

Artist Commission 2020-21: Brentwood – Dunton Hills Garden Village - Year 1

Budget: £10,000

Deadline: Friday 21 November 2020

Interviews: Wednesday 16 December 2020

Introduction

Working in close partnership with Brentwood Borough Council, we are inviting proposals for a new artist commission, as part of our NPO commissioning programme funded by Arts Council England. We are looking for creative responses to the evolving development of a new Garden Village on land at Dunton Hills, a site that sits within the Brentwood Borough but also very close to Basildon and areas of Thurrock. It is bordered by the A127 to the north and the A128 to the west, a mainline railway line to the south (including nearby West Horndon Station), and includes areas of heritage, traditional farmland, woodland, and historic pathways.

Brentwood Borough Council has progressed with planning for the new Garden Village and is in the process of developing draft design guidance, a process it wants to be as collaborative as possible with local communities across the area. A Framework Masterplan has been produced which clearly identifies the boundary of the new village, as well as setting out the spatial approach with areas for open space, housing, community, and education. The ambition is for 2700 new homes up to 2033 (the current Local Plan timescale), and ultimately for 4000. A key focus of this commission therefore will be to creatively engage with the Garden Village concept at this early stage, and with the broader community consultation and engagement process where possible. Of particular relevance would be to think about diversity, and the need to embed processes where diversity is considered from the beginning in terms of people and environment (more on this below).

This is the first commission in what is to be an initial two-year partnership between ECDP and Brentwood Borough Council, focused on Dunton Hills Garden Village. Another commission opportunity, with a new brief and open call to artists, will go out at some stage in 2021-22. These commissions will be an important in terms of reflecting on the Garden Village concept as it develops, and in engaging local communities.

About Essex Cultural Diversity Project

Since 2007 Essex Cultural Diversity Project (ECDP) has been bringing together artists, museums, libraries, performers and writers with local authorities and commissioners to improve and enhance artistic and cultural diversity, ensure that excellence is thriving, and that cultural integration and understanding is supported through arts and cultural activity. ECDP is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) working across the East and South East of England to support diversity in arts and cultural practice. ECDP's programme of commissions provides an opportunity for artists to explore diversity through their work and develop their socially engaged and participatory practice, as well as capture the 'spirit of place', connect communities and give people a platform to tell their stories in their own words.

ECDP has a key role to explore the concept of 'diversity' across Essex, working with a wide range of partners and providing opportunities for artists and creative practitioners from diverse backgrounds and contexts. Through our commissioning programme ECDP aims to support the production of challenging

work that responds to specific places and the local context, as well as reflecting on national themes and issues around diversity. We are keen to see greater use of 'digital' to achieve this, and are keen to see creative responses to how this can happen (particularly relevant given the current prominence of, and reliance on, digital tools across society, business and education).

About Brentwood Borough Council

Brentwood is a borough of many villages which has a current population of over 75,000. The borough has a diverse economy, with a range of different transport links to London and surrounding areas. The combination of country parks and open green spaces make the borough a very attractive place to live. Much of the population in the borough is retired, with a significant ageing population. The population is projected to increase to approximately 78,000 over the next 20 years and as such new places for people to live are needed in the borough.

A new village is proposed for the borough at Dunton Hills Garden Village. As one of its key corporate priorities, Dunton Hills Garden Village will provide new homes for the growing population of the borough. Further information about the project is set out below.

Dunton Hills Garden Village – Context for Commission

The 'overarching vision' for Dunton Hills Garden Village is:

'Dunton Hills Garden Village is a settlement in a Borough of villages. It is a place where people's lives are shaped through understanding the value and protection of the local natural environments. Education and community facilities and amenities are central and well-integrated, creating a place that becomes a blueprint for healthy and sustainable living'.

Dunton Hills Garden Village is a new settlement proposed in Brentwood Borough that will help to meet the needs of our growing population. The proposal is identified in the emerging Brentwood Borough Local Plan as a strategic housing allocation. It will be a self-sustaining community; providing up to 4,000 homes, new schools, job opportunities, health and community facilities and new public spaces. Dunton Hills Garden Village will become one of the borough's many villages that make up the unique character of Brentwood.

In January 2017 Dunton Hills Garden Village was designated as one of (then) fourteen Garden Villages by the Government and continues to well-supported by Homes England. Dunton Hills Garden Village is regarded as one of the leading Garden Communities for its engagement with the local community and youth population.

