



# Old Deptford Library Activity Engagement & Interpretation Plan

## Place Mapping & Audience Development Report

26001 | Solomon Charles

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# Executive Summary

The renovation of the Old Deptford Library (ODL) marks a major milestone in the building's life as a historic civic and cultural space. As a community-centred, artist-led project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), a place mapping and audience development report is required. This report provides a strong evidence base to inform an integrated Activity, Engagement and Interpretation (AEI) Plan, grounded in curatorial principles.

This report's place mapping and audience development research supports the development of the AEI plan by identifying cultural assets, community networks, learning organisations, and gathering spaces across the local area. It also contributes to smarter audience development by showing where relationships and outreach can grow. The results of this research highlight priority groups, partnership opportunities, and routes to sustained engagement with key stakeholders, synthesised into actionable recommendations and case studies to support the Lewisham Art House's community partnership and audience development goals. Recommendation summaries are shown below in Table 1.

*Table 1 Summary of Recommendations*

Recommendations	Benefits
<b>Open a Meanwhile use Gallery Space</b>	Increased gallery space capacity at low cost. Meanwhile use spaces could be used to host exhibitions held by Art House members and their creative communities. This would reduce pressure on limited gallery space capacity.
<b>Garden upgrade for community use</b>	Improving the landscaping by constructing new raised garden beds would provide space for an interested group to gain access to a garden space for community use. Gardens create neutral, welcoming spaces where neighbours who might never otherwise interact work alongside one another.
<b>Expand music event programming</b>	An expanded music event offering in collaboration with local artists, online radio stations and independent record labels has the potential to connect the space with a wider, younger audience and offer a wider range of arts programming which connects to the ODL's history as an informal music venue.

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# 1 Place Context

## 1.1 Site Context

The Old Deptford Library building (formerly known as the Deptford Central Library) is located at 140 Lewisham Way, New Cross, within the Borough of Lewisham. The Old Deptford Library (ODL) is owned by Lewisham Council and has been occupied by the Lewisham Art House (LAH) since 1994.

The ODL is situated within the Lewisham Creative Enterprise Zone (called SHAPES Lewisham), a priority area for arts and cultural activation. Prior to the London Government Act 1963, the site was located in the Metropolitan Borough of Deptford, which was abolished and merged into Lewisham in 1965. This history of amalgamation explains the original name of the library, despite not being located in the Deptford neighbourhood.

The ODL is located on a major transport route (A20) and has a medium density urban character typical of an arterial high street corridor. The site is well-connected to various local green corridors and transport modes, and is situated amongst a modest business cluster (see Figure 3):

- **Transport Links:** It is situated within walking distance of both New Cross and New Cross Gate stations, providing quick access to London Bridge and the Overground network.
- **Green Corridors:** Nearby open spaces include Hilly Fields, Borough of Deptford Memorial Gardens, and the River Ravensbourne corridor, which offers walking and cycling paths.
- **Surrounding businesses:** There are a range of traditional high street businesses located in the immediate area surrounding the ODL. This include restaurants and a bike shop, as well as second-hand furniture retailers.

The site is placed on a corner plot fronting Lewisham Way, with side access from Rokeby Road. Immediate features surrounding the site include:

- **North** of the site are high street businesses fronting Lewisham Way. Businesses include a music instructor, storage units, a driving school and retail.
- **East** of the site is a block of mixed-use commercial and residential buildings, flanked by residential terrace dwellings on Rokeby Road.
- **South** of the site is a residential terrace dwellings on Rokeby Road
- **West** of the Site is 138 Lewisham Way, a council owned building formerly occupied by Lewisham Way Youth and Community Centre, now occupied by a recording studio called House of Noise. 138 Lewisham Way features a substantial garden space at the rear of the lot.



Figure 1 ODL Front on (Lewisham Way)



Figure 2 ODL Entrance Approach

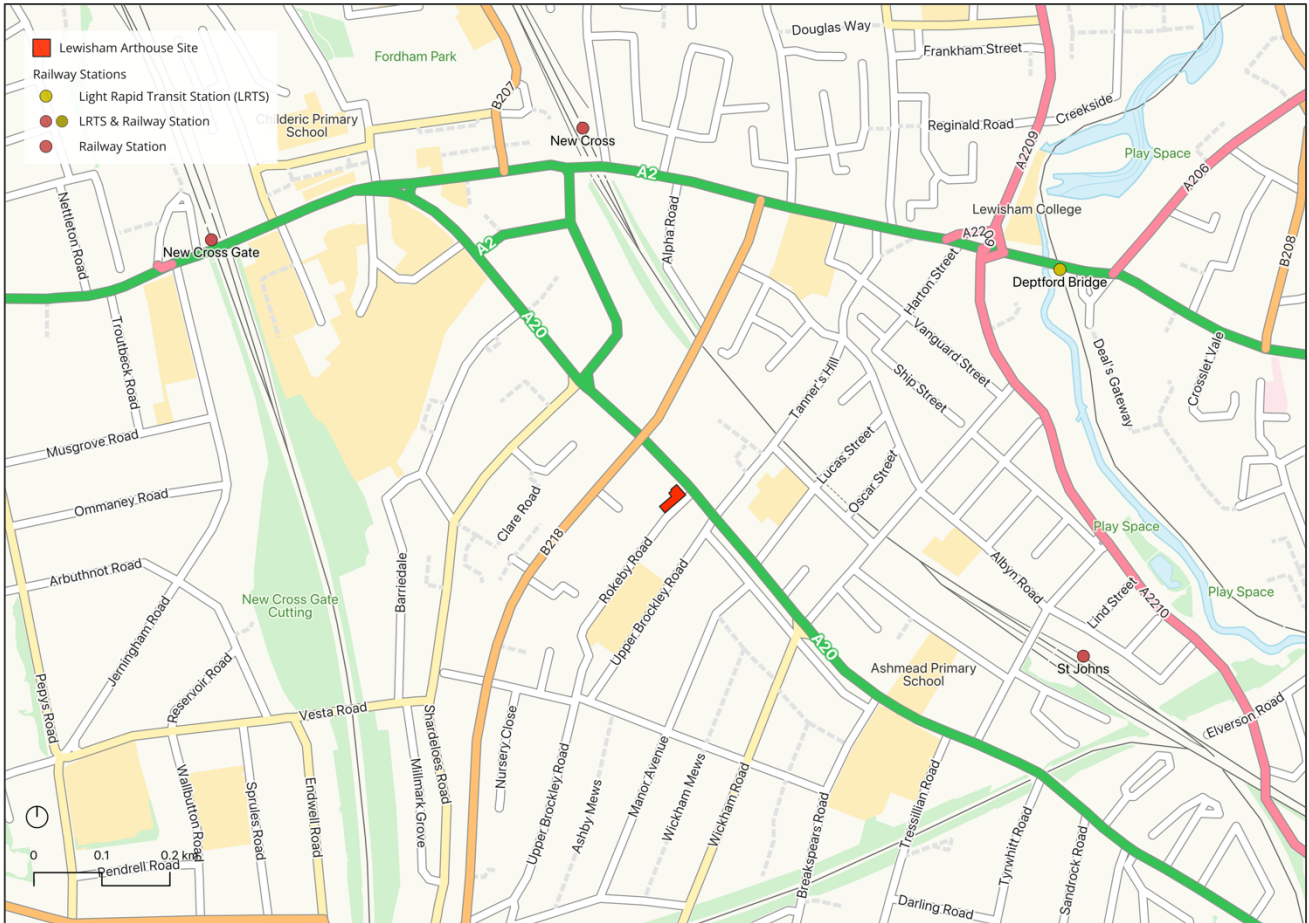


Figure 3 Site Area

Source: Ordnance Survey Open Data, 2026

### 1.1.1 Street Activity

This section compares commercial activity data from Lewisham Way, which the ODL is situated, with nearby high streets, Lewisham High Street and New Cross Road (see Table 2). This highlights potential trends and opportunities for the LAH. Lewisham Way presents a paradoxical picture. It has recorded the strongest footfall growth between 2025-2026, with visitor numbers up to an average of 3,519 per day (+16%). This is a notably stronger rate of increase than either Lewisham High Street (+3%) or New Cross Road (+7%).

However, this footfall growth has not translated into increased spending. Lewisham Way has seen a substantial average daily spend fall (-22%) since 2025, leaving it with a daily spend index of £211— a fraction of the £1,664 recorded on New Cross Road and the £5,290 on Lewisham High Street. This is the most significant spend decline across all three locations and points to a disconnect between the number of people visiting the area and their economic engagement with it.

Lewisham Way also carries the highest vacant premises rate of the three areas (14.8%), compared to 12.7% on New Cross Road and 9.2% on Lewisham High Street. High vacancy levels are likely both a cause and consequence of the low spend figures.

Table 2 High Street Activity

Area	Lewisham Way	Lewisham High Street	New Cross Road
Footfall (average per day)	3519	32852	13059
Percentage increase/decrease from 2025	+16%	+3%	+7%
Average Spend (index per day)	211	5290	1664
Percentage increase/decrease from 2025	-22%	+3%	-4%
Vacant premises rate	14.8%	9.2%	12.7%

Source: GLA Datastore, 2026

Property vacancies on Lewisham Way present an opportunity for “meanwhile use” by the LAH. This has the potential to provide additional gallery and events spaces for LAH community artists. A list of vacant commercial and retail premises potentially suitable for meanwhile use are identified below in Table 3.

