

Artists'
workspace
consultation report

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This report presents findings from an in-depth qualitative consultation with stakeholders on the challenges of affordable workspace provision for artists in London, and potential solutions to these challenges. The consultation reached over 30 stakeholders through a combination of online discussions and a week-long co-creative workshop.

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# **Background**

This report presents findings from an in-depth qualitative consultation with stakeholders on the challenges facing affordable workspace provision for artists in London. It also outlines solutions that stakeholders co-created in response to these challenges. The consultation reached over 30 stakeholders through a combination of online discussions and a week-long co-creation workshop.

The consultation forms part of a wider body of research being conducted by Dr Rhian Scott, at King's College London, on cultural infrastructure provision and the crisis of affordability in the creative workspace sector in London. The consultation was designed with support in kind from Creative Land Trust, as part of their efforts to engage with stakeholders from across London's creative sector and beyond, to understand how they can best support sustainable growth and long-term security within the studio sector.

The findings outlined in this report provide the evidentiary basis of the challenges and obstacles faced when delivering and securing affordable workspace for artists in London. In addition, the report provides insights for property developers, local and regional government, studio providers and Creative Land Trust to inform their strategies and best practice for addressing these challenges.

Dr Scott is an independent researcher based in the Department of Geography, within the Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy at King's College London, where she is also part of the Urban Futures research group. She has a PhD in Geography from the University of Oxford. She is currently undertaking an Economic and Social Research Council-funded postdoctoral fellowship at King's College London (with the London Interdisciplinary Social Science DTP) where her research specialisms are creativity in the city, urban transformations and the cultural geographies of precarity. In her postdoctoral work, Dr Scott explores different models of studio provision and what they stand to offer as a response to the crisis of affordability in London, including the recently established Creative Land Trust, with which she has consulted closely on the design of this piece of stakeholder research.

Creative Land Trust was established in 2019 through an initiative led by policy at the Greater London Authority and operates as an independent body with the long-term aim of securing affordable workspace for artists at scale and in perpetuity across London. The recent establishment of the Trust represents a major opportunity to achieve such ambitions, whilst also revisiting some of the long-standing challenges facing studio provision. It is important to note that the research undertaken by Dr Scott, including this stakeholder consultation, is not sponsored by Creative Land Trust; however, the workshop was designed in close consultation with Creative Land Trust and the results, as presented here, will be used to inform their future work strategy.

The report has been written in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has presented additional challenges for the creative sector, and stakeholders across London are facing their own pressures during this unusual time. Despite this, stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and engaged in an open, constructive and collaborative manner throughout this process. They must be thanked up front for taking the time to contribute to this consultation.

The scope of this report covers stakeholder views of the key challenges facing affordable studio provision for artists, their proposed solutions to these challenges, and the results of ranking solutions based on their impact and how difficult they would be to implement in practice. As such, this research seeks to move beyond discussion of the ongoing challenges and possible solutions to develop on-the-ground practices for putting these solutions into action.

# **Executive summary**

During the consultation, stakeholders were presented with six key challenges to address, some of which were felt to be more pressing than others, namely: i) the need to define affordability in the context of London, ii) the need to demonstrate the immediate economic and social value of artists' studios and iii) the need to build stronger links between studios and their local communities.

- Overall, stakeholders co-designed 12 solutions to these three challenges and agreed that seven of the solutions proposed were likely to have a positive and large impact on the affordable studio sector.
- Those seen as having the highest impact and being comparatively easy to implement were those that involve studio providers' leading the way in ensuring closer links are developed between studios and their local communities, such as designating a set portion of studios to artists living locally. Solutions involving local authorities' making provisions for affordable studios in new developments and masterplan strategies were also felt to be of high impact and comparatively easy to implement.
- Others seen as impactful in theory, but difficult to implement in practice, related to creating new measures and mechanisms for defining affordability across the studio sector in London, such as aligning rules for studio rent as a set percentage of artists' annual turnover across local authorities. Evidencing the relationship between the social and economic value of artists' studios was also felt to be of high impact for justifying funding and support for studios, but difficult to implement in practice.

Qualitative discussions of the solutions proposed by stakeholders also revealed several insights into the creative workspace sector:

- 1. There is a need for more mediators and gatekeepers to help broker relationships across the sector and link up studio providers with new funding and development opportunities - with local authorities and Creative Land Trust expected to play a leading role in this networking.
- 2. Responsibility for delivering the proposed solutions is not distributed evenly across stakeholder groups, with local authorities expected to play a leading role in delivering the majority of the solutions proposed.
- 3. Access to finance and resources continues to be an underlying barrier to delivering the proposed solutions. However, stakeholders are not agreed as to where additional resource should come from.
- 4. Stakeholder enthusiasm for including studios in social infrastructure mapping highlights the ongoing need to demonstrate the wider value of studios to justify intervention and support in the creative sector.
- 5. There is a pressing need to insulate studios from land rent change, which Creative Land Trust is well positioned to do, but which is not yet fully realised among stakeholders.
- 6. There are several aspects of studio provision that need to be more clearly defined and agreed on across the sector, such as what precisely 'affordability' means for artists and the duration of tenure that defines 'meanwhile', 'short-term' and 'long-term' workspace.



## **Context**

In towns and cities across the UK, artists have been celebrated for adding to the vibrancy and draw of certain urban areas. Studios provide the vital spaces for hosting and supporting artists, and provide some of the critical settings in which creativity can happen.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the subject of the studio has been taken up with renewed interest in policy circles, for its ability to reanimate urban spaces and heal social scarring after the COVID-19 pandemic by bringing people back together again (see Town and Country Planning Association, 2021; City of London, 2020; Greater London Authority [GLA], 2020).

Yet, at the same time, it is being widely documented and evidenced that artists' workspace is at risk (see GLA, 2014; 2018). In London, these risks are longstanding and tend to oscillate between three interrelated causes: artists' low and unpredictable salaries, a shortage of affordable workspace and insecurity of tenure. At a time when culture and creativity is increasingly at the forefront of urban recovery efforts, it feels pertinent to bring the sector together, to revisit these risks and explore alternative, long-term solutions.

### **Affordability**

Across London, the declining affordability and availability of spaces for creative production has proven to be a major challenge for urban policy predicated on the cultural economy as a driver of regeneration and renewal. Affordable studios matter because they provide vital incubators for a large subset of London's creative workers and are a home for the city's creative and cultural industries. These industries contribute significant amounts of financial, social and cultural capital to the city. Recent pre-COVID figures show creative jobs growing at twice the rate of the rest of the economy, with 25 per cent of all creative industries jobs based in London (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport [DCMS], 2018; Creative Industries Council, 2021). Creative industries were thought to boost London's economy by £52bn in 2019, with a study commissioned by City Hall estimating that the knock-on effect of the creative sector to local supply chains accounted for an additional £40bn a year to London's economy (GLA, 2019).

Affordability also matters because artists are among the lowest earners in the creative industries. Recent research tells us that the average annual turnover that artists make from their art practice is low, at around £6,020 per annum, with 90 per cent indicating that they do not earn enough from their art practice to support themselves (TBR, 2018). The knock-on effect is that artists rely on there being a supply of low-cost workspace in which to conduct their creative practice, and, whilst some artists work in digital or virtual media, most creative art work requires physical production space (GLA, 2014). A report commissioned by the Mayor of London (2018) estimates that 13,780 artists are on waiting lists and studio occupancy rates are at 95 per cent, suggesting demand is high and sustained.

#### Leasehold tenure

In London, it is becoming increasingly difficult for artists to find affordable spaces, which is having a direct impact on the types of creative production that London's cultural infrastructure is able to support, as well as having an impact on the wider creative supply chain (GLA, 2019). A common response to the pressing need for lowcost workspace has been the borrowed infrastructure model, encompassing a range of short-term solutions such as 'meanwhile' use and 'pop-up' schemes. Central to this model is leasehold tenure, which accounts for around 87 per cent of all studio properties managed by London's studio providers (see GLA, 2018 – a study of 129 studio organisations). Having initially provided a useful strategy for growing a supply of studios whilst keeping costs low, the proliferation of this model has generated a sectoral dependency on fluctuations in the property market to produce underused space for short-term creative use. Studio organisations are not always best equipped to negotiate rent reviews or lease renewals to secure their premises, meaning that, when market conditions improve and developers want to exploit the full value use of the land, the creative occupiers are often displaced.

### **Longer-term solutions**

In 2019, Creative Land Trust was established through an initiative led by the GLA as a direct response to this crisis of affordability in London and the need to secure long-term affordable space for creatives (Creative Land Trust, 2022a). The Trust's mission is to secure 1,000 studio spaces in five years that would otherwise not exist, making them available for studio providers to rent to artists and makers (Arts Council England, 2019). Initial funding was secured through a £4m grant from the Mayor of London, along with funding from Arts Council England and Bloomberg Philanthropies, and initial seed funding from Outset Contemporary Art Fund. The ambition of the Trust is to grow this funding by bringing together donors, investors and grant-givers to purchase buildings to provide affordable workspace in perpetuity across the capital (Mayor of London, 2019). It will primarily do so by purchasing freehold properties and long-term leases that it rents back to the creative sector. Within this context, it is important to better understand the challenges that Creative Land Trust is likely to encounter as it sets about securing long-term workspace in the capital, and what, if anything, can be done to overcome these.

## **Objectives of the consultation**

The overall aim of the consultation was to co-create solutions to key challenges faced by the affordable creative workspace sector by bringing together a range of sector experts from academia, policy, planning and the creative and cultural sectors. Specifically, the consultation aimed to establish:

- Stakeholder views on each of the challenges. including which are in need of the most urgent attention.
- Stakeholder ideas and potential solutions for addressing these challenges and dismantling the potential barriers to these solutions.
- Views on which ideas would be most impactful and should be prioritised by policymakers.





# Methodology

Between January and February 2022 stakeholders from across London took part in two online brainstorms and a week-long workshop. A total of 30 stakeholders took part in the consultation, including senior representatives from the following:

- Greater London Authority (Culture Team and Royal Docks Team)
- Local authorities (including representatives from the London boroughs of Lambeth, Newham, Hackney and Enfield)
- Property developers (Lendlease, Mount Anvil and L&Q)
- Studio providers (London-based, including Southwark Studios, City Studios, Chisenhale Art Place, Performance Space, V22, SET studios and Art Hub Studios)
- Arts organisations/trusts (Creative Workspace Network, Hackney Wick & Fish Island Community Development Trust, Creative Land Trust and Arts Council England)
- Academics (King's College London and University of Aberdeen)

All stakeholders were recruited based on their holding a senior position within their organisation and their work/organisation being mostly situated in London. The consultation was divided into three phases.

