

# Victorian factory is converted for offices

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**W**ORK is set to start on a £6m scheme to convert a former Tyneside toffee factory into a home for creative business.

The public-sector-backed scheme has just been given final approval by One North East and with the tendering for contract process under way, work is expected to start in September.

The redevelopment of the former Maynards factory will continue the development of Newcastle's emerging cultural district of Ouseburn.

One North East has agreed to give the scheme £2,750,000, and there will be a further £3m from the European Regional Development Fund with Newcastle City Council agreeing to contribute £250,000.

Work is also expected to start next year on 100 new townhouses near the toffee factory after the Government recently selected Ouseburn as one of

three sites in the country for a new homes initiative.

Peter McIntyre, director of planning and programme management at Newcastle Gateshead development company **INC**, said: "This scheme is critical for the next phase of the regeneration of Ouseburn.

"Over the past 10 years there has been development at the northern end and we are now concentrating on the southern end near the Tyne.

"This will be the first of many projects and should be a catalyst for private-sector development in the area."

The former Maynards toffee factory in the Lower Steenbergs Yard will be converted into 24 office units varying in size between 500sq ft and 800sq ft.

They will be aimed at the commercial creative market such as graphic designers, software engineers and architects.

The space is expected to fetch around £18 per sq ft.

When finished the building will be home to 160 staff, with around 50 of these expected to be new jobs and it is hoped 12 new businesses will be attracted to the region.

The plans will see the remaining walls and floors of the existing Victorian building preserved.

The factory, which was under threat of demolition 10 years ago, is a throw-back to when the Ouseburn Valley was at the heart of Tyneside's industrial revolution.

Following more than a decade of redevelopment work, the area now boasts artists and recording studio 36 Lime Street, the 1848 flax mill designed by John Dobson, which houses dozens of artists and craft workshops, the Cluny and Ship Inn pubs, the Seven Stories centre and the Ouseburn Farm.

David Cramond, director of capital development at One North East, said: "The toffee factory will be a major addition to the cluster of creative busi-





nesses that are already making the Ouseburn Valley a unique investment location.

“The delivery of this facility will be the first phase of a wider vision to regenerate the Lower Ouseburn.”

Bill Shepherd, Newcastle City Council’s executive member for regeneration, said there were obvious benefits in bringing together the digital and creative sector in one place.

He said: “We have a chance to make a big impact in a relatively short period of time.

“By attracting these creative types to one place we can offer real benefits to businesses that are already in the area but just a little more spread out.

“I know from my own experience running small start-up businesses that one problem can be trying to find the right office space and of the benefits of having like-minded companies around you.”





**CHANGES** How the development will look when the conversion is complete. Below, the Steenbergs Yard now