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**FrancisKnight**  
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 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009

Non-Domestic Rates Department  
 Maidstone House  
 King Street  
 Maidstone  
 Kent ME15 6JQ

Re letter dated 20 November 2009-12-16  
 Your ref: 10070287006135

Dear Sir/Madam

FrancisKnight Arts Consultancy are writing to appeal against the decision by Maidstone Borough Council not to award full discretionary rate relief on Business Rates for Unit B9, The Power Hub Business Centre, St Peter's Street, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0ST. We are claiming relief under sections 47/48 of Local Government Finance Act 1988.

1. Particulars of the Organisation

(a) FrancisKnight is Limited company by shares the Directors are paid a monthly salary to run the organisation and develop new arts projects. Any profits that are made are reinvested back into the company.

2. Details of Herdiment for which relief is claimed

(a) purpose for which used

Unit B9 (The Creative Project Space) is a project driven by FrancisKnight to refurbish and occupy a 3,000sqft industrial unit with creative workspace for the purpose of supporting artists and the fine arts to originate, develop and produce new work.

The refurbishment will divide Unit B9 into five workspace units to accommodate and provide affordable creative workspace:

- 1 unit for FrancisKnight, arts consultancy to provide a regional office base.
- 2 units for incubator spaces to support graduates from University of the Creative Arts
- 2 units for artists workspaces
- A gallery showing space that can be used to show new and experimental work by invited artists/ a networking space/ events and available for private hire.
- A private meeting room for use by tenants / events
- Disabled access toilets
- Communal Kitchen

## **Local Research & Evidence**

### **Art at the Centre**

The reasoning behind this appeal is based on research undertaken as part of and evidence drawn out of Art at the Centre, a flagship project with Arts Council England, South East and Maidstone Borough Council. Art at the Centre was a feasibility study into an Artists' Quarter. Artists were asked to take part in a survey conducted for Art at the Centre on the need for affordable studio provision in Maidstone. Evidence from the research has identified a range of creatives working in Maidstone and the need to develop and expand good, creative workspaces.

Through networking events, Art at the Centre canvassed artists' feedback on the kind of studio space they would be interested in and what they would consider paying for a 60sqft space.

- 50% were looking for workspace
- 50% would consider renting
- 50% were interested in networking held at studio spaces
- 100% would consider paying £25 - £40 per week.

(See Space and Place Evaluation Appendix 1)

Artists need studios. For many artists committed to their practice, having a studio is essential. However, the vast majority do not earn enough from their art practice to be able to afford a studio at open market prices in addition to a separate place to live. Many artists and small creative companies work from home or travel to Medway where affordable artist studio/workshop provision is well established.

At the time of the study the only Artist Studios in Maidstone were located at the Museum of Kent Life but under new management the Museum is currently being redeveloped and they are phasing out the studios. There is one artist left who is currently looking for new accommodation. In addition a small workspace is now currently being provided by Arts Development, Maidstone Borough Council, 60sqft at £55.00 month exclusive (no broadband/telephone).

The Power Hub was a site considered as potential workspace accommodation for artists based locally during the Art at the Centre project. Although architecturally suitable the spaces on offer were too expensive for individuals to commit to and too large for single occupancy. FrancisKnight recognise that the spaces do however lend themselves to be divided up, responding to the need to provide affordable, smaller spaces for creative individuals and businesses.

## **Regional Evidence & Research**

### **Unit B9 Feasibility study**

FrancisKnight also undertook an independent feasibility study to explore the potential for a Creative Workspaces in Maidstone and in particular the Powerhub as a potential venue. The study provided the opportunity to set up an advisory panel, inviting key individuals within the region to share their experiences and expertise. (See Advisory panel Appendix 2)

FrancisKnight visited various artist studios and workspaces within the region. These setups had a mix of artists and designer makers, varying rents and facilities. All the studios that were visited were managed either by a group or organisation managing buildings or parts of buildings. Each provided low-cost studio space to non-commercial artists, supporting artists at the basic level of production enabling them to sustain their practice and make a significant contribution to culture, education, and society and to the well-being and sustainability of local communities. These site visits were invaluable in helping to shape the type of facility and creative FrancisKnight wish to attract to Unit B9 to create a collaborative professional working environment. (See Appendix 3)

### **National Research & Evidence** **National Federation of Studio Providers**

The term 'visual artist' encompasses a very wide range of disciplines and studio practices and, consequently, there is a wide range of differing practical requirements according to individual practice when an artist is looking for suitable studio space. It is widely recognised that visual artists have for many years sustained their primary practice through a 'portfolio career' of related practices, from teaching to web design and a host of activities in between. The artist's studio is the base for all these activities, and while it may be possible to pursue some practices in a shared desk-based environment, most visual arts practices still require the flexible open-ended approach that only a reasonably sized studio can offer.

