

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
AND ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981**

Revised Inquiry into

**THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK
(AYLESBURY ESTATE SITES 1B-1C)**

COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2014

PINS REFERENCE: NPCU/CPO/A5840/74092

**Proof of Evidence of
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BA (Hons), PhD
For the Aylesbury Leaseholders Group**

Appendix LL3

**Appendix LL3; sample of ESRC project interviews with displaced council tenants
and council tenants under threat of displacement from the Aylesbury Estate
(not involved in the public inquiry)**

INTERVIEW (Dec 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANT WHOSE FAMILY HAS BEEN DECANTED FROM THE AYLESBURY ESTATE

Interviewee L2, Muslim woman (age 35-49), council tenant who had lived on the Aylesbury since 1991. Speaks for her wider family as their English is poor, they are in ill health and also have disabilities.

Q: How long did you live on the Aylesbury?

A: Over 20 years, since 1991.

Q: As a council tenant?

A: As a council tenant.

Q: Who was in your household?

A: Myself, my two boys, young brother, eldest brother (half-brother), mum, dad, cousin and her kid. 9 people.

Q: How many bedrooms?

A: 3 but the living room was big.

Q: When were you told you would have to leave?

A: 3-4 years ago....

Q: Can you talk me through what happened?

A: We didn't hear from them for ages then all of sudden we get documents etc. 5-6 months later we got a visit. Promised they'd keep us all together, wouldn't split us up. 1 year later we got an offer of 5 bed in Camberwell area, but it wasn't finished. We thought fine. Mum was told elder brother they can't offer (ok as he old enough and not there a lot). Another 4-5 months passed and they said 'Do you want a 5 bed?' And my mum said of course! So they said when it's done (the house finished) we'll contact you. Put all our names down. Heard nothing. 17 Dec 2015 they said they'd rehouse us in 5 bed...Jan, Feb we heard nothing...we called them and asked when our 5 bed would be ready, they said 'we know nothing'. The housing officer said: 'I don't know who said that to her (that her mum was getting a 5 bed)'. I said 'Josephine ****', she said 'oh she left'. They said there's no 5 beds anywhere. We were told in a few weeks we would get keys to a new building....a 3-4 bed offer, they said there wasn't even a 5 bed there. I said 'what?' My mum said 'they can't do this to us'. But the woman had gone, didn't know what to do. We started digging and found out could only bid for a 3-4 bed flat. I told mum if they split us up we need to be close, as I am carer

for my mum and dad and I have 2 kids. They said ok will put you close enough. The formal letter said was 'entitled to a 2 bed'. Dad was not on it. They said they'd sort it out. A few days later my mum got a letter and was told she need to get out.

Q: And what was the impact of this on your family?

A: Dad got worse (he is bed bound and has memory problems). My son had tonsilitus at the time (he had an operation [got his tonsils out] a few weeks before we got the letter). We were all over the place. They offered me a 4th floor flat, but I'm scared of heights, I can't go no further than 2nd floor, I said I can't take it, they said you are not allowed to refuse it....so what are you supposed to do? After 45 mins I decided to take it.

The worst was one month before we moved out. My older son is asthmatic and my younger brother has arthritis...They turned the heat off, the gas off (we have gas bills to prove it), we couldn't cook, there were no lights, no hot water. No water at all.

Q: Which block?

A: Chiltern House, second floor, we were the last council tenants to leave. We were told to leave beginning 2015, we finally left June 2016. They stopped collecting the rubbish, so there were mice everywhere. When we opened our door there were homeless sleepers everywhere, one time they left a needle on our doorstep...I called the council but they ignored us. The lift wasn't working (her disabled mother relied on the lift) ...the lights were off...the workmen or whatever; my son fell over in the dark. It's disgusting, I don't understand how they can treat people like that...all they do is lie.

I never had an issue before, never been mugged, normal life, but they let it (the estate) go, there were no drugs til they let it go...it was dark, hell on earth.

Q: And what's your new flat like?

