



PRESS RELEASE

Set to radically transform the future of making, BLOQS – the UK’s first open-access factory – opens in Enfield as part of Meridian Water’s £6 billion regeneration



Photo: Claudia Agati

This morning Bloqs welcomed Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor of London, and Cllr Nesil Caliskan as their guests of honour to officially open the brand new facility.

Bloqs is a revolutionary new facility providing professional makers and businesses with affordable workshop space, access to state-of-the-art equipment and the opportunity to become part of a vibrant

community of like-minded people. Bloqs offers an ambitious new model for open-access working, economising space and facilities on a scale never done before, while maximising the scope of the businesses, organisations and individuals that use it.

The new space – designed in close collaboration with Bloqs by [5th Studio](#) – provides 32,000 square feet of workspace with facilities for woodworking, metalworking, fashion and fabrics, engineering and spray finishing, as well as resources and services – including courses, classes and hireable meeting rooms. Part-newbuild and part-adaptive reuse of a former vehicle testing facility, the light-filled, hangar-sized building is 6.5 (serviceable) metres tall with direct access to a service yard. New amenities open to the public include a café and event space as well as a shop stocking tools and materials.

Users have access to £1.3 million-worth of light industrial equipment, usually beyond the reach of most new businesses, including: industrial mills, lathes, sanders, saws, CNC routers, laser cutting, 3D printers, spray booths and sewing machines. Once registered, members can pre-book spaces and facilities as they need them. Current members range from fashion designers, furniture makers and interior designers to playground designers and makers, metal fabricators and eco-entrepreneurs.

An investment of £4 million by the Greater London Authority and Enfield Council has enabled this groundbreaking concept to treble the scale of its operations and meet the growing demand among professional makers for affordable workspace in London.

[Meridian Water](#) is a major £6bn, 25-year programme led by Enfield Council, bringing 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs to the borough. Bloqs will play a crucial role in defining the character of the area ahead of longer-term regeneration, demonstrating how the creative industries can form an integral part of successful mixed-use development and placemaking.

Bloqs co-founder Al Parra said:

“From the very beginning Bloqs has been about providing professional makers and their businesses the right space and facilities to grow and make a living. We’ve done this by gathering a community that shares resources, and what really distinguishes us from other open-access workspaces is that we’ve designed specifically to enable commercial activity. With this new facility, we can give our community the space to make it work, we can create partnerships with education providers, manufacturers, suppliers, and our local communities. We’re deeply indebted and grateful to the many people and partners who have made this next step possible. We’re proud of how far we’ve come together and we can’t wait to show people around!”

Nesil Caliskan, the Leader of Enfield Council, said:

“I am excited to open the new Bloqs facility in Edmonton today. The expansion of the Bloqs workshop will provide higher levels of employment in Enfield, directly supporting our creative industries and businesses.

“This is another great example of how Meridian Water is not only helping a local business grow but how it is becoming the key place in the borough for the creative sector to flourish. I am proud that our partnership with Bloqs has allowed the space to grow for the benefit of local people, and I look forward to seeing local businesses use this fantastic new facility for many years to come”.

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor of London for Planning, Regeneration and Skills said:

"I'm delighted to be back in Enfield today to join the official opening of BloQs' new, industry-leading workspace. BloQs is an innovative example of what can be achieved when businesses, boroughs and City Hall work together to add value to local communities and economies. The ability of our small businesses to rebuild and thrive will be a crucial element of London's post-pandemic recovery and BloQs gives businesses the space, materials and resources to do just that. Meridian Water is one of London's most exciting regeneration areas and I'm proud that City Hall is investing in enhanced infrastructure and thousands of new homes. I look forward to following the area's progress closely in the years to come."

Tom Holbrook, Director of 5th Studio, said:

"Space for making things in London is diminishing rapidly as development displaces the capital's contingent and productive spaces. Building Bloqs forms an important bulwark and demonstrates that space for physical making is actually a growing need in the city. Bloqs is the latest in a series of productive spaces 5th Studio have helped create and its breadth and generosity are quite unique. The project delivers a critical part of the Meanwhile Masterplan for Meridian Water which is helping to inform change on the ground: shifting perceptions, improving connectivity, scaling up existing uses and embedding vibrant new ones."