Having a truly all-inclusive rent that also includes subsidised business rate relief is of enormous benefit to visual artists

#### **Why do artists need affordable studios?**

The vast majority of non-commercial artists do not earn enough from their art practice to be able to afford a studio at open market rents in addition to a separate place to live. Many artists support their practice by working in education, training and community development, encouraging innovation and creativity across the social and regeneration agendas. If artists are to continue to be able to provide maximum cultural and community benefit, they need space in which to work, at a rent they can afford.

For example, affordable studio providers in London charge rents which are, on average, one third of those for similar space on the open market.

Alongside the studio space, many studio groups and organisations provide support and resources for artists and the wider public. These include programmes of changing exhibitions, project spaces, residency programmes, open studio events, professional development programmes for artists, media arts facilities and education and outreach programmes involving diverse communities.

### **Projected Costings**

FrancisKnight have received £98K from Arts Council England, South East to refurbish and regenerate Unit B9 at Powerhub into creative workspace for artists and creative businesses. FrancisKnight have projected costings to refurbish and run Unit B9 at The Power Hub, Maidstone for the first two years of operation (see Appendix 4).

Keeping rents affordable is dependent on securing discretionary rate relief from Maidstone Borough Council.

FrancisKnight will operate the Creative Project Space as a commercial creative business venture. However a key driver for the Creative project space is not solely on the profits to be achieved but on the cultural value that it will represent. FrancisKnight will therefore ensure that rents are:

Affordable and accessible (based on £8-12 per sq ft)<sup>2</sup>

The Creative Project Space is managed and operated within best practice.

The Creative Project Space maintains a professional working environment and attracts high calibre tenants and artists.

Networks and systems of good practice are shared within The Creative Project Space

There are opportunities for collaboration

The Creative project Space becomes a sustainable business

### **Rents**

FrancisKnight will operate 4 studio spaces on an all inclusive rent basis. This will include insurance, service charges and utilities but will exclude VAT.

Based on 100% rate relief, the spaces will operate at the affordable rent of £12 per square foot.

This price sits between a very basic studio accommodation provided at Crate, Margate at £1 per square foot and a higher standard of office provision provided through Basepoint Business Centre, The Joiners' Shop, Chatham Dockyard at £21 per square foot + VAT.

Nationally (taken from the Acme September 2004 national survey of affordable studio providers), the average inclusive rent in London was £7.54 per square foot, which should be taken as a bench mark of affordability across London. Most studio providers in the affordable sector operate on an 'inclusive' rent basis. This term is normally taken to include any insurance, service charge, business rates or VAT. It does not normally include electricity, which is usually sub-metered per individual studio unit.

This is a venture driven by FrancisKnight with support from Arts Council England, South East, Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and two leading universities in the area.

We hope that we have provided enough information to make an informed decision regarding the activity that will take place in Unit B9 at The Powerhub.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Louise Francis and Laura Knight  
Directors

