

# Investing in Creative Communities

## THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE ARTISTS' STUDIOS

A role for Spatial Planning



Visualisation of Acme Studios' Matchmakers Wharf studios, London, E9. Opening June 2012.



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### A role for Spatial Planning

*' including artists' studios within a new development creates a natural conduit to local communities.*

*Artists' studios hold a natural attraction and by having them integrated into the heart of the development, we will attract other creative and commercial businesses to the area.'*

John Fitzgerald, Managing Director, Telford Homes Plc, discussing the Matchmakers Wharf development with Acme Studios at the former Lesney site, under construction in Homerton, London.

This guide, for planning and regeneration professionals, shows how the provision of affordable artists' studios can contribute to sustainable communities.

It has been produced by the **National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers** (NFASP), the professional body which supports, connects and represents all those who manage and develop affordable studio space for visual artists.

The guide forms part of a national advocacy project funded by Arts Council England's Grants for the arts programme and was written by **Professor Martin Elson, Emeritus Professor in Planning at Oxford Brookes University.**

**More information, advice and case study examples, developed by NFASP, may be found at [www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)**

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## The Artists' Studio Sector: Opportunities to increase the supply of affordable workspace

Visual artists and their creative and productive work bring demonstrable benefits to neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Working artists are an integral component of local, regional and national culture, and an important part of the UK's creative and cultural economy.

Research over the last ten years provides consistent evidence that there is sustained demand for affordable studio space amongst British and UK-based artists. Waiting list numbers across the UK's artists' studios remain high in good times and in recession. Existing providers are looking to expand and new groups are seeking suitable premises all the time.

### The purpose of this guide

This guide shows how local government, social and private developers, specialist and experienced artists' studio providers and the wider visual arts community can work together effectively to plan and deliver studios for working artists. These



Councillor Henry, Leader of Gateshead Council, launches the newly-refurbished first floor at The Shed

studios might be in refurbished or new facilities, and in dedicated or mixed-economy buildings.

A number of different, successful examples where such an approach has generated sustainable workspace are identified.

### The benefits

The provision of affordable studio space for working artists:

- is a catalyst to the regeneration and revitalisation of areas

- adds vitality to neighbourhoods, helping to maintain employment use in developments which would otherwise be vacant
- helps deliver community benefits, where artists can be involved in local neighbourhood projects which aid social cohesion, as well as benefiting the public realm, and
- offers a sustainable business model with extremely high levels of occupancy.

## The planning and development opportunities

Experience shows that studios which are affordable to a wide range of working visual artists can be an important component of any sustainable community, whether in the inner city, within new greenfield urban extension schemes or in rural areas.

Working with a range of development and artists' agencies, local planning authorities should take account of the needs of artists for affordable studio workspace when considering development and regeneration proposals in their areas.

Policies that allow for affordable studio space should be included in Local Development Frameworks and provisions made in Area Action Plans. Local communities should consider artists' studio needs as they prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans.

Studio space can add vitality and interest to areas by occupying sites where manufacturing has declined. Affordable artists' studio space can also be the chosen re-use option for vacant retail and office space in town centres. Planners and studio providers will be able to identify the possibilities for provision and the re-use of buildings.



Acme Studios' Harrow Road studios, London, NW10  
Photo: Greg Goodale (2010)



## What are affordable artists' studios?

Currently nearly 150 affordable artists' studio providers manage 270 buildings, supporting around 6,000 artists. There is high demand for new affordable studio space, with an estimated 5,000 artists on waiting lists across the country.

Affordable artists' studios are dedicated buildings, or parts of buildings, consisting of units provided for artists to research, experiment and produce art. Such space is rented at below market rents normally from a studio provider group or organisation.

*Artists' studios: a guide to securing, supporting and creating affordable studios in London, 2007* lists the key attributes of such space in terms of size, affordability and lease terms. Individual workspaces are normally in the 300-350 sq ft range, in buildings of between 10 and 50 units which have shared facilities.

Artists' studios are good neighbours in communities. They operate at full capacity and create interest and vitality whilst generating little traffic or noise.

