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THE NEXT HOTSPOT

# MEET THE NEW HOXTON

Deptford is becoming the cultural hub of southeast London, writes Lorna Blackwood

AN ARTISTIC community can often be a catalyst for the regeneration of an area. A prime example of this is Hoxton: in the late 1980s, it was a derelict place, unaffected by the property boom. Artists marked it as their own and after a few years a community had developed and the area was slowly rejuvenated. There was a thriving creative scene incorporating a trendy nightlife, which attracted an influx of people, dramatically pushing up property prices and finally driving the impoverished art community out.

Today Deptford, still an affordable part of southeast London, has taken over Hoxton's mantle. With one of the highest concentrations of artists in the capital, it has been designated a cultural hub by the London Development Agency. However, the leading lights behind Deptford's regeneration are aware that Hoxton's popularity ultimately forced out the community that made its name. So Deptford is trying to nurture and retain its creative community.

A joint scheme by the developer Lane Castle and the arts consultant Futurecity Arts at Paynes & Borthwick Wharves at Deptford is a prime example of how local artists and property development can work together. They intend to create a new cultural destination: along with 257 one, two and three-bedroom residential apartments, the plans include space for bars, cafés, restaurants and a 11,000 sq ft gallery for performances and exhibitions. There will also be live-work units for designers and artists.

"This is a ground-breaking development," explains Mark Davy, director of Futurecity. "We were involved right from the beginning

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and Lane Castle has allowed us to draw on the cultural activity in the area."

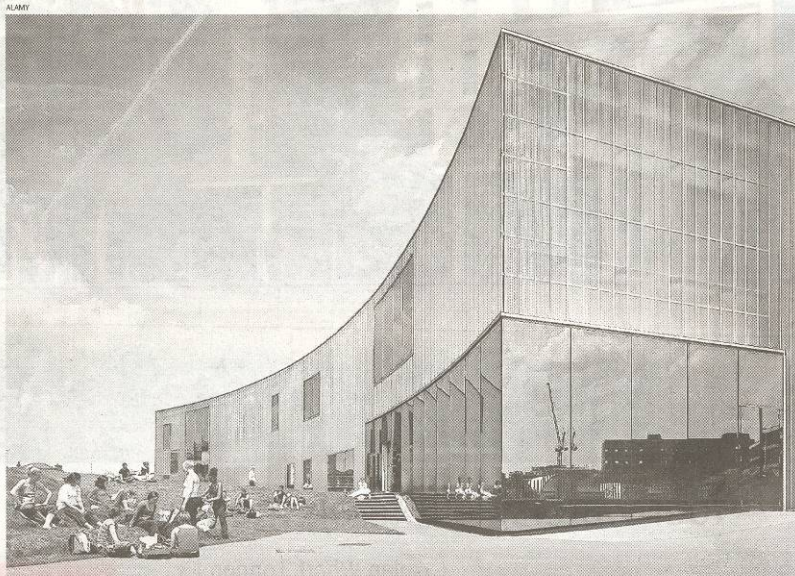
The partnership has culminated in the developers commissioning a website, the *p&b* cultural showcase. This promotes the best artists and creative businesses in Deptford, Greenwich and Lewisham. Local artists will submit their work to a selection panel and the best entries are showcased on the website. The aim is for some of them to contribute works to the development or perform there.

"The website is a work in progress at the moment," says Mark O'Grady, of Lane Castle. "We really believe this development will be part of the fabric of the local creative community, and the river views, and proximity not only to Greenwich but to Canary Wharf and Central London, must make it one of the most interesting opportunities in the market."

Paynes Wharf was built in 1860 as a base for marine engineering. The Grade II listed facade, with its Italianate arches, is the only part of the original building left and will form part of the arts centre, with two floors of 12 penthouse apartments above it.

Borthwick Wharf has been demolished and is to be replaced by an 18-storey residential tower, behind which will be the live-work units. A riverside promenade is also planned, opening up the Thames to pedestrians once again after many years. Overall, the Paynes & Borthwick Wharves development will cover some 350,000 sq ft.

The development is one of a number of regeneration schemes that are contributing to



What's the buzz: the Laban dance centre, top; Deptford market; and how Paynes & Borthwick Wharves will look

Deptford's renaissance. Next to Borthwick Wharf, a large development of homes, offices and shops is planned on the 40-acre Convoys Wharf site, which is being sold by News International, the owner of *The Times*. Mumford Mill, which has been split into loft apartments, and One SE8, an award-winning scheme by St James Homes, are two developments that have led the way in the area. There are numerous building works under way along Deptford High Street.

However, it is the diversity of the place that makes it so unusual. The high street hosts a lively market three times a week, contains several artisans' houses dating from 1680 and the selection of independent shops meets the needs of the artistic and student community. Famously, the playwright Christopher Marlowe, who was murdered in a pub brawl, is buried near by in the graveyard of St Nicholas' Church.

Contrast this with new dynamic cultural spaces, such as the iconic and colourful Laban dance centre, a £24 million project designed by the architects Herzog & de Meuron, and the architectural credentials of the area are quite impressive.

Lane Castle is hoping that its development will only enhance the landscape. "We intend to marry the historic with the contemporary and are also determined that arts, culture and the best of design will capitalise on the creative buzz of the area," O'Grady says. The development is due for completion by spring 2009. Let's hope the artists are still there to enjoy it and have not, as so often has happened, been priced out of the area.

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## FACTFILE

- The Paynes & Borthwick Wharves development will be launched in 2008, although no date has been confirmed.
- Guideline prices for the apartments will start at £300,000 for a one-bedroom apartment. Sales will be through King Sturge, 020-7715 9700.
- A total of 35 per cent of the properties will be affordable housing.
- For more information on local artists, designers, performers and musicians, log on to [www.pandbshowcase.com](http://www.pandbshowcase.com).
- [www.paynesandborthwick.com](http://www.paynesandborthwick.com)
- [www.lanecastle.com](http://www.lanecastle.com)
- [www.futurecity.co.uk](http://www.futurecity.co.uk)