increasingly important. The area's warehouses are ageing and the spaces within them are likely to be below the standards required for modern housing. Projects seeking to re-provide live and work uses through redevelopment may struggle to meet policy tests and this could result in the loss of accommodation tailored to creative housing needs from the area. This would be hard to quantify as data is scarce on the extent of informal work-live space currently available, but the importance and productivity of HWFI's informal, 'creative factories' has been recorded by the LLDC's commissioned study (2015), Brown Urbanisms work (2012 and 2014), and by recent citizen-led research (Creative Wick, 2021).

The answer could lie in “tethered” work-live models which provide working and living spaces which are proximate but with clear separation of uses. The LLDC's HWFI SPD notes that tethered models may offer planners the surety required that benefits can be delivered and protected against later conversions to high-end residential. It states that “schemes that meet the required Local Plan policy tests and also physically separates living and working accommodation within the scheme while linking these through lease or tenancy arrangements may provide a greater level of flexibility and be better able to meet the policy tests”.⁹⁷ Since the LLDC's 2015 Work-Live report, tethered work-live space has emerged as an

increasingly popular model for ensuring London's creatives have affordable and proximate space to live and work.



Figure 14. Hackney Wick's warehouses, canal and world-renowned graffiti. Image credit: [Diamond Geezer](#), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

5.1iii Work-live precedents

Bow Arts Trust has a strong track-record in innovating to provide housing, viewing it as an extension of creative workspace provision and manages 'LiveWork' accommodation for approximately 400 artists. In Thamesmead, Bow Arts is working on a bespoke project with the GLA and Peabody Trust to embed creative practice and practitioners into a new part of London.⁹⁸ The partnership has housed 40 artists who pay around 60% of market value to occupy vacant flats in return for contributing to the charity's work in the area.⁹⁹ While long-term plans are still in development, the intention is to ensure the arts play an important and permanent role in one of Europe's largest regeneration schemes.

As part of LB Barking and Dagenham's (LBBD) strategy to attract and retain creatives, a House for Artists has been delivered, "an ambitious, replicable model for affordable, sustainable housing tied to long-term civic engagement".¹⁰⁰ Built by LBBD's housing company Be First and supported by the arts charity Create, the project will house 12 artist tenants, each paying pay 65% of market rent in exchange for contributing to a community-facing arts programme in the ground floor of the building.¹⁰¹ The project is an example of tethered work-live space, providing the "work" element as flexible community space on the ground floor. The ground floor is designed to allow space for the 12 residents to work, exhibit, hold classes or events. With glass windows, the idea is for the space to be open and accessible to residents of the wider area, with activities over the course of its life tailored to be inclusive and attractive, supporting community cohesion and offering for a wider cohort of locals.

These two well-received public-sector partnerships with arts organisations evidence a new wave of tethered work-live projects designed to retain creative talent while giving planners increased surety that the mistakes of the past can be prevented from recurring. Overseen by experienced creative workspace operators, the projects are managed to ensure that occupation of residential space is a condition of continued creative work, aligned to wider policy objectives. The two projects have been made possible in part due to relatively low land values in Barking and Dagenham and Thamesmead and delivering similar developments in HWFI will be challenging, but where engaged partners can come together, here too these needs could be met.

5.1iv Sustaining and regularising Hackney Wick and Fish Island's work-live spaces

HWFI's work-live spaces have housed multiple tenants since their initial conversion in the '90s. Over time, spaces have evolved and this organic process of change does pose some risks. Interiors may not be compliant with modern housing standards and health and safety concerns have been raised, with "poor conditions" including inadequate ventilation, insulation, mould and damp cited in interviews with current occupants.¹⁰² Complex sub-leasing arrangements have been described to local authorities, with some current occupiers paying substantially over the odds through informal agreements that see rent charged by both the landlord and previous occupants, fuelling a view of HWFI's warehouses as "expensive and unregulated".¹⁰³ Anecdotally, there are also concerns that space designed to house creative practice has been given over to recreational use over time. Despite this, Creative Wick's 2021 research found that 90% of current work-live occupants surveyed would like to remain living in warehouses. Regulation would help to address all of these issues and there are examples of boroughs innovating to retain the benefits of living and working clusters while implementing protections against the pitfalls.