# Appendix 1

# APPENDIX A

	22/5/2007	18/6/2007	7/7/2007						9/10/2007	29th November 07	24th January 08	21st February 2008
										9 20	2 14	2 10
										45%	14%	20%
<b>Would you be interested in buying or renting work/live space in Maidstone</b>												
Buy	1	11%	2	50%	2	50%						
Rent	5	56%	2	50%	2	50%		1	25%	2	50%	1
Workspace only	3	33%	1	25%						1	25%	1
other: peppercorn rents, studio/boutique, freehold property, live/work, exhib, meeting, gallery, interested in networking events held at studios								1	25%			1
<b>If a building was found for creative people that would include work space, what other amenities would you like to be included</b>												
exhibition space	7	78%	3	75%	3	75%		2	50%	6	150%	2
project space	6	67%	2	50%						5	125%	1
café	6	67%	1	25%	1	25%				3	75%	
showcase/retail space	6	67%	0	0%	2	50%		2	50%	1	25%	1
resource centre	2	22%	1	25%								2
practice specific facilities - print facilities/sound studio	3	33%	1	25%				1	25%			
more suggestions: computers, sound proof/recording, sink, drying, photography, clean area, kin, dark room												
<b>Please indicate what you would consider paying weekly rent for a 60sq ft studio</b>												
less than £25	4	44%	2	50%				2	50%	2	50%	2
£25-£40	4	44%	1	25%	2	50%				4	100%	
£40+	1	11%	0	0%								
<b>Please indicate what you would consider paying monthly rent for a 1 bed flat</b>												
less than £65	1	11%	1	25%				1	25%	1	25%	
£65-£80			1	25%	1	25%				3	75%	
£80+	5	56%	0	0%				1	25%	1	25%	
<b>Do you know of any buildings in Maidstone that might be suitable for this type of activity?</b>												
Suggestions: The Vic 98 Union Street Loader and Paynes The Powerhub Royal Star Arcade Bridal Shop in Union street Ex-Salvation Army Building Mote House Old Cinema Industrial spaces west of river Avis car building, (corpus christ halls) Ohma Shoe Shop that's just closed in Earl Street High Street, old department store												
Would you art form require any particular facilities such as wet zone, dust free etc messy area, outdoor, dark room, extraction facilities												
Suggestions: co-creative spaces to share high ceilings/ventilation good natural light more detail other suggestions: extraction dust free												

The Advisory panel included the following:

**Miranda Chapman** – Account Director Pillory Barn Creative. A full service agency in advertising, marketing, branding and PR. Based at Maidstone Studios. Pillory Barn Creative run Media Tree on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council. Media Tree is a creative networking organisation, aimed at strengthening and encouraging collaboration across all areas of the creative and media industries.

**Michelle Chorley** – General Manager Dada-South. Dada-South is the disability arts development agency for the South East. The organisation is core funded by Arts Council England South East and continues to develop the profile of Deaf and disabled artists throughout the South East and beyond.

**Nicholas Fox** – Individual Learning Company, offers a range of support services to key stakeholders organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to assist them in the design, development and delivery of innovative approaches to life long learning.

**FrancisKnight** – Co-Directors Louise Francis and Laura Knight. FrancisKnight is an independent Creative Arts Consultancy, which develops and produces dynamic artist led creative projects and cross art collaborations in the region.

**Denise Harmer** (10<sup>th</sup> Feb)– Enterprise Partnership Manager (Kent) based within the Knowledge Transfer Team at University for the Creative Arts, Maidstone. The Knowledge Transfer Team act as a first port of call for the Universities work with business and the local community.

**Lucy Hayward** - Arts & Regeneration Officer, West Kent; Kent Arts Development Unit (KADU).

KADU aims to provide strategic leadership and co-ordination for the development of the arts in Kent, and ensure that the arts are realising their full potential for community engagement and empowerment, distinctive place-making and as contributors to the wider economy

**Sarah Robson** (10<sup>th</sup> Feb) & **Wendy Hegley** (26<sup>th</sup> Feb) – Arts Development Manager (job-share), Arts Development, Maidstone Borough Council. The Arts Development focuses on making the arts more accessible to a wide range of people and promoting the work and contribution that all artists can make to the quality of life in Maidstone.

**Cathy Rogers** – Artist and recent graduate on the Artist Film and Video MA, University of the Creative Arts, Maidstone. Her work is concerned with exploring the formal qualities of film.

**Stephen Turner** – Artist with a studio in Chatham Dockyard. Much of his work is inspired by the particular environment of the Thames Gateway from Bow Creek on the Thames to the marsh islands of the Medway below Chatham and the Mauncell Seaforts east of the Nore. He is currently a Member of Region Council for Arts Council England

**Janice Wason** (10<sup>th</sup> Feb) - Director of Channel Corridor Consultants. They provide specialist services to both the public and private sectors in three related areas. Economic Development, Transport and Freight and Strategic Business Development.

