

Olympic Legacy Supplementary Planning Guidance :

Consultation Response by the National Federation of

Artists Studio Providers (NFASP)

Introduction

NFASP

NFASP is the professional umbrella body representing the interests of all those involved with developing and managing affordable studio space for artists throughout the UK. Currently, we have 85 members, including 72 Studio members supporting around 5,000 artists through the provision of affordable workspace. Also a growing number of local authorities are joining to take advantage of the unrivalled experience of Federation members and the specialist advice and support we can offer.

NFASP supports the development of sustainable and affordable studio space for artists, and has good evidence over many years of the sustained contribution which such activity makes to the improvement of neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

The provision of affordable artists' workspace offers

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

In 2008, NFASP commissioned *Artists' Studio Provision in the Host Boroughs: a review of the potential impacts of London's Olympic Project*¹ (for more detail see page 8 below) which identified that:

In the five host boroughs (Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest), 940 affordable studio spaces for visual artists are provided by some three dozen studio providers, who have another 2,900 artists on their waiting lists. Many more artists are working in a variety of informal situations, which can be short term, expensive or unfit for purpose.

Regeneration pressures have always made achieving security and affordability difficult. Developments related to London's Olympic project exacerbate this and are now compounded by the uncertainties in the financial and property markets. Studio providers work effectively with local regeneration and development partners, their best practice securing affordable, long-term workspace for this world famous artists' community.

To secure and extend these opportunities requires stronger and more consistent support within planning frameworks, regeneration policies and local and subregional priorities.

¹ This report is available from the NFASP website http://nfasp.org.uk/resources_single.php?id=42

NFASP recently published *Investing in Communities: The provision of affordable artists' studios: A role for Spatial Planning* (July 2011) which highlights how artists' studios contribute to sustainable communities². The document opens with a statement by John Fitzgerald, Joint Group Managing Director, Telford Homes Plc, discussing the Lesney Toys site development, under construction in Homerton, LB Hackney, London.

'...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.'

NFASP commends the spirit and the specificity of this to the Mayor for the final OLSPG. Additional information and evidence is given on pages 5-7 of this document.

NFASP's submission to the GLA on the proposed OLSPG

- P5:1.3 **Delivering the Vision:** the new place will be surrounded by "old places". Improved connectivity, growth and investment in the Opportunity Area are all welcome: new opportunities need to build on the cultural, social and financial investment made over the years by a number of longstanding and locally and internationally well-respected arts, cultural and heritage groups. NFASP would particularly draw your attention to the c1,000 artists' studios based in the 5 host boroughs.
- P7:1.4 **Convergence:** by some standards, the 5 boroughs surrounding the proposed OLSPG area are ahead of London wide averages. The clusters of artists studios in East London represent a co-location of artistic activity, community and enterprise which has an international reputation, and which is one of the largest, if not the largest such cluster-location in the world. Many individual studios have already made considerable contributions to the neighbourhoods in which they are located (see examples and case studies in *Investing In Communities: The provision of affordable artists' studios: A role for Spatial Planning* and a wide variety of other [NFASP case studies](#)) NFASP is clear that this studio grouping of artists studios can help the 5 boroughs in their aspiration to deliver to the 7 core outcomes.
- P9:1.5 **Purpose:** NFASP's recent and widely welcomed booklet for planners *Investing in Communities: The provision of affordable artists' studios: A role for Spatial Planning* (July 2011) sets out how planners, private and third sector bodies and development agencies have successfully enabled new artists workspace to be developed and existing workspace to be strengthened and retained. NFASP commends this advice to be built strategically and practically into the OLSPG.

² [This document is available online from the NFASP website](#)

P23: 2A **Development Principle A3:** NFASP welcomes the references to Social Infrastructure, and the inclusion of cultural facilities within that. It asks the Mayor to note that cultural facilities would include places where people can actively engage in making and practising visual and other kinds of art (as well as places where people might enjoy art presented to them) and that visual artists living and working in and near the locality can make a substantial contribution to this. Visual artists have also, in many places across the UK, been commissioned, placed, located or offered studio space in community facilities (community centres, schools etc). This kind of studio provision often works best where there is a close and symbiotic relationship with neighbouring (professionally managed) artists' studios.

