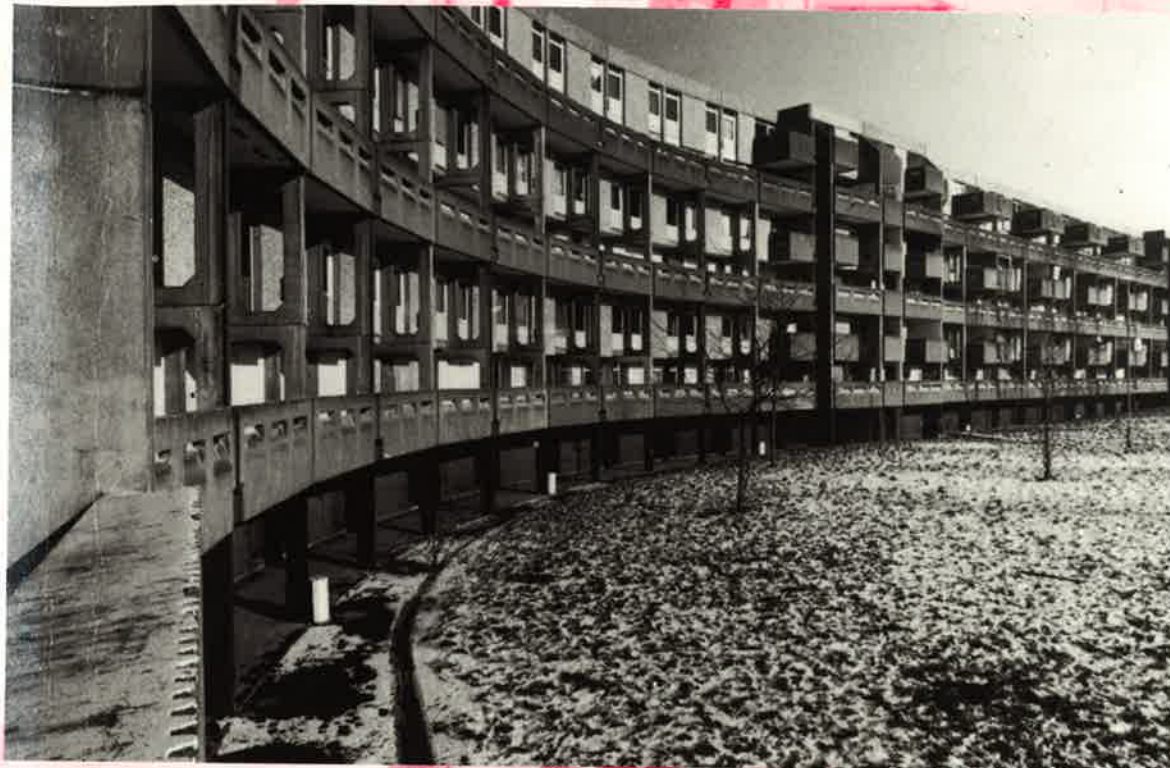


VIEWS FROM THE CRESCENTS



Hulme Views

CONTRIBUTORS

Clive

Audrey Oates

Mark

Charlie Baker

Marline

Andy Vaughan

Fay

J.J.

Steffy

Athene Harris

John Smalley

Trevor Smalley

Rebecca

Rob Blume

Karen Carmichael

Roy Johnson

Bunter

Paul

Sue

Billy Harte

Susie Cheers

Niall

Josie Duncan

Steve

Ati

Linzi Pinz

Vibeke

Freda Sims

Barry Johnson

Jackie

Phil Cherry

George Wrigley

Clare Dermody

Tom Sune

Chris Hogg

Neil Chappell

Victor Greenfield

Mike Hubbard

Jayne Farrant

Anne Clements

Theresa

Kenneth Topen

Fiona

Richar B. Palmer

Tas Parkes

Madge & Susan

Julia

Mrs. Horne

Brian

'The Grocers'

Irene & Judith

Vanessa

'Shopkeeper' (Post Office)

'The Chippy'

Billy & Jean Young (Hardware)