Table 3 Vacant Rental Properties for Lease Within 350m (1000ft) of the ODL

Property Address	Distance from 140 Lewisham Way	Type	Size (Approx.)	Status	Features / Status
11 Lewisham Way	~150m (2 min walk)	Restaurant / Retail	61.1 sqm	For lease	Ground floor with built-in bar, dining area, and viewing kitchen.
123 Lewisham Way	~100m (1 min walk)	Retail / Class E	71.9 sqm	For lease	Prime high-street position
Bond House, Batavia Rd	~350m (4 min walk)	Office / Studio	12.1 sqm	For lease	Creative space; larger corner unit has full floor-to-ceiling glass frontage.
146–150 Lewisham Way	~50m (1 min walk)	Retail / Showroom	208.3 sqm	For lease	Large ground-floor open-plan unit. Highly visible double frontage.
4B Pagnell Street	~50m (3 min walk)	Commercial Unit	46 sqm	For Sale	Ground floor open-plan workspace with kitchenette
302-314 New Cross Road	~320m (4 mins walk)	Retail / residential)	1425 sqm (commercial)	For Sale (for redevelopment)	Positive pre-application response has been received from Council, aiming to bringing high-street units back into active use.

Source: Prime Location; Zoopla; Rightmove; On The Market, 2026

## 1.2 Lewisham Community Profile

Lewisham is a rapidly growing borough characterised by high levels of community diversity across all major socio-demographic categories. Lewisham has higher levels of ethnic and racial diversity, notably hosting a significant Black African and Caribbean community. Simultaneously the area also supports a greater concentration of LGBTQI+ residents, particularly in the New Cross and Deptford areas. Socioeconomic deprivation occurs at higher levels, however the borough is comprised of residents from a mix of class backgrounds and housing tenure types, from housing association to outright ownership.

### Key highlights

- High population growth (+9% between 2011-2021)
- Lower median income compared to Greater London (-10%)
- High levels of ethnic diversity and a large Black African and Caribbean population (30.9%)
- Lower proportion of people born overseas (37.6%)
- Higher levels of Spanish as residents primary language (2.3%)
- Higher levels of housing ownership with a mortgage (32.8%)
- Lewisham has a substantially higher proportion of LGBTQIA+ residents (6.14%)

Table 4 Lewisham Demographic Characteristics

Community Profile	
<b>Population &amp; Age</b>	<b>Lewisham's population has increased by 9%</b> from approximately 275,000 in 2011 to 300,600 in 2021. This is a more substantial increase than Greater London (7.7%) The median age in Lewisham in Lewisham is 35, equivalent to the Greater London area. Likewise, the proportion of Lewisham residents aged between 0-19 years (23.5%) is with the Greater London area (23.7%)
<b>socioeconomic Indicators</b>	<b>Lewisham's median net household income is 10.1% lower</b> than the Greater London baseline. The Lewisham's median household income is £34,700, compared to £38,200 across Greater London. Zooming in on New Cross and Deptford, both localities experience higher levels of economic deprivation. Approximately 31% of house houses experience economic deprivation in New Cross. This figure is higher in Deptford and New Cross an Deptford South (36.6%), placing the area in the high deprivation band.
<b>Ethnic Diversity</b>	<b>Lewisham's population is defined by high levels of ethnic diversity</b> , notably Black African and Caribbean community that makes up 30.9% of the borough, nearly double the London-wide average (15.9%). While White British residents represent the largest single group at 37.2%, the area maintains a higher-than-average mixed or multiple ethnic population at 8.2%. Conversely, the South Asian community is significantly less represented in Lewisham (10.4%) compared to the Greater London average. However, East Asia community groups comprise a slightly larger proportion of Lewisham's population (2.1%), compared to the Greater London (1.7%).
<b>Overseas Migration</b>	<b>Fewer Lewisham residents were born overseas</b> (37.6%) compared to the Greater London baseline (42.3%). The top three counties of birth outside of the UK in Lewisham are Nigeria (3.1%), Jamaica (2.9%) and Italy (1.3%). By contrast, the top three counties of birth outside of the UK across Greater London are India (3.7%), Bangladesh (1.6%) and Pakistan (1.5%).
<b>Primary Language</b>	<b>Lewisham's primary language profile is characterized by a high proportion of English speakers</b> (80.5%), which is notably higher than the Greater London average (75.6%). Beyond English, the borough has a substantial level of Spanish speakers (2.3%). In terms of South Asian language speakers Greater London has a

	substantially higher proportion (5.4%) compared to Lewisham (1.8%). However it is noted that Lewisham has a slightly higher proportion of East Asian primary language speakers (1.6%) compared to Greater London (1.4%)
<b>Housing Tenure</b>	<b>Lewisham has a substantially larger proportion of residents who own their homes with a mortgage (32.8%)</b> compared to the greater London average (28.4%). Simultaneously, renting from local authorities or housing associations is more common in Lewisham (22.9%) compared to the Greater London Average (21%). Correspondingly, the borough has a notably lower rate of outright homeownership (18.9%) compared to Greater London average (26.2%), suggesting a population with higher ongoing housing costs.
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	<b>Lewisham has a substantially higher proportion of residents who identify as LGBTQIA+ (6.14%)</b> compared to the Greater London average (4.3%). People who identify as Gay or Lesbian comprise the largest proportion of LGBTQIA+ residents in Lewisham (3%), followed by people who identify as Bisexual (2.33%) and Pansexual (0.51%), Queer (0.17%) and Asexual (0.06%). Zooming in, Deptford, New Cross and Brockley East have the highest proportions of LGBTQIA+ residents in South East London and substantially higher than the Greater London average (9%, 10.65%, and 10.20% respectively)

Source: ONS Census 2021

## 1.3 Place Mapping

The ODL is situated with a significant cluster of arts and cultural venues and community organisations. Business and community infrastructure clusters provide collaboration opportunities. This has the potential to expand the LAH's current programming and audiences through joint activities with aligned organisations across the surrounding area. This section maps out venues, organisation and educational institution to increase visibility for groups who may be suitable for future collaborations, beyond the LAH's existing networks.

### 1.3.1 Surrounding Cultural Infrastructure Network

Music and performance venues, galleries, and community organisation within a one mile radius of the ODL have been mapped in Figure 4 and described in list form in Appendix A. The list provides a description of each venue and organisation, along with a high level estimation of suitability for collaboration with the LAH. Education institutions located within approximately a half mile radius have been listed below in Table 5 to identify institutions for potential collaboration to expand LAH audiences and facilitate potential intergenerational programming.

*Table 5 Educational institutions in the immediate surrounding locality*

Institution Name	Type	Approx. Distance	Key Focus / Notes
Goldsmiths, University of London	University	<100m	Major global arts and social sciences hub. The main campus is directly across the road.
Lewisham College (Lewisham Way)	Further Education	<100m	Vocational training, ESOL, and adult education. Located adjacent to the Arthouse.
Tower College of FE & HE	Further Education	350m	Private college providing health, social care, and business courses on New Cross Road.
Addey and Stanhope School	Secondary (State)	500m	Historic voluntary-aided secondary school located on New Cross Road.

Deptford Green School	Secondary (State)	550m	A vibrant community secondary school located on Edward Street.
St Stephen's C of E Primary	Primary (State)	350m	Located on Albyn Road, serving the immediate residential pocket.
Childeric Primary School	Primary (State)	650m	Located on Childeric Road in New Cross.
Ashmead Primary School	Primary (State)	800m	Primary school situated on Ashmead Road towards Deptford.
Haberdashers' Hatcham College	Secondary / Sixth Form	900m	Highly-regarded academy located on Jerningham Road/Pepys Road.
Myatt Garden Primary School	Primary (State)	900m	Located on Rokeby Road, popular with local families in Brockley/New Cross.