A: It's 10 mins from old one, it's so small, dad can't get in the bathroom or take a shower. He was in hospital and he's at my mum's now...he can't move here. The kids miss their grandma, they've never been in a place where grandma was not there, they will cry at night...'I want to go to Nans'. I'll say wait until the weekend son. He cries he wants to move back to the Aylesbury.

Mum's losing her marbles, she's lost so much weight, she lost her friends...one is in Cook Road, one is in Nunhead, she hasn't seen them since she moved. She hasn't seen any of them.

Q: How would you sum up your experience in one sentence...what lessons have you learned?

A: Not to trust the council, not to trust authority. The household was always together and all of a sudden we have to get used to not seeing each other every day.

Q: I'm sorry.

A: I don't want to remember!

INTERVIEW (Nov 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANT WHO IS TO BE DECANTED FROM THE AYLESBURY ESTATE

Interviewee A16, white British (age 85-89), retired, council tenant, suffers from COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and angina. His daughter also there but she does not live on Aylesbury anymore.

Q: Do you mind if I ask you if have you always lived in south London?

A: Yes... I have been living here, 30 odd years...

...

A: As far as I am concerned, I am quite happy living on the estate, my son died in that corner.

Points to the far corner of the living room

...We took him to hospital, and they sent him back home, there used to be a bed in that corner because he used to like, he was down syndrome, and he used to like to sit up and watch his wrestling and that with me and that, and he died in that corner. And, that was in 1994, he died in that corner. And in 1997 my wife followed him, from cancer and that. And they turn around and said to me, 'We are going to move you'. And I turned around and said, 'You can have the place back when they carry me out'. [The council asked] 'Why?' Well, I said 'My wife and my son died here, and that is where I am going to stay'. Well I'm a bit stupid because they are dead now, but, their spirits are still in that house and that is where I want to be. They think I am mad.

Q: I guess it is more than just the bricks and mortar, isn't it?

DAUGHTER: You've got him living here 30 odd years, you have got so many memories, that if you move, and go to a different place, you could die there, and you would rather die where you have got all of your memories.

Q: Of course, of course.

...

Q: So you've got a nice little family unit all around, in the local area?

A: Now, my grand daughter, she comes in, and she sits on the couch and she says, 'Hello old man. How are you old man?' 'Not so much of the old man if you don't mind.'

I laugh

Q: Mr **** you mentioned the importance of family as one of the things that you value, not just in life but also I guess about living in this area, right? Because you've got your family quite close. Which is really nice. Is there anything else that you still of value about the area, I guess you talked about the history of the area and families, is there anything else?

A: Oh yeah. That bloke up there.

Points to a portrait of a middle-aged man of South Asian Heritage which is hanging above the sofa

A: He owns the shop over the road there, and I worked for him for 13 years. He died, and we were the best of friends.

...

A: I always thought that, in the Victorian times, the class distinction, it was tremendous. When they brought in, when Aneurin Bevan came in, class went out of the window. Now, they are suddenly bringing class back in to the daily life of this country. And on top of that they are bringing in ideas from America.

Q: Can I ask you? You said something about, at the moment class is coming back into this country as a real issue. Do you think that housing plays a role in bringing back class?

A: Oh yeah. It definitely plays a role in the class, because, all of the houses that are being built and that, they're 90% housing associations. Housing associations help to make money. So the lower, the poorer the people are, the less chance they have of getting a home. Now you've got, up the road there, you have got the new block of flats that have gone up. Right, they, are £330,000 flats. And they are all, housing association flats. About 10% of them are Council. And the amount of money, and the way housing associations work, now, moving to a housing association, property, you are there may be for two years say, and suddenly one day you, it is a rough patch. So, you haven't got the money to pay your rent, after two weeks, of not paying rent,

He makes a slicing noise

A: You are out.

.....

Q: Can I ask Mr **** when did you first find out that there might be a change to the estate, like a regeneration? Can you remember?

A: The first time I got to hear about this was about a year and a half ago. They pulled the front part on the East Street down and that. I had friends down there and they all moved outside of London to different places. And they asked me if I wanted to move outside of London, and I said 'No thanks'. I will stay where I am, I have got the family around, although they annoy me half of the time...they are my family, and I appreciate their being around. Now if I was to move outside of London and that, within three months, I would be dead.

