



Mayor calls for investigation into council's 'racist' regeneration plans

Matt Weaver

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The mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, today called for an investigation into what he claims is the failure of a council to involve black and minority groups in one of Britain's biggest regeneration projects.

He said that Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) should formally investigate Southwark council over its multibillion pound plans for the rundown Elephant and Castle area of south London.

The mayor's call has infuriated Liberal Democrat-controlled Southwark, which accused him of playing party politics over the issue.

Mr Livingstone said: "Southwark council has failed to address the very real concerns of the African and Caribbean communities who have consistently alleged that they experience racism within the local authority-led regeneration process."

His comments come after a damning report in May by Lord Ouseley, the former chairman of the CRE, who warned that black traders were being driven out by the borough's regeneration plans.

Southwark council pointed out that it is acting on all 35 of Lord Ouseley's recommendations, which were contained in a report that it commissioned.

But Lee Jasper, the mayor's director of equalities and policing, said: "Black traders feel disenfranchised from the regeneration process. Our complaint is not politically motivated. Southwark [council] have had a long time to get this right and have failed to do."

He claimed that both black leaders in the area and the CRE were dissatisfied with the lack of progress made by Southwark in implementing Lord Ouseley's recommendations.

Southwark disputes this. Its leader, Nick Stanton, said: "The CRE has asked us for more information about progress on the Elephant and Castle. They said they were happy, and there was no need for intervention."

He added: "I'm surprised at the mayor's comments. I don't think this is a suitable issue for playing party politics. It is odd that some one who gave us a planning award for the


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Last Updated: Thursday, 15 December 2005, 17:46 GMT

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Black Londoners are not being properly consulted on one of England's largest regeneration schemes, says the mayor.

Ken Livingstone has requested that the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) investigate the £1.5bn regeneration of Elephant and Castle, in south London.

His office said the black community was "happy about regeneration but not happy about gentrification".

Southwark Council said the mayor's comments were "incredible" and accused him of "cheap political point" scoring.

The master plan for regenerating the 170-acre site in Elephant and Castle was agreed in February 2004.

About 4,200 homes are to be built along with two new "landmark" buildings and a civic square. The entire project will take about 10 years to complete.

Recommendations implemented

In a statement, Mr Livingstone said the council had "failed to reassure the local black community of its determination to tackle racism" and failed to address its concerns.

A spokesman for his office said the black community had "just not been involved at all".

In March 2005, Lord Herman Ouseley made 35 recommendations in his independent review of Southwark Council's equality and diversity framework. The council say they have been implemented.

Cllr Nick Stanton, Liberal Democrat leader of the council said: "This is incredible. I met with Ken Livingstone just last month and we agreed that the successful regeneration of the Elephant and Castle is in everyone's interests and we should be working together to achieve this."

He accused the mayor of trying to score "cheap political points" which would only undermine "our excellent community relations".



Elephant and Castle as it might look under new plans

“ The successful regeneration of the Elephant and Castle is in everyone's interests and we should be working together to achieve this ”

Cllr Nick Stanton, leader of Southwark Council

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Racism probe 'was a cover-up'

ONE of Britain's best known equality campaigners has made a withering attack on a London council mired in claims of institutional racism.

Lord Ouseley, former chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, accused Southwark of driving out black and ethnic minority traders in its attempt to "regenerate" one of Britain's most deprived boroughs.

He was hired by the council to investigate its policies after an ombudsman found it guilty of maladministration over a black nightclub and youth centre. Planning officers failed to tell the

BY MIRA BAR-HILLEL
Planning Correspondent

Imperial Gardens club of house-building proposals for adjacent land or give it the right to object. The club was later forced to close.

The local government ombudsman found no evidence of racial discrimination but ordered the council to pay £1,000 compensation and reform its procedures. A separate district auditor's report also ruled against the council.

But Lord Ouseley said his own inquiry had been used as a "front" to allow the Liberal

Democrat administration to cover up wider allegations, and accused its "dominant white hierarchy" of failing to implement his 35 recommended changes.

Lord Ouseley says: "I now feel that ... I may have been used not so much to uncover any wrongs but to help cover them up." His inquiry heard many aggrieved black and ethnic businesses telling "agonising stories of their appalling treatment".

Southwark said today it had made progress in acting on the recommendations, all of which it accepted. Council leader Nick Stanton said: "There is no bias."

Evening Standard 23 June 05

Livingstone calls for CRE investigation into Elephant regeneration

The Mayor of London is urging the Commission for Racial Equality to formally investigate Southwark Council over the Elephant and Castle regeneration scheme.



Following a meeting with Southwark Council leader Nick Stanton, Mr Livingstone said: "Southwark Council has failed to address the very real concerns of the African and Caribbean communities who have consistently alleged that they experience racism within the local authority led regeneration process. Lord Ouseley's investigation report and his subsequent press comments, in addition to recent calls from senior members of the black community indicate that Southwark Council has failed to reassure or convince the local black community of its determination to tackle racism.

"In such circumstances and after considering all of the issues involved I have decided to request the Commission for Racial Equality to formally investigate matters relating to the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area."

A significant number of local traders, especially in the Elephant and Castle shopping centre, have voiced strong concerns about the regeneration process, and say that despite assurances that businesses of all sizes will be accommodated in the regeneration scheme, that without financial and practical support they will struggle to meet the costs of relocation and shopfitting.

Traders have also told the London SE1 website that it is increasingly difficult to trade profitably when the shopping centre is effectively a 'condemned building' and the office building above the centre is now empty, thus drastically reducing weekday daytime trade.

Many businesses in the shopping centre are run by people of black and minority ethnic origin.

Lee Jasper, the mayor's director of equalities and policing, said: "Black traders feel disenfranchised from the regeneration process. Our complaint is not politically motivated."

Nick Stanton refutes the mayor's claims: "The CRE has asked us for more information about progress on the Elephant and Castle. They said they were happy, and there was no need for intervention."

He told The Guardian: "I'm surprised at the mayor's comments. I don't think this is a suitable issue for

playing party politics. It is odd that some one who gave us a planning award for the Elephant last year, is now saying he's concerned we are not consulting properly."

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