P25: 2B **Business and employment:** NFASP would refer the Mayor to the well-evidenced case for the economic and enterprise contribution which the creative and cultural industries make to local and city-region economies, and in particular to the importance of increasing the amount of affordable workspace for sole practitioners and micro-enterprises. In this context we note again the important contributions of which East London's network of professionally managed and highly expert artists' studio providers make to the proposed OLSPG area.

P27:2B **Business and employment:** NFASP welcomes the importance given to the creative and cultural industries in driving forward regeneration in the area. Again, the Mayor should note the importance of sustaining and improving existing creative and cultural workspace, and in particular existing and currently proposed artists' studio buildings. Successive NFASP or ACME commissioned research reports have set out how studio groups very rarely enjoy secure, safe, accessible and sustainable use of the (largely) former industrial buildings they occupy. Leases are often short, continuity is often at risk, community interest, social enterprise, mutual or other non-profit ownership of freeholds is scarce.

This has been a predominant pattern in the 5 boroughs surrounding the OLSPG area (and indeed elsewhere), but locally the risks attached to these kinds of occupancy conditions appears to have been exacerbated by the pressures caused by the scale of regeneration and inward investment in and around the Olympic area. Sustaining existing workspace is essential, and the OLSPG should ensure that it includes visual artists as an eligible employment activity where it is seeking to protect (let alone increase) employment floor space available for this sector.

Visual artists pay rent, provide employment, secure skills of hand and brain in the area, generate expenditure and footfall, bring in cultural and other tourism, enhance reputation and help "re-position" areas like the OLSPG area in the minds of business, investors and the wider world.

- P63: 3.3 **Stratford Development Principles:** NFASP notes that Bow Arts is a member of Stratford Rising, the partnership/network body which is leading the development and improvement of the Stratford Cultural Quarter (mapped also eg P64 Fig 3.3.2).
- P79: 3.5 **Hackney Wick and Fish Island Development Principles:** NFASP notes that artists' studios and studio providers like SPACE already play an important role in regenerating the area and in bringing to HW&FI a range of professional skills and practices which (a) contribute to the employment and cognitive diversity of the area and (b) have helped and will help planners and developers make imaginative interim, medium AND long-term use of difficult buildings and areas.

NFASP advice for planners³

In NFASP's view, 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.

The sector

The Artists' Studio Sector provides a continuous offer of opportunities to create widely 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 Britain'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 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 studios might be in refurbished or new facilities, and in dedicated or mixed-economy buildings.

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

³ NFASP has recently (July 2011) published *Investing in Communities: The provision of affordable artists' studios: A role for Spatial Planning*

- 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 green field 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 artists' studio providers will be able to identify the possibilities for provision and the re-use of buildings.

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 for studios 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 by artists 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?⁴

- 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

Examples of including affordable artists' studios in the planning mix:

Avoiding loss of employment on allocated land

Studio space can add vitality and interest to areas by occupying sites where manufacturing has declined. For example London based studio provider ACME are currently about to complete on a development developers Telford Homes a landmark mixed-use development in the London Borough of Hackney. Located on the site of the former Lesney Matchbox Toys Factory in Homerton, E9, Matchmakers Wharf comprises 49 purpose-built artists' studio, 209 residential units which will become available for sale or as social housing and commercial space for community, office and retail use. Hackney Council fully supports the

⁴ Source: *Artists' studios: A guide to securing, supporting and creating affordable studios in London*, Acme and Capital Studios, 2007. See www.nfasp.org.uk/resources

scheme which will see continued employment use on the site and complements plans to promote creative industries in the area.