**Anna Smart** - Policy Manager, Culture & Growth - South East Development Agency (26th February only) The culture and creative economy team at SEEDA support the development of the creative economy in the South East through partnership working, business support and regional evidence gathering.

## Practical Research – studio Visits

### Joiners Shop, Chatham Dockyard

Joiners Shop is managed by and part of Basepoint Business Centres a nationwide organisation that operates 25 various spaces in the Midlands and South on a commercial basis. It provides 1750sqm of high-specification commercial accommodation and creative space comprising of studios, workshops, office units and communal facilities. There is gallery space and breakout area for tenants. They provide flexible leasing arrangements, on-site management, hot-desking and parking. £21.00 + VAT Per sqft inclusive (excluding electricity and telephone/broadband charges). Studio's sizes range from 161 sqft – 1439sqft

**CRATE, Studio and Project Space Ltd, Margate** is an artists led organisation supporting contemporary visual artists' research and practice. It provides affordable artists studios and two project spaces. Crate's programme includes residencies, exchanges, talks and collaborative projects. The project spaces can be hired as temporary studios space to produce or document work and to give space and time for experimentation. Registered Charity. Company Limited by guarantee. £1.97per sqft inclusive. (excluding electricity)

There are 5 individual/shared studios – including 1 wheelchair accessible unit on the ground floor. The studios vary in size from 170 sq feet to 230 sq feet.

### STUDIO SPACE RENTS 2009

STUDIO 1 Ground Floor 172Sqft – £100 per month inc.

STUDIO 2 First Floor (Rear) 201sqft - £117 per month inc.

STUDIO 3 First Floor (Front Right) 199sqft - £116 per month inc.

STUDIO 4 First Floor (Front Left) 226sqft - £136 per month inc.

STUDIO 5 Top Floor 395 - £200 per month inc.

**NUCLEUS Arts Centre** (formerly the *New Art Centre*) is the largest artist's studio complex in North Kent. It's a creative hub, a meeting space for like minds and a proven incubator for local artistic talent.

In addition to studio space the NUCLEUS Arts Centre offers gallery space for hire, a courtyard café, a kiln room and conference facilities for hire.

All of our 26 studios are self-contained and benefit from wireless broadband, making the spaces ideal for creative start-up businesses as well as amateur and established professional artists. Studios vary in size and layout with prices starting from as little as £63 per month fully inclusive of utilities. Resident artists also benefit from discounts at our on site café and have access to creative opportunities and jobs unavailable elsewhere.

95ft £83.13 a month inclusive

77sqft £67.39 a month inclusive



**Meltdowns, Ramsgate** – is an arts facility run by artists for artists. They provide 7 studios spaces all on ground level, education opportunities, a fine arts foundry, an online exhibition space and an international commission service. For this set up the Studios run at cost and operate as a company limited by guarantee. The Foundry is operated on a commercial basis.

Two lockable spaces each measuring 200 Sqft, with five open plan studios each measuring 97 Sqft creating a communal space.  
Rents start from £90.00 a month for the smaller spaces or £185.00 per month for the larger. exclusive

**Expenditure & Income Appendix 10 - Page 1 of 4**

Refurbishment costs 4 month refurb					Income			
Item	Gross*		VAT	Nett	Item	Gross	VAT	Nett
access	1,750		262.5	1487.5	Arts Council Capital	48,750		
access	1,000				MBC Capital	10,000		
heating system	12,000		1800	10200				
Kitchen	2,500	0	375	2125			0	0
toilets (+1 disabled)	5,000		750	4250			0	0
electric wiring/light	5,000		750	4250			0	0
partitioning/finishes	8,000		1200	6800			0	0
paint	1,400		210	1190			0	0
create new entrance	2,000		300	1700			0	0
meeting room build	4,000		600	3400			0	0
fire alarm and ext	1,500		225	1275			0	0
entrance to utilities	1,000		150	850		0	0	0
telecoms	5,000		750	4250			0	0
built in storage	1,000		150	850			0	0
partitioning next unit	1,000		150	850			0	0
Architect plans	2,000		300	1700			0	0
contingency	2,600		390	2210			0	0
blinds	1,000		150	850		0	0	0
signage	1,000		150	850			0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>58750</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8662.5</b>	<b>49087.5</b>	<b>58750</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Key to colours  
 ACE funding  
 MBC funding  
 KCC funding