### PHASE 1

### **Discussion of challenges**

An initial 60-minute discussion was hosted on Microsoft Teams, during which stakeholders were introduced to six key challenges, which represented real challenges emerging from a preliminary literature review and refined in collaboration with Creative Land Trust.

PHASE 2

**Co-creating solutions** 

Following an initial discussion of the six challenges, stakeholders took part in a week-long workshop hosted online using digital brainstorming platform Miro. Stakeholders were presented with six brainstorming boards on Miro, each of which corresponded with one of the six challenges. Stakeholders were asked to share their suggestions for how best to address each challenge, the barriers to its success and the actions that would need to be taken to overcome such barriers. They were also encouraged to comment on and respond to each other's solutions, and allow ideas to snowball and be developed across stakeholder groups. To ensure that all stakeholders had the opportunity to engage and contribute to the workshop, it was designed to be flexible and accessible at any time, enabling stakeholders time to pause and reflect between their contributions.

### PHASE 3

#### **Voting exercises**

The consultation was concluded with a 120-minute discussion hosted on Microsoft Teams, during which stakeholders were presented with a summary of the solutions that they co-created during the workshop. They were invited to engage in a discussion of the solutions they had proposed in response to the three challenges that had received the highest response rate during the workshop, and that were seen to encompass some of the ideas and challenges of the remaining challenges. Stakeholders were prompted to share what they thought of the solutions and what they felt might work well (or less well), and how they could be improved. Following this, stakeholders ranked each of the solutions to the three challenges in relation to their perceived impact and how difficult they would be to implement. The exercise concluded with a final vote on which solution(s) they would most like to see policymakers carry forward.

### **Ethical considerations**

The research drew on ethical guidelines set out by the Research Ethics Office at King's College London. Participation was considered to carry low risk to participants and ethical clearance was granted by the relevant research ethics subcommittee/panel on these grounds. All participants received full disclosure of the research aims and were able to withdraw from the research at any stage. Consent forms were provided prior to Phase 1, and verbal consent was gained from stakeholders at the beginning of each online discussion. All responses in this report are shared in a way that ensures individual stakeholders cannot be identified - that is, only the stakeholder group is identified.





# Six challenges facing affordable studio provision

The consultation was structured around six key challenges that represent real challenges faced by the creative workspace sector. These were identified from existing academic literature, policy reports and papers, and were refined in close collaboration with Creative Land Trust. This section of the report introduces each of the challenges and provides some useful background and context.



## **DEFINING AFFORDABILITY**

**CHALLENGE 1** Affordable studios still aren't within budget for many artists, which brings into question how we can better define and understand affordability in the specific context of London.

In 2021, £11 per square foot appears to have become the informal benchmark for 'affordable rent' among studio providers, yet figures show that studio rents are often above this and still rising (Mayor of London, 2018). In 2014, the average rent across studio providers in London was £13.73 per square foot per annum; by 2018, the average cost was £14.29 per square foot per annum (GLA, 2014; 2018). Retail price inflation was 2 per cent per year over this period, so was unlikely to have contributed to this trend (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2018). However, it is hard to gain accurate and comparable figures around studio rents for artists because of the lack of a consistent method of calculation across the sector, and ambiguity around the ways in which affordability is defined. Affordable costs can differ by studio provider, property type, facilities on site, length of tenure and art practice. The parameters used to define and determine affordability in the housing sector are arguably clearer. Affordable residential property is often calculated as up to 80 per cent of market rent (including service charges - though 'genuinely' affordable is usually calculated at 60 per cent). Housing is also considered affordable when an acceptable standard of housing can be obtained whilst leaving sufficient income for the household to meet essential non-household expenditures (House of Commons, 2016). This raises the question:

How can we better understand and define what 'affordability' means in relation to affordable art studios?



## **VALUE & COMMITMENT**

**CHALLENGE 2** | Developers and local councils are under pressure to deliver short-term added value, meaning studios are often outcompeted by alternative uses.

Whilst supportive in principle, local councils are under pressure to achieve best value when disposing of community assets, which can lead to their prioritising short-term financial gain over long-term community value (Future of London, 2021). Developers often face similar challenges of needing to demonstrate the immediate added value of new developments.

The issue is that the financial and social values of studios tend to be evidenced over the long term. For instance, evidence of residential property values over a 10-year period shows that property prices in creative clusters (with studios) outperform surrounding areas by 4.4 per cent per annum, including rental prices (Creative Land Trust et al., 2021). In addition to increasing investment value in the long term, studios have proven to help minimise risk, due to the sustained demand for studio space across London and high occupancy rates (Creative Land Trust et al., 2021; GLA, 2020).

However, developers and local councils aren't always able to apply this long-term thinking, and, as such, studio developments tend to be outcompeted (in both new developments and when repurposing existing assets) by alternative uses with higher financial returns in the short term. This raises the question:

What, if anything, can be done to enable developers and local authorities to commit to the long term and make the most of the long-term social and financial benefits of studios?



# **LOCAL EMBEDDEDNESS**

CHALLENGE 3 | Local communities don't always feel that artists' studios are for them, meaning the positive impacts of studios aren't always realised within them.

Interaction between artists using studios and local communities does not always happen organically. Artists often don't live and work where studios are based and instead travel into the area to work in the studio for a few hours before going home, meaning that the 'community offering' of studios is not always immediately visible (TBR, 2018).

Studio provider organisations have tried to overcome this through tactical interventions that support better community engagement (see SPACE, 2022 and Acme, 2006 for examples). However, such interventions run the risk of taking the form of a single outreach event (eg a one-off open studio event or workshop), rather than a continued interaction. Ongoing engagement programmes can introduce additional costs to management margins, which in some cases can involve increases in studio rents.

Interventions can sometimes feel like a tick-box requirement for those renting workspace. Whilst it is important for studios to feel inclusive of the local community, it is important to ensure that artists and studios are not automatically seen as a service in the community. Artists are professionals in their own right and should be able to carry out their creative practice without needing to engage, should they choose not to. This raises the question:

What more can be done to build and sustain relationships between artists and the communities surrounding their studios, so that residents feel studios are for them?



## **LAND PRICES**

**CHALLENGE 4** It is becoming increasingly difficult to bridge the gap between the market price of land in London and affordable prices for artists' studios.

Land prices are rising across London and land sales are becoming increasingly competitive (Savills, 2021; ONS, 2021). However, there is still a shortage of opportunities relative to increasing demand, creating further upward pressure on land values. The issue is that many studio provider organisations tend to manage their properties under leasehold tenure agreements and are not able to raise the capital against their properties to compete on the open property market (particularly as lenders tend to require a minimum 25-year lease to raise funds against).

Planning regimes are also changing and making it easier for developers to build new residential properties and repurpose existing land and properties for residential use (eg permitted development rights). This further 'liberalisation' of planning regulations for residential use is squeezing out opportunities for commercial developments, such as those that might include artists' studios. Some developers are also sitting on land (a phenomenon called 'strategic land banking') without building and then selling it on for profit, which compounds the difficulties of creating affordable workspace (Wainwright, 2017). This raises the question:

What, if anything, can be done to address the gap between the price of land in London and affordable prices for artists' studios?



## **LONGEVITY**

**CHALLENGE 5** | The demand for studio space, both in terms of quantity and workspace type (ie short-term flexible contracts vs long-term contracts) is in a state of flux, bringing into question the value of long-term workspace.

The pandemic has accelerated trends in businesses' breaking away from traditional serviced business models and opting for more open and flexible workspaces that offer short-term leases and flexible in-out clauses, which help provide a buffer against future financial shocks (GLA, 2020; City of London, 2020).

High streets provide a new opportunity for meeting this flexible workspace demand. Fast growing e-commerce is challenging traditional assumptions of 'anchor' retail tenants and is compounding the pattern of high-street vacancy (GLA, 2020). With former retail spaces often vacant, landlords are meanwhile looking to use these as a way of bridging the gap until they are able to put properties to full use.

Flexible use is supported by the government, which, in September 2020, introduced the Use Classes Order, granting greater flexibility for landlords changing between retail and workspace (Town and Country Planning Association, 2020). In March 2021, the Mayor of London also set out the High Streets For All Challenge, which calls for the 'creative reuse of vacant and underused assets' with a focus on affordability, flexibility and meanwhile use (Mayor of London, 2021a). This raises the question:

What, if anything, can the studio sector do to ensure that the immediate post-COVID demand for meanwhile space does not overshadow the need for securing studios in the longer term?



## **ARTIST INVOLVEMENT**

**CHALLENGE 6** | There are very few, if any, successful examples of land trusts that are established and driven by people other than the residents (or artists) themselves.

