



**Breathing new life into one of East London's Hidden Gems**

Bishop Wood's Almshouses

## ICENI PROJECTS – CASE STUDY

# Iceni's Heritage and Planning teams worked with Noble House Properties, and Tasou Associates, to deliver the conversion of a group of late seventeenth-century almshouses into 1 and 2 bedroom flats.

The building forms a courtyard space, in a location adjacent to Clapton Pond, in the London Borough of Hackney. Having been closed as Almshouses, the building, listed at Grade II, had fallen into disuse, and it was clear that the existing studio units did not meet modern housing standards. Iceni thus worked closely with Hackney Council officers to agree an approach to returning the Site to use, taking the existing units, and opening up some roof spaces to allow them to reach London Plan compliant unit sizes. This process involved extensive investigation into how such a scheme would impact on the physical fabric and plan form of the building. There was also a need to undertake detailed discussions relating to the former Chapel's conversion, and on features such as planting to the front courtyard, which was required to try and recreate a traditional almshouse garden, but with modern planting.

Having gained consent for the conversion scheme, Iceni Heritage then worked closely with the design team to deliver the discharge of conditions, allowing building works to proceed, and addressing a number of heritage-sensitive issues associated with the structure of the building.

## 5 interesting facts about the project

### 1: HOLY HIGH ROLLER

The buildings are named after Thomas Wood, a seventeenth century Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry; he lived in a Country House that once stood in Clapton, and gave generously to Christ Church College, Oxford.

### 2: NEVER ASK A LADY HER AGE...

According to the will of Bishop Wood, the almshouses were intended to serve ten 'poor and antient widows' of the parish.

### 3: LATER YEARS

The 10 original (tiny!) almshouses were amalgamated to make 5 two-room residences in the 1930s; after refurbishments in the 1960s and 1980s, they closed in 2014.

### 4: SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED

In addition to its original 10, single room dwellings, the building also has a chapel, added in the mid-nineteenth century; it is alleged to be the smallest in Britain.

### 5: WOOD'S TIMBERS

The building, while containing very little of interest internally, was, amazingly, found upon inspection to retain almost all of its original, 350 year old roof timbers.

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**London:** Da Vinci House, 44 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8FH

**Manchester:** This Is The Space, 68 Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3EJ

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