Re-using empty premises in town/retail centres

Affordable artists' studio space can also be the chosen re-use option for vacant retail and office space in town centres. For example, ACAVA (London based) studio providers working in partnership with Essex County Council, Harlow Renaissance, Harlow Council and Harlow Town Centre Partnership have developed 23 artists studios a gallery and a community space in a former vacant office building as part of a regeneration initiative with plans to incorporate for the long term rather than the initial 3 year timeframe.

Building social capital in new areas such as sustainable urban extensions and large infill sites

Affordable artists' studios can be integral part of a mixed use scheme as in Space Studios, Arlington House development in Camden Town London. Offering residential units for homeless people, low rent flats, a doctor's surgery, conference and business support facilities in addition to 13 affordable artists' studios within the scheme. The scheme retains employment use on a former hostel and is in partnership with developers One Housing Group and London Borough of Camden fulfilling social economy aims.

Yorkshire Artspace have worked with The Housing Market Renewal Team in Sheffield City Council and Arts Council England, Yorkshire to deliver on the potential for affordable artist's workspace as part of their Neighbourhood Strategy. Two schemes have resulted in the provision of 18 artists studios across the two developments.

Creating synergies with the further and higher education sectors, providing space for those leaving college.

Another mixed use example illustrated by a development in a former tea packing factory in Bristol accommodates 70 studios for artists at affordable rents with residency spaces and a gallery subsidised by the rest of the building which houses facilities for fine art students from University of West of England other cultural and creative industries paying commercial rents.

Providing valuable uses for vacant property

Bow Arts Trust established in 1995 offers, across a broad portfolio of cultural activity, a live/work scheme pioneering the use of empty flats awaiting refurbishment in Poplar, East London. The artists are offered affordable housing rents and one third of the rent goes into a community arts fund to deliver with the help of the artists a sustainable arts project for the benefit of community.

East London Studios

In 2007, NFASP commissioned *Artists' Studio Provision in the Host Boroughs: a review of the potential impacts of London's Olympic Project*⁵ from David Powell, DPA. This research revealed:

Artists' studios in the host boroughs

This 2008 research identifies 26 studio providers in the host boroughs and 57 buildings where more than 50% of the occupants are visual artists. Hackney has the highest concentration of the host boroughs' studio groups and studio buildings, with 58% of buildings, 53% of units. Tower Hamlets has 28% of studios, but 43% of the studio units. Newham, Waltham Forest and Greenwich host between them the remaining 15% of the host borough studios.

Most studio providers are formally incorporated and have studio provision as their priority. Other providers include three commercial landlords and LB Waltham Forest. Many studio groups are less formal, often occupying buildings as subtenants or in other quasi commercial arrangements. There are even less formalised groups which are emerging the whole time: the vast majority of these will not have been mapped in this brief survey or in other earlier research.

Security of studio tenure

Only three of the 57 buildings identified in the host boroughs are owned by a studio provider. There have been no changes to the list since 2004, indicating that this is not a continuous process. Buildings are rented from private landlords (70% in 2008 - less than in 2004), local authorities (22% - up on 2004) and from the Crown Commission, Registered Social Landlords and others.

Sixteen studio buildings have leases expiring by 2012, five by 2008. Seven of these are expected to renew on affordable terms, five to vacate and the status

⁵ This report is available from the NFASP website http://nfasp.org.uk/resources_single.php?id=42

of four of these is not known. Closures continue to occur. SPACE, for example, reports 10,000 sq ft of studios lost in the last four years.

A number of recent and new studio developments are under contract or in advanced planning. SPACE has 15 units at the Triangle in Hackney, and has taken on management of the Barking Malthouse from London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. New projects include Acme's 21 studios at Leven Road in Tower Hamlets (the first UK model of affordable studios in a social housing project) and ACAVA will have 12 new studios within a large supported housing project in Canning Town.