Source: Google Maps, 2026

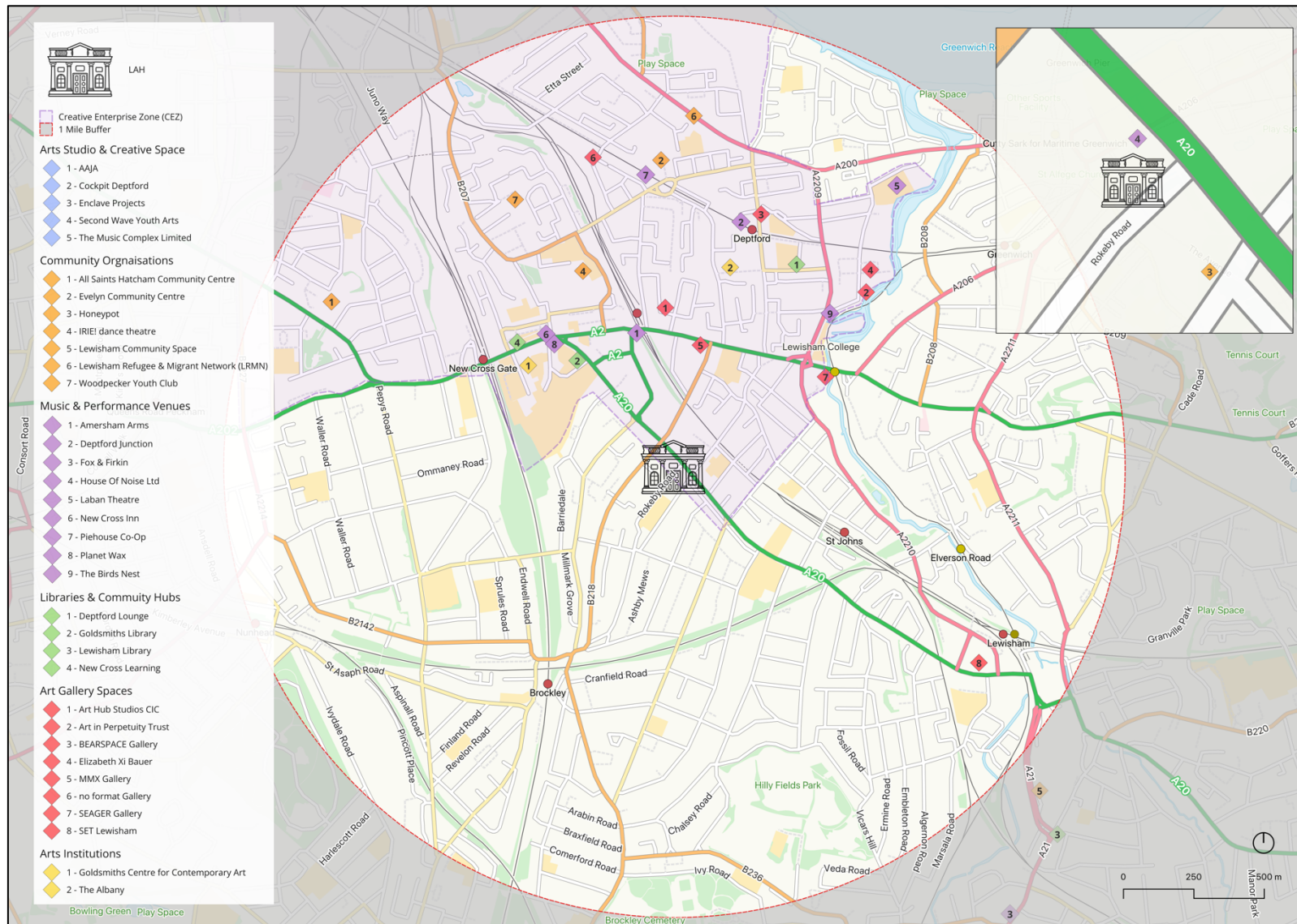


Figure 4 Cultural and Community Infrastructure Context

Source: Google Maps; GLA; OS Maps, 2026

## 1.4 Local Policy Context

The AEI Plan provides opportunity to strengthen LAH alignment with local government and Greater London Authority policy objectives in areas concerning arts, culture and community impacts. Key policies relevant to the LAH have been reviewed and summarised below.

### **We Are Lewisham: A Cultural Strategy for Lewisham 2023-2028 (London Borough of Lewisham, 2023)**

Lewisham Council's cultural strategy aims to establish the borough as a cultural beacon. It building on the 2022 London Borough of Culture programme, by promoting inclusive, accessible, and community-led art initiatives, utilising partnerships with local institutions to drive economic growth and social change.

#### Key Pillars of Lewisham's Cultural Strategy:

- Health & Wellbeing: Using arts to improve mental health and community wellbeing.
- Strong Relationships: Fostering community cohesion and strengthening local partnerships.
- Skills & Employment: Providing opportunities through the creative and digital industries.
- Sustainability: Addressing the climate crisis through cultural activism.

#### Outlined strategic goals:

- Cultural Legacy: Ensuring the momentum from the 2022 Borough of Culture continues, including maintaining the "Artists of Change "programme.
- Access & Participation: Delivering accessible arts and culture, including supporting schools and young people through the Lewisham Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP).
- Investment: Investing in the local economy and securing over £4m inward investment to support cultural practitioners and creative spaces.
- Public Realm: Encouraging public art in major developments and open spaces.

#### Key focus areas

- Creative Hubs: Focusing on New Cross and Deptford to support digital and creative industries, with expansion to Catford and Lewisham Town Centre.
- Inclusion: Targeting funding to tackle inequality, ensuring diverse participation in cultural activities.
- Young People: Creating opportunities for 16-30+ year olds via career advice, mentoring, and creative education.

### **Creative Enterprise Zones (Greater London Authority 2017)**

Lewisham was designated as one of London's first Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ) in 2018. The Lewisham CEZ is called SHAPES Lewisham and provides:

- Protection for Workspaces: Specific policies to identify and protect creative assets from being converted into residential units.
- Funding & Incentives: Tailored financial support to help creative businesses establish themselves within the community.
- New Developments: Projects like the Deptford Foundry, which recently launched 85 new artist studios.

## 2 Socio-Historical Context

Lewisham sits at the intersections of colonial entanglement, migration and resistance. The borough is a site that encapsulates the contestation and contradiction of colonial exploitation and birth of British multiculturalism after Empire.

### 2.1 Urban Multiculturalism After Empire

Deptford was the site of the Royal Navy's first dockyard, from King Henry VIII in the 16th century through to the mid 19th century. Over this almost 300-year period, all manner of maritime history started in Deptford (Green & Popple, 2025, p. 79). Deptford Strand was an early launching point for the English transatlantic slave trade (Paul, 2025) and is now a centre of African and Caribbean life in Britain, as reflected in today's demographic profile (see Table 4).

Deptford's historical connection to the transatlantic slave trade is significant yet largely unrecognised. London was the first slaving port in Britain, although it was subsequently overshadowed by Bristol and Liverpool. John Hawkins was arguably the first Englishman to carry out the triangular voyage, setting sail from Deptford Strand in 1562 (Green & Popple, 2025, pp. 80–81). Deptford is behind Bristol and Liverpool ports in its attempts to memorialise Britain's role in the triangular transatlantic slave trade. Deptford has lost much of its built heritage which spatially connect the area to the transatlantic slave trade. Locals and visitors alike will find little to memorialise Deptford's key place in the history of enslavement (Paul, 2025, p. 94).

Legacies of slavery and empire are ever present in the borough's diverse community despite the near-total erasure of Deptford's history as a maritime node of the transatlantic slave trade. The broader borough of Lewisham, of which Deptford forms a significant part, became home to successive waves of migration through the twentieth century. International migration grew in the post-war Windrush period (1948-1971), with recruitment of workers from the Caribbean (Britain's former slave colonies) to work on the railways and in the National Health Service. Alongside African and Caribbean migration, Lewisham was a key landing point for Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s, who settled in the borough following the Vietnam War (1969-1975) — many of whom first landed in Shoreditch yet moved to Lewisham due to housing and employment discrimination in East London (Wilkins, 2019).

Lewisham's multicultural character has come with tension and struggle. Lewisham experienced several landmark anti-racist demonstrations including the Battle of Lewisham in 1977, when local people successfully resisted a National Front march through Deptford (London Museum, 2026). The 1981 New Cross fire is widely suspected to be a racially motivated fire-bombing wherein thirteen Black young people tragically died (London Museum, 2026). There were strong reasons to suspect a racist attack. 'People from "ethnic communities" had become the focal point for national debates about the place of colonial and postcolonial immigrants in British society' (Ebke, 2020, p. 96). The 1970s and early 1980s were a time of racial tension, with major flashpoint events such as the Brixton Uprising taking place (April 1981).

Black and minority communities fought for their place in the city. The images below picture Lewisham as a site of territorial contestation, capturing the Borough's ethos of anti-racist solidarity and local political progress. Figure 3 shows Barbara Gray in 1974, who later became Mayoress of Lewisham and Council Adviser on BME health inequalities (Brockley Max, 2021; London Museum, 2026). This produced what has been described as a heterogeneous community — spanning White British, African, the Caribbean, South Asia and Eastern Europe — "guided by an approach of civic engagement and community empowerment as a means of shaping services inclusively and of enhancing the economic and social development of the whole community" (Bloomfield & Chapman, 2018, p.225).



Figure 5 Barbara Gray in Balham 1974

Source: London Museum (2026)



Figure 6 Battle of Lewisham in New Cross 1977

Source: London Museum (2026)

Today, Lewisham actively safeguards its community diversity. Lewisham was first to declare itself a Borough of Sanctuary in the UK, committed to supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants through the Lewisham Migration Forum. Coordinated efforts between the local authority and migrant support networks have campaigned for migrant rights and challenged the 'hostile environment' by creating localised safe havens. These efforts underline the borough's sustained commitment to supporting its diverse residents and its advocacy for a multicultural view of society more broadly.

Lewisham's diversity anchored by community solidarity is a pull factor for young Londoners with migrant backgrounds. As a New Cross resident described in an interview during this report's infield research activities:

"So I'm Nigerian Yoruba, where I grew up in Camden, it's become less diverse and gentrified. The reason I've stayed in Lewisham is to be around a Black community, whether that be West African or Caribbean. But then you go up to Deptford and there's a big Vietnamese community, West African community, then Old Kent Road and there's a big Somali and Turkish community. I like being in London which reminds me of the diversity of cultures that London has. And that comes with market culture which I really love — I love meeting people and knowing people locally, it's important. I like to be mirror back to myself, like anyone does" (Lewisham artist and local resident, field recording 2026).

Homing in on Lewisham Way, the buildings neighbouring the ODL (138 Lewisham Way) has a deep history as a space for Afro-Caribbean cultural expression and community support networks. 138 Lewisham was home to Lewisham Way Youth and Community Centre. The centre served as a "live alternative community hub" for young Black residents, providing music, arts and educational services between 1972-2016 (Back & Henry, 2018; Lewisham Community, 2016). As Prof Les Back and Dr Lez Henry highlight in their Reggae Map of New Cross, the centre was an important space for reggae sound clashes, hosting regular dances throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Back & Henry, 2018). The community centre could host big sound system dances out the back. Places like Lewisham Way Youth and Community Centre were safe spaces, Black spaces hosted by Black people. This was (and still is) a powerful and important aspect of New Cross (Henry & Back, 2020).