John Moserop

Preeya

Ronald Holme

Abee

Sabu

Dorothy Emlyn

Kevin Davy

J. Carmichael

Dean Sarker

Tommy

Ian Hallworth

S. Hughes

Dave

Billy

James Hillan

Eugene Farrelly & Simon Jones

Ian Millar

Geraldine Connaughton

Pat

Lynne Skipworth

Norma Clarke

Michael

Joanna Dyson

Tony Carroll

Debi

Kirsten

Joe

Kirsten & Jacob

Tom Dunford

Mr. & Mrs. Fairbairn

Saffi

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Brian Benson

(for cartoons)

Vibeke Fussing

(volunteer)

Debi Williams

(volunteer)

Marlene Britton

(Typing during Crescents Week)

Chris Hogg

(volunteer)

Neil Chappell

(volunteer)

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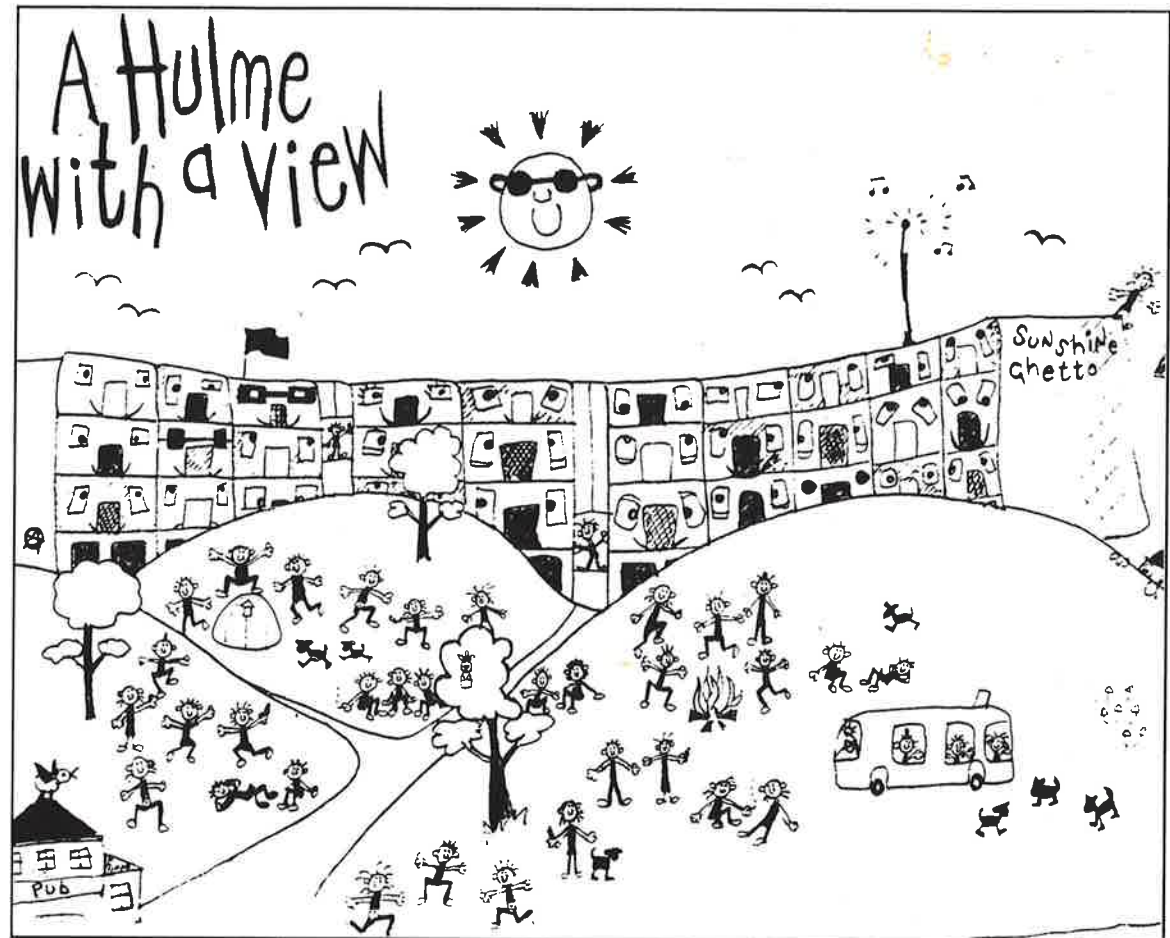


Illustration by Spanner

VIEWS FROM THE CRESCENTS

Writing, photographs and illustrations
by
people from the Crescents area of Hulme

“Hulme Views” project
Hulme
Manchester
1991



“Hulme Views” is a fifteen month project run by local residents to record people’s experiences and feelings about living in Hulme and perhaps most importantly their aspirations and expectations for the future.