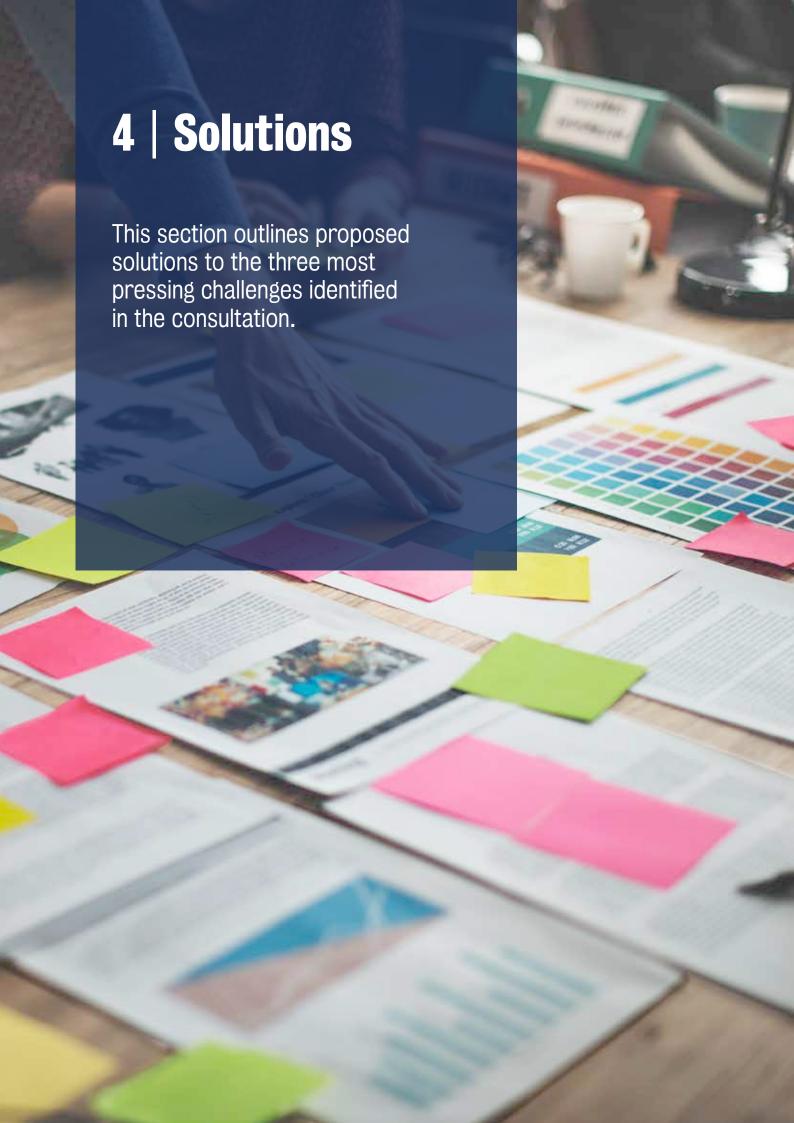
Land trusts offer an alternative way for communities to develop and manage community assets for long-term benefit by taking the assets off the market and making them permanently affordable (see Community Land Trust Network, 2022; UN HABITAT, 2012). It is generally understood that land trusts must make a provision for an 'asset lock' to ensure that any assets acquired by the trust can only be bought and developed for the explicit benefit of the community it serves, or, in the case of Creative Land Trust, for artists and other creatives.

However, there are very few examples of successful land trusts that have been professionalised or state-led (Thompson, 2020: Hackett et al., 2019) and many examples of communities' becoming disengaged where they feel they are not in control. Whilst London's Creative Land Trust was born out of the demand for affordable and longterm workspace for artists, it was established through an initiative led by policy at the GLA.

Whilst a professionalised land trust is valuable for connecting opportunities, resources and funding, artists and studio provider groups need to be part of the driving force making it happen. For Creative Land Trust to gain traction with studio groups and artists, more than just the consent or support of the artists who would benefit is required. This raises the question:

What, if anything, can be done to ensure artists and art groups are more active participants in Creative Land Trust, to ensure that it unlocks its full potential?





# **Proposed solutions to the challenges**

Three challenges in particular were felt to be the most pressing and received the highest levels of engagement during the workshop. These were:

- **1** Affordable studios still aren't within budget for many artists, which brings into question how we can better define and understand affordability in the specific context of London.
- 2 Developers and local councils are under pressure to deliver short-term added value, meaning studios are often outcompeted by alternative uses.
- 3 Local communities don't always feel that artists' studios are for them, meaning the positive impacts of studios aren't always realised within them.

Stakeholders co-created four solutions to each of these challenges, totalling 12 solutions. During the final Phase 3 voting exercise, stakeholders discussed and debated these 12 solutions and ranked them according to their impact and how difficult they would be to implement. This section sets out the stakeholders' proposed solutions and the outcomes of the ranking exercise.



## **DEFINING AFFORDABILITY**

**CHALLENGE 1** Affordable studios still aren't within budget for many artists, which brings into question how we can better define and understand affordability in the specific context of London.

This requires more open discussions between artists and studio providers about how they measure and define what constitutes affordable rent. Stakeholders acknowledged that this would require a more open-book method of measuring artists' earnings and the proportion of salary spent on studio rent. Many felt this would be the first step towards creating new and shared measures for defining affordability across the sector. They co-created four potential solutions to this challenge.

Of these four solutions, stakeholders felt that defining affordability against a set percentage of market rent would be the easiest to implement on the grounds that it would build on existing measures used within the housing sector. However, defining affordability as a set percentage of artists' annual turnover would create a higher impact, on the grounds that it would ensure genuine affordability for artists in relation to their individual earning capacity.

### **Solution A**

Aligned rules for rent as a set percentage of artists' annual turnover

The overall aim of this solution is to define affordability as a flat rate percentage of artists' total annual turnover. This involves a review of how affordability is currently calculated by studio providers, expressed as a single figure inclusive of all additional charges - including business rates, Wi-Fi and service charges - to allow for easier cross-sector comparisons. Studio providers identified the current lack of co-ordinated data monitoring and affordability indexes as a potential barrier to developing a shared definition of affordability and aligning their work more closely.

This solution would also involve a review of artists' salaries, with studio providers' moving towards an openbook policy of artists' earnings. Whilst recent reports have gone some way towards understanding salaries and artists' livelihoods (see TBR, 2018), stakeholders insisted that there are still gaps in understanding how studio rent is paid and how affordability is calculated in relation to individual artists' earnings. For instance, it is not known whether 'affordable rent' is calculated in relation to earnings from their creative practice, or earnings from other sources (such as secondary employment or their partner's earnings). A more open discussion with artists about their earnings could help to determine the upper and lower limits of what percentage of their income they could afford to spend on studio rent. To be genuinely inclusive and affordable, stakeholders stressed that this would need to be measured against what a new entrant could afford, to ensure it is based on the lowest end of the salary spectrum.

Studio providers were seen as being particularly well placed to gather and monitor this information. One suggestion was that studio providers could include basic questions about income and rent in their annual studio review, during which they reach out to their tenants for feedback and information about contract renewals.

### **Potential barriers raised**

- Artists' salaries fluctuate widely and are often supplemented with other sources of income. Recent reports have demonstrated the variability of artists' earnings in relation to their project-based styles of working, whereby earnings yo-yo from month to month (TBR, 2018; Kretschmer et al., 2011). These reports have also evidenced artists' relying on external sources of income to subsidise the cost of studio rent. Taken together, this makes it difficult to assess individual circumstances and how affordability is defined against this. Stakeholders were also sensitive to the fact that artists may not be comfortable with sharing personal data about earnings and sales, particularly if it requires them to disclose other income sources. Reassurances would therefore need to be provided as to the privacy and anonymity of any data being collected and shared.
- Stakeholders also raised concerns about the additional resource needed to monitor these data, and revise definitions of affordability on an annual basis in keeping with artists' income change, the rising cost of living and market rates. Stakeholders acknowledged that studio providers' time and resource is already stretched to its limit and that this additional monitoring may not be viable.
- Developers also raised the issue that studio space may end up being offered to higher-earning artists who are able to pay higher rates, thus excluding artists at the lower end of the income curve.

'This would have lower impact because it keeps everything very individual. The artist will have to think about their individual turnover and demonstrate and negotiate that on an individual level, which seems like really hard work."

**Arts organisation/trust** 

## Moderate impact, difficult to implement

- Stakeholders felt this solution could compound the pressures on artists' low and unpredictable incomes. They also felt it would be difficult to implement due to variation in artists' salaries and income sources, which would make it difficult to create a fair system that works for all artists.
- However, stakeholders agreed that an open-book policy on artists' earnings (including details of the percentage spent on rent) would be a positive first step towards negotiating a benchmark studio rate for studio providers to work towards.

### **Solution B**

### Introduce *monthly* turnover rents for artists

The proposition is for studio rent to be set as a percentage of an artist's monthly turnover, meaning that studio rent would go up or down in keeping with the artist's earning capacity. Stakeholders suggested that public sector landlords should lead in this area, trialling different mechanisms to monitor monthly salaries and rents.

### Potential barriers raised

- Despite recognising the potential of this solution for ensuring 'genuinely affordable' studio rents for artists, stakeholders felt it posed too many issues for studio providers looking to stabilise their incomes and plan ahead.
- Studio providers also raised concerns that this would require constant monitoring, which would be an additional burden to studio providers and the limited time and resources they have available. It would also mean that direct debits for artists to pay rent would be impossible.
- Local authorities and developers raised concerns that it could lead to studio providers' potentially needing to prioritise artists with more stable incomes to cover the costs of implementing the scheme, therefore discriminating against the lowest earners (particularly those in the early stages of their careers, such as new arts graduates - see TBR, 2018, for more information).
- Studio providers and local authorities suggested an alternative may be for studio providers to set aside a small portion of their building (or a portion of their property portfolio) for monthly turnover rents, allowing them to retain financial stability elsewhere and making the solution more manageable.

'It would be impactful to have something that appears transparent and fair and goes towards addressing the issue of if an artist has been in a studio a long time and their careers go well, how does that impact other artists who need cheap space? A fair grading system would have high impact but it's complicated.' Regional government

### Mixed impact, difficult to implement

- Stakeholders felt that implementing this solution would have a large and positive impact for artists. Local authorities and arts organisations, in particular, felt that this solution would go some way towards ensuring that artists who can afford to pay higher rent move on, thereby freeing up affordable studio space for the artists who need it most.
- However, the resulting variability of monthly income for studio providers and the constant monitoring this would require on a site-by-site level were felt to outweigh the benefits for artists, and could potentially destabilise studio providers who are already struggling.

### **Solution C**

## Define affordability against a set percentage of market rent

This involves introducing similar parameters that have been used to define affordability within the housing sector in London. However, stakeholders were keen to see studio rent being negotiated at a lower percentage than affordable housing targets. Rather than the average 60-80 per cent of open market value (which appears to be the benchmark within the housing sector - with 60 per cent considered genuinely affordable), stakeholders suggested that 30-60 per cent of the open market rate would be needed to ensure genuine affordability.

Whilst a local-authority-wide strategy is desirable, local and regional government stakeholders were keen to see the percentage being adapted on a local level to account for variation in property prices between boroughs and within different parts of a borough (see Case Study 1 for an example of best practice).

Local authorities also acknowledged that discounted rents would need to be based on comparable rents in relevant markets to ensure affordability within the creative sector - in other words, relative to other studio space on the open market rather than office space (which it is often benchmarked against).