## 2.2 An Enclave of Intersectionalities

Lewisham's neighbourhoods provide spaces where the LGBTQIA+ community have built a deep sense of place. As highlighted in Section 1.2, Deptford, New Cross and Brockley East have the highest proportions of LGBTQIA+ residents in South East London and substantially higher than the London average. In particular, New Cross and Deptford have been established as a vibrant, safer space for the LGBTQIA+ community. A queer sense of place in these neighbourhoods has been anchored by local institutions such as the Feminist Library, which supports queer-focused activism, as well as queer-owned venues such as Corner New Cross (a café, artist space and cocktail bar) and the recently reopened Piehouse Co-Op (a worker-owned co-operative music venue which centres DIY, experimental and queer cultural intersections).

This understanding and lived experience of the Deptford and New Cross area as an enclave where people with marginalised intersectional identities have built a sense of place and community in the city, was crystallised during an interview with a queer-identified LAH artist member:

"I think Deptford is a place where lots of queer people, especially queer people of colour move to from other parts of London it's a place where you can be yourself without having to hide in ways [one] might in other communities and family households. Like as an example, my queer Somali friend is able to live and be safe in Deptford, in ways they can't at home on the other side of London. You can outwardly show intersectional identities here in ways you might not be in other parts of the city" (LAH artist member, 2026)

### 2.2.1 A centre for Community Arts

Artists can create in Lewisham. The area's vast brownfield sites, disused municipal buildings and relatively affordable housing provide ideal conditions for artists to hone their craft, form collectives and co-create supportive infrastructure for exhibition, performance and exchange (Strasser, 2020; Wright, 2019). The area's somewhat disorderly character has allowed art communities to shape the built environment because the urban landscape lacked an overdetermined design which assigns strict uses to the city (Sennett & Sendra, 2020). In practical terms, this has seen railway arches converted into community-run music venues, industrial warehouses into galleries and municipal buildings into studios. Lewisham's artist enabling urban environment was summarised in an interview during this report's infield research activities:

"I feel like Lewisham has a high number of housing cooperatives and artist collectives. Because of this it allows people to have jobs like being an artist and give more time to a practice which would normally be harder to do in a different borough. There are a lot of artists in Lewisham, the area has a culture and history of supporting more alternative and collective ideas of mobilising. That's always been of interest, even before I moved here, I was already volunteering for a community land trust in Lewisham. That was the first time I started going to the Lewisham area. Also, there are just lots of studios around... And they're less pretentious. I think there's more grass roots collectives, for example Deptford X" (Lewisham artist and local resident, field recording 2026).

Lewisham's more favourable environment for arts is seen as a strength by the Borough's local authority. Lewisham Council has created a favourable strategic policy environment aimed at supporting and further expanding possibilities for artists in Lewisham, whilst seeking to protect against displacing impacts of the rising tide of gentrification gradually rising across the city.

### 2.2.2 Gentrification & Resistance to Urban Displacement

The urban development in Lewisham exists within a broader context of city-wide gentrification, pushing artists further towards the fringes of the capital, or even to towns such as Margate, Folkestone and Hastings, where rents are more affordable. Deptford is changing rapidly. Green et al. (2025) document a community

increasingly divided between long-standing working-class residents and creative communities vis-a-vis wealthier incomers paying private rents reaching £3,000 a month while 10,000 families are on a housing waiting list with at least a decade's wait for social housing.

Gentrification-induced displacement disrupts the organic and collaborative nature of the art scene within London by fragmenting supportive artist networks which are often anchored by shared studio spaces and the clustering of artists, studios and local-scale exhibition spaces within a neighbourhood. Against this backdrop, the LAH is critical for supporting artist networks across the Borough of Lewisham, representing a counter-narrative of community resistance to ongoing processes of gentrification-driven displacement and cultural erasure.

## 2.3 Old Deptford Library Histories

The Old Deptford Library is a Grade II listed building designed by Sir Alfred Brumwell Thomas. The Library was originally named the Deptford Central Library opening in 1914. Following its closure in 1991 and subsequent repurposing as an artist co-operative operated by the Lewisham Art House in 1994, the library was renamed the Old Deptford Library.



Figure 7 Deptford Central Library 1914

Source: Borough of Deptford, 1914 [edited 2026]

### 2.3.1 Architectural Context

The Old Deptford Library (ODL) is a prime example of municipal-level Edwardian Baroque architecture based on Classic Renaissance style. It encapsulates the core tenets of the architectural principles, which responded to the broader British zeitgeist and a shifting socio-political landscape between 1901 and 1914 (Bremner, 2022). Two principal factors shaped the Edwardian Baroque design ethos: global imperial dominance and the rise of public institutions as cornerstone features of the modern administrative state.

The style materialised a sense of British imperial prosperity and stability through the architectural expression of state power. Buildings were designed to embody the idea of Britain as a global authority. Grand domes,

sculptural façades, and theatrical entrances conveyed strength and permanence. Edwardian Baroque became closely associated with public buildings, including libraries, town halls, government offices, police headquarters, central railway stations, and courts across London and the Empire's growing metropolises. London boroughs purpose-built grand libraries and town halls to signal that knowledge and civic participation were central to urban British life.

The ODL's original function embodied Edwardian Baroque design philosophy. Notably, it was one of the first purpose-built open-access library spaces, allowing borrowers direct access to book collections and featuring substantially larger public reading rooms. This approach later became the default configuration for municipal libraries across Britain and beyond.

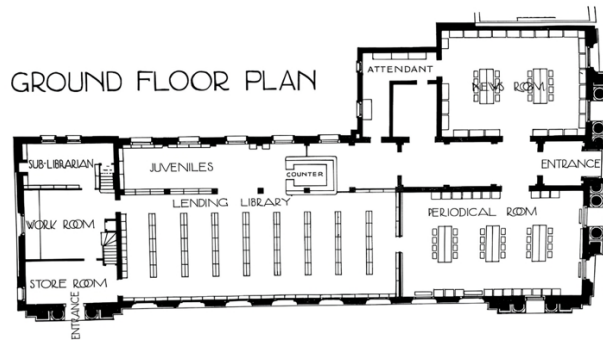
The planning and construction of the ODL coincided with key events that bookend the Edwardian Baroque period. The library opened on 18 July 1914, ten days prior to the outbreak of the First World War. The decline of the style is often attributed to the consequences of war: an era of Great Power competition culminated in global conflict, resulting in catastrophic human loss and economic devastation. The style's grand aesthetics were no longer economically viable in an age of austerity, nor culturally desirable given the central role of European imperialism in precipitating conflict.

The ODL situates the borough within the wider historical context underpinning the Edwardian Baroque period. The values of civic participation and imperial authority defined the library's design principles, demonstrating the local-level reproduction of broader social and political trends reshaping the built environment.

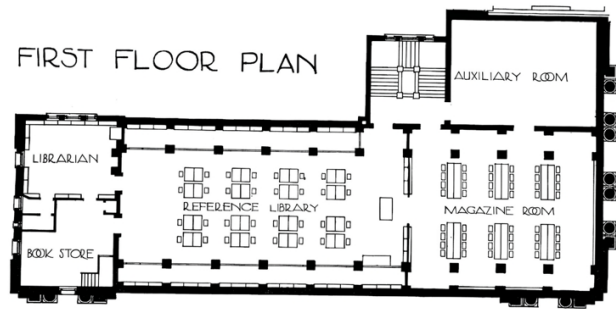
### **2.3.2 Early Days as the Deptford Central Library**

The former Borough of Deptford's public library service was established on 27th October 1905. Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie pledged £9,000 to construct a central library. The site for the central library was purchased in October 1909 for £5,600, on land that had previously been occupied by three shops. As costs grew, Carnegie was approached again in August 1910 and agreed to increase his contribution, bringing the total funding for the central library to £12,000. The commission to design the building was awarded to Sir Alfred Brumwell Thomas in 1911, and a tender of £12,418 was accepted in October 1913. Construction began immediately, with the foundation stone laid on 5th April 1913, and the library welcomed its first visitors on 18th July 1914.

At opening, public rooms were arranged on two floors (see Figure 8 and Figure 9). The Ground floor accommodated 41 readers, with 25 wall-slopes and two tables each seating eight people. The Periodical Room has capacity to accommodate 45 readers, with 21 wall-slopes for separate journals and three tables each seating eight, and the Lending Department. The Lending Department had capacity for 20,000 volumes — thought initially opened with 17,000 volumes — arranged using the open-access system, allowing library card holders direct access to the shelves direct (Borough of Deptford Public Libraries, 1914).



**Figure 8 Deptford Central Library Ground Floor**  
Borough of Deptford, 1914 [edited 2026]



**Figure 9 Deptford Central Library First Floor Layout**  
Borough of Deptford, 1914 [edited 2026]

Access to the library was significantly expanded on 11 October 1924 with the introduction of a dedicated Children's Department, located in the former Periodicals Room. The Children's collection was opened to children of the borough aged between 9-14. It initially featured 2000 volumes and could accommodate 30 readers (Metropolitan Borough of Deptford Public Libraries, 1924).

The Old Deptford Library has a long legacy of public arts exhibition. Lewisham local history archives record the first public arts exhibition at the Old Deptford Library, running from 19 November 1927 to 31 December 1927 (Metropolitan Borough of Deptford Public Libraries, 1927).