### What makes artists' studios work best?

- average individual unit size 300 sq ft floor area, but range from under 200 sq ft to around 800 sq ft
- good ceiling heights, natural light and unfettered walls, 24-hour access and good security
- affordable rents (about one third of open market rents); £6-12 per sq ft per annum (depending on location and area of the country) inclusive of insurance, repairs, maintenance, and business rates, but excluding electricity costs
- long-term security guaranteed by a long lease or ownership, (normally by a charity-registered or not-for-profit studio provider group)
- for individual artists, 'easy-in, 'easy-out' lease terms and a sub-letting option.

Source: *Artists' studios: a guide to securing, supporting and creating affordable studios in London, Acme and Capital Studios, 2007*.  
See resources at [www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)

# How can spatial planning help?

## What is spatial planning?

Spatial planning is a process of place shaping and delivery that responds to local challenges and opportunities. It is based on creating a sense of local distinctiveness from community-derived objectives, within a framework of national policy.

Policies are laid out in Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), and in Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), which describe how particular policies can be implemented in detail. These help local planning authorities to respond to planning applications in a systematic and fair way.

Regeneration teams also work to promote renewal of the urban fabric in many areas, and affordable artists' studio developments are often considered an important part of successful redevelopment schemes.

## Local Development Frameworks

Government advice in *Local Spatial Planning* lists four types of document that can contain policies and proposals relevant to culture and the arts (Department for Communities and Local

Government [DCLG], 2008). Examples are given below in each case. These are:

- ***the Local Development Framework Core Strategy***, which contains an overall vision for the local area, incorporating key local objectives.
- ***the Infrastructure Delivery Plan***, accompanying the core strategy, which lists the infrastructure needed, including cultural infrastructure, to deliver the policies in the Plan.

### An LDF Core Strategy Enabling Policy

#### The Regeneration of Designated Employment Areas in the London Borough of Brent

' Redevelopment will be expected to deliver:

- New employment floor space that is fit for modern usage for a range of B use classes including "starter" and "move on" units for small and medium enterprises, and (affordable) studios for artists and cultural and creative industries.'

Source: Brent Council (2007) Brent LDF Core Strategy, Policy CP BIW 4, [www.brent.gov.uk](http://www.brent.gov.uk) (as adapted by the author).

- **Area Action Plans**, which detail the framework for areas of significant change or conservation where, for example, it is intended to stimulate regeneration, focus area-based initiatives or deliver planned growth.



## **An Area Action Plan Policy**

### **Achieving a balanced mix of uses within the Clerkenwell Employment Priority Area in Islington**

' At least 50% of the non-residential floor space component of developments should be provided either for non-B1 uses (e.g. shops and local services, eating and drinking, hotel, education, gallery and exhibition space) or comprise B1 floorspace suitable for accommodation by micro and small enterprises, or affordable workspace/retail space.'

The reasoned justification states: ' "Affordable" workspaces/retail spaces are units provided for rent below the market rate, either to provide for the needs of specific sectors or to promote regeneration...Affordable, micro and small workspaces are encouraged...to ensure that the area's economic diversity is retained.'

Source: Islington Council (2010) Bunhill and Clerkenwell Area Action Plan, Draft for Consultation, Policy BC 8, [www.islington.gov.uk](http://www.islington.gov.uk)

Manor Oaks Studios, Sheffield. Photo: Yorkshire Artspace



- **Supplementary Planning Documents**, which are detailed explanations of LDF policies, including those allowing for planning obligations (Section 106 Agreements between the developer and the local authority) to deliver specified benefits.

These could:

- specify the amount of space for affordable artists' workspace in a development,
- define affordability in terms of rent levels,
- define eligibility criteria for those occupying the space, and
- suggest the nature of management of the space.

Examples are given below of Section 106 Agreement wording for recent developments in the London Boroughs of Brent and Hackney.