In Haringey, a Warehouse Living policy has been developed to regularise and legitimise defined clusters of combined residential and employment space in formerly industrial areas. Haringey's warehouse districts grew organically and now face similar threats to those present in HWFI. The council maintains a position to resist the development of new live/work developments and its policy seeks to

“avoid, in particular [...] the potential for the commercial floorspace becoming de facto residential use over time”.¹⁰⁴ Critical to resisting conversion are controls over the management and operation of spaces “to ensure that the use of the site continues to promote the genuine interrelationship of the living and working elements” The council is working through the planning process to ensure “existing and future occupants [of the districts] are provided with an appropriate standard of living; the existing creative industries and SME sectors are supported and given room to grow; and the creative living and working offer of these sites is maximised”.¹⁰⁵

A similar policy for HWFI’s warehouse clusters would be a substantial step towards sustaining the typology which first enabled artists to move to the area and supporting the continued presence of these creatives locally. Such a move would provide clarity for landowners and developers, facilitating a form of redevelopment that sustains the working culture of the area while giving authorities confidence in outcomes. A framework that permits redevelopment could see such issues with standards and management addressed, the risk of conversion reduced and spaces modernised while retaining the characteristics and benefits of the cluster.

There is appetite in the development sector for such a move. Longstanding local landlord and developer Palm Lane Estates has worked with architects Metropolitan Studio and Centro Planning Consultancy to develop a model combining living and working space through a tethered model for the proposed redevelopment of Palm Lane Estates’ Algha Works site. One of Fish Island’s most well-recognised historic buildings, the circa 1,500sqm factory building was designed as printing works in 1908. Today, the partners’ aspiration is for it to become a beacon for sustained creative practice in HWFI, providing affordable tethered space to live and work. The project is non-standard and falls into the sui generis use-class and is likely to face significant challenges in securing planning. While the development team consider there to be sufficient policy alignment for the scheme to be approved, a clear framework setting out the requirements for redevelopment of HWFI’s creative factories would provide additional clarity and build confidence all round.



Figure 15. HWFI’s warehouses and yards provide indoor and outdoor space for collaboration. Image credit: Amber Joy.

5.2 COMMUNITY LED HOUSING

5.2i Background

In addition to regularising work-live spaces, there are opportunities to develop new housing tailored to local creatives' housing needs and income through a community-led approach. Such an approach could be piloted on a site in HWFI already earmarked for the delivery of community led housing (CLH).

East London Citizens originally campaigned for a Community Land Trust on the Olympic sites as part of their support for the Olympic bid. The St. Clements hospital site in Tower Hamlets was agreed as a pilot, which was successfully delivered as part of a wider development, Under Boris Johnson the LLDC were exploring the possibility of up to 100 CLT homes in the Chobham Manor development. The LLDC went on to promise that at least 20 CLT homes will be delivered within the new neighbourhoods Eastwick and Sweetwater.¹⁰⁶ By 2021, a plot had been identified for the homes and concerns around viability and deliverability were being explored.¹⁰⁷ Delivery partners LLDC, East Wick & Sweetwater Projects (a joint venture partnership between Places for People and Balfour Beatty Investments) have been assessing the route for delivery and an Expression of Interest process to identify a community partner for the project is anticipated in 2022. HWFI Community Development Trust has formed a partnership with London CLT, a community led housing organisation created to work “with teams of local residents to create truly and permanently affordable homes that are owned and run by local people”.¹⁰⁸ The two organisations plan to work together in supporting the East Wick and Sweetwater partners to deliver community led housing on the site.