### 2.3.3 Changing uses across the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

During the Second World War, the ODL was utilised by the Civil Defence Canteen Service, providing essential support to personnel involved in local defence efforts. During this time, the ODL was also set up to provide access to book collections after blackouts, allowing the building to continue its role as a vital community resource (The Architectural Heritage Fund, 2024).

From the 1970s onward, new models of community infrastructure co-located modern facilities such as sports centres, libraries, and schools, gradually rendering the library's single-use format obsolete. The future of the library was decided at a closed council meeting in 1982. Against the backdrop of council asset privatisation during the 1980s, and in response to financial pressures, all three Carnegie-funded Edwardian Libraries in Lewisham were slated to be closed, and a new library and swimming pool built off Lewisham High Street (Beale, 2014). Lewisham Council closed the Deptford Central Library in 1991 and put it on the open market for £750,000.

Sustained community action prevented privatisation and created opportunities for informal adaptive reuse. The Brockley Society formed a local pressure group, the Friends of Deptford Library, and convinced the local authority to retain the library for community use. In March 1994 Lewisham Arthouse moved in. This demonstrates the effectiveness of grassroots resistance to broader trends of privatisation and redevelopment. The building's community reuse preserves the architectural legacy of its Edwardian Baroque structure while providing affordable studio space for Lewisham's artistic community — offering an alternative to the privatisation of imperial-era civic buildings.

### 2.3.4 Informal Uses and Hidden Narratives

During the building's years spent abandoned (1991-1994), the ODL became a sanctuary for underground rave culture. The building was squatted in 1991, giving rise to the space as a prominent New Cross "squat-rave" venue. Events that blurred artistic boundaries between Acid House raves, art installation, and community gathering were organised by the New Cross based squat-rave crew, Unconscious Collective.

Tickets were priced by minimally, or entry was by donation. The crew squatted and repaired the buildings themselves — fixing plumbing, clearing fire damage — which fostered an unusually cooperative relationship with local police, in the years before the Criminal Justice Act made such gatherings a serious criminal risk. As the primary guardians of the ODL, Unconscious Collective hired the space out to Spiral Tribe, who ran their own rave events. Crowds ranged from several hundred to around a thousand people on busy nights, with events typically running into the afternoon of the following day. Figure 10 shows pictures taken in the ODL during a Spiral Tribe rave in 1991.



Figure 10 Spiral Tribe Rave at the Old Deptford Library

Source: Lewisham Art House Digital Archive, 1991 [edited 2026]

Raves were countercultural and anti-commercial. Young and old punks, travellers, arts students, and members of the local community all shared the same floors. New Cross had always been a mixed neighbourhood and the raves reflected the area's diversity:

"New Cross has always been very mixed, that's what I've always liked about it... Its different to Greenwich or Blackheath which were very White... Once we ended up hanging out with a bunch of off-duty paratroopers at the rave, we ended up hanging out with them, you get people from all different walks of life... I used to love taking my straight mates to rave, they would end up meeting so many people" (Interview with ODL rave attendee, 2026).

Raves at the ODL had complex interdisciplinary programming. As detailed during the interview with an individual who attended multiple Unconscious Collective raves, there were elaborate painted installations, projections, performance artists and multiple rooms with live bands and DJ collectives to give the parties a spectrum of different textures and vibes. This interdisciplinary spirit was heavily influenced by students from nearby arts college, Goldsmiths. For those who attended, raves at the ODL were a counterculture space held together by an artist community dedicated to contesting the dominant conservative, individualistic, and money-centric ideals.

Following Council's more to evict the squatters in November 1991, the ODL's brief period as a rave venue was brought to an end. This once again placed the building into unoccupied limbo, during which time it was recognised as a heritage site with strong suitable characteristics for a film set.

The ODL was transformed into the primary filming location and unit base for the filming of the 1992 arthouse film *Tale of a Vampire*. The production's art department undertook an extensive renovation of the building, leaning into its gothic-like aesthetics. The front multipurpose room was repurposed for equipment storage, while the main space (now used as a studio) was meticulously recreated as a dark, atmospheric, and dusty library, mirroring its original use.

“The Library was selected as the film location because of its brilliant look as an old rundown heritage building... there’s lots of this sort of stuff around Lewisham. The art department were able to create the look and feel of a vampires lair” (Interview with *Tale of a Vampire* third producer, 2026).

The upstairs area was converted into the vampire’s living space, decorated with ornamental gargoyles, providing the backdrop for many of the film's key sequences and showcasing the versatility of the site's original architecture.

The ODL’s history as a film site reaffirms Lewisham and wider South East London as a prominent area for film location scouts, since the 1980s into the present day. Other recognisable titles filmed across South East London include: *Babylon* (1980), *The Good Woman of Deptford* (1993), *Spider* (2002), *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), and *Supacell* (2024).

### 3 Audience Profile

The Lewisham Arthouse has a diverse audience and core artist membership. The multipurpose nature of the LAH allows for varied arts and non-arts based activities, widening the audiences beyond gallery visitors or performance arts patrons. In keeping with the original use of the buildings — as a library — the ODL continues to function as a central node of the Lewisham community, providing a physical space that anchors various art networks and community-focused organisations. LAH audiences are categorised at a higher level in Table 6. Figure 11 supports the audience breakdown below by mapping out the LAHs diverse audiences and user groups and their proximity to the LAH’s core offering.

Table 6 Audience Profile Breakdown

Audience insights	
<b>Core Users</b>	<u>LAH Artist Members</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 248 total members (1994-2026)</li> <li>• 50 current members</li> </ul>
<b>Emerging Artists</b>	<u>Graduate Artists (grad program)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [TBC] total number of grad program participants</li> </ul>
<b>Local Community arts participants (hobby artists)</b>	<u>Main hobby artists</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographers (darkroom use)</li> <li>• Ceramicists (kiln use)</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Partners (organisations based in the ODL)</b>	<u>LAH Partners based in the ODL building or closely associated</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deptford X: London’s longest-running contemporary arts festival, which operates as a charitable organisation to support experimental art and nurture local creative talent.</li> <li>• Heart n Soul: A creative community and arts charity that provides a platform for people with learning disabilities and autism to express themselves through music, art, and performance.</li> <li>• Charles Hayward's music network: An influential community of experimental and improvisational musicians centred around the renowned drummer Charles Hayward. The network bridges the gap between the Lewisham Arthouse and other major South London venues like The Albany.</li> <li>• South East Arts London (SEAL): A charity established by the LAH to manage governance and expertise for large-scale cultural projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Exhibition and Event Visitors</b>	<u>Number of exhibitions held in 2025</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 Exhibitions were held</li> <li>• 3 one-off events (film screening, poetry night, light installation piece)</li> </ul>
<b>Workshop and Class Visitors</b>	<u>Regular classes held at the LAH:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative photography</li> <li>• Life Drawing</li> <li>• Monthly art class for children</li> <li>• Printmaking</li> </ul>
<b>External Partners and Collaborators</b>	<u>Institutions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goldsmiths, University of London: They host a specific Goldsmiths Residency program, bringing in cohorts of emerging artists and research groups.</li> <li>• National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF): Currently partnering with the Arthouse on their "Creative Roots, Bold Futures" project to restore the Old Deptford Library.</li> </ul>

	<p><u>Creative collectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Edge Collective: A recurring collaborator that recently staged the exhibition From The Ground Up (2024), focusing on information systems and collaborative research.</li> <li>• Pistil Collective: Known for the 2025 exhibition Maybe We Can Tangle and Reform.</li> <li>• The Neulinge Collective: Collaborated on the Figure it Out exhibition series.</li> <li>• Collide Collective: A group that holds regular sessions and community meet-ups at the Arthouse.</li> <li>• School of the Damned: An alternative, peer-led art school that has held graduate shows and residencies at the space.</li> <li>• Decolonising the Archive: Collaborated on heritage and archival exhibitions exploring local histories.</li> </ul> <p><u>Community organisations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brockley Society: Collaborates on local community-led events and grant-funded projects.</li> <li>• Clarion Futures: Works with the Arthouse on social housing community art initiatives.</li> <li>• Friends of Luxmore Gardens: A local group that frequently co-hosts outdoor or community-centric art interventions.</li> </ul>
<b>Lewisham Stakeholder</b>	<p><u>Extended community Stakeholders</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local care homes: These facilities provide residential support and nursing care for elderly or vulnerable residents in the Lewisham area, often serving as sites for intergenerational art projects hosted by the LAH.</li> <li>• Peacock Housing Trust: A local social housing provider that works to offer affordable accommodation and community support services to residents within the borough.</li> <li>• 999 Club Deptford: A frontline charity based in Deptford that provides essential support, shelter, and advice to people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.</li> <li>• Brockley Max Festival: An annual community arts festival that celebrates local talent through a week-long program of music, performance, and exhibitions across the Brockley area.</li> <li>• Lewisham Caribbean community organisations: This refers to a network of local groups dedicated to supporting and celebrating the heritage, social welfare, and cultural contributions of the Caribbean diaspora in Lewisham.</li> </ul> <p><u>Local authority and governance bodies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lewisham Council</li> <li>• Creative Enterprise Zone SHAPE Lewisham</li> </ul>
<b>Heritage Audiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open House London Festival</li> </ul>

