

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

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**Witness statement of
Dr Ben Campkin**

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Summary

This statement is based on evidence gleaned through long-term research on regeneration, with a particular focus on London. This research has been commended by the Royal Institute for British Architects and Urban Communication Foundation (USA). I draw attention to the specific history of the Aylesbury Estate, its association with disputed 'defensible space' theory, and its long-term stigmatisation in cultural, media and political discourses. Within discussions of refurbishment or demolition options, a more nuanced evaluation of the estate's history and aesthetics, and more careful use of terminology, are therefore needed than the *Area Action Plan* provides. I also highlight the detrimental effects of recent regeneration approaches on BAME and other minority groups. Given past criticisms of Southwark for regeneration practices at odds with diversity policies, and the emphasis in *London Plan* (2011) and *Draft London Plan* (2017) on improving outcomes for BAME communities, there is a need for exemplary practice attentive to intersecting identity characteristics of affected residents.

Background to the research

- 1 The following comments are based on findings that have formed part of an on-going 16-year historical research project on regeneration in London. Outputs of this research have included my monograph, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (London, IB Tauris, 2013). As a trans-disciplinary investigation of regeneration discourses and practices, *Remaking London* looks at a number of interconnecting case studies in-depth over different time periods. It has a particular focus on Southwark.
- 2 *Remaking London* developed from writing, research and teaching on regeneration conducted since 2001. The book, and the research on which it is based, have been the subject of over 30 invited talks (including 6 international and 2 keynotes) and 15 conference papers (3 international, 1 keynote). As the project's main output, the book has been positively reviewed widely in academic and mainstream publications (e.g. *Times Literary Supplement*, *Building Design*, *LSE Review of Books*, *The Geographical*, *Urban Times*, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, *The Guardian*, *Progress in Human Geography*, *The Londonist*, *Journal of Historical Geography*). In 2013 it was awarded a Commendation for University-led research by the Royal Institute of British Architects and it later won the Urban Communication Foundation's Jane Jacobs Award (USA, 2014).

Case History of the Architecture of the Aylesbury Estate, its direct relationship with the disputed theories of 'defensible space', and the media, political and cultural stigmatisation of UK estates

- 3 In my evidence to the last inquiry I provided an architectural historical account of the Aylesbury Estate. This focused on the early stigmatization of design features and the direct relationship between the development of a narrative of the estate's problems and the 'defensible space theory' proposed by Oscar Newman, who visited whilst promoting his new book, *Defensible Space: People and Design in the Violent City* in 1974. Newman made a well-publicized television broadcast that set a negative tone for subsequent media and political portrayals and presented a reductive view of the relationship between design and social issues, both in terms of problems and solutions. This was tied into a wider debate in which different post-modern architects positioned themselves against the previous generation of modernists and decried the 'failures' of modern architecture.
- 4 More recent but equally negative and generalised cultural depictions of the Aylesbury Estate have distanced us further from the contexts that shaped its design and production, and the experiences of residents. When we examine the uses of such estates in architectural and political discourses we see that these representations of decline are far from neutral; rather, they result from specific political positions on the provision of housing, treatment of the poor and architectural modernism. They serve to distort understanding of design positives and negatives, as well as processes of change and decline.
- 5 In order for a Compulsory Purchase Order to proceed in the public good the statements in the *Area Action Plan* (CD2) would need to include a more thorough, balanced and robust evaluation of the case history of the Aylesbury Estate and the problems that have been ascribed to it, which takes into account the broader history and continuing practice of stigmatizing estates in a range of political, media and professional discourses.
- 6 Such an account would usefully replace the current over-simplistic ascription of problems to design in the *Area Action Plan*. This key document refers anecdotally to 'well-known' problems (1.2.2) and 'dated' design (1.2.5), but does not give informed and balanced evidence of specific issues. This is exacerbated by the lack of evidence open for public scrutiny and comparison surrounding refurbishment and demolition options; and the detrimental impacts of the regeneration process itself on the estate's maintenance, through disinvestment, as cited by leaseholders. Such disinvestment is typical within unethical gentrification processes as documented in my book *Remaking London*.
- 7 In similarity with generalized negative descriptions of the estate, I also note the value-laden and unsubstantiated claims made for the 'attractive' design proposed as

replacement – attractiveness is subjective concept which is evidently influenced by an individual's background and identity.

- 8 Based on my research I have argued that complex case histories of specific estates have often been overlooked in regeneration schemes, and that a discursive and political rhetorical over-simplification of estate problems – or conversely the vague way that 'attractive' regenerated schemes are projected – contributes to unethical regeneration practice. This is not in the public good but rather has unequal outcomes for different groups, and often adverse outcomes for minorities, such as BAME and LGBTQ+ communities, disregarding equalities and diversity legislation and policy.

