

acmestudios

SUPPORTING ART & ARTISTS SINCE 1972

Harrow Road artists' studios – Local authority facilitating a partnership between a housing association and a studio provider



Manor Point development from Harrow Road. Artists' studios on the ground floor to the left of the entrance road.
Photo: Greg Goodale (2010)

THE PROJECT

Harrow Road studios in London, NW10, form part of Manor Point, a major affordable housing development in Kensal Green in west London. The project consists of a mix of social rented properties, part-rent, part-buy affordable homes and 21 affordable artists' studios. It is only the second 100 per cent affordable mixed-use development in the UK.

AT A GLANCE

- 12 purpose-built studios
- All studios located on the ground floor and fully-wheelchair accessible
- Units range from 231 to 330 square feet
- High levels of sound and thermal insulation
- Separate studio entrance within the development
- Designated disabled parking bay and large loading bay

BACKGROUND

In 2006, Catalyst Housing Group acquired a semi-derelict industrial site on Harrow Road which straddled the boroughs of Brent and Hammersmith & Fulham. Although the site required planning permission for change of use, Catalyst saw the potential to create a mixed-use development and began working with the local authorities on a plan for the site.

Aware of the lack of affordable workspace for artists in the borough, planners at Brent had been looking to incorporate studios into various new developments. Recognising the potential of the Harrow Road site, Brent introduced Catalyst to Acme Studios who had previous experience of successfully creating artists' studios in new-build mixed-use schemes elsewhere in London.

HARMONIOUS USE

Catalyst were initially sceptical about including artists' studios in the scheme. Like many developers, they were wary of creating commercial space which might remain boarded up. As Catalyst learnt more about Acme and the use of the studios, they quickly realised that active use of the commercial part of the development was a harmonious use that makes a positive contribution to the community. The experience has been a thoroughly positive one for Catalyst who are exploring different ways artists can be involved in other sites.

'Today is a reason to be cheerful. Brent council is very keen to expand the arts and culture offer that we have in this borough and providing studio space for our own home-grown budding artists is a very important part of that.'

Cllr Ann John OBE, Leader of Brent Council speaking at the launch of Harrow Road artists' studios, October 2010

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Brent Council made the provision of affordable artists' studios part of the planning requirement (s106 agreement) for Harrow Road, ensuring they remain a benefit for local artists in perpetuity. Harrow Road studios are a part of a long-term commitment by Brent to provide long-term, sustainable and affordable studios in the borough. Aware of the benefits that artists' bring to local areas, the council have embedded the provision of creative workspace into its 20-year strategy. The ambition is to create a critical mass of long-term, secure studios which attract artists into the borough. Brent are currently involved with Acme and other studio providers on a number of future developments.



BENEFITS OF ARTISTS' STUDIOS

- Guaranteed sale of commercial space
- 100 per cent occupancy from day one
- Meets section 106 requirements, including continued employment use on the site and providing community benefit
- Local artists continue their work in the area

FINANCE

Acme bought a 75-year lease on the studios at a fixed price that covered the construction cost of the studio element of the building only. This price was much lower than if Acme had been involved in financing a stand-alone development as it did not include the cost of land acquisition or design team fees. The purchase price guarantees Acme can provide affordable rent levels for artists in perpetuity. Acme also drew on funding from Arts Council England's Grants for the arts – capital programme towards the cost of the project, releasing capital to be invested in future schemes.

The studios at Harrow Road form part of Acme's current capital development programme, supported by Arts Council England, and will result in this phase in 189 permanent, high-quality, self-sustaining and affordable artists' studios across London by 2012.

CONTACT

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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