

# Alliance House



## PROJECT SUMMARY

Alliance House is a development of 32 one and two bedroom apartments. Located in the conservation area adjacent to St Mary's Church, a major landmark in Portsmouth which can be seen from around the Hampshire City. Situated within one mile of Southsea's shopping, bars and restaurants, the Spinnaker Tower and Gunwharf Quays leisure and shopping facilities are just two miles away.

**The 32 homes, each with outdoor living space, were completed on 31 May 2011.**



## Project background

A previously dilapidated business centre, Radian's proposals for the regeneration of Alliance House were taken to public exhibition at St Mary's Church on 28 October 2008. As Alliance House is in the St Mary's Churchyard conservation area, the planners had to ensure that the design of the flats enhanced this environment.

### Planning consent was received on 31 December 2008

The apartments have been designed to make the most of the site aspect with spacious balconies and ground floor patios provided to encourage outdoor living. Ground floor apartments and those served by a lift have a cycle storage area incorporated in the hallways. This provides a useful and flexible space that can be utilised for other activities should the residents not cycle.

Two apartments on the ground floor have been designed specifically for wheelchair users, under the guidance of Portsmouth City Council Occupational Therapists. Wet rooms, wheelchair charging points and automated doors are included in the adaptations and both homes are prepared for retrofitting of additional equipment, such as electric hoists.



## Consultation process

At the consultation meetings with the community, many suggestions were made by local residents and Radian had the plans amended accordingly. Strong on-going relationships whilst the building was taking place were reinforced by a steering group comprising local community representatives, the contractor, Radian staff and local police. Regular meetings of the steering group were held throughout the construction of the new development.





## Technology

As leaders in the field of environmental development and retrofitting, it was important to Radian that an environmental approach was taken. As a result:

- **85% of all waste material produced during the process of construction was recycled**
- **24 hour lighting in the corridors was installed to deter potential burglary**
- **Photo Voltaic installation to the main roof serving electricity in the communal areas**



## Challenges



Work started on site on 7 December 2009 and the contractor, W Stirland Ltd, was two months ahead of schedule, when the site fell victim to an arson attack on 27 June 2010. The fire, started by two 12 year old boys, destroyed approximately one third of the newly constructed timber

frame building, with additional damage to the foundations, brickwork and drains. Witnesses reported flames 25ft above the adjacent houses, many of which received superficial damage due to the immense heat generated.

The fire damage was estimated at approximately £250,000, and the completion date was delayed from 24 March to 31 May 2011.

In October 2010 Radian was contacted by Catch22. This excellent charity provides specialist support to young people by equipping them with the skills and confidence to make a positive start in life, perhaps after an initial setback.

One of the young people who had set fire to the building had been given a 12-month referral order by the Court with Catch22, whose Reparation Service helps young offenders understand the consequences of their offences. Once the Justice Officers, the contractor, surveyor, site agent and Radian had established their desired outcomes, the reparation work began. This focussed on the effects of the damage and the impact to not only families, but on additional services brought in and subsequent financial losses due to construction delays.

Radian and its contractor finally invited the offender to visit the completed development, at which time he demonstrated his responsibility and remorse by offering a written as well as verbal apology for the damage he had caused.

Radian is highly supportive of youth work and was pleased to be involved in a successful outcome, although it would have been preferable to have avoided it altogether!

Snowfall and cold weather in the early months of 2011 made keeping to the programme difficult, but Stirland brought in more tradesmen to ensure the completion date was met, and a well constructed and designed scheme was handed over to Radian on 31 May 2011.



## History

The development has been constructed on the site of one of the last remaining corset factories for which Portsmouth was at one time world-famous.

These homes stand on the historical site of a corset factory constructed at the end of the Victorian era. Originally owned by Charles Bayer and Company Ltd., the premises were acquired by another corset manufacturer, Leethams (Twilfit) in the 1940s, who continued production of corsetry on this site until the factory closed. The firm of Leethams (Twilfit) was established in Portsmouth in 1877 and allowed employment opportunities for thousands of Portsmouth's women, some starting at the factory as runners from the age of 15. The St. Mary's Road factory was Twilfit's main corsetry factory in Portsmouth after the war.

An institution in Portsmouth, Leethams (Twilfit) was bought out by Spirella in 1968 but continued to produce and manufacture the high quality corsetry on this site. Many local exhibitions and historians have detailed the corset industry in Portsmouth, of which Alliance House stood key.

In 1984, the factory was closed and adapted to become the Alliance Business Centre and community centre, which boasted such diverse tenants as glass companies, Medical & Dental Laboratories, dance schools and a CD shop.

The communal building was underused and dilapidated before Radian's regeneration of this site started on 7 December 2009.

Radian would have preferred to keep the name 'Alliance House' for the new development, whilst the Post Office prefers street names and numbers. However, to all involved in the project and no doubt to local people, this will always be Alliance House!



Radian is an award-winning housing and support provider, managing 18,000 affordable homes across the south of England. Whilst the majority of housing stock is general needs housing, it also includes a significant portfolio of sheltered and supported housing, together with key worker accommodation, shared ownership, market rent and private sale properties.