### Potential barriers raised

- Whilst stakeholders agreed that 30-60 per cent represents a meaningful benchmark for discounted studio rents, some raised concerns that discounts of greater than 20-50 per cent of market value may not be viable for developers. As such, there remains a discrepancy between deducted market rents that are desirable and those that are feasible on the ground for developers.
- Stakeholders also viewed this approach as requiring top-down co-ordination and agreement from policymakers at both local and regional levels (particularly the latter if the plan is to develop a regionwide percentage) and stressed that this would be hard to deliver given competing agendas and priorities across local authorities.

'We have just adopted a planning policy that says 10 per cent of floorspace in eligible developments has to be provided at an affordable rate and that varies on where it is in the borough. The north of the borough is different to Brixton, where the required discount is bigger: between 20-50 per cent.' Local authority

### Mixed impact, easy to implement

- Stakeholders had mixed views on the impact of this solution due to the income variability among artists. Some felt that, whilst it may benefit artists at the upper end of the income curve, discounted rates may still be unaffordable for those at the lower end.
- However, stakeholders agreed that this solution would be relatively easy to implement as it is already happening in some boroughs across London, meaning there is an existing framework that could be adopted and adapted at a local level.
- Stakeholders were keen to see the development of a region-wide percentage for local authorities to use as a benchmark. Whilst they felt this would deliver greater impact, they felt it would be difficult to agree a London-wide percentage.

## CASE STUDY 1

### Challenge 1, Solution C

### **London Borough of Lambeth's Affordable Workspace Policy**

In 2021, Lambeth announced its revised Local Plan, which is designed to build on the support given to affordable workspace (including creative workspace) in the London Plan. Of particular interest here is Policy ED2 of the plan, which sets out the council's approach to affordable workspace: 10 per cent of all floor space in eligible developments is required to be provided at an affordable rate, which varies depending on where it is in the borough. In Waterloo/Southbank and Vauxhall developments exceeding 1,000m2 gross office floor space, 10 per cent of the rentable floorspace should be available at 50 per cent of market rents for a period of 15 years. Whereas, for developments of a similar size in Oval, Kensington and Clapham, affordability is set at 80 per cent of market rents for a period of up to 15 years. In the Brixton Creative Enterprise Zone, discounts also vary in relation to the size of the development, but are secured at discounted rates for a longer, 25-year period. This presents an opportunity for studio providers to secure affordable workspace for artists in the longer term. The Local Plan therefore outlines one possible approach to defining affordability, whereby market rents are assessed on a case-by-case basis at the time of the application, taking into account the nature and location of the proposed development. Whilst it is expected that rents charged for affordable workspace will vary over time relative to market rents for the space, the plan includes clear and directive requirements for developers/owners to report annually on current market rents and the rents charged for the affordable workspace, to enable the council to monitor the correct application of discounts.

See Lambeth Local Plan 2020–2035 for further information: beta.lambeth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/Lambeth%20Local%20Plan%202021.pdf



### Solution D

Introduce rents that are time-bound to encourage artists to move on once their earning capacity increases

This involves freeing up affordable workspace for those who need it the most, opening up space for growth within the sector whilst potentially increasing diversity and inclusion across studio sites. In practice, this would require close monitoring of artists' salaries, with studio providers' setting different rent amounts for different income thresholds.

#### **Potential barriers raised**

- Stakeholders returned to the barriers raised in response to Solution A; in the first instance, this would require a more open-book policy on artists' earnings, and regular monitoring of their fluctuating salaries, which would be both resource- and time-intensive. In addition, studio providers stressed that increases in earning capacity may only be temporary, meaning that artists would be asked to move on without necessarily having the means to support themselves in the long term.
- Others raised concerns that provisions would need to be made for artists to move on to once their earning capacity has increased. Without these additional provisions being made, this solution could undermine the aim to bring long-term stability and affordability to the sector.

'I can see it having a rather negative effect... We are trying to problem-solve in the long term and if we don't have a place for artists to go after they've moved on then we've failed to do what we are trying to do and, if anything, caused more stress to the system.'

### **Arts organisation/trust**

### Low impact, mixed views on difficulty to implement

- Whilst stakeholders were keen to explore ideas that would enable the sector to open up space for those who genuinely need it, this was outweighed by concerns about the lack of space currently available for artists to move on to.
- However, stakeholders agreed that this solution would be easy to implement as it could be managed at a local level by studio providers and involve their asking artists to disclose their income thresholds when assigning them new studio space.



## **VALUE & COMMITMENT**

**CHALLENGE 2** | Developers and local councils are under pressure to deliver short term added value, meaning studios are often outcompeted by alternative uses.

Stakeholders would like to see more made of the social and economic contributions of artists' studios, discoursing studios as part of a wider social infrastructure. Positioning studios in this way would help to make them an attractive option to social impact investors and developers who need to make a social and financial case for choosing studios over other types of commercial workspace. Stakeholders would also like to see local authorities' being more instrumental in influencing development briefs by setting clear studio targets for developers to deliver against. Taken together, stakeholders feel that these would be proactive steps in ensuring new workspace is delivered in the immediate future, which is ultimately what the sector needs. By comparison, solutions to Challenge 1 (on defining affordability) were felt to supplement this approach and help local authorities to define and communicate their studio agenda more clearly.

Overall, stakeholders co-created four solutions to this challenge. Of these four solutions, stakeholders agreed that local authorities' being more instrumental in influencing development briefs would be both easy to implement and of high impact, largely on the grounds of its being the most direct route to ensuring more affordable workspace is delivered across London.

### Solution A

Build evidence of the 'ripple effect' of the social value of artists' studios and their knock-on economic value

This involves developing new measures that capture and convey the positive knock-on economic impacts of artists' studios that arise from their social impact. One example is to explore how studios contribute to the local sense of pride and identity and measure the impact this has on the duration of tenancies among residents in the local neighbourhood.

Developers felt that linking the social and economic value of studios in this way could help to demonstrate more valid substitutions to commercial development where plans need to demonstrate the tangible (financial) impact of an investment.

#### **Potential barriers raised**

- · A lack of co-ordinated data monitoring on social and economic activity across the studio sector was felt to be a key barrier that would need to be addressed at a regional level. Stakeholders suggested that studio providers would need to adopt similar measures to produce robust evidence of this social-economic nexus.
- Stakeholders also expressed frustrations about the ongoing attempt to quantify social outputs, rather than acknowledge the standalone social value of artists' studios.

'Models are there and it's easy to deliver and do robustly... It wouldn't be hard to create some tools and some standard measures... but I don't think it moves us on from where we are.' Local authority

## High impact, difficult to implement

- This solution was seen as high impact because developers pointed out that current reports on the economic value of studios tend to focus on the longer-term impact of studios on local property prices and rents over a 10-year period (Creative Land Trust et al., 2021). However, this solution could help to demonstrate the economic impact of studios in the shorter term and help developers to justify their investments.
- Others pointed out that it would be difficult to implement from the perspective of accessibility and getting those local residents who aren't already engaged with studios to engage with research that explores their social and economic value.
- With the exception of developers, stakeholders felt that this solution replicates the work that is already happening across the sector and doesn't move the conversation on much from where we already are.

### Solution B

### Position studios as a social investment that sits within a wider social infrastructure/ecosystem

This involves publishing local examples of how studios help to meet specific social needs, as well as positioning studio providers as championing local causes. This could be combined with cultural infrastructure mapping (see the Mayor of London's 2019 cultural infrastructure map) to identify where culture is contributing to social wellbeing and resources in the local area and ensure social use planning is in place. Social use planning is a process that involves local governments and community members working together to address social issues and build healthy communities (see the Mayor of London's 2021b London Plan for further details). Some would also like to see studio providers' taking this a step further and developing a community wealth building strategy to demonstrate this in their business plans.

There were high levels of interest in this solution across all stakeholder categories, as it was felt to move studio provision towards a more quota-based approach in a similar manner to that of housing and industrial land. It was also felt to overcome some of the frustrations around demonstrating the economic value of studios by plainly stating the need for affordable workspace for the social and cultural good of urban neighbourhoods.

### **Potential barriers raised**

- Social infrastructure plans and cultural mapping would require centralised, top-down administration by local authorities, which may not be viable given the constraints on their time and resources.
- Developers also raised concerns about the need to revisit how 'mixed use' is defined in a social infrastructure, to ensure that it includes genuinely productive space as opposed to resorting to residential or consumption space.

'I think it would be great. The social investment sphere in the UK is very sophisticated now and they are interested in studios... The thing about artist studios is that they're linked to inflation, and they aren't a bad investment because occupancy rates are at almost 100 per cent, so it's about making a good investment case.' Studio provider

### High impact, moderately easy to implement

- The existing momentum and interest around social infrastructure space meant that stakeholders perceived this solution to be of high impact.
- Stakeholders also felt it would be moderately easy to implement, as it could build on what is already known about the social contributions of studios to their surroundings and local community. A lot is already known about the high demand and occupancy rates of artists' studios, meaning that this data could be leveraged to attract social investors and ensure they receive a return on their investment.
- Some were keen to see Creative Land Trust leading this space and making the case for studios to be considered part of the wider social infrastructure of London, whilst also testing and securing funding from social investors.

### **Solution C**

Clarify how individual schemes feed into wider regeneration and masterplan strategies

It is not always viable to deliver affordable workspace at the individual scale, whereas in large-scale regeneration masterplans, studios can be used for other purposes such as ground floor activation and placemaking, rather than financial returns. This solution therefore involves building studios into wider regeneration and masterplan strategies.

Developers also explained that viability changes with time, and that the greater the scale of the project and the longer the delivery process, the greater flexibility developers would have for defining what viability looks like. This, in turn, was felt to reduce the pressure developers face around ensuring short-term financial returns on their developments. Additional larger-scale developments delivered over the longer term could, stakeholders explained, allow the longer-term economic value of studios to be more easily measured and quantified, if needed.

Stakeholders would like to see local authorities playing a leading role in demonstrating this 'bigger picture' thinking. What's more, this solution was felt to work particularly well in instances where developers are working closely with local authorities or public sector landowners with good leverage to ensure the desired outcomes on their land (see Case Study 2 for an example of best practice).