...

A: And the reason I would die is because there would be no one around, and I could not interact with the members of my family, and that.... This estate is crumbling, it is losing its humanity, and, I have been living on here 30 odd years, and when I first moved on here it was a real pleasure. Now it is a tedious task, you can't, you can't, get women walking down the stairs and that, without, complaints of somebody exposing themselves. The moral well-being of this estate has gone downhill, that's all I'm going to say... And you have got the gang mentality and that. But all of the time I have lived on this estate, I can walk up and down these passageways and don't get bothered. I turn around, and see five or six blokes together and I walk past them

mines salutes

I laugh

Q: Can I ask you a question about, you said that a lot of the new blocks, the majority are housing association, so they are more expensive. If all of these blocks become more expensive, how do you think that might change what the area is like?

DAUGHTER: there will be a lot more people on the street.

A: Now, this is the world as it is, this is a working-class area. If they all become housing association people, then you will get the rich, and that come in. And it will become a social snobbery area where you wouldn't be allowed to drop a sweet paper on the floor without someone coming

mimes someone turning up their nose

A: ...housing associations are good in their own right and that, and they can be pretty good, but they are not for the poor. And never have been for the poor. They are, well, the rent for this place is £174 a week.

A: Estates as I see them, are family units. You have got, one family, and it is a block of flats which are just stones and bricks and that ... And it is nothing. Without the people on the estate, it is just an empty block of flats. With the people on the estate it becomes family units. And although they are all different families, it is a unit of human beings. And there are different, there are some human beings that are reasonable and that, and some that are, you get some people that are, conversational and all of that, but that is all part of life. And if, if you do not live like this, then you are an outcast, you have got nothing to make your life richer, or that. Now if you have got neighbours that are, fun to be with and that. The estate becomes more reasonable, more flexible, there are no fighting and that, and life in the estate is a happy life. Whereas you have got confrontation which is not. Things... ahh, don't give me a headache...

Pause

Q: Do you think there could be any benefits at all to the estate coming down?

A: No. There is no benefit whatsoever, in, when you have got an estate that is full of people, and that...there is no benefits in that, you disrupt the estate, you move all of the people out and

throw them in all different directions. And, then, the estate becomes just a block of flats, empty, there is no life in it, no reason to be there.

....

A: ...I for one, turn around and said that these estates, this estate, if it had been looked after better, could have gone on to the year 2070, or 2080, it doesn't make much difference. The only difference would have been the change in the people. And, it is my opinion, and it may be a wrong opinion, I wouldn't say that I have a knowledge enough to, but the way I see it is, the council, is in charge of a certain district. Their job is to see that that district is up and running smooth as possible. And that's the repairs on the estate, and the estates and the places, is their responsibility, so far as to be deemed reasonable. And, they should, as a council, be humane in their way of thinking, and that the council, as far as I am concerned the council is a body that is, that protects the estate and the life on the estate. It is no good, a council turning around and being close minded...This council is inhumane, as far as I am concerned.

Q: Mr ****, those are actually the end of my questions. I don't know if you have anything you would like to add?

A: No, what I'm saying is, if a council has got no humanity in it, it's no good for the district, most- their most important part is to keep their people - to evict a woman and her four children from a place and put them on the street is inhumane, I don't care what anyone says, it is inhumane.

... [the housing officer] got a flat for me once, and took me to walk around it and have a look at it. And it was on the top floor, and I turned around and said 'Where is the lift?' [She replied] 'Oh the lift is broken down you will have to walk upstairs.' And I said 'Excuse me but I can't.' And she said 'Why can't you?' And I said 'I suffer from COPD and angina and if I get halfway up the stairs you'll have to carry me the rest of the way, and that' and she said, 'Oh, but but but but but', and I went back and told them, the lady in the office, she just laughed. And I thought

*Mr **** makes a V sign with his fingers*

INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANTS FACING DECANTMENT

Interviewee A11, white couple (age 30-34) with 2 young kids, temporary council tenants, father employed and stay at home mum. Interesting case of impacts on more recent temporary council tenants moved in.