### **Section 106 Agreements and Supplementary Planning Documents**

**Harrow Road Studios** (12 purpose-built artists' workspaces in scheme of 125 affordable dwellings)

' the provision of not less than 300 sq m of Affordable Workshop space to be let on a long lease to Acme or other organisations nominated by Brent Council in order to provide affordable workspace... with priority to residents of Brent'

(Note: Brent Council's Section 106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document [2007] lists 'community or affordable workshop space' as a possible outcome of planning negotiations; see [www.brent.gov.uk](http://www.brent.gov.uk))

**Lesney Toys Site (Matchmakers Wharf)** (49 artists' workspaces and open market housing and other uses)

' the 2,293 sq m gross internal floor space area of the B1 Use Area as shown coloured xxx on the plan annexed... to be used as 49 affordable artists' studios available for a lower than market rent to local artists residing in the London Borough of Hackney'

' Not to occupy...or permit the use of the Open Market Dwellings... until such time as the Affordable Workspace has been transferred ...to Acme Studios or Other Affordable Workspace Provider for a term of not less than 125 years at a peppercorn rent and at a premium of £75 (inclusive of VAT) per square foot of net internal area.'

See [www.acme.org.uk](http://www.acme.org.uk) for details of both schemes

## Neighbourhood planning

*Neighbourhood Development Plans* (included in the Localism Bill) are plans drawn up by Neighbourhood Forums (representative groups of local people) with help from local authorities. They are intended to shape development in local neighbourhood areas such as single or multiple wards or parishes. They will be required to be consistent with the LDF for their area and will be subject to a local referendum.

Consultants Colin Buchanan, the Urban Forum and the Young Foundation have produced a simple guide to Neighbourhood Planning, which answers basic questions on the approach (see Further Advice).

### Situations where encouraging affordable studio use may be important

- Avoiding loss of employment on allocated land
- Providing valuable uses for vacant property
- Building social capital in new areas such as sustainable urban extensions and large infill sites
- Re-using empty premises in town/retail centres
- Retaining valuable historic buildings/streets or street scenes
- Creating synergies with the further and higher education sectors, providing space for those leaving college.

## Being proactive

People who want to see artists at work in their neighbourhoods and playing their part in local economic growth should make representations to the planning authority, in particular to the head of planning policy

- **at the consultation stage** in plan making (LDFs and AAPs) to ensure that enabling policies are included in plans that refer to the need for affordable studio space,
- to ensure that affordable artists' studios are identified as possible planning benefits in the Section 106 Agreements' **Supplementary Planning Documents**, and
- where **individual applications** are being considered for mixed use on employment sites and in other appropriate locations.

Affordable artists' workspace should be considered, at the same time as affordable housing, when housing and mixed-use schemes are being considered.



Arlington House, Camden. SPACE partnership with One Housing Group

Arts interests should also make it clear that affordable arts space should be considered and listed separately from arts or creative industry space generally in plans.



Bow Arts Trust schools project, 'Willow Birds' with artist Tessa Garland. Photo: Tessa Garland.

Providers are also proactive in securing partnerships with other local stakeholders. The London-based Bow Arts Trust made an agreement with registered social landlord Poplar HARCA (the Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association) to occupy difficult to let flats as live/work units, with part of the benefits flowing back to the local community.

**Bow Arts Trust**, established in 1995, runs four studio sites housing approximately 200 artists in spaces ranging from 90 to 800 square feet. It also runs the Nunnery gallery, which has been presenting a successful contemporary exhibition programme for over ten years. The trust runs a wide range of education and community programmes to generate income and opportunities for artists.

The live/work scheme involves artists inhabiting empty flats in the Poplar area that are awaiting refurbishment as part of Poplar HARCA's longer-term plans. The opportunity arose in discussions relating to the re-development of a community school and how artists might contribute to regeneration of the area.

The trust acts as a landlord, fixing windows and doors, and allowing artists a rent-free period to make the space habitable, and to personalise it.

The charges to artists are based on affordable housing rates. One third of the rent goes towards a community arts fund that delivers a programme of high-quality, sustainable community arts projects for local people throughout the borough. [www.bowarts.org](http://www.bowarts.org)

See resources at [www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)

# Artists' studio provision - examples

## Mixed-use schemes

In many cases successful affordable artists' studio provision has involved:

- Partnerships with developers on mixed-use redevelopment sites where it is a policy aim to retain employment use

### **Creative workspace as part of a range of community uses in refurbished former hostel – Arlington House, Camden Town, London, NW1**

The scheme involved the renovation of this building for a mix of uses, including residential units for homeless people, low-rent flats, a doctor's surgery, conference and business support facilities and training space.