Source: Lewisham Art House (Staff), 2026

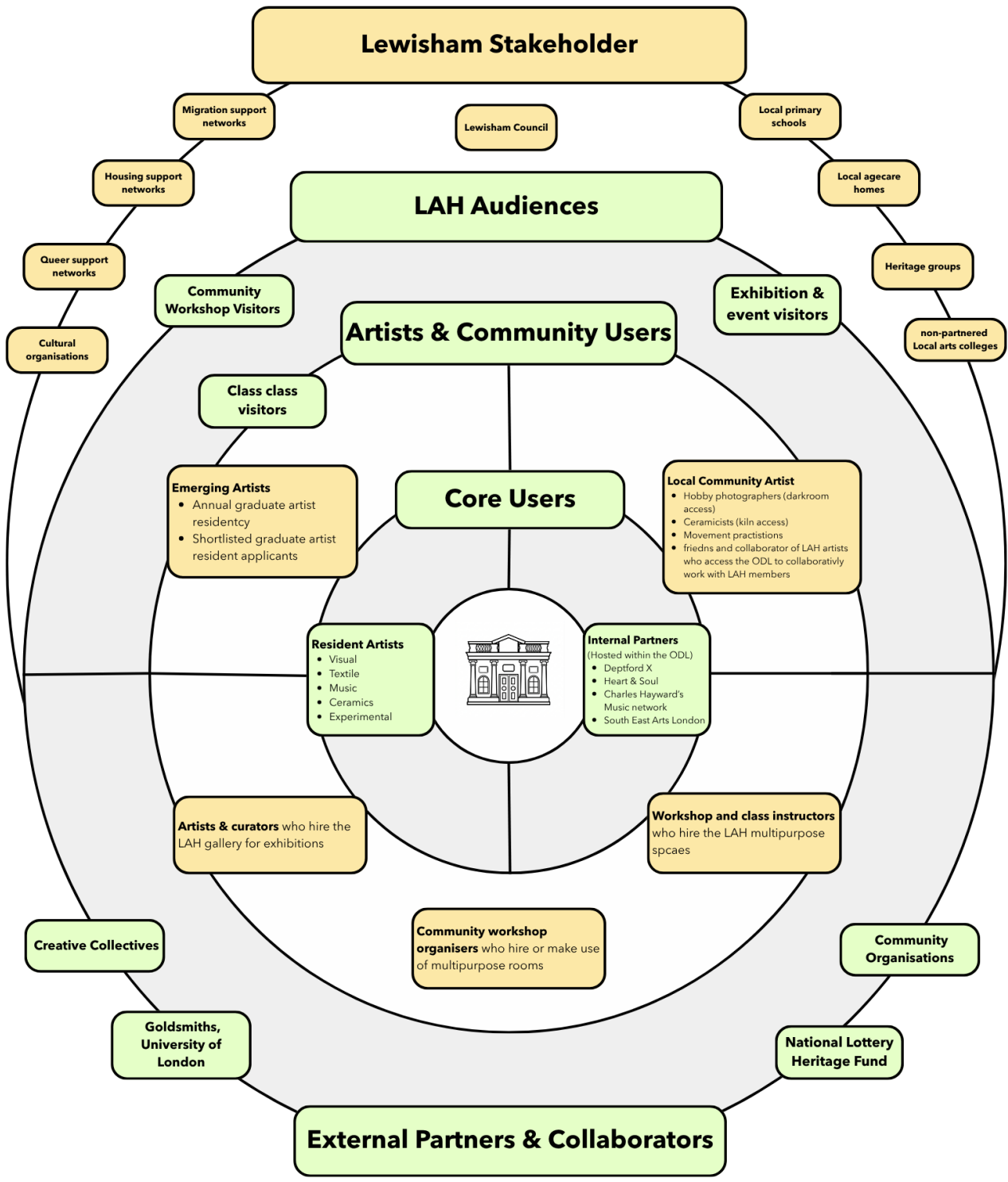


Figure 11 LAH Audience and User Groups Diagram

Source: Lewisham Art House; Solomon Charles, 2026

## 4 Primary Research Insights

This section summaries key findings from interviews undertaken as primary research activities to inform this place mapping and audience development study. Interview insights have been summarised in Table 7 and interviewees are listed below:

- George Grylls — Sound and audio tech (attended raves at the ODL)
- Kev Hopper — Active in the early LAH music scene
- Niamh Schmidtke — Current LAH Members responsible for organising
- Richard Freeston — involved in the filming here (in 1992) of 'Tale of a Vampire'
- Seyi Adekun — Lewisham based artist and local resident (field work interview)
- Sid Patrick — Lewisham Council Principle Planner
- Stephen Palmer — LAH Member and coordinator

Table 7 Thematic Summary of Primary Research Findings

Themes	Key Findings
<b>LAH origins and Programming</b>	<p><u>LAH Origins</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LAH's first studio was in a meanwhile use space an old school prior to moving into the ODL in 1994</li> </ul> <p><u>Past Programming:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAH used to have regular music event programming There was this event series called KEEP, every three months or so KEEP finished by the end of the 1990s</li> <li>• LAH used to work with local community groups including Working with 4-5 primary schools in the 2000s. This involved intergenerational projects with Deptford Green Working with elderly care homes and primary schools, bringing them together through participatory arts programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Future Programming</b>	<p><u>Workshops and Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is underway host trans allyship workshops and providing free space for these sessions at LAH</li> <li>• Expand the LAH artist lunches. This is a successful model where 2–3 artists cook for the building (for £3) to the wider community and artist groups</li> <li>• Utilise the garden more as it is a vital resource for local people to meet.</li> <li>• Connect with housing associations and social housing blocks, where residents often have more secure, long-term tenancies compared to transient high-street populations.</li> </ul> <p><u>Artist Opportunities and Expanded Programming</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide shortlisted Grad applicants with one--day exhibition opportunity with small budget (approx. £200)</li> <li>• Council supports the principal of opening of an additional gallery space on a meanwhile basis on Lewisham Way</li> </ul>
<b>LAH Allyship and Collaborations</b>	<p><u>LGBTQIA+</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAH has a Trans Solidarity and Diversity/Access statements</li> <li>• Active collaboration with Goldsmiths and potential for increased visibility through LGBTQIA+ signage (flags).</li> </ul> <p><u>Potential Future Partnerships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking into the Rainbow Migration Organisation and the Sanctuary Migrant Project as potential partners who need space.</li> </ul>
<b>LAH Music Scene</b>	<p><u>Experimental Music Networks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largely maintained by Charles Haywood who is a key member of the local experimental jazz music scene.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to the Albany via Charles Haywood's network</li> <li>• Gigs typically draw a dedicated "core" of about 15 people.</li> <li>• There is a visible influx of international students from Trinity taking an interest in experimental jazz.</li> <li>• There has been a significant increase in the number of women involved in the scene compared to previous years</li> </ul>
<b>Lewisham Community</b>	<p><u>A Diverse Lewisham</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a growing Latin American population (particularly from Colombia and Venezuela) moving from Elephant and Castle into Lewisham.</li> <li>• Spanish Language: Demographic data shows Spanish becoming a prominent language in the area.</li> <li>• Lewisham is home to significant LGBTQIA+ community supported by a queer community venues, particular in Deptford and Lewisham</li> <li>• Lewisham's diversity is an highly valued quality which helps people of colour feel at home and in community</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested improvements for the LAH</b>	<p><u>Opening up the LAH</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been an influx of younger members post-COVID who are pushing to make the LAH more open and accessible.</li> <li>• More flexible programming is recommended, including scheduling events at non-traditional times (e.g., early mornings)</li> </ul> <p><u>Social Justice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the power of the LAH community network to take action on social causes, similar to the work done at the Feminist Library in Peckham.</li> <li>• A specific "Queer Safeguarding Policy" does not yet exist. Developing this is seen as a vital step for audience development.</li> </ul>
<b>Hidden ODL Historical Narratives</b>	<p><u>ODL Rave Audiences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The events had a deeply anti-commercial vibe, operating on donations or minimal ticket pricing.</li> <li>• Raves were described as a space where people looked out for each other, people attended from across all different walk of life</li> <li>• A raves were a counterculture microcosm with New Cross attracted a highly diverse crowd, including young and old punks, travellers, and the wider counterculture movement.</li> <li>• There was a strong connection to Goldsmiths, the local art college in terms of both performers at raves and attendees.</li> </ul> <p><u>ODL Rave Programming</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Unconscious Collective were the primary group running parties at the ODL, they were New Cross-based and active in 1991</li> <li>• Raves multimedia experience with featuring painters doing backdrops, sound system installations, and light shows (early strobes, oil projections, and massive TV installations).</li> <li>• Live Performance were common please at ODL raves, included performing arts and live bands such as Back the Plant, Cocreators, and The Sea.</li> <li>• Raves were semi-formal with event organisers building a working relationship with the Police. Organisers ensured the building was safe and repaired to meet minimum safety standards</li> </ul> <p><u>ODL Film Set Narratives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ODL provided a versatile space well suited as a film set. Its many rooms provided storage and could be reconfigured to create the atmosphere necessary for the film shoot.</li> </ul>

## 5 Audience Development Insights

This Section details recommendations for audience and programme development, based on findings from the Place Mapping, Socio-historical and Audience Profile sections. Priority groups for future audience development are detailed below and recommendations with case studies are detailed in the following subsections