Regeneration practice negatively impacting on BAME communities

- 9 Regeneration research, including my own, has also considered the negative experience and consequent struggles of communities with large BAME populations, where regeneration exacerbates rather than addresses inequality, to the detriment of local residents and businesses. The new *Draft London Plan* (2017, Policy E8 6.8.2), recently published, calls for regeneration actions in growth areas that 'in particular, should be tailored to provide opportunities for women and people from Black and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) backgrounds'.
- 10 Housing estates, markets and shopping centres are all key sites where contradictions between regeneration policy and practice with regard to 'diversity', and racialised social struggles, are revealed. In relation to markets, this is emphasized by the recent decision of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights to report on the disputed planned demolition of Tottenham's Pueblito Paisa indoor market.¹
- 11 This has also been acutely evident in the protracted case of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and its market. The mistreatment of BAME residents and business owners whilst developers have made huge profits emphasizes a particular obligation upon Southwark to show leadership in presenting community-centred regeneration approaches focused on achieving social justice. Since the London Plan (2011) makes clear that over the past twenty years the successes of London's economy have not benefited all Londoners and that poverty is concentrated in areas with the biggest BAME populations, to be more just regeneration needs to benefit, in particular, BAME Londoners.ⁱ
- 12 Since the 1980s property-led regeneration has been pursued in the name of public good with an assumption that wealth generated by public sector infrastructural investment alongside private-sector property development will automatically 'trickle

1 United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, London market closure plan threatens 'dynamic cultural centre', 27 July 2017 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21911&LangID=E>

down' to those in need. This idea of regeneration as redistributive is highly contested and not backed up by longitudinal evidence. There is a weight of evidence that suggests that the opposite is happening, as those who are the stated or intended beneficiaries of regeneration are displaced or made to suffer in other ways as a direct or indirect consequence of rising land and property values and the demolition of large-scale social housing, accompanied by the eviction and dispersal of lower and middle income residents to the periphery or to other cities.² Indeed, by inference, the London Plan (2011) itself reinforces that these approaches have not lifted Black, Asian and ethnic minority Londoners, and others who face the worst of the city's economic hardship, out of poverty. Yet it does not propose a radical change of approach to address this market failure.

13 My research on regeneration fits within a growing body of scholarship that highlights contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of regeneration in London.³ Questions of diversity feature in my book, *Remaking London* (BC4), and in my recent research on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans communities' night-spaces in London. On the one hand, regeneration often has diversity, or the protection of 'sustainable communities', as a stated goal. On the other, we see time and again those settled communities being displaced from affordable business and residential accommodation, against their will, defended by the assumption of trickle-down economics.

14 In considering the impacts of the Aylesbury Estate regeneration on BAME populations, as raised in the last public inquiry, it is important to note the history of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre's regeneration history. In 2004, the centre became the site of a conflict when traders and business people complained that they were being mistreated by Southwark Council and that the Council's regeneration policies were institutionally racist (BC1). The community had, at that point, already suffered from uncertainty for many years about the centre's future. Southwark invited Baron Herman Ouseley, former chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, to carry out an independent review of the authority's equality and diversity framework, and to look at Southwark's planning and regeneration policies and the way they impacted on small businesses and, in particular, black and ethnic minority-run businesses. Ouseley concluded that the council had sound equality and diversity policies but was critical of the delivery of those policies and said that the Council needed to do more to gain trust from within the BME community (BC2). He made 35 specific recommendations which included additional training in the Race Relations Amendment Act for council members and staff; the development of ways to improve career opportunities and pathways for under-represented groups;

2 See, for example: Ben Campkin, David Roberts and Rebecca Ross (eds.) *Urban Pamphleteer* #2, 'Regeneration Realities', UCL Urban Laboratory, 2014 (BC5); Claire Colomb, 'Unpacking New Labour's "Urban Renaissance" Agenda: Towards a Socially Sustainable Reurbanization of British Cities', *Planning Practice & Research* 22(1), 2007, pp. 1.24; Rob Imrie and Loretta Lees (eds.), *Sustainable London?* Bristol, Policy Press, 2014; Libby Porter and Kate Shaw (eds.), *Whose Urban Renaissance: an International Comparison of Urban Regeneration Strategies*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013.

3 Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*, London, IB Tauris, 2013.

additional support for small businesses, including an agreement with a voluntary organisation to undertake outreach with black and ethnic minority residents and businesses about the planning function and service. The Council duly responded ([BC3](#)), although the labyrinthine trail of paperwork, and the fact that Ouseley's report is not easily locatable – if available at all – on Southwark's website, do not emphasise transparency or institutional learning.

- 15 The case of the Aylesbury Estate, as determined in the last public inquiry, suggests that Ouseley's review did not have the wider impact on regeneration policy and practice in Southwark that it should have done. There is a particular need, therefore, for a fuller evaluation/Equality Impact Assessment of the impacts of the regeneration on the economic, social and environmental well-being of the BAME community, as well as recognition of the intersectional minority characteristics of community members in terms of protected characteristics recognized in the Equality Act 2010.

i The *London Plan* (2011) states: "Although London's economy has been generally successful over the past twenty years, not everyone has benefited and the incidence of poverty has not fallen'. The plan continues by saying that amongst other groups 'deprivation is [...] concentrated among Black, Asian and ethnic minority and disabled Londoners'. Furthermore, the Plan predicts that 'Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities are expected to grow strongly as a result of natural growth and continued migration from overseas.