5.2ii What is community led housing

CLH can take a variety of forms but follows three common principles adopted by central government and the GLA. It is the democratic accountability of groups and greater community control over development and management processes that set community-led housing apart. The following definition for Community-led housing (CLH) has been agreed by the sector and is also used by MHCLG, the London Housing Strategy, and the London Plan. All CLH shares the following principles:

1. Meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the development process. Communities do not necessarily have to initiate a scheme, or build homes themselves, though many do;
2. There is a presumption that the community group or organisation will take a long-term formal role in the ownership, stewardship, or management of the homes; and
3. The benefits of the scheme to the local area and/or specified community group are clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.¹⁰⁹

There are four main forms of CLH including housing co-operatives, Community Land Trusts (CLTs), cohousing, and self-help housing (see Appendix 1). These approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be blended to deliver the stated objectives of an organisation or project. As long the development process and outcome abides by the principles above, community led housing can be adapted and moulded to create bespoke solutions that remedy particular issues facing a community.

CLH is recognised regionally and nationally as a model that has potential to deliver viable, and predominantly affordable homes which respond to hyper-local housing need. The Government made £168m available to community-led housing projects between 2016-19, £38m of the fund was allocated to London where a continuous bidding process is in operation, receiving new applications until either funding is fully committed or by March 2024.¹¹⁰



Figure 16. The development of new homes would benefit from local insight. Image credit: Charli Bristow.

5.2ii Benefits of community led housing

Using methodology based on the Treasury's Green Book Framework, Capital Economics calculated that CLH delivers significant economic, social and environmental benefits which equate to medium to high value for money for public funding. The research found that "over a ten-year horizon each £1 of public support delivers £1.80 of benefit, rising to £2.70 when health and benefit savings, wellbeing and income distribution are factored in."¹¹¹

CLH projects benefit from local insight and can provide benefits to both their inhabitants and the wider neighbourhood. CLH is purposeful about promoting democratic empowerment and giving citizens greater control over the development process. Typically, projects seek to provide sub-market affordable housing but schemes including market value homes can also offer valuable outcomes in relation to empowerment, community control and the promotion of neighbourly living. Inhabitants of current CLH homes describe the benefits as including security of tenure, a quality home and affordability; a sense of community; health improvements and reduced isolation; and commonality between residents brought together by shared interests and circumstances.¹¹² There are multiple examples of CLH groups providing activities for the wider neighbourhood and meeting space for other community groups. Projects frequently include an element of communal space alongside housing in which to facilitate interaction and shared activities.¹¹³

5.3ii Benefits for Hackney Wick and Fish Island

The primary benefits of CLH - the features that set it apart from any other form of housing - are increased community control over the development process and the democratic empowerment of local people. CLH projects are set-up with clear governance and objectives, designed to ringfence the benefits and beneficiaries of relevant schemes and projects. These aspects of the approach could provide a useful framework for considering the wider landscape of existing work-live in HWFI. Given that there is currently a view of HWFI's warehouses being "unregulated", establishing democratic governance arrangements and clear objectives could protect affordability and the provision of workspace; improve conditions; eliminate unfair sub-leasing arrangements and address risks of conversion over time.

For new developments, CLH could support the provision of combined living and working arrangements by providing communal spaces that facilitate creative

practice and collaboration, tailored to creatives' spatial needs. Communities can be defined by geography or by interest, CLH groups have been formed by older people, LGBTQ+ communities and recently, a group of creatives living in a former pub formed a co-op with a view to securing long-term ownership of the building.¹¹⁴ Given CLH's ability to meet a range of needs, promote collaboration and protect affordability, it is perhaps surprising more groups have not formed through a shared interest in sustaining creative practice in London.

Figure 17. CLH offers lessons for improving existing and creating new locally relevant spaces. Image credit: Matthew Comoy, licensed under Unsplash.