The site currently comprises undulating arable farmland, a family golf centre and a historic farmstead - Dunton Hills Farm, located at the heart of the site, which is a prominent landmark and will be an integral part of connecting to the past for the future Village.

Dunton Hills Garden Village is just over 256 hectares and will provide a self-sustaining community that includes:

- 3 distinct neighbourhoods including: A Village Centre (to include local shops, services, cafés, healthcare provision, community facilities, employment, and a Mobility Hub), and two smaller Neighbourhood Hubs
- Education facilities including a new secondary school, three primary schools and early years provision
- Over 5 hectares of employment space
- Three care homes
- Green infrastructure, including parks, greens, natural and semi-natural green space, as well as space for water retention
- Access and mobility routes including routes for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport (no train station) and cars

The three distinct neighbourhoods, knitted together by a rich variety of green spaces weaving through woodland, play areas, water features and nature areas, with exceptional views across the wider area from a ridgeline park. Historic farm buildings will be retained and incorporated within the central village green, a focal space for community events. More information can be found at <https://www.duntonhillsgardenvillage.com/project>

The Commission

The commission takes place at an interesting time in the evolution of the Dunton Hills Garden Village concept. While actual development is still a few years away, what happens at this stage will set the context. A draft Framework Masterplan document has recently been prepared in a partnership between the main developer and the Council, as well as with other stakeholders including Homes England and Essex County Council. The masterplan is high-level, and more detail will be prepared in a Council-led Detailed Design Guidance and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). All of this requires significant community consultation and engagement. Although ECDP and Brentwood Borough Council do not expect the commission to form a core or statutory part of the community engagement and consultation process, it should seek to encourage community interest and explore some of the key issues. The experience of delivering the commission may highlight new opportunities or creative ways of getting communities involved.

As referenced above, we are interested in exploring the concept of diversity in relation to the Garden Village as it develops. It is important that as well as considering housing, facilities and environment, that a strong sense of building a diverse and resilient local community is considered throughout. This is an interesting time to be planning for a new community, with Covid-19 and an increased focus on the importance of local community (including local assets, culture and heritage) and digital connectivity (including tackling digital exclusion), as well as a continued need to consider climate change and sustainability. There is an interesting history and legacy of building new communities (including Garden Cities and New Towns) across the UK, including for example those led by the pioneer Ebenezer Howard who sought to provide better housing, more open space, and a new relationship between town and country as a response to the poor conditions of much of the rapidly expanding towns and cities of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Dunton Hills Garden Village is very much part of the evolution of this process – one of many such programmes currently underway across the UK.

The commission could reflect and respond to the heritage and environment of the area, and how this is likely to change with the birth of a new community that partners hope will support a range of people and ways of living, while encouraging a sense of place, belonging and sustainable living. The commission will therefore represent this point in time, as well playing a role in imagining the future of the space and the communities who will live there.

As part of the commission we would like the appointed artist(s) to work with at least one local community or voluntary organisation, local schools and engage volunteers in developing the work of the commission. It is important for ECDP and its partners that the artistic process creates opportunities for people to learn new skills, gain confidence and have enjoyable experiences. This is an important element and we would expect to see at least 10 people volunteering their time supported by the commissioned artist. It is important, therefore, that the appointed artist(s) considers the detailed design guidance which has reflected the needs of the local community and engages with the Borough Council to develop a commission process that engages local communities and schools where possible as part of the Council's Dunton Hills Garden Village Community and Education Programme. It is hoped that the schools already participating in the education programme will be considered for engagement, however the artist may choose specific communities or groups to engage and this process will be supported by the team. Representing the thoughts and views of those engaging in the commission will be important, and the resulting work can be presented as part of the wider consultation programme (including in Brentwood town centre for example) for a wider audience.

The creative response (or final art work) and how this is developed and ultimately presented will be up to the appointed artist to decide. ECDP and Brentwood Borough Council are obviously keen to see creative responses to this Commission Brief.

Application process and support

The successful artist(s) will be selected by a panel of representatives from ECDP and Brentwood Borough Council. A shortlist will be made from the received applications based on how well they meet the commission criteria and respond to this brief, and these will be invited to interview to talk further about their proposal before a final decision is made. The commission will be managed by ECDP and the commissioned artist can receive ongoing support, advocacy and advice from ECDP and Brentwood Borough Council throughout. There may be opportunities to engage directly with the consultant teams working with the Council, particularly in relation to ongoing consultation and community engagement.