**“Hulme Views” is funded by the
Joseph Rowntree Foundation.**

To contact the project call in or phone

John Davidson or **Peter Marcus**
(Media & Development Co-ordinator) (Writing & Research Co-ordinator)

at

**The Hulme Study Information Point
9 Otterburn Close
Hulme
Manchester**

Tel: 061 226 2307

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VIEWS FROM THE CRESCENTS

One of Britain's first comprehensive slum clearance exercises in the 1930s, Hulme, in Manchester, is still undergoing massive inner city redevelopment, and will be for at least the next ten years or so.

The Hulme Views project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, is run by residents on the Hulme Estate. It exists to allow local people to record and express their views, opinions and experiences of the enormous changes that have happened, and are still happening in Hulme, especially the part that local people have (or have not) played in influencing those changes.

Ultimately Hulme Views will have helped people in Hulme to produce a book which tells the overall story of Hulme from their own, residents' point of view.

Along the way, though, the project has also organised a couple of "area profiles" where people living or working in certain areas of Hulme can air their opinions about their own particular neighbourhood.

"Views from the Crescents," our second area project, happened during the second week of December 1990, when anyone living or working in and around the Hulme Crescents was invited into the Hulme Library foyer.

First there was the camera, set up for people to take their own Polaroid "self portrait." Then, over tea and biscuits, there was the chance to sit down and write a few words or pages of personal reflections about Hulme and the Hulme Crescents.



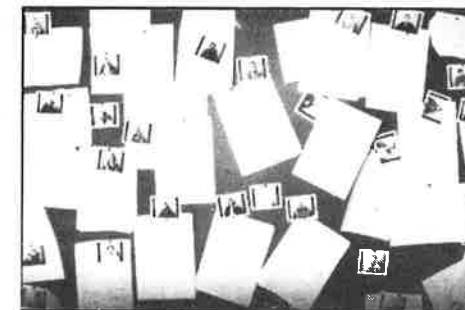
Views about the Crescents are never particularly hard to come by anywhere in Manchester, let alone in Hulme itself amongst the people who actually live there. However, to help focus people's comments, we did have a list of 'prompt' questions up on the wall to jog people's memories, questions like...

- What is it like to live on the Crescents?
- (How) could they be improved?
- How good a landlord is the Council?
- How do you think the estate could be run better?
- Do the Crescents provide a useful housing service?
- What is your flat like?
- Is there a "community" in the Crescents?
- Is it possible to have a decent home on the Crescents?

Luckily there was a team of local volunteers on hand throughout, ever willing to brave the freezing cold outside the Library to entice passers-by into the freezing cold of the Library itself, sit down with people who wanted to chat about their writing, and keep the coffee and biscuits coming.

Some people stayed for ten minutes, some stayed all day but, with the incentive of appearing in a printed book spurring people on, we ended up with around eighty scripts, some of them a couple of sentences, some five or six pages long.

People also made use of the additional camera equipment and some of the volunteer helpers to take photos of the surrounding area or back home inside their flats, and a couple of others went out with a



tape recorder to record the views of shopkeepers and other local residents who couldn't make it down to the Library.

The whole event lasted three days. The editing process took a little longer. A group of people from the Crescents took part in getting the scripts, photographs and other pictures that we had come across into a reasonable order for the book, while the cover was being prepared and the background history was being researched.

This process was constantly hampered by distractions, not least of which were: the Council's second attempt to agree to demolish

the Crescents (they didn't); the leaked Council document which threatened to turn Hulme into an Olympic Stadium; a secret flying visit to the Department of Environment by Councillors; a Planning Dept. map that showed most of Hulme's housing replaced by prestige offices; and a visit from Mr Heseltine, MP.

Due to these and many more excuses the book took just under seven months to get to the printers.



