

## **JASMIN VARDIMON COMPANY RECEIVES TWO MAJOR BOOSTS FOR NEW HOME**

### **Acclaimed dance company set to become first choreographer-named organisation to have own purpose-built creative space outside London**

Jasmin Vardimon Company announces today that it has received two major boosts in its bid to relocate to a new state-of-the-art purpose-built home in Ashford, Kent. To coincide with last week's approval of the development of a currently disused site in on the Henwood Industrial Estate by **Ashford Borough Council's Planning Committee**, the company has revealed that **Arts Council England** has approved a grant of over £3million of National Lottery funding towards the ground-breaking project.

This project will provide the Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company, which has had its base in Ashford for the past seven years, with a self-financing, energy-efficient, bespoke, new-build home in the Kent town.

The building will be designed to advanced standards of sustainability and efficiency. Its ultramodern fit-out, which will provide the capital infrastructure in order to deliver financial resilience, will enable the company to develop its artistic model and content, education and outreach work well into the future. At the same time it will provide the Ashford community with a valuable asset, which will add to the town's health and fitness and arts offering as well as contributing to the local economy.

The new space will have the capacity to house a creation and presentation space for Jasmin Vardimon Company and dedicated training spaces for the educational wing of the company.

In addition to the facilities for Jasmin Vardimon Company, the scheme being put forward by **Kent County Council**, also includes 29 light industrial units, the proceeds of which will help to make it self-financing.

The space will also include incubator and start-up spaces for emerging local creative companies and individuals. Community facilities will include space for additional training courses delivered in partnership with Kent County Council, a Pilates and yoga studio to house classes and a café for people to meet and socialise.

The facilities will also be available for the wider arts industry with a preview arena for visiting companies to showcase new work.

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Additional funding is being made available by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which has agreed a £1.597m Growing Places Fund loan.

The creative space will be leased from Kent County Council by the Jasmin Vardimon Company.

Together with the light industrial units, the total project cost is £9.145 million.

Since 2012, the Jasmin Vardimon Company has been based at the Stour Centre in the town, which it has now outgrown. A number of other companies have expressed an interest in using the space there, while small creative businesses are emerging from Jasmin Vardimon Company who themselves need space.

Work on the dance studio will begin shortly with occupation by the Jasmin Vardimon Company by September next year.

**Jasmin Vardimon – Artistic Director of Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company says**

*"This is a significant and hugely exciting step forward towards the realisation of my long-held dream for The Jasmin Vardimon Company. Since founding the company in 1998, it has always been my ambition to develop a creative hub, an environment in which to research, create, produce and educate. A laboratory for multi disciplinary artistic study and creative research, where we can provide dancers with development programmes that enables them to fully engage with the physical, emotional, intellectual and technical aspects of the work. Today we are a huge step closer to that."*

**Suzie Leighton – Chair of Jasmin Vardimon Company says:**

*"We could not be more delighted at this news. It comes as the result of much work and an imaginative, productive and collaborative effort between Jasmin Vardimon Company, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council. Jasmin and I have worked together for many years to realise her vision of a creative home for the company, and are proud and excited to see such major development in the company's history. The unique partnership at the core of the initiative means that, whilst it presents no cost to the local authority, it will provide plenty of benefits to the community as well as an invaluable resource for the company. In so doing, it creates a new model for creative enterprise in these financially challenging times"*

**Hedley Swain, Area Director, South East, Arts Council England, says:**

*"We're delighted to be able to support Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company's exciting future thanks to National Lottery funding. The new home will not only enable Jasmin and her team to stretch the organisation's artistic ambitions, but also its work with the local community and support for emerging talent. The investment from Kent County Council is hugely welcome and reflects how important arts and culture is to their ambitions for the county. I look forward to seeing this development become a hub of creativity in Kent"*

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**Mike Hill, Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, says:**

*“These are two pieces of great news. Kent County Council has been a long-time supporter of the Jasmin Vardimon Company, whose work is recognised nationally and internationally. Having been based in Ashford over these last six years, Jasmin and her company have played a vital role in raising the county's creative and cultural profile. This project will provide a high-quality facility for the company and we can now look forward to seeing the completion of this exciting development.”*

**Tracey Kerly, Chief Executive of Ashford Borough Council, says:**

*“This is an exciting transformational period for the borough and we are pleased to see yet another of our Big 8 projects move forward. This purpose built centre of creative excellence will act as a creative hub for Ashford and will include rehearsal and presentation spaces, dedicated training spaces, a wellbeing suite and creative incubator spaces. Jasmin Vardimon Company can now press ahead with their plans that supports their commitment to education, strengthens community engagement and provides a base for the company's significant national and international touring programme. We are pleased to be able to secure such a prestigious and pioneering arts organisation in the town.”*

**Christian Brodie, Chairman of SELEP, says:**

*“The Growing Places Fund Loan agreed at our November meeting will finance the development of the industrial units, creating employment at an early stage and enabling the delivery of the whole scheme.*

*“Interest has already been shown in the light industrial units and negotiations are underway in relation to four of them before any marketing of the site has taken place.*

*“Javelin Way will be a great home for the creative sector in Ashford, which we are happy to be able to support with this loan.”*

*Sarah Dance of the South East Creative Economy Network said: “We are delighted to see that SELEP recognises the important contribution that the Creative Sector brings to the South East's economy and is prepared to invest in its future.*

*“We are also very grateful for the support of Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council in helping bring this really exciting project to fruition.*

*“The sector is expanding rapidly, with creative industries accounting for 9.6% of total businesses in the region in 2015.*

*“Our current rate of growth lags behind the national average and an investment such as this enables us to accelerate growth, ensuring the south east can share the wealth and social benefits of the UK's fastest growing sector, whose products are some of the UK's stand out exports.*

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