### **Potential barriers raised**

- Planning assessments tend to be on individual schemes and their impacts, meaning that developers and local authorities don't always look at the bigger picture.
- Competing demands at a local level and councillors' being under pressure to deliver against their policy aspirations could pose a challenge for prioritising studios in masterplan developments.
- Some felt that co-ordinating across local authorities' boundaries would be a challenge, particularly in cases where masterplan developments are happening at the periphery of boroughs and their jurisdictions; and, therefore, the success of this solution depends heavily on where these masterplans are being delivered.

'It's about coordinating across several local authorities and their being strategic in getting proper policy in place. If there is a difficulty it's because it sits halfway between the GLA and local authority. We need more thinking across boundaries.' Developer

### High impact, moderately easy to implement

- Stakeholders saw this solution as high impact, as developers would be required to deliver what is stipulated by the local authority under which they are operating.
- It was considered to be moderately easy to implement, as stakeholders felt it should be straightforward to introduce studio provision into masterplan strategies and that the challenge is more about local authorities' prioritising studios and communicating what they would like to be delivered through these large-scale schemes.

## CASE STUDY 2

### Challenge 2, Solution C

Acme's Harrow Road studios, delivered in partnership with Brent local authority and **Kensington Housing Trust (Catalyst Housing Group)** 

In 2010, studio provider Acme opened a new-build studio at Manor Point in Harrow Road, Kensal Green. The site provides 12 affordable, non-residential studios for artists to rent. All studios are located on the ground floor of the building; the remainder of the building is residential. The studios were delivered through a partnership between Brent local authority and property developer Catalyst Housing Group. The site, a former builder's yard, situated close to the Old Oak Common regeneration site, straddles the boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham. Catalyst Housing Group's initial plans were to transform the site into a new-build residential development. However, driven by the local authority's desire to increase affordable provision in the area, it was decided that the site needed to include affordable creative workspace. The collaboration between Brent local authority and Catalyst Homes has had a lasting impact: following the delivery of Harrow Road studios, the local authority signed further studio development agreements with SET studios and ACAVA studios. Brent, which was named London Borough of Culture in 2020, continues to play a leading role in brokering new deals between developers and studio providers, growing studio provision from the ground up.

See the Acme (2012) Securing the Future report for more information: acme.org.uk/assets/Downloads/Acme Bulletin 2012.pdf



### Solution D

Local authorities to be more instrumental in influencing development briefs

This involves local authorities' setting and communicating clear targets for affordable workspace, along with development objectives and local policy aspirations, to ensure that developers are fully equipped to make the right assumptions in their appraisals and value offer. Developers explained that they deliver whatever a development agreement stipulates that they should, meaning that if a local authority were to require more affordable workspace for artists, it would need to specify this clearly as early into the procurement process as possible.

Some local authorities currently set requirements for commercial space to be available for a set number of years at capped rent, and the suggestion put forward by stakeholders was that this specification could be extended to artists' studios. This would require local authorities to enforce mandatory affordable studio obligations through revising policy and planning requirements, expanding local plans and leveraging Section 106 agreements (as outlined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 106 focuses on site-specific mitigation of the potentially negative impacts of development). For further information on how Section 106 agreements have been used to deliver studios through development partnerships, see Acme (2022). Some felt this would also require leadership and advocacy from the regional government to expand and enforce mandatory workspace requirements at a local level.

#### **Potential barriers raised**

- Stakeholders explained that councillors would need to be sufficiently engaged in policy to see studios as an important priority to influence allocation; however, this is currently not the case for all local authorities because they each face different challenges and issues.
- It would require stronger overall communication between planning and regeneration officers to link overall delivery strategies with overcoming the barriers in the planning schemes. It would also require assessing schemes on their individual merits against policy aspirations.

'Development briefs need to have teeth because developers won't deliver studios unless they are obligated. In my experience, unless developers are legally obligated to address studios, they aren't going to bother.' Studio provider

## High impact, moderately easy to implement

- The solution was seen as high impact, as local authorities have the capacity to legally obligate developers to include affordable creative workspace in their development briefs, which could translate into a real uplift in the number of studios being delivered and secured across London. However, a couple of stakeholders raised concerns that, in the past, developers have been able to get out of obligations and local authorities have not always had the time and resource to be able to fight it.
- The solution is seen as moderately easy to implement because local authorities already have the planning tools needed to implement the change; however, the challenge remains that there would need to be greater clarity about how to use these tools and what local authorities want to be delivered.



## **LOCAL EMBEDDEDNESS**

**CHALLENGE 3** | Local communities don't always feel that artists' studios are for them, meaning the positive impacts of studios aren't always realised within them.

Stakeholders would like to see studio providers and artists developing closer ties to their local communities by aligning studio provision with local needs and developing closer links to large institutions in the local area – in particular, local schools and education services. However, some foresaw issues with asking studio providers and artists to take on more social responsibility in their local neighbourhood and were sensitive to the additional resource and time this would require. Alternatively, as a quick-fix solution to ensuring studios are more closely embedded in the local community, stakeholders suggested studio providers could designate a set proportion of their studios to artists living in the local area.

Overall, stakeholders co-created four solutions to this challenge. Of the four solutions, designating a set proportion of studios in a studio building to artists living in the local area was felt to be both the easiest to implement and of the highest impact, on the grounds that studios are a direct product of their local community.

### **Solution A**

Align studio provision with local causes and position studio providers as championing local causes

This involves studio providers' developing a clearer understanding of the needs of the local communities in which they are embedded to ensure that their studio offering addresses and champions local causes.

Stakeholders pointed out that not every community is asking for the same thing from artists' studios (for example, not every local community is requesting more open studio events) and, as such, there is a need to develop a deeper understanding of how studios can be aligned with local issues - which begins with closer listening to and consultation with local residents. This was also of interest to developers, who suggested this would help when looking to fund and support targeted studio impact programmes in their planning application process.

It was widely felt that local authorities are best positioned to map and monitor local needs and should consult with studio providers on how they can deliver against these. Another suggestion was for studio providers to consult with community leaders, who could provide a gateway into understanding local causes.

### **Potential barriers raised**

• Studio providers are experts in the requirements of artists and their studio space, but are not necessarily experts in local need and may not have the time and resource to specialise in this. This solution would therefore need local authority input to identify local needs and pair up studio providers with opportunities for meeting these needs and championing local causes.

'It's easy to understand if you are local to an area what locals require and I think studio providers do this anyway. They provide a space for community that is sorely lacking in a lot of new developments and older spaces that haven't been renewed.' Local authority

## Moderate impact, moderately difficult to implement

- Perceptions that some studio providers are already delivering community outreach programmes in parts of London meant that, overall, stakeholders did not consider this solution to be a gamechanger for the studio sector.
- Stakeholders also perceived the solution as being moderately difficult to implement, because a barrier remains about finding alignments that are already happening and building on these.

### **Solution B**

Develop closer links between studio providers and large institutions in the local area

This involves studio providers' linking up with local education and health institutions. For example, studio providers could hire empty school halls during the holiday periods or design in spaces on site for schools to hire for student projects, alongside hosting other community residencies. Another suggestion was for studio providers to link up with social prescribing and health services (such as non-clinical services) to support health and wellbeing in the community (see Case Study 3 for an example of best practice). Both ideas were felt to clearly embed studios as part of local social infrastructures.

Stakeholders envisaged local authorities as playing a key gatekeeping role, brokering relationships between studio providers and local institutions with which they already have relationships.

'Working with the local council has opened up more opportunities. We've done projects funded by the council where it's created work opportunities for artists, who have gone into schools to do workshops and it's reached children in schools who otherwise wouldn't know about studios... Getting the right links makes a massive difference.'

### Studio provider

### **Potential barriers raised**

- · A potential lack of interest from studio providers and artists in providing additional outreach programmes on top of their existing social commitments (such as delivering workshops and participating in open studio events) was perceived as a key barrier. A recent report (TBR, 2018) on the livelihoods of visual artists suggests that many artists rely on other full-time employment to top up earnings from their creative practice, which impacts on the amount of time they are able to spend on their studio practice. Studio providers therefore worry that this solution could place an additional pressure on artists and negatively impact on their creative practice.
- With regards to building in space for schools and community residencies, some stakeholders felt that all available space on site should be prioritised for studios. They explained that making space freely available to local institutions could potentially cause studio rents to increase to cover the cost of running the space, therefore having the opposite effect of tackling the issue of affordability.

'It's one of those things where if a great synergy can happen... it would be a great partnership. Other times you can spend a long time chasing someone down and it doesn't happen.' Regional government

## High impact, mixed views on difficulty to implement

- The solution was seen as high impact on the grounds that it would create direct links between studio providers and local communities, whilst producing visible and potentially high-profile social outputs.
- However, there were mixed views on how difficult it would be to implement. Some felt this solution would be too time-consuming for artists and studio providers whose resources are already stretched. Others felt the success of these partnerships would be highly contingent on the individuals working in these different organisations and their support and enthusiasm for the creative sector.

# CASE STUDY 3

# Challenge 3, Solution B

### Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN) brokering relationships between local communities and the creative sector

LEAN leads a network that champions arts education in Lewisham by empowering artist educators and building strategic partnerships with arts organisations to deliver creative learning opportunities to children and young people. It plays an important role in brokering partnerships between individuals and organisations in the local area, including teachers, artists, arts organisations, arts education officers, advocates and supporters of arts education, youth workers, community workers, policymakers and arts administrators. Through these networks, it disseminates information about good local practice in creative partnership working among its members, keeps members updated with changes in local government policies and creates new opportunities for sharing creative skills. It offers an informal brokerage to schools, health- and social-care settings and other statutory and voluntary agencies that are interested in working with creative practitioners. It also helps to establish communication channels with charitable organisations with a track record of funding creative partnership working and giving fundraising advice to members with regards to funding criteria and priorities. A recent manifestation of this work has been LEAN partnering with the local Creative Enterprise Zone to lead programme of work around creative career pathways and creative career development opportunities.





#### **Solution C**

Align studio provision with future-skilling younger generations in the creative industries

This involves studio providers' delivering training and education programmes focused on skilling younger generations for working in the creative industries. Stakeholders felt this solution would work best if paired with Solution B, as it would require studio providers to partner with local schools and offer work experience and hands-on training for pupils.

Local authorities pointed out that delivering training and education programmes could help to demonstrate the combined social and economic contribution of artists' studios, helping, in turn, to justify public intervention and financial support.

Local and regional authorities also felt that broadening the definitions of 'creatives' and 'creative industry' would help to enable easier entry into a wider sequence of opportunities and career paths for younger people and may help to include those who do not currently consider themselves creative or part of the local creative industry.

