

# Artists drawn into space battle

## Report pinpoints impact of 2012 Olympic Games

by LEE PEART

HACKNEY artists have welcomed a report that highlights mounting pressure on studio space in the borough.

The report, released last week by the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers, examines the impact of the 2012 London Olympics on the provision of working space for artists in the five host boroughs.

SPACE, whose headquarters are based in London Fields, has lost 10,000 square feet over the past four years, according to the report.

SPACE chief executive officer, Anna Harding, said the reduction was down to a natural cycle of leases expiring rather than demand for land from developers in connection with the Olympics.

Ms Harding said: "It is becoming harder to find the kind of properties we need to keep rents affordable.

"There are an increasing number of big commercial developers moving into the area who are not interested in supporting the artistic community."

SPACE is home to 600 artists in 18 buildings in five London boroughs, 10 of which are in Hackney.

The lease on the Deborah House building in Hackney, near Belsham Street and Morning Lane, expires in 2011.

Ms Harding said negotiations to renew the lease were imminent and she was fearful that the building's rent might become unaffordable, or the property even could be sold off to developers.

Neil Gall, of Hackney Road, one of the artists based at the building, said: "Of course, we are worried.

"There is a strong artistic community here that would be destroyed if the studios were lost."

SPACE is holding its annual symposium next Thursday (Janu-

ary 22) when artists will be given the opportunity to put their case to policy makers.

Fiona Fletcher Smith, Hackney Council's director of neighbourhoods and regeneration, who will chair the panel, said: "We're aware there is a long waiting list of artists needing studios, which is why we already work with SPACE to make council buildings available for rent.

"Our campaign to ensure the 2012 media centres are transformed into a regional hub for media and creative industries after the Games includes the aim that affordable artists' studio space would be available."

Speakers include Martin Reid, senior project manager at the Cultural Industries Development Agency, John McGill, director of the North London Strategic Alliance, and consultant David Powell.

The debate starts at 2pm and carries on until 5pm.

On the same day, a special meeting at Hackney Wick Community Centre will give residents the chance to quiz the Olympic Delivery Authority, the company responsible for staging the Games.

The event starts at 3pm at the centre in Eastway, Hackney Wick, and stalls will provide information on jobs and training, an update on work being carried out on Hackney Marshes and how the Olympic Park legacy will be shaped.

The meeting will provide an update from 7pm on the development work carried out on the Olympic park, including progress on the media centre scheduled for Hackney Wick

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Artist Neil Gall is a worried man