Table 8 Priority Groups for Audience Development

Audience Group	Justification (Based on Place Mapping Findings)	Indicative Priority Level
<b>Local artists and creatives</b> based in Lewisham or SE London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary user groups of the LAH</li> <li>Diminishing affordable arts studio and creative spaces across London</li> </ul>	<b>Very High</b>
<b>Local African and Caribbean</b> artist, creatives and community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lewisham's demographic profile shows a large African and Caribbean community</li> <li>New Cross and Deptford are important areas for the formation of Black British culture and identity</li> <li>The LAH was located next a significant Caribbean community centre which is historically significant to the community</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>
<b>Intergenerational audiences</b> including families, children (3-12 years), and young people (13-26 years), and older people (65+ years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitating cross-generational exchange of knowledge and creative practices.</li> <li>Strengthening community ties across the generations through arts-based programs</li> <li>Connecting to past intergenerational programme run by the LAH which facilitated exchange through arts-based programming involving care homes and schools through across Lewisham.</li> </ul>	<b>Very High</b>
<b>LGBTQIA+</b> community, creatives and artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lewisham's demographic profile shows a high proportion of LGBTQIA+ residents</li> <li>LGBTQIA+ resident inclusivity currently relies on artist member networks and proactivity</li> <li>There is currently no formal framework of LGBTQIA+ artist or audience inclusivity the LAH</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>
<b>Lower income local residents</b> (Deptford, New Cross, Brockley areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lewisham's demographic profile shows a higher levels of economic deprivation, particularly in the New Cross Deptford areas</li> <li>Economic deprivation can often be a barrier to engaging in formal artist and creative practices</li> <li>Economic deprivation can be prohibitive to attending arts events/galleries as an audience member</li> </ul>	<b>Moderate</b>
<b>Long-term local residents</b> (Deptford, New Cross, Brockley areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building and maintaining connections with the surrounding local community to ensure the ODL building remains a community resource in line with its original use</li> <li>Support social cohesion across the diverse community</li> </ul>	<b>Moderate</b>

<b>Local Spanish speaking community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lewisham’s demographic profile shows a relatively high level of Spanish spoken as a first language</li> <li>The Latin community is growing rapidly in Lewisham</li> </ul>	<b>Moderate</b>
<b>Membership of community organisations across Lewisham</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a diverse range of community organisations within a one mile radius of the LAH who provide services that deliver social benefit to the community</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>
<b>Architecture and design enthusiasts across London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ODL is a Grade II listed building with a multifaced history that encapsulates key movements in British architectural, civic, and subcultural development.</li> </ul>	<b>Moderate</b>

## 5.10 Open a Meanwhile use Gallery Space

Consider opening additional gallery space on a meanwhile use basis in a vacant commercial or retail premises within the LAH’s immediate surrounding area.

### Benefits:

Increased gallery space capacity at low cost. Meanwhile use spaces could be used to host exhibitions held by art house members and their creative communities. This would reduce pressure on limited gallery space capacity which is currently needed as a key revenue stream as a venue hire space. Taking on an additional meanwhile use gallery space aligns with the DIY traditions and historical origins of the LAH, which began as an artist collective in a meanwhile use space prior to moving into the ODL.

Opening a meanwhile use space has the potential to expand the LAH's programming and increase its overall flexibility, creating more opportunities for local up-and-coming artists. There is scope for the additional meanwhile use space to be programmed by an LAH artist who represents minority communities within the arts, for example, platforming local queer artists of colour.

As detailed in Section 1.1.1, Lewisham Way is in a relative state of decline, with high vacancy rates and decreasing economic activity. Opening an additional meanwhile use gallery space on Lewisham Way has the potential to improve the overall vibrancy of the High Street, aligning with the policy goals of the Creative Enterprise Zone and Lewisham Cultural Strategy (see Section 1.4). Lewisham Council have delivered multiple instances of meanwhile use across the Borough. Lewisham Council's planning team support the principle of the LAH activating a vacant space on Lewisham Way on a meanwhile use basis. At time of writing, there are six vacant commercial/retail properties on or in close proximity to Lewisham Way within 1000 ft of the LAH, as detailed in Table 2.

### Partnership Opportunity:

[SET](#) is a London-based arts and community charity specialising in meanwhile use and the delivery of affordable workspace for creatives. They transform vacant and underused buildings into thriving community-facing spaces through genuine occupation. Their approach has supported over 1,500 artists and makers to gain access to meanwhile use creative spaces while maintaining mutually beneficial arrangements with landlords. SET is currently Lewisham Council's preferred delivery partner for meanwhile use spaces for creative uses.

## The Rest of Us (TROU)

Location: Footscray, Melbourne (Australia)

TROU is located in one of Melbourne's (Australia) most important multicultural neighbourhoods and a historically socioeconomically deprived area, currently experiencing the effects of gentrification. TROU's mission is to empower young individuals from underrepresented and disadvantaged communities by providing creative workshops, poetry nights and community exhibition space. They offer a platform for self-expression, storytelling, and skill development, helping participants find their voices in a supportive and inspiring environment.

TROU began as a meanwhile use project, following a Council initiative to support community arts by assisting them to gain access to physical retail and commercial spaces whilst simultaneously improving activity on a local high street experiencing high vacancy rates. TROU has been operating out of their shopfront on Paisley Street for 12 months and has become a key space for artists from the South Sudanese and wider second generation African Australian community. The diverse programming offered by TROU has allowed them to expand their temporary lease of the space, moving towards operating the space with a permanent leasing arrangement.



## 5.2 Garden upgrade for community use

Improve the rear garden landscaping to include garden beds for community use. It is recommended that a section of raised garden beds are included in future landscape planning. Given current and future use as a multipurpose space, it is recommended that a single community group with a philosophical connection to the LAH is selected to manage the planting and maintain the garden on a volunteer basis, along with any interested LAH members.

The ODL's outdoor garden space is relatively constrained (approx. 120 sqm) in terms of size (see outline in orange Figure 12). Additional consideration could include seeking permission to use the rear garden space at 138 Lewisham Way for LAH events or community gardening activities to provide additional capacity (Figure 13). Access to 138 Lewisham Way could be introduced by seeking planning permissions to create an access gate between 140 Lewisham Way and 138 Lewisham Way.

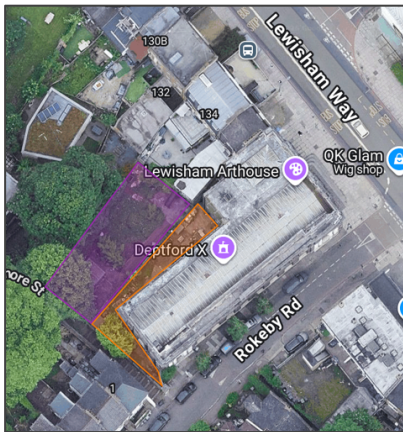


Figure 12 Outside Spaces 138 and 140 Lewisham Way

Source: Google Maps, 2026 [edited]

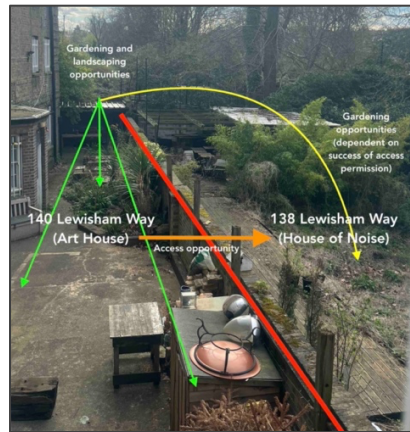


Figure 13 Garden and Access Opportunities

Source: Site Visit, 2026



Figure 14 DIY Garden Beds Located on Rokeby Road

Source: Site Visit, 2026

### Benefits:

Improving the landscaping by constructing new raised garden beds would provide space for an interested group to gain access to a garden space for community use. The current outdoor garden space is underutilised and has very limited landscaping and garden maintenance (see Figure 12). Introducing raised beds for community gardening use has the potential to expand the LAH's audiences and work to open the LAH to the local community beyond its current offering. It would also build on past efforts to introduce a gardening dimension to the LAH's current offering, as pictured in Figure 14.

Gardens create neutral, welcoming spaces where neighbours who might never otherwise interact work alongside one another. They are particularly valuable in dense urban environments where social isolation is common. Community gardens also provide a shared purpose and regular reason to gather. This effect tends to be strongest in diverse neighbourhoods such as Lewisham, where the garden becomes a space that cuts across ethnic, generational, and class lines.

Improving the garden and landscaping will also work to create a more inviting outdoor space for events programming. The benefits outlined above would be magnified if access to 138 Lewisham Way's garden space was enabled, providing increased opportunity for community gardening and outdoor events. It is noted that 138 Lewisham Way is a Council owned building, which may make the approval process easier as creating an access way between 140 and 138 Lewisham Way would be connecting two Council owned properties.

### Partnership Opportunity:

[Coco Collective](#) is a grassroots Afro-Diaspora led community organisation that practices community care and collective healing open to all. They have two Ital Community Gardens in Bellingham and Catford, where they hold food growing workshops for adults and children, family day gardening activities during Windrush week and Black History Month and gardening drop ins every Wednesday and Sunday. Opportunities to partner with Coco Collective could include inviting them to co-manage the garden space with local community participants and volunteer LAH members. This would provide opportunities to deliver cross-disciplinary workshops centring Caribbean cultural practices (music, cooking, gardening, textiles, etc).

## Calthorpe Community Garden

Location: Kings Cross, London

The Calthorpe Community Garden is a multiuse community space that provides an eclectic range of programmes, including horticultural volunteering, community classes, and sustainable food growing. The Calthorpe share a similar community activism narrative to the ODL. The site was slated for major development, however after a sustained campaign by local residents, Camden Council purchased the site for community use.