#### **Potential barriers raised**

• Stakeholders felt strongly that artists would need to be reimbursed for their time spent teaching and training, which is a profession in itself. This raised the issue of from where the funding and finance would be sourced. Some suggested that offering rent reductions for artists' time might be a more appropriate way of reimbursing them; however, this could mean that the financial burden comes back to studio providers to offer rent reductions in exchange for educational services.

'Future-skilling is very much on our agenda from a local perspective, and it helps in proving studios are a work, and support a set of jobs.' Local authority

'It's a really tricky additional ask for studio providers and artists, however it is a highly desirable thing. It might be the thing that tips the deal into succeeding, but it's not going to be the guts that secures workspace.' Arts organisation/trust

# High impact, difficult to implement

- There was consensus that this solution would be of high impact because it would have an immediate and visible effect on the local community and could be clearly aligned with local policy aspirations to support education and culture.
- However, stakeholders felt it would be difficult to implement because it is a large undertaking for studio providers on top of the community outreach work that they are already doing. Stakeholders were therefore left feeling that this could help to supplement other solutions but would not be impactful enough on its own.

#### Solution D

# Designate a set proportion of studios to artists living in the local area

This involves studio providers' ensuring a proportion of their studios are dedicated to artists living in the surrounding area. This would enable artists to build connections in the local community and support local supply chains. There was consensus among stakeholders that this solution offers the clearest and most straightforward way of strengthening relations between studios and their local areas.

Another proposition was to deliver a number of studios alongside residential space, as live/workspace, which would also ensure that artists embed in the local area. Stakeholders explained that this speaks to the wider affordable housing crisis in London and could help to overcome workspace and housing competing for the same types of space.

Local authorities felt that this could help to disassociate the delivery of affordable creative workspace from the delivery of market-rate commercial workspace, which was not felt to be a fair comparison for artists.

#### **Potential barriers raised**

• Stakeholders did not identify any potential barriers to this solution.

'We make sure that over 50 per cent of our members (studio holders) at each site actually live in the local borough. Those who hold studios also become associate members meaning they have rights (and obligations) to contribute to our public programme... Together this makes studios a genuine product of their local community.' Studio provider

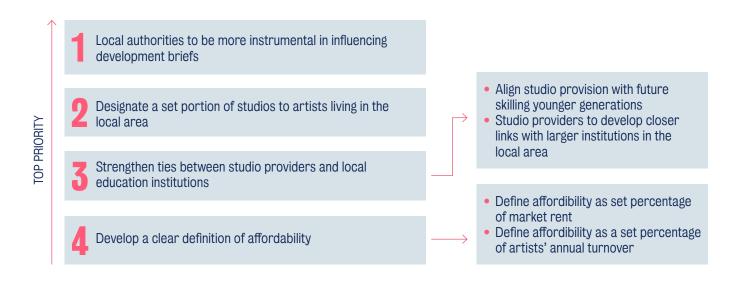
# High impact, easy to implement

- The solution was seen as high impact because stakeholders felt it would help to move beyond the need to demonstrate the social value of studios through conducting new outreach work by ensuring that studios are a direct product of their local community.
- It was seen as easy to implement because studio providers control the terms of their rental agreements with artists. Also, with demand for workspace across London being high, studio providers should, in theory, have a readily available selection of artists to choose from in the local area.

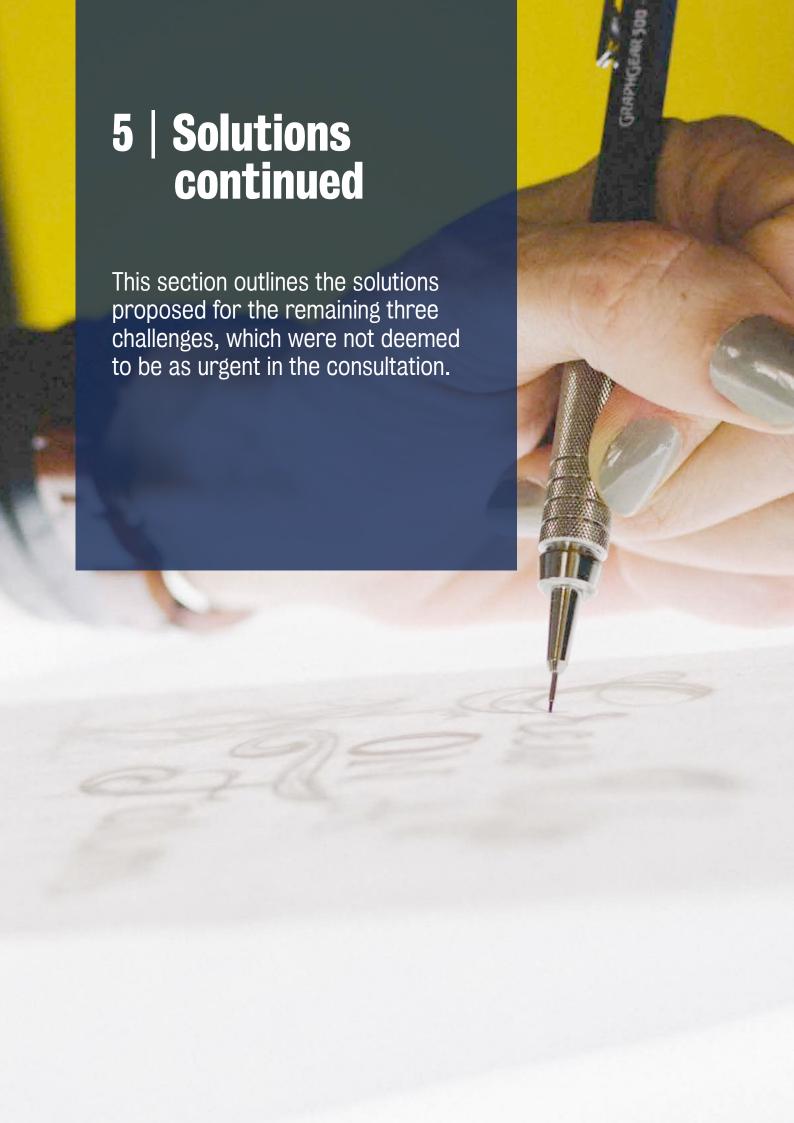
# **Prioritising solutions**

Stakeholders voted on which of the 12 solutions discussed in relation to these three challenges they would most like to see prioritised and carried forward by policymakers. Overall, stakeholders identified four top priorities, with 'local authorities being more instrumental in influencing development briefs' coming out as the number-one priority. Stakeholders felt that this would lead to an immediate and long-term increase in supply of affordable studio space across the sector. However, beyond extending Section 106 planning mechanisms (see Town and Country Planning Act 1990), stakeholders were less clear on what planning mechanisms they would use to deliver these new studios.

The second priority was to 'designate a set portion of studios to artists living in the local area'. Stakeholders felt that this would ensure a direct connection between the studios and their local communities, helping to reduce the pressure on studio providers to demonstrate the studio's social value, freeing them up to spend more time and resource on securing genuinely affordable rents for artists. The results of the prioritisation task:









# **LAND PRICES**

**CHALLENGE 4** | It is becoming increasingly difficult to bridge the gap between the market price of land in London and affordable prices for artists' studios.

Higher land value means more challenging profit margins and greater pressure to maximise commercial revenue from new developments and existing assets. Stakeholders felt that land value is unlikely to go down in London and that the affordable studio sector must work within this reality. They stressed that the sector must instead find new ways to insulate artists from rising land value over time; currently, the best two methods for doing this are through long-term leases or ownership by studio groups.

However, it was widely acknowledged that access to capital is often a key barrier preventing studio providers from entering these types of property negotiations, and thus finding new avenues of funding the sector should be a key focus. In instances where this is not possible, stakeholders suggested that the public sector should continue to explore asset transfer options to secure creative infrastructure, whilst the private sector should experiment with rent escalation models and other approaches akin to shared-ownership models that would help studio providers work towards full ownership. Overall, stakeholders co-created three solutions to this challenge.

#### **Solution A**

# Focus on asset transfer within the local creative community

This involves local authorities' auditing their land holdings to explore potential options for redevelopment for creative workspace outcomes, building on the momentum of what is already happening in several boroughs across London. However, stakeholders acknowledged that a lot of the land owned by local authorities is already in use and is fraught with political uncertainty and competing priorities. Local authorities explained that councils across London are also fighting a battle of shrinking funding and are feeling increased pressure to generate income from their assets, meaning that asset transfer is not always the most viable option, and is not in the best interests of the respective council. Further, local authorities are tied to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, which stipulates that councils considering land disposals must find the best price reasonably obtainable for their assets on the market. (See Case Study 4 for an example of best practice).

#### Solution B

# Explore new funding options with social impact investors

This would involve studio providers and Creative Land Trust testing ideas with social investors to understand the challenges and interest in socially investing in cultural infrastructure. Stakeholders recognised that a potential barrier may be that, at the point of land purchase, investors need to see the relationship between social value and financial uplift being clearly demonstrated to justify their investment. Positioning studios as part of the social infrastructure and demonstrating their financial value through education and outreach programmes (as suggested in response to Challenge 3) was therefore seen as an important first step before reaching out to social investors.

#### **Solution C**

### Rent escalation approach for eventual ownership by studio providers and/or artists

This involves a stepped approach for studio providers akin to the shared ownership housing model, where the long-term aspiration is full market ownership. However, stakeholders explained that studio providers can struggle to access the capital needed to enter negotiations with developers in the first instance, meaning that access to funding would continue to be a barrier to this solution.

# CASE STUDY 4

# Challenge 4, Solution A

### Alice Billings House – an example of asset transfer from the London Borough of **Newham to Creative Land Trust**

Alice Billings House is a historic Grade II listed building in Stratford, situated within the London Borough of Newham. The property comprises two blocks of firemen's accommodation and a courtyard in between, with a total area of 6,800 square feet, and has stood vacant for over 10 years. Newham local authority owns the property and is working closely with Creative Land Trust to refurbish and develop it into a mixed-use creative space, including provisions for 30-40 artists' studios. A funding award of £250,000 was made available for the refurbishment from Newham Council's Active Spaces Programme and was part of a wider borough strategy on infrastructural recovery to explore the potential of the arts to bring about greater youth participation in the local community (supporting the borough's programme of activities through the development of Stratford Youth Zone) and jobs for local people to the Stratford area. Following a competitive bidding process, Creative Land Trust was awarded funding (along with a 25-year lease) by the council to convert the building into studios, offering affordable rents to creative workers. It stands as a good example of how asset transfer can help meet creative workspace needs, alongside other local policy objectives, supporting jobs, education, and arts participation in the wider community.