Informal arrangements

Many artists, whether they are already on studio providers' waiting lists or not, create informal working arrangements for themselves, in a wide variety of more or less regular arrangements with owners, landlords and occupiers. Whilst this may suit some artists, others, by inexperience or through lack of choice, find themselves in expensive, insecure or inappropriate workspace to the detriment of their practice.

Affordability of rents

A range of rents are offered by studios in the host boroughs. An affordable rent is now (2008) considered to be between £9 and £9.20 inclusive psf for visual artists' studios in London. Affordability for young and established visual artists diminishes above this and it is considered that anything over £12 psf becomes increasingly difficult for visual artists to afford unless they share or take much smaller spaces.

The great diversity, the different scale and the technical demands of thousands of individual artists' practices require a wide variety of types of studio. For many artists, smaller spaces are not appropriate.

Demand for studio spaces

The host borough studio providers have c2,900 artists on their waiting lists. This level of demand has stayed this strong over the last five years or more. Many artists state that a studio base in one of the host boroughs is a priority. There is clear evidence of demand from European and other international artists. There is no evidence that the market is oversupplied. Occupancy levels in well managed studios remain very high and turnover very low.

Key Messages from the Research

Studios: demand, and good practice in developing and providing them

Demand for long-term affordable studios in east London remains buoyant, as evidenced by growing waiting lists over the last few years, sustained levels of demand and feedback from artists on waiting lists.

There is no evidence of any immediate threat of over-supply of affordable studios. Developers and planners concerned about this may well be confusing commercially developed “creative workspace” and affordable, sustainable workspace for visual artists under consideration in this research and report.

Studio providers demonstrate good practice in developing models for medium and longer term use of light industrial and similar buildings.

There appears to be a significant amount of informal, short term studio space-making with formal and informal groups organising spaces for themselves in a variety of more (and often less) beneficial or sustainable arrangements.

Studio providers, developers and regeneration agencies: mutual benefit

Studio providers are confident that they have a number of development and management models offering property owners and public agencies the certainty of 100% occupancy in well managed workspace, for lower income workers.

Delivery agencies and other public bodies, Registered Social Landlords and commercial property owners have established mutually beneficial long-term arrangements with a range of Studio Providers.

Studio providers own a small number of properties. They hold a variety of lease and licence arrangements from commercial owners, public agencies and delivery bodies. Only one local authority directly provides studios to artists.

Studios and their local contributions: reasons for supportive planning and regeneration frameworks.

Artists and studio providers contribute to the local economy, to place making and to the vitality and distinctiveness of local and community life. They contribute greatly to the wider cultural reputation of some boroughs and their local authorities.

NFASP and its members need to engage with local planning reviews, master planning opportunities and with the Olympic legacy and London Plan processes.

Affordable, sustainable artists' studio provision has not yet been secured in Olympic legacy discussions and planning and needs to be differentiated from other cultural and creative workspace.

Studio provision is neither consistently nor adequately represented in Local Development Frameworks, reflecting a low policy status and priority amongst local authorities and delivery bodies. At best, it may be covered by statements of intent or priority relating generically to creative workspace.

Strategic agencies: the need for support

The specific studio provision needs of visual artists are not yet secured within the overall legacy master planning frameworks being developed by LDA and ODA. These are increasingly strongly recognised in the Host Boroughs Cultural Leadership Board and related host borough programmes

ACE's 3 year programme intentions to 2011 offer advocacy support for the sector, confirm existing levels of support for NFASP and a number of providers, but offer no new resources directly to tackle existing studio waiting lists, nor to mitigate or exploit new Olympic impacts.

Olympic Impacts

Property conditions for studio providers are already made difficult by the impact of east London's long-term regeneration agenda and the effect of developments spreading east from the City and Canary Wharf. This has been exacerbated by the increased demand for industrial property in areas surrounding the Olympic park, and most recently by the credit crunch and adverse conditions which developers and builders are facing.

As with other cultural activities and agencies, studio providers fear that the demands of Olympic project for extra resources will diminish support and attention to their own demands and requirements.