The following features of CLH could support the development of permanent, locally relevant housing:

- Democratic empowerment and control over the development process: a CLH approach could ensure housing is designed to meet local need and protect the role of local people in governing and managing spaces for the long-term.
- Provision of genuinely affordable housing with rent levels tied to local incomes: most CLH schemes are established with covenants protecting affordability in perpetuity, ensuring homes built cannot be sold for profit and continue to serve their intended objectives.
- Development of local skills and community capacity: CLH projects offer a range of skills and training opportunities – from strategising, fundraising and partnership-building to design-thinking and project management - which enhance the local community’s capacity and promote cohesion.
- Creation of bespoke eligibility criteria: ensuring homes are earmarked for occupation by target demographics e.g. creatives on low incomes, from diverse backgrounds, young people and those with long-standing ties to the area. London projects such as the RUSS and St. Clements established eligibility criteria which ensured homes were occupied by local residents on pre-defined incomes and these approaches could be extended to include sector-specific eligibility criteria. These criteria do not preclude residents from council waiting lists from accessing affordable housing, rather they form an additional layer of filtration, ensuring residents from the list align with the project’s ethos.

While the delivery of community led housing in HWFI should not be viewed as a panacea, it could make a substantial difference to both the creatives who will directly benefit from occupancy and contribute to inclusive place-making. CLH is a core focus of this report due to the opportunity at East Wick and Sweetwater. The delivery of CLH homes at East Wick and Sweetwater would set a precedent by demonstrating that delivery of affordable homes can be tailored to local need. In other areas, CLH groups have successfully made the case that dedicated housing should be provided for groups including older women, older LGBTQ+ residents and estate residents living in overcrowded conditions. In HWFI, there is a clear and pressing need for homes for creative practitioners on low to median incomes, and for emerging creatives unable to access market properties and the associated benefits of independent living.

The East Wick and Sweetwater project would benefit from the insight of a community partner such as the HWFI CDT. It has strong local networks and a clear understanding of the community’s social and spatial needs. Working closely with its associates London CLT, the CDT is well placed to guide the development of homes in line with the local communities aspirations, providing expert insight to development partners and lending legitimacy to a project born out of a grassroots campaign to asset local interests in the production of housing.

Figure 18. HWFI would be well-placed to develop CLH, building on its history of grassroots innovation and community-led arts practice. Image credit: Amanda Robinson.



6. CONCLUSION

The supply of new housing in HWFI is failing to meet the needs of local creatives on low to medium incomes. Homeownership is out of reach for all but the top earners, intermediate and genuinely affordable options are few. For many years, the majority of Londoners unable to buy homes have found accommodation in the PRS. The rental market in HWFI – and in London more widely – is contracting, struggling to meet demand and prices for the homes that are available for rent are rising. The PRS is increasingly unaffordable and ill-equipped to maintain a base of low to medium income creative professionals in HWFI. As a result, the fragmentation of the community is observed to be occurring, with the likely consequence that the occupiers of low-cost workspace will be travelling to HWFI from ever greater distances. This separation between live and work space is likely to have detrimental impacts on the overall attractiveness and vibrancy of the neighbourhood, and be associated with increased carbon emissions and expenditure in relation to commutes.

While the issue of a “squeezed middle” comprised of residents who cannot afford to buy, are struggling to keep pace with rising PRS prices and do not qualify for social housing is not unique to HWFI, HWFI is uniquely positioned to pilot innovative solutions. A creative heartland where new approaches to securing affordable workspace are emerging, HWFI additionally benefits from Creative Enterprise Zone status and a policy context which is supportive of innovative housing models. New approaches to delivering i) work-live space which prioritise affordability and the facilitation of creative practice and ii) community led housing models both have significant potential to form part of a solution.