UCA funding  
 CPS income

other costs for refurb/set up					Income			
Item	Gross*	80% Relief	VAT	Nett	Item	Gross	VAT	Nett
Service Charge	2256		0	0	KCC local schemes	4,090		
Business Rates		0	338.4	1917.6			0	0
Project management	14,000		0	0	G4A :Marketing	2,500	375	2125
Insurance	1000		150	850			0	0
Electricity	667		0	0	overheads project management1	14,000	2100	11900
Water	167		100.05	566.95			0	0
Accountants	1,000		25.05	141.95	Business advice	1,400	210	1190
Solicitors set up	2500		0	0	solicitors	2,500	375	2125
Marketing set up	2,500		150	850	accountancy	1000	150	850
business advice	1,400		0	0	admin cost post, stationary	500	75	425
admin costs post etc	500		0	0			0	0
Data projector	1,500		0	0	data projector	1,500	225	1275
			0	0			0	0
			0	0		0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27490</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3823.5</b>	<b>21666.5</b>	<b>27490</b>	<b>3510</b>	<b>19890</b>

Expenditure year 1 Apr2010 - Mar 2011						Income			
Item	Gross*	80% Relief	VAT	Nett	Item	Gross	VAT	Nett	
Service Charge	4647		697.05	3949.95	Kcc local schemes	9,282			
Business Rates		0	0	0	rent incubator space 2+4	4,070			
Insurance	1030		154.5	875.5	revenue incubator space prof dev	6,325			
Telephone Broadband	1030		154.5	875.5	rent Arts Investement fund rent	4,750			
Electricity	2060		309	1751	ACE G4A : Marketing	500	75	425	
Water	515		77.25	437.75	overheads Office/project manage	4,320	648	3672	
managing incubator	6,325		948.75	5376.25	admin costs post, stationary	1,000	150	850	
Accountants	1030		154.5	875.5	Creative programme	5,128	769.2	4358.8	
Solicitors	1,545		231.75	1313.25	Business advice	2,100	315	1785	
Marketing	4,000		600	3400	evaluation	500	75	425	
Marketing	500		75	425	gallery	1,112	166.8	945.2	
artistic programme	5,128		769.2	4358.8					
up keep	2060		309	1751					
business advice	2,100		315	1785					
Administrator/Manager	4,320		648	3672					
admin costs post etc	1,000		150	850					
contingency	1,297		194.55	1102.45					
Evaluation	500		75	425					
<b>Total</b>	<b>39087</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5863.05</b>	<b>33224</b>		<b>39,087</b>	<b>2199</b>	<b>12461</b>	

Expenditure year 2 Apr2011- Mar 2012						Income			
Item	Gross*	80% Relief	VAT	Nett	Item	Gross	VAT	Nett	
Service Charge	4786		717.9	4068.1	Marketing/revenue fund	3,000			
Business Rates		0	0	0	rent incubator space2	4,944			
Insurance	1061		159.15	901.85	rent incubator space 4	4,141			
Telephone Broadband	1061		159.15	901.85	revenue incubator space manag	6,325	948.75	5376.25	
Electricity	2122		318.3	1803.7	G4A: creative programme	6,378	956.7	5421.3	
Water	530		79.5	450.5	overheads officeproejectman	4,445	666.75	3778.25	
managing incubator	6,325		948.75	5376.25	Marketing	1,000	150	850	
Accountants	1061		159.15	901.85	evaluation	500	75	425	
Solicitors	1591		238.65	1352.35					
Marketing	4,000		600	3400	gallery + quiet room	3,600	540	3060	
Marketing	1,000		150	850	space 5	3,090	463.5	2626.5	
artistic programme	6,378		956.7	5421.3					
up keep	2122		318.3	1803.7					
Administrator/Manager	4,445		666.75	3778.25					
contingency	441		66.15	374.85					
Evaluation	500		75	425					
<b>Total</b>	<b>37423</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5613.45</b>	<b>31809.6</b>		<b>37423</b>	<b>3800.7</b>	<b>21537.3</b>	