Nevertheless the Crescents were still standing at the time of going to press, and taxi drivers and other 'outsiders' were still giving *their* gratuitous, not-so-constructive views about Hulme and the Crescents along the lines of "What this place needs is a bomb dropping on it..."

The views in this book are from people for whom the casual phrase "demolishing the Crescents" means losing their home or their livelihood without, at the moment anyway, very much guarantee about what will take their place.



INTRODUCTION

For as long as Manchester's Hulme district has been identified as *the* classic 1960s concrete housing estate disaster, the Hulme Crescents have attracted the lion's share of Hulme's bad publicity.



Maybe this is partly because the four huge Crescent blocks stand for everything that is wrong with thinking a terraced-housed family-based community can be moved straight into completely different housing so clearly unsuited to any of their needs.

It may also be for the simpler reason that no other buildings, anywhere else, look remotely like the Crescents, not even the Bath Regency terraces they are somehow supposed to resemble.

Certainly, in the eyes of Manchester City Council, no other buildings symbolise such an immense drain on public resources for such apparently little reward.

Yet for most of the Crescents' residents, who presently occupy slightly fewer than half of the 918 flats, the Crescents are an unrepeatable opportunity to show that public housing, catering for a non-family population, nevertheless has a community feel and spirit very much of its own. All this does not have to be written off, they argue, simply because a local authority cannot properly fulfil its duties as landlord.

More practically, the Crescents are a concrete (in all senses) guarantee against homelessness or at least being moved miles away from Hulme, an area they know as home. This is the fate most of these tenants now fear should their homes be demolished.

A Bit of History

Hulme's concrete renewal was completed in 1972, but the area's redevelopment had started over 40 years earlier when, under the 1930 Housing Act, a vast area of Hulme's crumbling terraced housing was declared a slum Clearance Area.

This allowed the Manchester Corporation to impose mass Compulsory Purchase Orders on land, houses, shops, pubs, factories and anything else in the way, all on the grounds of Public Health and "fitness for human habitation."

Over 300 acres of prime inner city land were flattened with no clear idea of how to replace the lost housing. Only a handful of isolated landmarks were left marooned amongst the rubble; the **York St. Cinema** (later the Aaben), and the **Zion Institute building**, described by the Crescents' future architects as an unfortunate "eyesore," to be hidden as much as possible by the new buildings.

The most famous casualty of the Clearances was **Stretford Road**, a major high street lined along both sides for over a mile with small shops, department stores, cafés, and described by the **Manchester Evening News** as "perhaps the most famous shopping centre in South Manchester."

During the 1940s and 1950s flats had already started to be built on the newly cleared land – long, low-rise blocks of brick flats in Bentley House and St George's – and by the end of the fifties the Corporation had even experimented with a tower block (Hornchurch Court.) But by the 1960s the pressure was on to create as much new housing as quickly as possible, so in 1962 the City Council announced the bulldozing of all remaining Hulme terraced houses in preparation for the redevelopment of Hulme in five "neighbourhood units."

Rebuilding in St George's (Hulme 1) continued, but at too slow a pace to satisfy what was seen as an immense national housing demand. By late 1964 the Corporation were in desperate straits.

They did have new and exciting ideas for Hulme:

"..a new street pattern, entirely segregated from traffic roads, where all age groups can be suitably accommodated, [which] will have to serve the needs of five generations of Manchester people."

What they lacked, though, were sufficient staff and expertise to do something with their ideas. The Housing Department had future plans to set up a Development Group, but in the meantime the Corporation suggested that "a firm of consultants or private architects should be brought in." [Nov '64]

Within the week, Wilson and Womersley, Chartered Architects and Town Planners (and creators of Manchester's Arndale Centre and University Precinct,) confirmed that they were:

"..in a position to undertake the full architectural services in connection with the housing and other buildings which are to be erected by the City Council in the Neighbourhood Centre [Hulme 5]."

Meanwhile the Council was coming to grips with two fashionable new ideas.

Firstly, **Deck Access**, a system of housing

".. designed to increase the degree of segregation of pedestrians from vehicles by providing improved and continuous connection between adjoining blocks above ground floor levels."

