

Property and Place Notes from Session

29 April 2003

The session began with an introduction from Chair Michael Frye who welcomed both the Commission members and guests. There was a recap on the work already done in the main sessions, and an update on the LDA research currently taking place into BME creative businesses and London's creative sectors – findings from both of which will feed into the Commission's deliberations.

The Creative Industries Property Trust

The Commission members were given two presentations. Andrew Carmichael, Creative Lewisham described the role of Cockpit Arts, a well-established provider of affordable property for designer makers, in contributing towards Lewisham's creative economy. Graham Hitchen, LDA outlined the idea of a Creative Industries Property Trust – a body which would act as a knowledge hub, broker and negotiator; and also as the owner and developer of property assets in order to support the Creative Industries. Commission members were joined by figures with expertise and experience in London's physical geography, spatial dimension and property market. These were: Shelley Adams, Park Royal Partnership; Gus Ambler, DTZ; Emmanuelle Filsjean, Greater London Authority; David Powell, David Powell Associates; Eric Reynolds, Urban Space Management; Iain Tuckett and Alison Pinner, Coin Street Community Builders; Mark Crane, LDA. As a result, the following were identified as points for possible LDA action:

- Those present broadly welcomed the concept of a Property Trust as a simple and effective means of delivering much-needed help to creative businesses.
- The point was made that providing workspace for people with creative ideas and businesses is one of the simplest and most effective means of boosting employment and economic growth.
- There are a number of charities, trusts and co-operatives that are already providing affordable workspace for creative professionals. The Trust should aim to work with these agencies and avoid any duplication of efforts.
- There are currently unused spaces in London that could be released and used, even if just for the short term: temporary uses of space can be valuable and exciting, providing settings for work, performance and exhibition.
- There is no generalized shortage of property – it's just that people want to work in certain places, such as Soho. It is only in these areas that controls may be necessary.
- An important role for the Trust could be to act as a broker and negotiator on Section 106 Agreements, helping to ensure that these are effectively used in the planning consent process to support CI activity.

The Mayor's Commission on the Creative Industries

- Price stability is a critical issue: following a rent review, sudden and dramatic rises can be a real problem for small businesses. Can policies (perhaps price caps) be introduced so as to dampen these rises?
- Consideration needs to be given to property requirements throughout the lifecycle of a creative business. This means getting start-ups into affordable workspace, but also ensuring that there is adequate provision as they mature and move through the lifecycle, continuously releasing spaces for new entrants.
- A property trust should also support and improve existing space. Many buildings inhabited by creative businesses and organisations are poor quality, and in need of basic repair and maintenance.
- What is needed is a 'para property team' – a floating group of surveyors, architects and developers who can visit sites, scope up plans very quickly and draw on a feasibility fund to work on projects and initiate early stage developments.

For more information about the Commission's activities, please get in touch with Paul Owens, paul@creativelondon.org.uk or 020 7468 2334