

CASE STUDY: Manor Oaks Studios

Developing affordable Artists' Studios in a Housing Market Renewal area

By Kate Dore, Yorkshire Artspace

AFFORDABLE ARTISTS' STUDIOS have been developed in a Housing Market Renewal area in South Sheffield through an innovative partnership between Sheffield City Council, Arts Council England and studio provider Yorkshire Artspace.

Developed by Green Estate in partnership with Yorkshire Artspace, the studios accommodate eight artists and makers and are part of an inner city 14 hectare heritage site that was once the Great Sheffield Deer Park. Managed by Green Estate, the Manor Oaks site includes a restored Tudor turret house, the Manor Lodge Discovery Centre, heritage skills training centre, farm shop/cafe and green waste recycling facility, all within a mile of the city centre and girdled by local authority housing.

The local community is already actively engaged with Manor Oaks through the existing environmental and heritage education programme.

Green Estate is also a significant local employer and centre for volunteering. It is hoped that the studios will add to this community offer through open days and hands-on activities.



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Setting of Manor Oaks Studios

KEY OUTCOMES

- Affordable, purpose-built studios created for eight artists and makers at the heart of the community
- A positive relationship established between a social enterprise delivering social and environmental activities aimed at place-making, and a studio provider
- Studio provider Yorkshire Artspace established as a credible and reliable development partner
- The project delivered a successful outcome for all partners - Sheffield City Council, Arts Council England, Green Estate and Yorkshire Artspace.

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BACKGROUND

In 2007 Yorkshire Artspace, one of the most established studio providers in the UK, began work on the development of a model for artists' studio provision in Housing Market Renewal (HMR) areas of Sheffield.

Project partners

The project was conceived as part of Creative Places - a partnership between Arts Council England Yorkshire, Sheffield City Council and arts organisations Eventus and Yorkshire Artspace. Creative Places identified and provided opportunities for the arts to be embedded within large-scale housing and community building programmes (and improved cultural provision) in those places experiencing housing renewal and growth, through a number of strategic interventions and partnership working. Demand for studios had outstripped supply at Persistence Works, Yorkshire Artspace's Sheffield City Centre building, from the day it opened in 2001 and arts capital funding to create new spaces had all but disappeared.

Feasibility study

Yorkshire Artspace bid for and was awarded the contract to complete a study of the potential for affordable artists' studio provision within HMR areas. The study broke down into three main interlinked areas – Demand, Advocacy and Site Analysis – each vital to the success of the study. Yorkshire Artspace commissioned the independent Demand Study from arts consultants Paul Swales and Keith Hayman. It showed that over 100

affordable studios were needed in the city at that time with the prospect of the number rising as existing studios closed due to the regeneration of the city centre and the consequent lack of available property.

Making the case

The Advocacy was two pronged. Eventus (a Sheffield-based social organisation using the transformative power of the arts to make a difference to people and places) was commissioned separately to talk to individual officers in the three HMR areas about the public benefits of cultural activity and cultural provision in local communities. Miranda Plowden, then interim Director of Housing Regeneration at Sheffield City Council, supported an advocacy event at Persistence Works for HMR staff and potential delivery partners and funders. This included studio tours and an opportunity to meet the artists, presentation of the Demand Study, a presentation from NFASP on the public benefits provided by affordable artists' studios and examples of studios across the UK. An initially sceptical audience went on to identify 28 potential sites within two weeks.

Assessing potential sites

Each site was visited and analysed against a grid of:

- area must-haves: good public transport, local shop, hardware/DIY shop, post office, sandwich shop, newsagent, pub/cafe, parking, security

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- area nice-to-haves: tool or plant hire, community facilities, schools with Artsmark, FE/HE/training facility, nice view, good feel, and
- development practicalities: size of site and how many studios it could support, site ownership, availability and potential for funding.

This resulted in a shortlist of seven sites for further analysis. The seven mini business plans looked at existing local arts and community provision, how each development might be funded and delivered and predicted annual income and expenditure.

Development partners

Development partners were quickly identified for the first two projects as they already had an interest in, or ownership of, the sites. The first model complex – Manor Oaks Studios – opened in August 2010 and the second – Knutton Road Studios – is on site and due to complete in summer 2011.

Artists and community

Yorkshire Artspace aims to provide studios to an even balance of artists and craftspeople, although the line between these areas of practice is increasingly blurring. The need for light industrial work space has been partially met by the studios at Persistence Works but most potential new developments, many of them mixed use, did not lend themselves to such provision. This is one area where the partnership with Green Estate became mutually beneficial. Green Estate, as part of its

landscape services, promotes and values traditional skills such as dry stone walling and wood carving. They also store heavy plant and machinery at the Manor Oaks site. This meant that not only were the louder, heavier craft practices suitable neighbours on the site but there were also opportunities for the sharing of skills and services. Making the most of this relationship formed part of the selection process for the studios.

The artists selected for Manor Oaks Studios were;

- Finbarr Lucas, a furniture designer/maker using locally sourced timber and keen to work with Green Estate on their plans to dry wood on site
- Sue Disley, ceramicist, working with Green Estate on the development of a wood fired kiln on site
- Annette Petch, jewellery designer/maker and workshop leader, using the natural world as inspiration
- Miles Gavin and Joel Neild, selected for Yorkshire Artspace's first Ceramics Starter Studio – a programme designed to support emerging artists in an equipped studio with mentor support and business training, based on the successful silversmithing programme at Persistence Works. The programme at Manor Oaks was established in response to the history of ceramics on the site – the first recorded pottery in Sheffield – and the large pool of experienced ceramicists at Yorkshire Artspace able to act as mentors.