Projects which fall into these categories, designed and delivered to meet creative living requirements could offer significant neighbourhood benefits while providing an “anchor” to ensure resident creatives have affordable accommodation in HWFI in perpetuity. While pilot schemes would likely deliver small numbers, they would provide an evidence-base to inform decision-making going forward and have potential to scale. These projects could provide a roadmap for the sensitive and productive refurbishment of HWFI’s warehouses, a next-stage evolution of the informal spaces which underpinned HWFI’s original, organic development into internationally significant cluster, regularised and made policy compliant while retaining benefits including affordability and communal spaces that support cohesion, learning and collaboration. There are a number of policy and market drivers which align to indicate the HWFI is a location well-placed to deliver innovative housing options, these include:

- **A local policy landscape which supports “innovative housing models”** (LLDC Local Plan Policy H.8), with the reasoned justification recognising such models’ ability to “enable more wider community needs to be met, such as the potential for shared amenity space or facilitating home-based working”. Specifically, while the HWFI SPD does not recognise live/work as a form of housing provision that would be supported, where proposals meet the employment and housing policy requirements within the Local Plan it could be treated as a “sui generis” use.
- **Significant appetite to sustain the cluster, shared by the community and local authorities.** The original Creative Enterprise Zone bid was developed jointly by the LLDC, LB Hackney and LB Tower Hamlet, mobilised by sector and community engagement. The vision and strategy set out to “protect, embed and scale what we already have; recognising the broad social and economic value our creative economy creates.” Its Action Plan set out to develop “policy to support ‘innovative housing products’ (including live work, co-housing and warehouse living) which support the retention of a diversity of creative workforce and activity in the area.” While no new policy in relation to these aims has been developed, “affordable, tethered live-work options for creatives” continues to be recognised as a KPI under the Policy strand

of the Mayoral Accreditation process. With London's housing market offering even fewer affordable choices today than it did at the time of the bid (2018), the time is ripe to review and catalyse these aims.

- **Appetite in the development sector for new approaches**, evidenced by Palm Lane Estate's proposed 'warehouse living' scheme and the community led housing opportunity at East Wick and Sweetwater. While the detail of both opportunities is still being developed, it is significant that a private actor and joint-venture partnership are both on the road to facilitating innovative delivery.
- **Community appetite, skills and capacity to work in partnership with private and public stakeholders**, demonstrated by the HWFI CDT's track record of collaborating with the local authorities and Mayor of London both informally and through commissions and funding bids. The wider network of community organisations and businesses in HWFI is engaged and multiple examples of collaboration to support local policy objectives - from developing circular economies to supporting the pandemic response - are evident.

There is a clear opportunity to support demonstrator projects which have the potential to deliver real benefit to the local area through a combination of collaborative policy application, investment and advocacy. The local authorities, GLA and private parties should come together in enabling locally-led innovation to thrive.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ):

- The GLA should set out its objectives for supporting creative clusters through housing and begin building an evidence base of best-practice schemes and policies to date.
- The GLA and zones should come together to discuss approaches to sustaining creative clusters through innovative housing and develop a strategy for how this work can be taken forward, through planning, housing strategy or other avenues.
- Innovative and non-standard development proposals seeking to combine housing and workspace under one rental agreement are unlikely to meet policy tests of affordable housing or workspace, but typically seek to provide a discount on the combined market price of leasing both types of space. The GLA and zones – in consultation with community and development stakeholders - should develop a framework for assessing the affordability of combined living and working proposals.
- LB Haringey's Warehouse Living policy DM39 provides a strong precedent and framework for the creation of area-specific policies to legitimise and regularise the continuation and development of mutually supportive living and working creative clusters. The merit of developing such a policy should be explored by LBs Tower Hamlet and Hackney with a view to enhancing HWFI's Creative Enterprise Zone and providing clarity for future development proposals.

For the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC):

- LLDC's Local Plan policy H8 supports innovative housing proposals where these "may also enable more wider community needs to be met, such as the potential for shared amenity space or facilitating home-based working" and covers sui generis uses. The application of this policy should be open-minded and collaborative, allowing innovation to flourish where it responds to a defined local need.

- stakeholders are primed to support the authority and joint-venture partners successfully delivering homes tailored to local need, the opportunity should not be missed.

