

Club wins longer hours but must keep security

MILLWALL Rugby Club has secured longer drinking hours – but will still have to keep a doorman posted.

Tower Hamlets Council's licensing committee has allowed the Millwall Park clubhouse to be open for alcohol until 10.30pm from Monday to Saturday but the club didn't get everything it wanted from last week's meeting.

The club requested an extension to 11pm from Monday to Saturday, earlier opening at 11am at the weekend and Sunday hours up to 10.30pm. The committee decided 9pm on Sunday was more suitable.

A condition banning new admission after 9pm from Monday to Saturday was removed, but the club still has to operate CCTV and employ a doorman.

As part of the licensing application, Tower Hamlets Police's licensing officer

Andy Jackson said the club had "proved they are responsible".

Manchester Grove residents Ishila Bhattacharya and Indraneel Basu Majumdar had objected saying that broken bottles were "strewn" in the park and that the clubhouse was "not living up" to its claims to be a family club.

The club's youth chairman Matt Shorrock contacted *The Wharf* last week to dispute this suggestion, citing initiatives such as its Christmas lunch and its mum and baby club.

He said: "Our youth section now has over 60 members from ages six to 19 and we challenge anyone unsure as to the family friendly nature of our club to speak to any parent of the youngsters attending each week and ask them if our clubhouse is being used as a family space."

Artists find a home for their ambitions

John Hill visits a development that has set aside space to develop an active hub for creativity



A FEW weeks back, Kitty McLaughlin was working on one of her paintings when a group of children burst in.

Sounds like the start of a story about teen crime, doesn't it? Not at Atelier Court, a Poplar development where artist studios and homes sit side by side.

She said: "We had an open day, and the children came in and were running around. I didn't expect them to be interested in art, but they were very appreciative and asked lots of questions. It was very harmonious."

Atelier Court is located on Leven Road, not far from the dreaded car pound just east of the Blackwall Tunnel Northern Approach.

It used to be a printworks employing 15 people, and the borough insisted that Swan Housing's new development provide some sort of replacement commercial space.

But while regeneration may bring more homes to the area in future, it isn't exactly the sort



Acme Studios' Jack Fortescue, left, and Lawrence Norton, senior project manager for Swan Housing

of place in which many shops would thrive.

So Swan formed a partnership with Acme Studios to place 21 custom-made ground floor artist studios within the development, available to "non-commercial fine artists" earning less than £15,000 a year. It took 10 months to build and was ready in March last year.

Acme spokesman Jack Fortescue said: "Now the

residents have artists working downstairs. It's different from having a bookies, Tesco Metro or a row of boarded-up shops."

The development features 66 one to four-bedroom units, catering for social rented housing and families. Artists can reach their studios whenever they please via a separate entrance, settling into spaces designed for their specific needs.



LOUISA EMERY

Litty McLaughlin's artworks have been seen in galleries around the world

be able to concentrate. This is the best studio I've ever had. Acme looks after us. In some other studios you have to manage everything but here you can just concentrate on your paintings.

"You see kids shouting and kicking footballs on the street and you think 'Oh gosh', but when they came in they were very respectful. I'm not scared anymore."

The impact of the recession will naturally slow down any planned facelift for the area as

a whole, but Jack thinks it's a good example to follow.

He said: "It's an area that will be redeveloped, but this is the first."

"It's difficult when you are a pioneering scheme and people have to buy in to what will come. But it's

a natural mix of nice cultured people at the bottom and friendly families on top.

"It's not going to work everywhere, but if you have one in 100 like this, whether it's for dance or craft or art, if you find the right space it's not just a solution to a problem but a huge advantage to an area."

Go to acme.org.uk or swan.org.uk.

low demand. It can really contribute to regeneration."

Artists in the studios range from musicians to painters and sculptors. Kitty lives in Barnet, but travels here most days to work on her paintings. Her "integration" of eastern and western styles has been seen all around the world, from Sweden to the halls of the Louvre.

She said: "I do a lot of meditative work, so I need to

Jack said: "Artists need high ceilings, big doors and a lot of wall space to hang things on. The great thing is that we were able to make these suggestions at the design stage."

Big doors are certainly handy for Helen Barff, an artist with a huge rowing boat propped up against her wall.

She said: "My last studio was a converted office and it wasn't built to be an art studio. I couldn't have had a boat in there and it wasn't fun hauling bags of plaster up the stairs."

"It was also half the size of this one. I spent the first few weeks up here walking up and down just because I could."

"It's much better to have a space which is sympathetic to what you're doing. I used to have all these ideas but couldn't actually do them."

Helen previously worked on a project based on objects found by the Thames and is now hoping to do something similar with the nearby Lea river.

"It's a great partnership to have, especially in an area where commercial space is in



Helen Barff bases her art on found objects

Boost for museum

THE National Maritime Museum has had a boost in visitors due to the recession.

The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions found the museum's numbers had risen 15 per cent last year. This was boosted by Britons staying at home and Europeans taking advantage of the weak pound.

Barca route

FLIGHTS to Barcelona from London City are being relaunched by British Airways.

From next month the route will become a permanent fixture on the airline's schedule.

There will be six flights a week to the city, with prices beginning at £63 each way.

Safety drive

CROSSRAIL is training its lorry drivers to be safe around cyclists.

It is to introduce safety awareness programmes for its 3,500 professional drivers to encourage them to take extra care.