See the Creative Land Trust website for more information: creativelandtrust.org/creative-land-trust-alice-billings-house



# **LONGEVITY**

**CHALLENGE 5** | The demand for studio space, both in terms of quantity and workspace type, is in a state of flux, bringing into question the value of long-term workspace.

Stakeholders explained that it is too early to tell how demand may be changing, and as such, were reluctant to develop solutions on what would feel like speculation. However, there was broad agreement on the need to clarify what is meant by short-term and long-term workspace.

#### Stakeholders agreed that more monitoring is needed across the sector to fully understand how demand may be changing.

They acknowledged that commercial space is in a state of flux as companies are rethinking how and where they work; however, it remains to be seen if this is also the case for artists' studios. Studio providers and local authorities were particularly concerned that these two trends around studio space and commercial space may be being grouped together in post-COVID recovery strategies, which could have a detrimental impact on studio provision, which, in turn, runs the risk of being subsumed by the needs of the commercial sector.

Representatives from regional government expected occupancy rates and demand to remain high post-COVID and felt the emphasis should be on studio operators' securing long-term workspace where possible. Likewise, studio providers felt demand for long-term workspace is higher than ever and explained that, in their experience, artists are exhausted by ever-shorter meanwhile contracts, which can cause instability in their practice and income.

Stakeholders raised concerns that artists and studio providers cannot be expected to value future use of their workspace on the same timescales as developers who are looking at the value of future returns. As such, there is an issue around how different stakeholders define and understand meanwhile, short-term, mid-term and long-term workspace.

For instance, studio providers explained that, for them, long-term means 10 years plus, whereas other stakeholders interpreted long-term as 20 years plus. Likewise, some stakeholders interpreted meanwhile space as leases secured for a year, whereas others interpreted meanwhile space as 18 months to 5 years.

These definitions matter because they mean different things for different studio providers and their specific needs. For instance, small studio providers explained that they would like to see the term 'mid-term' tenure being better defined, as mid-term leases (which, for them, constitutes a duration of 10 years) offer a degree of stability compared to other short-term or meanwhile leases, which are often seen as the main route for small and emerging studio providers to enter the market. Overall, stakeholders would therefore like to see tenure durations being clearly defined, to ensure that the market offers a wide range of tenure types to meet different affordability needs.



# **ARTIST INVOLVEMENT**

**CHALLENGE 6** | There are very few, if any, successful examples of land trusts that are established and driven by people other than the residents (or artists) themselves.

Stakeholders were keen to see Creative Land Trust 'do more' than purchase and secure studio space in London to ensure that they are not replicating the work of existing studio providers. Studio providers were supportive of Creative Land Trust in principle; however, a small number expressed concerns about the potential duplication of responsibilities and competition for funding. Access to capital remains a key barrier for studio providers' being able to enter negotiations with developers and landlords to secure their own property. As such, they were keen to ensure that Creative Land Trust uses its £4m grant from the Mayor of London in the best way possible to build on the work that is already happening within the sector.

This desire for Creative Land Trust to 'do more' culminated in two clear recommendations, or, rather, calls to action: the first was for Creative Land Trust to support studio providers to raise funds and develop their own bids; the second was to provide sector advocacy on behalf of artists and studio providers.

#### Solution A

Creative Land Trust to support studio providers and artists to raise funds and develop their own bids alongside the Trust

This would involve Creative Land Trust providing technical advice and support to studio providers during proposalwriting and bidding stages. Stakeholders were keen to see Creative Land Trust empowering and supporting studio providers and artists to manage their own studios via direct ownership. Some suggested that this could also involve establishing local branches so that Creative Land Trust can provide tailored guidance based on local planning processes. This would also involve Creative Land Trust's opening up the sector to new funding channels and brokering relationships between studio providers and donors to introduce new funding streams to the sector (such as social impact investors).

However, regional government stakeholders felt that this would require additional upfront public sector investment being made to studio providers in addition to the financial support provided by Creative Land Trust. Potential barriers therefore continue to be access to funding, along with the need for Creative Land Trust to manage the complexity and specificity of a range of studio plans across London, understanding how each plan aligns with specific local authority aspirations, which stakeholders acknowledge would be both time- and resource-intense.

#### **Solution B**

Creative Land Trust to provide sector advocacy on behalf of artists and studio providers

This would involve Creative Land Trust developing a body or union to represent artists' and studio providers' needs and interests, and advocating for policy and support at local and regional levels in London. It would also involve **Creative Land Trust collating evidence of the work that is** already happening across the sector and communicating this to funders, developers and policymakers. Creative Workspace Network, which had representatives attending the workshop, is already working with Creative Land Trust to represent the interests of the sector. Stakeholders were therefore keen to understand the plans for growing this partnership (see Case Study 5 for more information on **Creative Workspace Network).** 

However, some studio providers pointed out that previous attempts to unite the studio sector, such as the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers (NFASP, established in 2007 and disbanded in 2012; see NFASP site for more information), haven't lasted. In the case of NFASP, the organisation required studio providers to 'buy in' to become a member and many didn't take up this opportunity, meaning that the model could not sustain itself. Stakeholders would therefore need reassurances of how Creative Land Trust and Creative Workspace Network would work together to ensure a long-lasting, positive impact on the sector.

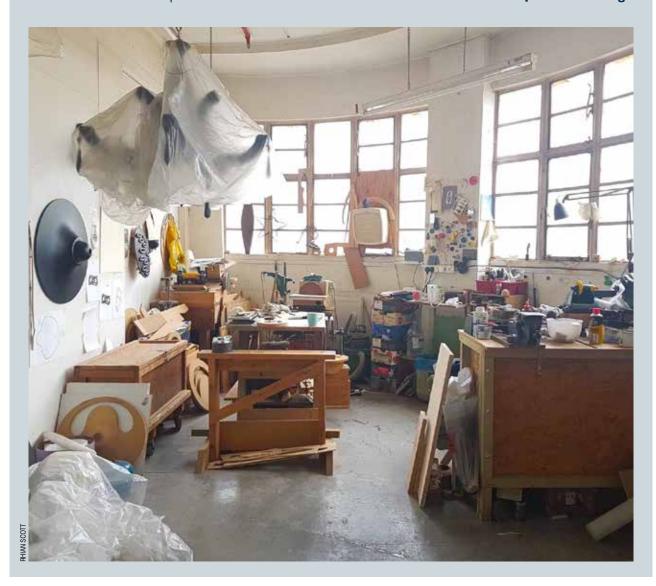
# CASE STUDY 5

# Challenge 6, Solution B

### Studio sector advocacy through Creative Workspace Network

Creative Workspace Network was established in 2020, led by Brighton-based arts organisation Phoenix Art Space and funded by Arts Council England. It is a network of creative workspace providers across the UK that have come together to create a platform to advocate, promote and develop the creative workspace sector. The network seeks to position the sector with a strong, united and clear voice to lobby local authorities, property developers, and corporate sector and other financiers to help find solutions to creative workspace needs. In addition, it has a knowledgesharing function that involves connecting conversations that are happening across the country about affordable workspace to tackle bigger issues, such as the long-term resilience and affordability of workspace. In doing so, it provides the sector with support, resources and the learning necessary to deliver against these ambitions.

See the Creative Workspace Network website for more information: creativeworkspacenetwork.org







# **Conclusion**

As in other towns and cities in the UK, London's affordable studio sector is facing a series of challenges. Whilst new opportunities are opening and new models of studio provision are being developed - most notably exemplified by the establishment of Creative Land Trust in 2019 - long-standing challenges persist. This stakeholder consultation focused on six specific challenges that the sector faces.

# **Recap of findings**

Overall, stakeholders co-designed 18 solutions to the six challenges with which they were presented. Of the 12 solutions they voted on (in relation to the three most pressing challenges), it was agreed that seven solutions were likely to have a positive and large impact on affordable studio provision.

Those seen as having the highest impact and being comparatively easy to implement were those that involve studio providers' trialling different rental agreements on site (such as designating a set portion of studios to artists living in the local areas) and those that involve local authorities' being more instrumental in influencing development briefs in their local areas to ensure that the need for affordable workspace is being met.

Others seen as impactful in theory, but difficult to implement in practice, related to creating new measures and mechanisms for defining affordability across the studio sector in London, such as aligning rules for studio rent as a set percentage of artists' annual turnover. Evidencing the relationship between the social and economic value of artists' studios was also felt to be of high impact but difficult to implement in practice.

### **Discussion**

The stakeholder consultation also provided a series of insights into London's affordable creative workspace sector more broadly.

#### 1. There is an underlying need for mediators to help broker relationships across sectors

Studio provision resides at the intersection of a series of overlapping sectors and jurisdictions in the city. It relies on studio providers' working with landlords, property developers, residents, local authorities, regional authorities and many others to fund and develop workspace that meets the needs of artists but also the local area in which the workspace is situated. Studio provision therefore relies on a range of mediators and gatekeepers to broker and support these relationships across the city. During the consultation, local authorities and Creative Land Trust emerged as playing a leading role in this.

Local authorities were perceived to be in a unique position of understanding the needs of the communities across their respective boroughs, as well as overseeing the types of development that can happen there. As such, they were seen to play a vital role in identifying new opportunities for studio providers in their local area, as well as linking up studio providers with local institutions (eg schools and healthcare services) and property developers working on large-scale masterplan projects, and ensuring that studio provision delivers against local issues and needs.

Creative Land Trust was also seen to be well positioned to play a similar gatekeeper role - albeit at a regional scale - linking studio providers with funding and development opportunities across London. Stakeholders would like to

see Creative Land Trust working with local authorities to tap into their existing networks and disseminate knowledge and opportunities to studio providers working in other parts of the city. Further, stakeholders were keen to see the Trust connecting studio providers with new funding opportunities, such as social investors, which requires scale and advocacy beyond that which individual studio providers can achieve alone.