Q: So how long have you lived here on the Aylesbury Estate?

A: I think I have lived here a year and a half.

Q: Just a year and a half? Okay. And where did you live before?

A: In Herne Hill.

Q: And was there any particular reason that you moved from Herne Hill to the Aylesbury?

A: Because I was in a hostel in Herne Hill and it only had one room. So they moved me here.

... we only have one bedroom and there are four of us in the room. So it is not really that much more spacious because we only had one child in the other house.

Q: And, I guess you are both already aware of the plans to regenerate, the demolition, yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: So when did you first find out about it?

A: I think it must have been about a month ... month after we moved in, yes.

Q: And was that a leaflet through the door or just word-of-mouth, or?

A: A leaflet.

Q: Oh okay, you got a leaflet.

A: Yeah.

Q: And, what was your kind of initial reaction to...

A: I think, not really that bothered because I am a temporary accommodation...

Q: You're temporary accommodation here? So you kind of anticipated being moved on?

A: Yeah

Q: And has there been, kind of, building work happening?

A: Yeah.

...

Well today I think I just put him [*younger son*] down for the first, like 2 minutes, and as soon as I had put him down there was a big drilling in the wall, whatever they are either doing work upstairs or downstairs. And they are doing work outside.

... Oh yeah, it is noisy... And it is noisy as hell.... They have made like, mice come.

... We can't go on the balcony no more. If I let the little one out there- They are refurbishing upstairs and it is made like rats come, on the lower floors and stuff... And it was rats first but we didn't really see any. And then as soon as they started doing the work upstairs, I think I was outside clearing up the stuff when I saw a rat and it looked to me, ha ha! And we haven't ever gone back out there, since. Ha ha!

Q: And have you guys contacted, like the management or anything like that about it?

A: We called them and they came and put rat poison. They told me that it is not an emergency for them to remove the dead rats that were on the balcony so they left them there, and then a few days later they came and one man collected it and put poison down.

Q: So, ****, for you, the prospect of the estate being demolished, do you think that it is likely to affect work or anything like that, depending where you get moved to?

A: Erm, yeah. Because if they do move us like, far away from the area or out of the area, that is going to be very hard for me to get to work because it takes an hour already to commute into work (he is a carer), so we kind of pray that they are going to move us somewhere closer but I can't really see, living in Southwark, them putting us anywhere unless they put us in Lambeth.

... I would like to live closer to his family (hers in Camberwell, his in Brixton) because I can get support with the kids.

Q: So I guess, from what you have told me, a kind of uncertainty about,

A: All they do is just, when they go, they just put like, a gate on it on the doors and that is it. So all of the time I've seen them they have just literally, just, I hear them packing up, and then you look outside and there is a steel door around their door, so... they're gone.

Q: You don't have to answer this question if you don't want to, it is a bit of a personal question but... can you describe for me, what it feels like to be in, a state of not knowing, kind of, where your next home might be? I know it is a difficult, and it is a bit of a horrible question, I'm sorry.

A: Yeahhh, when you have kids is just like, it is one of the most important things is stability. ... because this one [*older child*] is going to be starting nursery and stuff and I'm going to have to settle them into a nursery, and then move them, and we don't know where we are going, how far away from our, you know, our immediate family and stuff, and stuff like that so, it is kind of worrying.

...

To move somewhere far and have our support networks cut off, and if our support is cut off, it is going to struggle for us because, I do so much hours at work, she has to look after the kids and, each day I am gone, it takes a strain on her, because they wake up at six o'clock, five o'clock sometimes and I don't know how she does it. And she still has to go outside with them so... and it's hard, there is no way for her...

Q: Yeah, for sure. And I guess, it is really important to the kids as they get older, as you said to have some stability with nursery and school and that kind of stuff.

A: Yeah.

**** appears visibly uncomfortable with the questions I am asking so stop interview.

INTERVIEW (Nov 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANTS FACING DECANTMENT

Interviewee A14, white British, age (55-59), council tenant, unemployed.

Q: So how long have you lived here on the Aylesbury?