At the same time, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (now the DoE) was into "industrialised building methods" (System Build) in a very big way. This was a new form of building, using factory-prepared blocks and slabs which simply slotted together on site, like so much lego.

It was more expensive than traditional methods of buildings, but the key point was the speed at which large numbers of homes could be built.

In 1965 a circular from the Minister of Housing and Local Government told local authorities to submit their 4-year house building plans, and made it clear that the more use they made of industrialised building, the more likely the Government would be to approve the plans.

Birth of the Crescents

In October 1965 Hugh Wilson and J Lewis Womersley personally presented a report to Manchester's Housing Committee which suggested a handy, deck access, system-built solution to the Hulme 5 area. Over their cardboard cut-away model of four, huge, curved blocks of flats they explained to wary Councillors:

"We feel that the analogy we have made with Georgian London and Bath is entirely valid. By the use of similar shapes and proportions, large scale building groups and open spaces and, above all, by skilful landscaping and extensive tree planting, it is our endeavour to achieve, at Hulme, a solution to the problems of 20th Century living which would be the equivalent in quality of that reached for the requirements of the 18th Century in Bloomsbury and Bath."

[illegible]

The first tenants were moved into the Crescents in early 1969, over a year before the whole project was fully completed.

Nevertheless by 1971 the four Crescents were completed, along with a small additional block of single storey flats. They were named after the famous British architects of very different sorts of buildings: **Charles Barry** (*Houses of Parliament*), **William Kent** (*Horse Guards Parade*), **John Nash** and **Robert Adam** (*Regency Terraces*), and **Nicholas Hawksmoor** (*Baroque churches*).

[illegible]

“a morass in which design faults and tenants’ revulsion at their environment have combined to produce staggering maintenance demands and angry howls of neglect.”

After July 1974, when a young child fell to his death from a Crescents top floor balcony these mounting miseries prompted tenants' into action .

The **Hulme 5 Rehousing Campaign** was formed “for the immediate rehousing of all tenants who wish to be rehoused from the Hulme Crescents,”

and in August 1975 a residents' survey of all tenants indicated that 96.3% wanted to leave the blocks.

Finally, residents presented a petition to October's Housing Committee which stated:

"We want all those families in the Crescents who want to leave to get rehoused. We want houses with gardens. Don't waste money on improvements for the Crescents. The Crescents should never have been built. We want a public transfer list made. We want to know where we stand on the list, and why.

We want an exact statement from the Council on how long it will be before each one of us will be rehoused. We want no new families in the Crescents unless they know exactly when they will be transferred
REHOUSING MUST START NOW.

Within a month we want:

1. A list to be drawn up of all the families who want to be rehoused.
2. These must be put in order of priority.
3. Dates must be given for rehousing.
4. No new families to be put into empty properties. Any houses left empty by families to be given to single tenants, or couples without children, or students.
5. All tenants should have the right to get on the transfer list regardless of rent arrears.
6. Why should we have to pay to live here in these dangerous prisons?
7. **REHOUSING MUST START NOW."**

This petition was supported by 643 signatures of residents of the Hulme 5 blocks.

The Council accepted these pleas as a fatal criticism of the City's deck access housing and, particularly, its ability to house families. The Council came back, the following month, with a 3-point response which:

- agreed to open the housing transfer list to all deck access tenants;
- looked towards "reducing child densities and putting these estates to more effective occupation;"
- investigated design improvements to deck access blocks.

In the Crescents' case, these "design improvements" took the form of "compartmentalising" the blocks, installing entryphones which never worked, and heavy wooden lockable doors on the walkways, which had to be forced open by frustrated tenants when the entryphones had stopped working.

The second design improvement idea, to convert some of the 2-floor flats into single-storey homes, was abandoned just over a year later.

However, the one policy that *was* successfully put into action was to empty the Crescents of most families with young children.

In October 1977, in response to a press campaign about conditions on the Crescents by the Hulme People's Rights Centre, the Chair of Housing, Councillor Allan Roberts, announced:

"the accommodation is unsuitable for the families who live there. We have a policy of moving them out and by 1980 at the latest we expect none to be left in the Crescents of Hulme."

In the following day's *Daily Telegraph* an article entitled "New Policy for Ghetto Blocks" quoted Cllr Roberts as saying that the Council was "replacing families with groups of single people or joint tenancies" who were reportedly "now living successfully in the flats."