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Another selection criterion was the artists' eagerness to take part in open days – both the annual Yorkshire Artspace open studios event and the more regular community events arranged by the Green Estate team. The choice of ceramics for the new Starter Studio at Manor Oaks also reflected the suitability of this medium for public engagement activities.

FINANCE

The £12,700 HMR Study was financed by Sheffield City Council and Arts Council England, Yorkshire. Yorkshire Artspace was then able to move forward with three of the top seven sites (two combined for Knutton Road Studios) with funding from the Arts Council's Thrive¹ Organisational Development Programme that supported both additional staff time and the changes needed for Yorkshire Artspace to become a multi-site manager.

Capital costs

The capital cost of Manor Oaks Studios was funded through £500k of LEGL funding (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative) after a LEGL representative attended the advocacy event, with the landscaping provided by Green Estate through in-kind labour and recycled materials. The studios are owned and maintained by Green Estate as part of the wider heritage site. Yorkshire Artspace has a seven year lease with Green Estate (the maximum possible under a relatively uncomplicated lease).

Knutton Road Studios, the second studios project being developed as a result of the HMR Study, are

being developed as part of a larger mixed-use scheme with SOAR, (Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration) a regeneration-focused community-based organisation in North Sheffield, with a mix of funding including LEGL and Objective European Funding. The same lease/rent split has been proposed.



Annette Petch in her studio at Manor Oaks

Costs for artists

The artists at Manor Oaks Studios pay approximately £6 per sq ft, plus heat/light/power costs as metered. Roughly half the rent paid by the artists goes to Green Estate to maintain the buildings and services. The other is kept by Yorkshire Artspace to manage the selection of artists, administer the tenancy agreements and for an element of

¹. Thrive was a pilot programme launched by Arts Council England in 2006 to test the theory that organisations could be helped to become more self-sustaining with seed funding to support organisational development. To thrive not just survive.

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programming (annual open studios and the Ceramics Starter Studio programme). Whilst this has partially reduced Yorkshire Artspace's reliance on external funding for the programme, the relatively modest size of the complex means that the income is also modest. Additional funding was secured from The Foyle Foundation and Arts Council England, Yorkshire through the G4A funding stream to equip the Ceramics Starter Studio and establish the programme.

BENEFITS DELIVERED

For the community

- The artists' studios will be open to the public on Green Estate's frequent open days and Yorkshire Artspace's annual open studios event
- There will be workshops for the public and other engagement activities as part of the Ceramics Starter Studio
- The concept of Manor Oaks as a creative centre, and a place of work, will improve the public perception of the area.

For the delivery partner

- Green Estate, has a stunning new building in its portfolio
- Higher profile achieved through:
 - the press coverage of the new studios
 - Yorkshire Artspace events - Open Studios and activities linked to the Ceramics Starter Studio

- the activities of the individual artists (marketing, workshops, visiting clients)

- The skill set of the Manor Oaks artists – ceramics, metal working, furniture making – complement both the environmental and traditional skills ethos of the organisation and there is potential for skills sharing with Green Estate staff and volunteers
- Additional attraction for community events
- The studios will help to attract tenants for other business units being created on site.

For the studio group

- Able to offer more light industrial specification studio space to meet demand
- A modest income from rents
- Profile raised through the launch of the new studios
- An opportunity to extend the Starter Studio Programme – increased profile within the ceramics sector in particular
- Demonstrable ability to work successfully in partnership outside the arts sector and a commitment to local communities

For the development partners

- The studios fit well with Sheffield City Council's aim to take the successful regeneration of the city centre out to communities
- The neighbourhood studio fits well with Arts Council England's 'Great art for everyone' rallying cry.

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For the artists

- By Autumn 2011 (the Ceramics Starter Studio has a phased selection) eight artists will be working from the Manor Oaks Studios
- Medium term security
- Affordable rent
- The studios are purpose built for the needs of artists using light-industrial processes
- Part of a small creative complex and a larger creative community
- A semi-rural working environment (complete with farm shop, café, shire horse and wild flower meadows)
- Free parking on site – quite a rarity – yet only half an hour's walk to the city centre
- Increased profile resulting from the launch of the studios, Yorkshire Artspace events, Green Estate events and Ceramics Starter Studio programme.



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Exterior of Manor Oaks Studios, Sheffield

FURTHER INFORMATION

Yorkshire Artspace is one of the largest and most established studio providers in the UK, currently offering affordable workspace to over 80 artists and craftspeople in three buildings in Sheffield.

It aims to be a centre of excellence for the support of artists and makers by providing good quality affordable studio space, tailored professional development programmes and by raising the profile of artists and their practices locally, nationally and internationally.

In 2009 Yorkshire Artspace carried out a 'public benefit' survey to highlight the importance of providing studios to artists and craftspeople in Sheffield. The results can be viewed at <http://artspace.org.uk/about-us/overview>, see the drop down menu on the right-hand side of the page 'public benefit survey 2008/09'.

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