The Section 106 Agreement between the developers One Housing Group and the London Borough of Camden identified 3,000 sq m of space for 'social economy' purposes. Established studio provider SPACE manages 13 affordable artists' studios within the scheme, which was opened in June 2010 by Mayor of London Boris Johnson and Tracey Emin.

See [www.spacestudios.org.uk](http://www.spacestudios.org.uk)

### **Permanent, affordable artists' studios resulting from a partnership with commercial house builders – the Galleria, Peckham, London, SE15**

An award-winning development between established provider Acme Studios and Barratt Homes comprising 98 apartments for private rent, shared ownership and social rent with 50 artists' studios. Opened in June 2006 by David Lammy MP, Minister for Culture.

Barratt Homes were initially refused planning permission to build on the site of a former print works because the development consisted entirely of housing and no employment space. The local authority, London Borough of Southwark, was determined to maintain employment use on the site.

Fifty purpose-built studios were created through the planning-gain mechanism - meeting the requirement to reprovide the employment space. The project was part funded by Arts Council England's Grant for the arts - capital programme.

See case study at [www.acme.org.uk](http://www.acme.org.uk)

- Developments involving arts or similar uses (for example creative industries to cross subsidise the affordable artists' space)

### **Creative industry workspace, and facilities for fine art students enabling affordable studio provision - Spike Island, Bristol**

Redevelopment of former tea packing factory in Bristol's Harbourside, for arts facilities. The building accommodates 70 studios for artists at affordable rents, together with gallery and residency spaces.

The enabling development, which shares the building, comprises a café, facilities for fine art students at University of the West of England, premises for start-up design businesses and cultural organisations paying market rents.

The development received funding from Arts Council England's Capital Programme, the South West Regional Development Agency and Bristol City Council.

[www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)

## **Re-use of vacant retail and office use in town centres**

- Leasing space from local authorities and private landowners in town centres to re-use empty retail and office space

### **Re-use of vacant office and shop premises in town centres - Harlow, Essex**

Twenty-three artists' studios, a gallery and a community space have been created by converting vacant office and shop space in central Harlow as part of the town regeneration initiative.

The scheme, known as Gatehouse Arts, was initially set up for three years, but project managers ACAVA are now working on incorporating studios into the long-term regeneration of Harlow. See [www.acava.org](http://www.acava.org)

The scheme is a partnership project between studio provider ACAVA (based in London), Essex County Council, Harlow Renaissance, Harlow Council and Harlow Town Centre Partnership. Funding came from the DCLG Empty Shops Initiative and Arts Council England, as well as some of the partners and the Harvey Centre.

See news at [www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)



### **Re-use of empty furniture shop for 36 artists and creative practitioners – central Gateshead**

The Shed project in Gateshead involves the provision of 36 rent and rates-free affordable artists' workspaces in a vacant shop in the centre of the town. The leases are for a three-year period and the scheme is part of the 'Starter for Ten' initiative promoted by Gateshead Council.

The studios are managed by local Community Interest Company, Mushroom Works - an experienced provider of affordable artists' studios.

Refurbishment of the empty shop was funded by Gateshead Council's capital programme and was supported by Arts Council England North East and the Northern Rock Foundation.

The aim is to move the artists to follow-on accommodation if and when the shop is demolished in order to retain a working community of artists in Gateshead.

See resources at [www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)

## **Working with neighbourhood groups**

- Working with neighbourhood planning groups to secure an element of affordable workspace in facilities designed to promote employment and economic activity

### **Ten affordable studio units established through partnership working with social enterprise organisation following production of neighbourhood strategy – Yorkshire Artspace**

The Housing Market Renewal (HMR) team in Sheffield and Arts Council England, Yorkshire commissioned a study into the potential for affordable studio provision in its three HMR areas. The study has led to two schemes to date, Manor Oaks Studios in the HMR South area (NFASP case study) and Knutton Road Studios, both in partnership with local social enterprises.