Change...

Over the next thirteen years, the community of the Crescents became established as predominantly all-adult households: some young, ex-homeless; some ex-hostel; some young couples; some students.

There were also those who had lost out on the rehousing policy: the middle-aged and elderly couples who had brought up families on the Crescents but whose children were now too old for them to classify as "families." In 1989 the

Housing Committee accepted a tenants' proposal that all these tenants who have lived on the Crescents for more than fifteen years and wished to leave the Crescents could be rehoused as priority cases.

Meanwhile in 1987 the Hulme Project Office, set up by the Council to solve the deck access problem had commissioned a Concrete Testing Report on the Crescents which recommended that:

"the structural life expectancy be taken as not more than five to ten years.."

In order of soundness of structural conditions, the worst was found to be Charles Barry Crescent, next came John Nash, then William Kent and, best of all, Robert Adam.

By July 1990 the Housing Committee, running out of patience with the Crescents, approved a report on the future of Hulme 5 which recommended that :

"on the basis of the information presented, the Crescents do not currently fulfil a role within the City Council housing stock."

The Council intended to stop all further lettings of property on the Crescents from then onwards.

However, Hulme 5 Tenants Association took the Council to Court and had the Council's decision overruled on the grounds of insufficient consultation (there had been none at all) under the 1985 Housing Act.

To satisfy the injunction's requirements the Council conducted a "consultation exercise" from November to December 1990.

Out of 352 tenants in the Crescents, 108 took part, and of these:-

- 49% favoured partial or total refurbishment of the blocks.
- 37% favoured total demolition
- 77% of Crescents tenants wanted to stay in Hulme.

These survey results were published in February. Before this, in late January, a private note to the Council Leader, Graham Stringer, from a Senior Chief Executive Officer had already informed him that:

"...the Housing Department have completed the tenant consultation and it appears that the outcome doesn't impede implementing the decision that [the Crescents] have no future role to play in housing terms.

"There appears to be a consensus amongst members that the Crescents should be emptied and demolished as quickly as possible."

At the time of writing, the argument about the future of the Crescents is now submerged within the wider debate about the City Council's "City Challenge" bid.

To win a share of this "new" Government money for the inner cities, Manchester City Council submitted to the Department of the Environment a bid which deals with Hulme as a whole.

In this bid the Council have asked for the money they need to demolish the Crescents, along with the rest of Hulme's deck access property.

Their plan for demolishing the Crescents is accompanied by no firm plans for affordable, rented housing to replace the housing lost through demolition.

Meanwhile the Hulme 5 Tenants' Association, through a R.I.B.A. (Royal Association of British Architects) grant, commissioned a small-scale feasibility study of their own, from a firm of architects previously engaged as part of the joint Council/DoE/tenants-managed Hulme Study.

This initial report put forward twelve design options for refurbishing the Crescents, most of

them based on demolition of some or most of the existing buildings.

It concluded that:

“further detailed investigation could well reveal an opportunity, on economic grounds, to retain areas of the existing Crescents...to provide varied forms of tenure and accommodation, at comparable cost.”

With this possibility in mind, the final bargaining position of Hulme Crescents tenants was to ask that investigations be carried out to find out whether one Crescent could remain and be converted into new rented housing units. The form of words they suggested to the Council was:

“That within the next five months the future of all remaining deck access properties [in Hulme] should have been determined, based on the outcome of feasibility proposals for achievable, economically viable refurbishment of one remaining Crescent as new social housing units no longer owned by Manchester City Council.”

This is what residents who want to stay on the Crescents knew would be the only chance to keep open the option of refurbishing one of the Crescents.

The Council refused to include this option in their bid. In the draft of their bid they say instead,

“The Crescents symbolise Hulme as it is today, and demolition within the first eighteen months of the City Challenge programme is considered essential to altering the external and internal perceptions of the area.”

What next?

Buildings or no buildings, what cannot be denied, especially after reading the pieces in this book, is that there are people who *do* live in the Crescents. They want a secure housing future, whether in the Crescents or elsewhere in Hulme, which is an area that most of them seem to think of as home.