The Calthorpe provides an inclusive social space for Camden's diverse residents. It provides space for training, including for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, a vegetarian cafe, as well as activities for children and families. The Calthorpe is an important intergenerational and cross-cultural space, with 120+ older people from the Latin (South and Central American), Bengali, African and Caribbean communities regularly engaging in events and workshops. The Calthorpe is more than a community garden, it provides a space where Camden's diverse groups mingle and build community ties that span generations, a place of mutual aid, teaching and learning where people from any background can find a moment of calm in amongst the urban intensities of King's Cross.



## 5.3 Expand music event programming

Expand the LAH's music events offering in collaboration with local artists, online radio stations and independent record labels. Recommended expansions to music programming include hosting a local online radio station to run live radio events at the LAH for a day or over the course of a weekend. A second recommendation for expanded music programming are listening sessions done in collaboration with local independent record labels. This could include temporarily installing a hi-fi sound system in one of the LAH's multipurpose rooms for a particular event or event series, with patrons attending to listen to a new local album release on a quality sound system, along with a discussion about the records.

### Benefits:

DIY and experimental music communities have deep roots both in the New Cross area and the ODL itself. As detailed in Section 2.3.4, the ODL hosted a number of interdisciplinary music and performance art events during its brief life as a rave venue. This included live performances and DJ sets, providing a grassroots platform for developing new and experimental underground sounds (such as Post Punk, Acid House, Jungle). This tradition has been maintained through Charles Hayward's jazz-focused experimental music community. However, the refurbishment of the LAH provides an opportunity to expand the current music programme offering, beyond experimental live performances, resonating the progressive music histories of the area. Moreover, as detailed in Section 2.1, Lewisham Way has a significant Reggae and Sound System heritage.

More frequent and diverse music-focused programming would build on existing programming, (such as the planned Caribbean Memory and Sounds music event), widening the audiences and attracting new patrons from across the local community and nearby arts schools (Goldsmiths, Trinity). Expanded music event programming also presents increased capacity to provide opportunities for local arts students studying music through appropriate collaborative student programming.

Online radio broadcasting events and listening sessions have the potential to connect the space with a wider, younger audience. These formats are well-suited to changing music audience behaviours. Weekend long raves are generally less popular amongst younger audiences (Generation Z), while there's been a shifting emphasis to listening style sessions or "soft clubbing" with wellness or community focuses (Eventbrite, 2025). This approach draws connections between the underground DIY music and cultural heritage of the LAH and its immediate neighbours, whilst aligning with contemporary audience behaviours and uses a format that is more suited to the LAH's current use as a multipurpose arts studio space (rather than a rave venue).

### Collaboration Opportunities:

[Radio Lewisham](#) is a diverse youth-led radio station giving a platform for all young people in the borough to share their views and creativity. Broadcasting live from Lewisham Music's HQ in Bellingham, Radio Lewisham is a joint venture between Lewisham Young Mayor's team and Lewisham Music, with support from Bloomsbury Radio and Undeniable. Radio Lewisham features a range of shows, music genres and topics that are chosen and broadcasted by Lewisham young people. Opportunities to collaborate could include running a live radio event from the LAH featuring young local artists.

[Touching Bass](#) is a Deptford-based independent record label that carries the DIY spirit of their Sound System crew forebears. Touching Bass have become world-renowned for their eclectic releases and community-centred club nights. Touching Bass's connection to local Afro-Diaspora music heritage as well as their inclusive range of genres, (from Soulful House to Dub melodies to Experimental Ambient), highlights opportunities for music event collaboration.

### Shai Space

Location: Peckham, London

Founded in 2024, Shai Space is a multipurpose venue dedicated to community-focused experiences through music. The space is used as a creative studio, hosts exhibitions, workshops, tea nights, live performances and listening sessions. Its main event programming centres intimate listening experiences where artists and audiences come together to slow down, share space, and intentionally listen to records selected by musicians and DJs on a Hi-Fi sound system, exploring their musical archives in a slower, more relaxing setting. Shai Space's broader philosophy holds that intentional spaces can help people slow down and feel deeply, blending deep listening, sound, ritual, and sensory awareness to cultivate grounded experiences that support restoration and social connection, prioritising presence over performance.



## 6 Concluding Remarks

This report will provide an evidence base and audience profile to help inform the full Activity, Engagement and Interpretation (AEI) Plan. It provides a place-specific social and economic baseline, socio-historical context of the LAH's surrounding urban area, and uncovers some of the ODL's more obscure historical narratives. Using these insights in conjunction with a stakeholder engagement process, LAH audiences, user groups and key target audiences for future programming were identified. Taking into consideration all findings from the place mapping and audience analysis process, three key recommendations have been made, contributing to the Interpretation outcomes of the full AEI Plan.

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## Appendix A Surrounding Venues & Organisations

The **Alignment** section is my estimation of suitability for collaboration with the LAH: High suitability (H), Mediums suitability (M), Low suitability (L). These estimates need to be validated more thoroughly.

Venues within a 1 mile radius of the ODL have been mapped, as shows in Figure 4

*Table 9 Surrounding Venues & Organisations with indicative Alignment Rating*

Type	Organisation / Venue	Focus & Description	Alignment
<b>Art Gallery Spaces</b>	South London Gallery	The Fire Station annex provides a major contemporary exhibition space near the Lewisham border.	H
	APT Gallery	A large contemporary space on Deptford Creek, part of a charity providing 40+ artist studios.	H
	Bearspace Gallery	A pioneering gallery on Deptford High Street focused on discovering award-winning emerging artists.	H
	Elizabeth Xi Bauer	A sleek permanent gallery supporting international emerging and established artists.	M
	MMX Gallery	A specialist space on New Cross Road dedicated to contemporary and estate photography.	M
	SEAGER Gallery	A gallery focusing on art that explores digital technology and its impact on society.	M
	Art Hub Gallery	An affordable exhibition space in Creekside supporting members, graduates, and local artists.	H
	no format Gallery	An interdisciplinary space within Second Floor Studios for research-based and experimental art.	M
	Enclave	An experimental site hosting eight independent, rolling project spaces and artist incubators.	M
	SET Deptford	Located in a former office building, this space hosts intimate installations and exhibitions.	H
	Deptford Does Art	A curated space on the High Street showcasing and selling work from hundreds of local makers.	M
<b>Music &amp; Performance Venues</b>	AAJA	A DIY grassroots music venue, bar, and radio station serving as a creative hub for electronic music.	L
	Amersham Arms	A New Cross pub and venue famous for live indie bands and stand-up comedy.	L
	Deptford Junction	A creative venue founded by artists, hosting live music, DJ sets, and club nights.	L

	Fox & Firkin	A staple for underground live music (reggae, punk, jazz) featuring a large garden.	L
	Laban Theatre	Part of Trinity Laban, this 300-seat venue is a world-class site for contemporary dance.	L
	New Cross Inn	A legendary grassroots venue hosting live bands and international touring acts.	L
	Piehouse Co-Op	A non-profit, worker-run space in the railway arches for experimental jazz and folk.	M
	The Birds Nest	A long-standing Deptford institution known for its DIY ethos and local live music.	L
	Planet Wax	A record store and community hub that specializes in vinyl and frequently hosts live DJ sets.	L
<b>Multidisciplinary Arts Centres</b>	The Albany	A major performing arts hub with a 500-capacity arena, two studio theatres, and a café.	M
	Goldsmiths CCA	A world-class contemporary art gallery in a converted Victorian bathhouse on the Goldsmiths campus.	H
<b>Arts Studios &amp; Creative Spaces</b>	The Archive Room	Located in the old police station, focusing on archive-based projects and local history.	M
	Cockpit Deptford	A maker space for high-end craft and design; hosts popular bi-annual Open Studio events.	L
	The Music Complex	A dedicated facility with rehearsal rooms and recording studios for local musicians.	M
	Second Wave Youth Arts	A Methodist affiliated, youth-led charity that has empowered young people aged 11–25 through performing arts	L
<b>Community Centres</b>	2000 Community Action Centre	A vital Deptford hub serving a predominantly African-Caribbean community; hosts a social supermarket.	M
	Lewisham Irish Community Centre	Supports the Irish and Gypsy Roma Traveller communities with advice services and lunch clubs.	L
	Evelyn Community Centre	A community space providing local services and meeting rooms for residents.	M
	All Saints Hatcham	An inclusive space in New Cross offering free community meals and affordable meeting rooms.	L
	Riverside Youth Club	A local youth club offering community engagement and activities for young people.	M
	Woodpecker Youth Club	A youth-focused community hub providing safe spaces and programs for locals.	M

Library & Community Hubs	Deptford Lounge	A central hub hosting multicultural events, Vietnamese festivals, and community-led workshops.	H
Library & Community Hubs	New Cross Learning	A volunteer-run library and learning centre providing books, IT access, and workshops.	L
Library & Community Hubs	Pepys Community Library	Located in the historic Old Library building near the river, serving the Pepys Estate.	L
Library & Community Hubs	Manor House Library	A community-run space in a manor building, frequently hosting yoga and literary workshops.	L
Library & Community Hubs	Goldsmiths Library	The main library for Goldsmiths, University of London, open 24/7 during term time.	L
Library & Community Hubs	Lewisham CommUNITY Space	A shopping centre-based space that is LGBTQ+ friendly and hosts social support and games.	M