The different characteristics of private and community-led and non-standard development proposals should be recognised. Community-led projects are likely to be subject to governance arrangements designed to protect the benefits and beneficiaries of proposals, this should give confidence to planners that benefits of proposed schemes and endure will be delivered.

For developers:

- Innovative and non-standard proposals led by private actors and seeking to meet local policy tests should learn from innovative creative housing projects delivered to date, for example the House for Artists in Barking and Dagenham. Partnering with experienced creative workspace operators and implementing transparent management arrangements can provide confidence to planners that projects will continue to promote a genuine interrelationship between living and working elements of a scheme, addressing the risk of a de-facto conversion to purely residential use over time.
- Innovative and non-standard proposals should consider establishing partnerships with community-led groups or developing covenants such as those implemented by community-led housing projects to protect the proposed benefits of schemes in perpetuity.

Figure 18. HWFI lights up for the night.
Image credit: Charli Bristow.



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APPENDIX

Homes for Sale in HWFI

The table shows the highest and lowest value properties available on the market at the time of writing and a property representing the mean average between the two. The table provides the deposit and level of household income required to purchase each with a mortgage. The London Plan states that, for a dwelling to be considered affordable, spend on housing costs (including mortgage repayments, rent and service charge) should not exceed 40% net annual household income. "Required net salary" in the table below uses this formula to extrapolate the required salary for each of the properties above to be considered affordable.

Bedrooms	Location	Price	Deposit (10%)	Monthly payment	*Required net salary
1	Roach Road	£110,000 (for 25%)	£11,000	Mortgage: £460 Rent: £825.68 Service charge: £131.72	£42,502
1	Eastway	£319,995	£32,000	£1,336	£40,080
1	Smeed Road	£425,000	£42,000	£1,775	£53,250
1	White Post Lane	£525,000	£52,500	£2,192	£65,700
2	Dace Road	£138,675 (for 25%)	£13,868	Mortgage: £579 Rent: unspecified Service charge:	tbc
2	Leabank Square	£370,000	£37,000	£1,545	£46,350
2	Cadogan Terrace	£550,000	£55,000	£2,297	£57,425
2	Icemaidd Court	£725,000	£72,500	£3,027	£90,804
3	Dace Road	£156,275 (for 25%)	£15,628	Mortgage: £653	tbc
3	Prince Edward Rd	£585,000	£58,500	£2,443	£73,290
3	Gainsborough St	£685,000	£68,500	£2,860	£85,800
3	Eastway	£800,000	£80,000	£3,340	£100,200

Homes to rent in HWFI

The table compares rental prices (highest, lowest and the mean average based on the two for a room in a shared house; a studio; one, two, three bed homes) with average net monthly salaries.

Bedroom(s)	Location	Price (PCM)	Net household income required	Net salary per person required
Double bedroom (shared house)	Mare Street	£560	£16,800	£16,800
Double bedroom (shared house)	Hackney Central	£1,000	£30,000	£30,000
Double bedroom (shared house)	Homerton	£1,500	£45,000	£45,000
Studio	Leytonstone Road	£950	£28,500	£28,500
Studio	Makers Yard	£1,690	£50,700	£50,700
Studio	Old Ford Road	£2,500	£75,000	£75,000
1 bed	Eric Street	£1,038	£31,140	£31,140
1 bed	Great Eastern Road	£2,200	£66,000	£66,000
1 bed	Manhattan Lofts	£3,400	£102,000	£102,000
2 bed	Chopwell Close	£1,495	£44,850	£22,425
2 bed	Bramshaw Road	£3,750	£112,500	£56,250
2 bed	Manhattan Loft Gardens	£6,500	£195,000	£97,500
3 bed (LLR)	Eric Street	£1,268	£38,040	£12,680
3 bed	Glenavon Road	£1,750	£52,500	£17,500
3 bed	High Road Leyton	£4,500	£135,000	£45,000