A: I have lived in this particular block [*Taplow*] since 2004. And I have lived over in Missenden which is the Aylesbury Estate, I lived over there for 18 years. I broke up with my wife, and then after six months they moved me in here. I was homeless for six months, and then they moved me in here.

But my thing now, as far as them getting people to move out, I am comfortable here, I know my neighbours and I'm comfortable with my surroundings. I am 56 now and I find that a very stressful situation, that I'm going to have to move away, hopefully not too far, but if it is then I am going to have to make new friends and, you know. So that is a bit stressful, and of course moving is stressful, it is one of the most stressful things isn't it?

Q: So, have you always lived in South London?

A: I was born in Camberwell.

Q: Oh right, so you are a lifelong-

A: Yes, I was in Camberwell for a bit. And then I moved up to New Cross when I was very very young, and then we moved back to Camberwell. And then I met me ex-old woman, and moved over there for years.

points to block across the street

Q: And, when did you first hear that there might be changes to the estate?

A: Well when they we first got letters to say they are knocking the surrounding, well they are knocking this and the surrounding areas down. I think that was a couple of years ago wasn't it? Probably a couple of years, two or three years ago.

Q: Oh right, so very recently.

A: Yeah. We got letters digitally, saying that we, that they are going to be doing demolition and all of that malarkey.

...

Yeah, I think they like, I think they want anyone who is on benefits, and people like that is, they want them out. So for want of a better word they are trying to yuppifie it all. The whole area.

Q: And, and the social difference between the, there is a kind of a class difference right? Do you think that is likely to change the sense of community in the area as well?

A: Yeah possibly, because, well, I think they're just going to do their best, like I say, to get people who are not working or on benefits, who are living in Council properties, to try to get them out, that is why, I think that's what they're trying to do. I think that is their sole aim.

Q: And where do you think people get the moved on to?

A: In the middle of Timbuktu somewhere. Up north or somewhere.

Q: Do you think there could be any benefits to knocking down an estate like this?

A: ... there is no point knocking up big tall one, and they are building these big tower blocks over at the Elephant [*and Castle*] now. You know, and especially what happened with the Grenfell Tower. You know, I dread to think how anyone would cope with a fire if there was one on the top floor of one of those buildings over there now. And they are carrying on building them. You know. Without even putting a sprinkler system in or something like that. I would feel very insecure in a high-rise block like that. I don't feel too good up here to be honest. I don't know what he's on the eighth floor. You know, we are lucky that these walls are solid concrete. So you have got half a chance, but I would be petrified if I lived over there. And a lot of them are private over there aren't they?

Q: Oh so the new-builds are not concrete are they? They are plasterboard?

A: Yeah there are plasterboard.

... I watched that being built. Mate, a strong wind would blow those walls over. I bet they are paper-thin, I bet you can hear every noise that goes on.

So they use plasterboard, yeah, and they will stick one there and one there and they will just fill it with a foam.

They have knocked them up too quick I think. If you look, when you go out, this block over here.

Points out of the front door towards the newly built states across the street

The end balcony, it is a slant like that.

Gestures with hand to demonstrate the angle of the slant

So they have rushed it. You can see that, you can see in the balcony that it is not level.

Q: So I guess, forgive me if I am wrong, what you're saying is that, these new flats, they look really nice, and they have fully fitted with carpets and kitchens and everything like that, but they might not necessarily last as long as these ones or may not be as safe potentially?

A: Yes, yes. All of the above there what you have just said, yeah. I think so...

But I am worried about getting, and as I said to you at the beginning, I am just anxious about where they are going to put me, am I going to be next to neighbours from hell, am I going to be the neighbour from hell? I don't know.

we laugh

.. You know, older people worry, even younger people worry. They've probably worry about that, they don't want to, you know, a shit road where there is all scumbags down it or something, you know, you don't want that. But that is, my anxiety is where are they going to put me, you know. Am I going to be forced into a situation where I have got to take it? You know. I don't think there will be a lot of choices going about, to be honest with you. And once you have put pen to paper and commit yourself, you are buggered aren't you?