#### 2. Responsibility for delivering solutions is not distributed evenly across stakeholder groups, with local authorities expected to play a leading role

In addition to brokering relationships with local organisations and developers, local authorities were seen to play a leading role in developing social infrastructure mapping; exploring opportunities for asset transfer within the local creative community and playing a leading role in influencing development briefs by setting clear policy aspirations for affordable studios; and enforcing mandatory obligations through revising policy and planning requirements for masterplan strategies and other types of development happening across the borough. They were also seen to play a leading role in developing new models for measuring affordability against open market rent, and consulting with the GLA to align their aspirations at a regional level.

Studio providers, on the other hand, were seen as playing a data collection function and overseeing smallscale experiments with costing studio space on site. Studio providers were seen as well positioned to collect data on artists' salaries and monitor what percentage of their income they are spending on rent, to better understand how artists define affordability relative to their income. Alongside this, stakeholders were keen to see studio providers trialling out small-scale solutions on site, such as monthly turnover rents or incremental rents in a small number of their studios. Studio providers were not seen as capable of implementing the scale of change needed across the sector to resolve the challenges in the long term; however, it was felt that studio providers could make small changes easily for a more local impact.

Finally, developers were seen to play a leading role in proactively testing different opportunities and taking risks in larger-scale projects, such as trialling out rent escalation approaches and including studios in masterplan strategies for ground floor activation. However, it was widely acknowledged that this can only be done with local authority support, encouraging (or obligating) developers to trial these alternatives.

#### 3. Access to resources continues to be an underlying barrier to delivering solutions

Stakeholders tended to agree that access to finance and resources is a key barrier underlying the crisis of affordability in the workspace sector, and in most cases was raised as a barrier to the success of the solutions proposed. However, stakeholders were far less aligned on where this additional resource should come from. Studio providers explained that they are working at their limits both in terms of money and time, with many feeling unable to take on the additional roles and responsibilities proposed during the discussions (such as additional community outreach work, delivering education and training programmes, and, in some cases, collecting and monitoring data on artists' salaries). Likewise, local authorities and regional government representatives stressed that access to resource and funding is an ongoing issue, with access to housing being cited as a directly competing funding issue. Despite making the £4m grant available to Creative Land Trust, material resource is clearly not being provided by the public sector at the extent it is needed within the studio sector. Despite high levels of engagement with the issues surrounding access to affordable workspace, there remains the problematic question of who, if anyone, is stepping in to subsidise the cost of workspace. This came through in the consultation as an urgent need for the sector to explore new channels of funding; however, at present, the sector is placing too much emphasis on one potential avenue (social impact investors) to resolve these issues.

#### 4. Enthusiasm for social infrastructure mapping highlights the ongoing need to demonstrate the wider value of studios to justify intervention and support

The desire to demonstrate the social and economic value of studios was still at the forefront of many of the solutions being proposed by stakeholders. Despite stakeholders' feeling these values have already been proven and evidenced extensively, and therefore feeling frustrated with the ongoing need to provide further evidence, it is clear that this value does not translate in the way it should to developers and funders.

Local authorities felt that including studios in local social infrastructure mapping could help to justify intervention and support, whilst developers felt it could help to better justify including studios in their masterplan strategies. This focus on social infrastructure mapping arguably speaks to the ways in which creativity and artists are valued more broadly in society: in other words, that social infrastructure is regarded as being more fundable than cultural infrastructure.

The emphasis on social impact investors risks playing into this narrative of needing to evidence studios as a

social asset, rather than being valued as much-needed workspace for hosting the city's creative workforce (in much the same way that office buildings are regarded as vital space for hosting businesses).

#### 5. There is a pressing need to insulate studios from land rent change, which Creative Land Trust is well positioned to do, but this is not yet fully realised among stakeholders

Stakeholders acknowledged that making room for new individuals and organisations to subsidise rent and fund studio development is not enough, and that there is an underlying need to insulate studios from land rent change to make them affordable and sustainable in the longer term. Key suggestions included focusing on long-term leases and supporting studio providers to purchase their own properties. What is interesting about the solutions presented here is that, despite leasehold tenure having failed to deliver long-term affordable workspace for artists in the past, stakeholders continue conceptually to collapse the dimensions of tenure into leasehold or freehold.

Creative Land Trust arguably offers an alternative solution through collective property ownership, blending the tools of freehold and leasehold in new ways. This is evidenced by their recent acquisition of Stone Studios in Hackney Wick, which they secured on a 999-year lease with the property developer (see Creative Land Trust 2022b, for further information). Therefore, while progressive steps are being taken to break the dependency on state subsidy and on freehold and leasehold tenures, these solutions did not cut through as clearly as expected in the consultation. Whilst these hybrid tenure mechanisms were understood at a regional level, it was clear that more work needs to be done about communicating the mechanisms of the Creative Land Trust model to ensure that they trickle down to studio providers, developers and local authorities.

6. There are several aspects of studio provision that need to be more clearly defined and agreed on across the sector, such as what precisely 'affordability' means for artists and the duration of tenure that defines meanwhile, short-term and long-term workspace.

Whilst recent reports have gone some way in understanding artists' salaries and livelihoods, there still remain questions about what portion of their salaries artists are spending on studio rent, and what they consider to be an affordable rent. Stakeholders suggested an open-book policy on artists' earnings would enable frank conversations with artists about the upper and lower limits of rent that they could afford, which would help studio providers to ensure their offering is genuinely

affordable for artists. For local authorities and developers, this is important when approving and delivering new studio developments to ensure they meet a genuine need. Likewise, it is important for monitoring the types of spaces that are being secured and delivered by Creative Land Trust and the impact they are having on improving the affordability of workspace across London.

There is also a need to clarify how different tenure types are defined and understood in relation to the duration of leases to ensure that studio providers are able to access the right kinds of workspace for their needs. Whilst not itself a solution to any of the challenges, developing these definitions would help the sector to co-ordinate its approach to affordable workspace provision and ensure that definitions mean the same things for all parties involved.



# **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1** Method

On 10 January 2022, an initial 60-minute presentation with 30 stakeholders was undertaken on Microsoft Teams to set out the research context and introduce the six key challenges facing creative workspace provision. The researcher interacted with the participants through the Miro channel, asking follow-up questions and encouraging participants to expand on their solutions. After this, participants were provided with login details to take part in a one-week online workshop hosted on digital brainstorming platform Miro between 10 January and 15 January 2022.

At the end of the workshop, participants were convened in a 120-minute discussion on Microsoft Teams. During this session, participants were presented with a summary of the solutions emerging from the workshop and were asked to discuss and debate the three challenges that emerged as the most pressing from the online workshop. Participants were asked to vote on each solution to the three challenges and rank them in relation to how much of an impact they would have on tackling the challenge outlined, and how difficult they would be to implement. Following this, participants took part in a final prioritisation challenge, during which they were asked to vote on which one solution (spanning all three of the challenges) they would most like policymakers to carry forward.

#### **Benefits of this approach**

**Flexible participation:** Holding the workshop on Miro allowed participants to contribute their ideas as and when they were able to across the week, which ensured a high response rate.

**Genuine co-creation:** Miro provides a commenting function that allowed participants to comment and build on others' solutions, ensuring collaboration across the workshop.

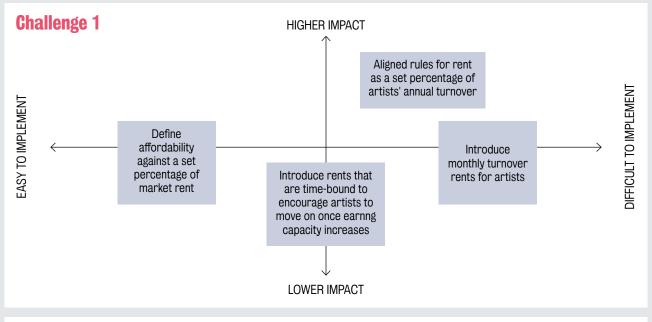
**Deep-dive into ideas:** The follow-up discussion enabled a deeper exploration of the solutions put forward and how stakeholders envisaged solutions would play out on the ground, leading to a refined selection of actionable outputs.

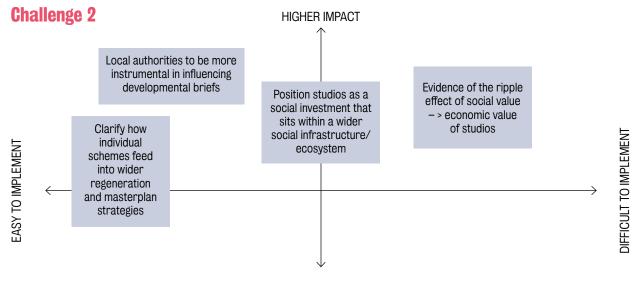
### **Appendix 2** Research participants

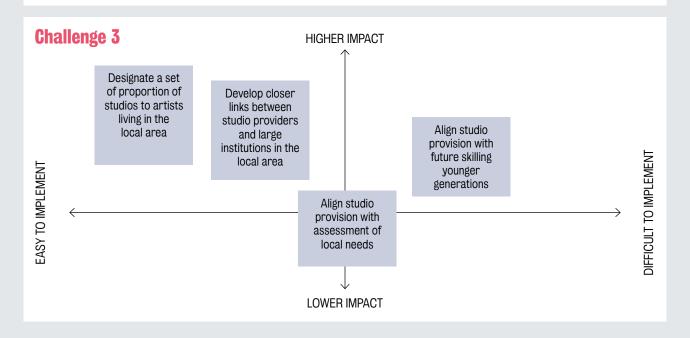
The 30 research participants were recruited to reflect the diverse groups and individuals involved in developing and delivering workspace for artists in London. All participants were recruited on the basis that they hold a senior position within their respective organisation and that their organisation/work is based in London. Screening questions were also asked to ensure that the consultation included stakeholders with varying levels of knowledge of London's studio sector and with varying levels of familiarity and contact with Creative Land Trust. This helped to ensure that the consultation elicited a balance of 'warm' (familiar and engaged) and 'cold' (unfamiliar and new) perspectives on the challenges being discussed.

### **Appendix 3** Voting exercises

On the following page are graph summaries of the results from the voting exercise on solutions to the top-three challenges with which stakeholders were presented. Stakeholders were asked to rank the solutions they came up with in relation to their perceived impact and how difficult they would be to implement.







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