

Art house

Where artists go, others follow. So, will a new space for artists in Peckham boost the area, asks David Spittles

UP-AND-COMING Peckham is now firmly on the property map. Credible rather than desirable, it is an edgy inner-city area with attitude, becoming popular with young professionals, especially public-sector employees.

Where does it go from here? Shoreditch is perhaps the best pointer. It had similar demographics before it was transformed thanks to an influx of artists and creative types. Peckham may head the same way.

Already it has quite a lot to shout about: a funky library designed by architect Will Alsop; proximity to Camberwell School of Art and Goldsmiths College; an emerging gallery scene; a proposed theatre and a council-sponsored streetscape programme involving local resident and the sculptor behind Angel of The North,



Creative colony: The Galleria is deliberately designed to integrate commercial and residential elements

Antony Gormley. Now along comes London's first purpose-built scheme of artists' studios and apartments, rising on a filled-in canal overlooking relandscaped Burgess Park, SE15.

The project comes with the blessing of London's mayor, Ken Livingstone. He is intent on getting housebuilders to provide cultural facilities alongside new homes, so more of these schemes are likely.

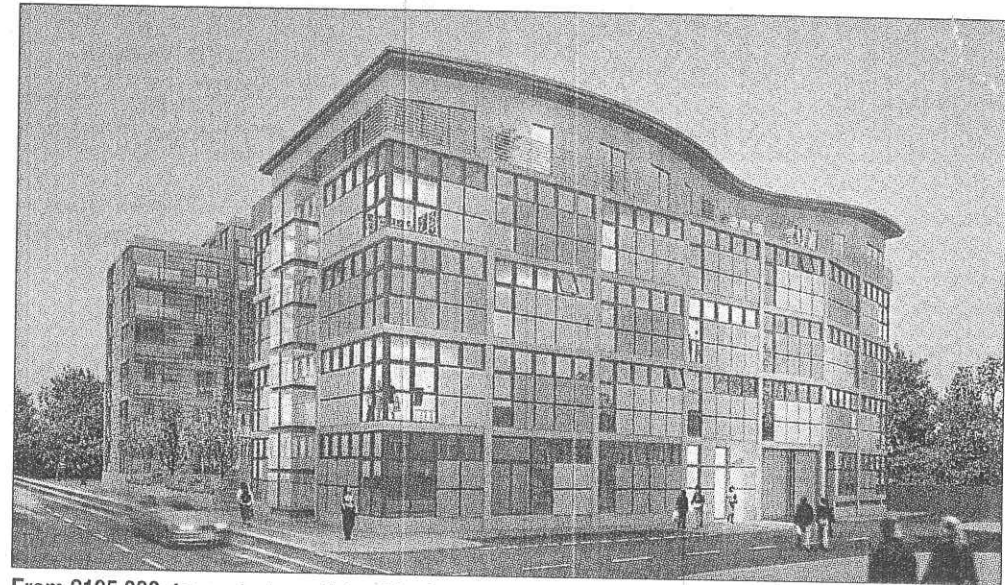
This one is a collaboration between developer Barratt Homes and housing charity Acme, which provides low-cost space for artists. Barratt Homes won planning consent for 98 apartments and, as part of the deal, is creating 16,000sq ft of workspace, acquired by Acme at a price less than the construction cost of the building.

The commercial space is deliberately integrated with the residential element. The studio block rises five storeys and has a grid of glazed squares to form a distinctive façade. A low-rise block is linked to the main 10-storey, apartment building, The Galleria.

Prices start at £195,000 for one-bedroom flats and flats are selling well off-plan (completion is due next spring). Duplex penthouses with generous terracing will cost from about £380,000 when released later this year. Call 020 7703 9732.

"We think residential buyers at The Galleria will enjoy having a small colony of artists as neighbours — it's one of the development's attractions," says Barratt chairman Clive Fenton.

The 47 artists' studios range from 300sq ft to 600sq ft. They are work spaces only, not live/work units, and will cost from about £250 a month to



From £195,000: for one-bedroom flats at The Galleria, Peckham. Artists' studios are work spaces only, to be let from £250 a month. Penthouses released later this year are from £380,000. Through Barratt Homes (020 7703 9732)

rent, through Acme (020 8981 6811). Studios at The Galleria will replace those at Larnaca Works, a building in Bermondsey, SE1, where Acme's lease expires in 2006.

Ironically, one of the reasons for Acme's departure from Bermondsey is the increase in property values caused by live/workers and artists moving to the area. Trendy urbanites are happy to pay more than £500,000 for lofts at developments such as the Jam Factory.

A number of artists at Larnaca Works will transfer to The Galleria. Sculptor Mark Haywood, 37, is among them. He works in resins, creating translucent objects, and makes a living from his art, but says this would be impossible without subsidised studio space. "I couldn't afford to live and work in London if I had to pay a commercial rent and full business rates."

Swish studios may seem a little sanitised for

Bohemian artists who like to get their hands dirty. Nonetheless, Haywood is looking forward to working in a purpose-built space. "It will make a difference. It is less beaten up than my current space. The light should be good. I also need some sort of office to cope with the increasing amount of paperwork."

More artists are good news for Peckham residents. But how long before it, too, becomes unaffordable for aspiring artists? It might be worth scouting

around bordering areas now. Check out streets off Old Kent Road, which divides Peckham from Bermondsey. Or search around leafy Nunhead.

Though starved of the Tube, Peckham is well placed for bus and train journeys into the West End. Elephant & Castle, a major transport hub soon to undergo massive regeneration, is within walking distance. And there is talk of a cross-river tram coming to Peckham from King's Cross.

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