

The Galleria - Working in partnership with commercial house builders to create permanent affordable studios

The project

An award-winning development between Acme, Barratt Homes and Southwark Council in Peckham, London, SE15, comprising 98 apartments for private rent, shared ownership and social rent with 50 artists' studios.



The Galleria Studios, Peckham, London, SE15

At a glance

- 50 purpose built studios over four floors
- 46 studios are fully-accessible with lift access
- 56 artists
- 16,000 square feet of space
- Units vary from 300 to 600 square feet
- High level of sound and thermal insulation
- Separate studio entrance and service stairwell

Background

A print company employing around 30 people wished to relocate and sold their site to Barratt Homes. Initial planning permission to build on the site was refused because the proposed development consisted entirely of housing and no employment space. The local authority, London Borough of Southwark, was determined to maintain the employment use on the site as well as securing at least 25 per cent of the development as affordable housing. Barratt approached Acme to see if it would be interested in taking studio space in the new development to create an acceptable planning proposal.

Mutual benefit

Local authorities are keen to encourage mixed-use developments which combine housing, commercial and retail space because such schemes help create sustainable communities. By working in partnership with Acme, Barratt was able to fulfill all the local authority's requirements. There are currently 56 artists using the studios, almost double the original employees of the print company.

Acme also provided Barratt with a guaranteed sale of the commercial space and ensured 100 per cent occupation from day one. Fully occupied artists' studios adjacent to new flats for sale, provided Barratt with a unique marketing tool, resulting in the final choice of name for the development.

Planning gain

Fifty purpose-built studios were created through the 'planning gain' mechanism, which is commonly achieved through the 'social workspace' element of a Section 106 agreement. Acme's thirty-year track record and core charitable objectives, ensured that affordable workspace would be maintained at the building in perpetuity, making the need for a separate Section 106 agreement unnecessary in this instance.



Bella Easton in her studio at the Galleria. Photo: David Stewart

Benefits of artists' studios

- Guaranteed sale of commercial space
- 100 per cent occupancy from day one
- Continued employment use on site
- Meets section 106 requirement to provide community benefit
- A creative community provides unique selling proposition

Finance

Acme purchased a 155-year lease on the studio block from Barratt at a fixed price sufficiently below the construction cost which enables it to guarantee affordable rents in perpetuity. Acme drew on funding from Arts Council England's Grants for the arts – capital programme towards the cost of this project, releasing capital to be invested in future schemes.

Building on success

Affordable housing is often achieved through the planning gain mechanism. Galleria was the first time affordable artists' studio space had been created by the private sector and this partnership provides a vitally important model showing how 'social workspace' can be achieved through planning gain. The success of the project was recognised at the What House? Awards 2006 when Galleria was awarded Joint Bronze in the Best Development category.

Acme is currently involved in a series of further partnership developments:

- 12 studios, Harrow Road with Catalyst Housing Group in the London Borough of Brent – opens January 2010.
- 15 studios, High Street, Stratford with Genesis Housing Group in the London Borough of Newham – opens February 2012.
- 49 studios, Lesney Matchbox Works with Telford Homes in the London Borough of Hackney – opens 2012.

For more information on Acme's current developments or to find out more about the benefits of working in partnership with Acme, please contact:

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