In October 1990, another report, this time the Government-funded Hulme Study Stage One Action Plan, had recommended that:

“the future of the Crescents needs to be determined with active participation of the residents.”

and points out that:

“it is believed that the Crescents provide a pool of ready accommodation for young people, who would otherwise be homeless.”

So, what about the people?

Few could deny that the Crescents have proved themselves unworkable as cheap, rented *family* housing, even with a decent standard of maintenance.

But the Crescents *are* providing a housing service to many of the people who have written this book, who weigh up the floods and break-ins against a feeling of community reliance and support.

Is a high turnover of tenants a sign of their low commitment to settling down, or a sign that, for childless people on no or low income, stable housing is not easy to come by?

Is it just pie-in-the-sky to want to turn one of the Crescents into a refurbished housing cooperative, or is it an enterprising sign that people with few alternatives are willing to take a direct interest and control over the security of their own futures?

How many other housing options will be open to them if the Crescents go?

How high a priority is preserving a community valued by people who may have little else to rely on?

Who will ask these people where, and in what kind of housing, they want to live? More to the point, who will take notice of what they say?

Will demolishing the Crescents help to make these people's lives, and Hulme as a whole, more or less secure?

There are as yet no clear answers to any of these questions from the people making major decisions about the future of Hulme.

The people who have written this book *do* have definite and, at times, very positive and constructive ideas about these issues and others besides, not to mention their invaluable experience of having actually lived in or around the housing in question.

CLIVE

“I’ve been living in the Crescents for about a year. When the electricity was ‘free’ it was OK, but since having to pay for the heating the flat has become a damp, cold smelly place that I’m just holding on to, hoping for an exchange or compensation.

There are some people who spend up to £30.00 a week keeping warm; in the days of cheap electricity these flats may have seemed lovely, but today’s high energy costs makes the whole concept of heating with electricity ridiculous.

I can’t really see much of a future for the Crescents, apart from the obvious signs of decay. There is the hidden problem of water getting into the concrete reinforcement. Maybe with millions of pounds spent on them, insulation, double glazing etc., something could be done.

I feel very much that the ‘powers that be’ i.e. the people in the Council who decide on the fate of the Crescents, have already decided what to do; I feel that this “consultation” is just for the Courts’ sake, after all the Council had already decided to demolish before they were taken to Court and ordered to ‘think again’.

Travelling abroad, where most people live in flats and don’t have nice little houses with nice little gardens surrounded by nice little fences,



I have seen many flats that look incredible in comparison to those in Britain. There are usually many more trees and bushes, with window boxes on balconies.

I read with amusement the words of the architects, comparing the Crescents with Bath, and talking about ‘skilful landscaping and extensive tree planting’. **It has been said before but these highly paid ‘experts’ never have to live in the mess they create.**

The best thing about Hulme is without doubt the people. I don’t like to use the word “community”, that sort of thing died out many years ago, but compared to a lot of other places, there is a much greater tolerance towards people of different race, background or lifestyle - the only trouble seems to be from local kids and people from outside the area passing through or going to the PSV. There have been a few gang attacks, but really it is no worse than anywhere else.

I feel very much that the ‘problems’ associated with Hulme and the Crescents are really a reflection on the state of society as a whole. Until there is a change (and a massive change at that) such places as Hulme and the Crescents will always exist. ”

AUDREY OATES

“ I moved to Hulme eleven months ago, first as a squatter, then acquiring a tenancy.

It is a valuable start to many people's independent life being able to find a home whilst having little money for rent or deposits.

The Crescents have a bad reputation which is largely undeserved. Sure they are dirty and many are badly in need of repair, but many of the flats that are still occupied and in good working order show the soundness and potential of the place. Balconies and walkways help to create space and a more human living environment than high-rise blocks.

There is definitely a community here and a happy lack of many of the types of prejudice encountered in more “respectable” areas.

There is much work to be done on the Crescents but it would be a shame if it was abandoned for demolition. Hulme provides a vital service and an important start for many people and I for one wish to stay in the Crescents.”



MARK



“What I feel about Hulme.

I've lived in Hulme for two years, the first of them in John Nash Crescent. Since then I've been mugged a couple of times and broken into once. Still though, to this day I think that moving here has been one of my better decisions in life.