Sustainable Growth: The Bloqs model intensifies land use and machinery by grouping multiple businesses under one roof, so sustainability is part of its DNA. The new building allows Bloqs to further reduce its footprint with the addition of a biomass plant which converts waste woodchip and sawdust into heating and hot water while extensive SUDS (sustainable urban drainage system) contribute to the sustainability of the Lea Valley.

Equipped for the Future: A new partnership with leading equipment makers Weinig UK / HOLZ-HER UK means that members now have access to brand new state-of-the-art equipment including a Cube Plus automatic 4 head planer, a Streamer 1057 XL Edgebender and a Dynestic 7505 flatbed CNC router, in addition to an extraordinary 5-axis CNC router.

Kitchen Culture: Always at the beating heart of the community, a revitalised and expanded Bloqs Kitchen will be run by Marianna Leivaditaki, former head chef at the renowned Moro and Morito restaurants. The Bloqs Kitchen welcomes the public and will soon open out onto an exterior social space furnished with seating, planters and an outdoor stage that will play host to music events and performances.

Building the Future: Bloqs actively fosters relationships with education providers from Special Educational Needs (SEN) to Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE) and is effectively an outsourced technical campus for the Bartlett School of Architecture UCL and West Lea School for children with special educational needs. 2022 promises collaborations with CONEL, Barnet & Southgate College, School of Engineering UCL, and Building Crafts College. To support its status as an educational hub, the new building incorporates classrooms, and other infrastructure to support learners. Bloqs also partners with professional bodies, such as MAKE UK and The FSB to expand learning and business opportunities for its members.

Notes to Editors

Bloqs is a professional, open-access workspace and social-enterprise based in Meridian Water on the River Lea, providing flexible pay-as-you-go access to machinery, workspace, training and business support. It was co-founded in 2012 by – Vinny Nanray, Arnaud Nichols, Al Parra, Alex Motta, and Julien Thomasset building on the success of their live-work space enterprise at The Chilli Works. Facilities currently include engineering, CNC machining, 3D-Printing, metalworking, woodworking, spray finishing booths and sewing and fashion studios as well as a café, shop and storage space. It's free to sign up. Once registered, members can pre-book spaces and facilities as required. Bloqs is accessible via car, with onsite parking available. It is within walking distance of Meridian Water station, located less than a mile away.

5th Studio is a unique spatial design agency, working across the fields of architecture, urban design, infrastructure and landscape. Working with clients and commissioners, they create beauty and enduring value from complex situations.

The practice applies spatial intelligence to a broad spectrum — from delivering buildings through to research and strategy. 5th Studio strives to be visionary, innovative and persuasive, committing to successful outcomes beyond the traditional role of a designer: leading the team, transforming risk into opportunity, raising profile and clearly articulating the objectives of a project.

Bloqs is the fourth makerspace 5th Studio has delivered – it follows the government-funded Creative Exchange in St Neots, Cambridgeshire (2009), The Future Business Centre (2013), and Clifton House co-working space in Finsbury Park (2020). Current work spans from the sustainable retrofit of university buildings, the Urban Design Framework for Stratford Station to masterplanning London's Royal Docks.

Meridian Water is a major 6bn, 25-year London regeneration programme led by Enfield Council, bringing 10,000 homes and 6,000 of jobs to Enfield, north London, next door to the beautiful Lee Valley Regional Park. Alongside attractive new homes, fantastic public spaces and community facilities, the development now has its own railway station, unlocking the area for commuters, with better connections south to Stratford and London Liverpool Street and north to Stansted and Cambridge. The Council is leading on the vision for Meridian Water and overseeing its delivery, which is based around three pillars:

- Your place to make and create
- Mixing uses and animating streets
- Park life at your doorstep