ECDP staff will liaise with the commissioned artist to establish a timetable for delivery and identify times for recording digitally the ongoing creative process (this is as important for ECDP as the final outcomes in terms of understanding community engagement with the process).

Budget

The commission budget is £10,000 (to include VAT) and will be treated as a grant. This is inclusive of all expenses and must therefore cover fees, travel, materials and marketing. Some promotion and advertising will be undertaken by the partners, at their cost, and this will be discussed in due course. Payments will be made in instalments, on receipt of invoice, and subject to progress against achieving agreed activity as outlined above. If this is a joint commission one artist/organisation will need to be the project lead and all payments will be made to them.

Promotion for the commission can be undertaken in partnership with ECDP and other partners as appropriate. ECDP will promote the commission and related activity on the ECDP website and support the process throughout on social media (including Twitter and Instagram). ECDP hopes that the commission will attract significant numbers from the local community both in terms of active engagement and audience, as well as attracting audiences from further afield (where possible/appropriate). ECDP and its partners would expect to see good levels of audiences online (not necessarily exclusively during the actual commission).

Funding must be committed as far as it possible by the end of April 2021 although we are happy to discuss extending the commission process beyond this if there are good reasons or opportunities.

Tracking Outcomes

It is very important for ECDP as an Arts Council England funded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) that we can report on all of our activities effectively and accurately. The commissioning of artist(s) for 2020-21 is the key element of our NPO programme and we expect there to be important outcomes, which we will work with the commissioned artist to record and track. ECDP would also want the appointed artist(s) to be aware of and engage with the concept of the 'Creative Case for Diversity' throughout the commission (ECDP is happy to discuss this with the commissioned artists). In summary we would expect the appointed artist(s) to record both quantitative and qualitative information to support ECDP in capturing outcomes (as far as is possible). These include:

- numbers of 'sessions' and a list of workshops/events/meetings that took place as part of the commission
- numbers of project participants or volunteers
- numbers of audiences who attended events (who were not direct participants) – i.e. 'live' audiences
- any information on digital audiences (i.e. those engaging or viewing work online) where this is possible to get

- Reflections on how the commission has impacted on the practice of the appointed artist(s), and how the commission may have impacted on the beneficiaries (volunteers/audiences) and the place
- Any recorded feedback from participants/beneficiaries or partner organisations involved
- Photos from workshops, events and the artwork/performances (much of this can be shared on the ECDP website and social media)

Environmental Sustainability

ECDP is committed to minimising its potential for negative impacts on the environment. As an NPO we also have a leadership role in the arts/cultural sectors and consider that ECDP can have a positive impact on environmental sustainability as we have for issues relating to ethnic and cultural diversity. This is relevant to the commissioning programme for artists and we are keen that all artist(s) interested in this commission for Dunton Hills to consider how they will reduce the impact of their work on the environment. For example, the use of materials – consider whether they are recyclable, made from recycled materials, or can be repurposed after the commission. The aim of this will be to reduce the waste from commissions/exhibitions and the use of non-recyclable materials where possible. Artists should consider where possible choosing accessible locations for activities and events – locations that can be easily accessed by public transport/walking as well as by older people. This fits with the sustainable vision and principles which are fundamental for how Dunton Hills Garden Village comes forward.

Responding to this Commission Opportunity

To apply for this commission please email jo@essexcdp.com and include the following:

- An outline of the artistic concept for the commission, including the proposed community engagement process, intended audience and legacy (no more than 1 side of A4).
- A brief description on why you are interested in this commission at this time, how your project promotes diversity and any relevant connections with Brentwood/Dunton Hills (no more than 1 side of A4).
- A biography and CV with relevant previous work (no more than 2 sides of A4). Please include links to relevant websites and social media/media.
- An outline budget breakdown showing how you would utilise the £10,000. It is important that all of the funded work takes place within the 2020-21 financial year, so please be clear on availability and resources to complete the commission in time
- An approximate timeline for the work.

Please ensure that proposals are received by midnight on Friday 21 November 2020 - Send your proposal to jo@essexcdp.com

Interviews will be held on Wednesday 16 December 2020 in Brentwood. Due to COVID-19 disruption interviews could be held via Zoom video Conference if it is not possible to do face to face interviews. Interviews will include an opportunity for a 15-minute presentation on your Proposal. If you are shortlisted for an interview, we will let you know by Wednesday 2 December 2020.

For further information on Essex Cultural Diversity Project visit www.essexcdp.com