The Knutton Road Studios are part of SOAR Works enterprise centre at Parsons Cross, Sheffield, including serviced offices, workshops and light-industrial units, hot-desk space and 10 affordable artists' studios. Opening Summer 2011.

Designed by architects 00:/ for Soar Enterprises, after consultation with established provider Yorkshire Artspace. Studios managed by Yorkshire Artspace with rents at approximately £6 per sq ft per annum.

Planning Policy: A non-statutory neighbourhood strategy was adopted by the local neighbourhood group and Sheffield City Council. Financial support was obtained from the regional development agency.

[www.artspace.org.uk](http://www.artspace.org.uk)

## Further Advice

### The National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers

Advice on studio developments, contacts with local providers, case studies of provision and guidance on the role and value of artists' studios.

Recent briefing notes and case studies include: The value of artists' studios (2010); Developing artists' studios in partnership with social housing providers (Acme Studios, Leven Road, 2009) and Developing artists' studios in partnership with commercial housing developers (Acme Studios, Galleria, 2009).

Case studies on the Artists' studios and social housing (Bow Arts Trust Live/Work Scheme, 2010), Developing temporary artists' workspace (The Shed, Gateshead, 2010) and Developing artists' studios in a housing market renewal area (Yorkshire Artspace, Manor Oaks Studios, Sheffield, 2010).

NFASP, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ;  
Tel: 020 7251 9395; [www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)

## Arts Council England

National development agency for the arts; supports the sector with advice and guidance, grant support for studio providers and partnership working.

14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ; Tel: 0845 300 6200; [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

### Capital Studios: The London artists' studios development programme

This programme led by Acme Studios, now concluded, has produced a guide to securing, supporting and creating affordable studios in London. Many of the principles covering requirements for the sustainability of studios, development options and finance are generally applicable across the country.

See: *Artists' Studios: A Guide to Securing, Supporting and Creating Affordable Studios in London*, Acme and Capital Studios, 2007, [www.acme.org.uk](http://www.acme.org.uk)

## Department for Communities and Local Government

Planning Policy Statement 12, *Local Spatial Planning* gives details of how the system of local plans and planning works in England. See [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps12lsp](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps12lsp)

### Localism

The *Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill* is found at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide)

### Living Places

The *Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit* has a step-by-step guide on how to build culture into spatial planning. The toolkit includes case studies of provision and a range of good practice examples. Updates on legislation and national guidance are also included. See [www.living-places.org.uk](http://www.living-places.org.uk)



'Carve Up' workshop with artist Terri Potter at ACAVA's Gatehouse Arts project in Harlow. Photo: Sarah Bracey

### Neighbourhood Planning

The Urban Forum, The Young Foundation and Colin Buchanan have produced a document *Neighbourhood Planning: Questions and Answers*. It can be found at [www.neighbourhoodplanning.info](http://www.neighbourhoodplanning.info)

## Checklist - has your local authority?

- Included an enabling policy referring to the situations in which studio provision could be made in the LDF core strategy?
- Included a definition of 'affordability' for artists' studios in the written justifications of appropriate policies?
- Included a policy on affordable artists' studios in the section on the retention of sites in employment use?
- Considered affordable artists' studio provision in Area Action Plans, particularly in regeneration areas?
- Considered affordable artists' studios as an appropriate land use when negotiating affordable housing provision in large schemes?
- Given advice to Neighbourhood Forums preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans under the new Localism Bill?
- Considered including the cost of building/ converting buildings for studio use in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, or as a basis for the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule?
- Included the circumstances in which affordable artists' studios could be negotiated as economic and/or community benefits in your section 106 Supplementary Planning Document?
- Discussed the scope for local affordable studio provision with locally based studio providers and artists' groups?
- Considered good practice case studies of affordable artists' provision available on the NFASP website?
- Contacted NFASP to put you in touch with local studio providers where these are not already known?



Yorkshire Artspace, Knutton Road Studios, entrance (image 00:/architects)

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[www.nfasp.org.uk](http://www.nfasp.org.uk)

Cover: Artist Beth Carter  
in her Spike Island studio, Bristol.  
Photo: Stuart Whipps