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FROM OPEN HOUSE TO OPEN CITY...

Architecture education organisation announces name change and new focus on commissioning research in the run up to the Olympics

25 March 2010: After 18 years as Open House, leading architecture education organisation announces name change to Open City. The launch of Open City signals a new focus in the strategic direction of the organisation, as it expands its commissioning of research into current issues on the built environment.

From its early roots showcasing the capital's best architecture via a now world-famous annual event, Open City has evolved to encompass ground-breaking research, training, advice and capital-wide campaigns, as part of delivering targeted programmes for decision-makers, young people and the London community at large.

This new name better expresses the scope of work the organisation currently undertakes and will allow Open City to further develop its key strands of activity. As a champion of the value of good design, Open City is the only independent organisation that works year round with councillors, planners, students, young people, the public and all professionals who are active in shaping the built environment.

In 2010 Open City will be launching a series of research commissions examining in greater depth the most pressing issues relating to architecture and the built environment, and how different stakeholders respond to them. These will include:

- Blueprints for Future Living?: 50 years on from the major post-war housing boom, Open City is commissioning a series of conversations between architects, planners, housing associations and residents, exploring the lives of some of our iconic London housing developments and estates, to identify the key priorities that those designing our next generation of housing should have in mind. These forums and symposia will be the first time that designers, managers and users of housing will work together positively to identify design solutions that work.
- Enhancing our Public Space?: In the run up to 2012, many new commissions for art in the public realm in the capital are planned, but will these be of the quality that we deserve? This study, building on the knowledge from Open City's ongoing research into art in the public realm in Stratford and its role as advisor to the Olympic Delivery Authority's Arts and Culture team, will turn attention on the rest of London: will new commissions compete with or complement one another? How will this affect the quality of our public space across the capital as a whole?

Mayor of London Boris Johnson commented: "Over the past 18 years Open City's ambitious and engaging approach has inspired generations of Londoners to take an interest in good design and the built environment. The sheer variety of public art on our streets, and in our squares and parks, allows residents, visitors and tourists to enjoy our city all the more, and it important that we create monuments that last. I wish Open City a long and successful future."

Open City is an acknowledged leader in research and activities that lead to new evidence and thinking about the benefits of a well-designed built environment. The organisation has a proven track record in catalysing new ideas among architects - both established and upcoming - engineers, academics, policy

makers and the public sector, as well as measuring the views and opinions of Londoners. Its pioneering initiatives include:

- the My City Too Young Londoners' campaign, first launched in the run up to the last Mayoral Elections, is now entering it's second phase. Delivered in part through the Young Urban Planners Programme funded by the Department of Children, Schools and Families the programme empowers young people to voice their ideas, aspirations and solutions for the future of London and puts them in the driving seat to influence change.
- the Exemplar masterclass programme, initially funded by CABE and now in its sixth year, enabling planning councillors from across London to interrogate what 'good design' really is, the benefits it brings and how to ensure that aspirations can become reality. It uses Open City's expertise in equipping participants with the tools and language to evaluate and argue for a high standard and appropriate design
- regular polls and an Annual Survey that capture and track Londoners' views on issues as diverse as low carbon buildings to the design of local high streets.

Victoria Thornton, Founding Director of Open City added: "This is an exciting time for Open City. As our success has grown, so too has the way in which we are able to influence decision making at a high level. The national and local elections in May will create a new generation of politicians who will influence our built environment at a crucial time in terms of climate change and fundamental economic and social change.

"New ministers, MPs and councillors need to understand the vital significance of improving UK cities and making them more sustainable. This can't be done without the intelligent understanding and support of local people. This has always been the foundation of Open City's work."

Rt. Hon Nick Raynsford MP, Open City Trustee and Chair of Supporters at Large said: "I have seen first hand the positive impact Open City's programmes make in raising awareness of the importance of high quality urban design among a wide range of groups, including young people and local councillors. In Open City's 18th year and with London poised to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games, Open City's work is more relevant and important than ever and I urge all those with responsibility for London's built environment to support and get engaged with this vibrant organisation."

Past and current partners of Open City include Architects' Journal, Arts Council, Arup, Atkins, Building Design, Bisley, CABE, Corus, DCSF, Design for London, East Potential Housing, Evening Standard, First Base, Grainger, Lend Lease, MAKE, Property Week, Samsung, Tesco as well as all London Boroughs.

The Open City's website will be transformed into a new multimedia resource available to the public. For more information please visit: www.open-city.org.uk.

The Open House London weekend will retain its identity, with this year's event scheduled to take place on 18 and 19 September.

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