The stories in the local rag have shootings and knifings where other papers have weddings and christenings. That is a real part of the “filth” about the area but only a small one. Hulme has always been described as much worse than it is. Once, when looking after some Czechoslovakian visitors we had them whisked away from us in a hurry when the organisers of their visit found out

they were billeted in Hulme (at least they'd seen some real life first).

Hulme's bad reputation is the first thing that is “different” about the area. At least it weeds out the “tourists” and keeps the local area for locals. I mean, have you ever heard of TV licence people calling 'round the Crescents? So Hulme is quite definitely for Hulmanoids.

What is a Hulmanoid? It is anyone who has lived here and has a stake in the area. They can be black or white, working or not, the catalogue kid or a hippy punk. What they all have in common, though, is that this is their area. They can be a tenant, a squatter, or living in a van, but they are doing what everybody else here is: getting from A to B in their lives while living here. Because we live here we have something in common; a sense of community that can be seen. It is far short of ideal. If you ever go canvassing 'round here (like I did against the Poll Tax) you realise that an awful lot of people live very lonely lives. Hulme's “community spirit” ain't strong enough to light up everyone's lives. It isn't even strong enough to radically change *anyone's*; but it does exist, which is more than you can say for other places. You can talk to people in the street who ain't quite strangers because they live here too. Once your face fits, doors are open.

But other areas have poor people, crappy flats and high crime. How come they're just bad areas and Hulme is special? Well maybe these other areas are special places to their residents, but

Hulme is different because of the people who come to live here. **Just where do you go if you're moving to Manchester, haven't got a bean and possibly have a dog? No landlord will touch you so you come to Hulme. People from all backgrounds and all parts of the country end up living here.** Well, people here ain't no angels. We're not biologically designed to appreciate others and can be as bitching and bigoted as people anywhere. But there exists here a lot of tolerance towards different lifestyles and traditions. You might think that so-and-so over the road is a waster and a drongo but that's as much their right as it is yours. Like I said - we ain't no angels, but nowhere have I sensed such a feeling of community of interest and tolerance of people as strong as it is in Hulme.

Yes, it pisses you off when you find syringes in the street, but in Miles Platting you can shovel them up by the bucketful. You can get mugged in Chorlton, and the affluence of Didsbury just invites burglars. And when it's happened to you in these other areas how soon is life normal again? At least here the normality has never stopped.

I've got no plans to move. I might think again if I had a family. Not everyone here might see what I can. What does it matter? People live, not theorise about life. **This is an area for the living.** It's tough, hard, dirty and possibly dangerous. But it is, as are all who live here, alive. Maybe suicidal now and again, but very alive and very Hulme. ”

CHARLIE BAKER



“ I’ve lived in the Crescents, on Charles Barry, for over six years. It’s the first time I’ve felt I belong in a community, the first time I’ve felt part of one. I moved around a lot as a kid and never felt I really belonged to the various places. I think it’s ‘cos of the huge variety of people all mixed together, it makes for a very tolerant crowd of people: none of that narrow-minded outrage when someone down the way sees something different, like they do in a lot of suburbs. **The Council don’t seem to realise the value of this kind of community - it’s quite rare** - I’ve only seen it in places like Berlin and Amsterdam. That’s why I get so

angry when the Council want to knock the place down - **that a big chunk of that community would be lost, dispersed around Manchester, just like they did with the original community of Hulme 20-30 years ago.** We’ve got to stop and say this is enough, you cannot keep doing this to people.

Of course there are a lot of problems around here that they want to solve just by knocking down our homes. In fact, with some money spent in the **RIGHT** places they could be really good places to live. The way they are laid out is good. The flats are nice inside when it’s warm and dry. People keep saying build houses - I don’t want to live in a house with nothing to look out on but a road and more bricks. There’s a lot of work that could be done on the Crescents to make them into good homes, but the Council don’t want to do it - if they aren’t going to, why don’t we?

The Council as landlord?

Incompetent, arrogant, narrow minded. The Council has a vision of a “typical working class family” that it has to house. If you don’t fit into their stereotype you’re knackered. The Crescents were a failure for that stereotype on the whole, but there are a lot of people who don’t fit into that who live here now, **but we are not really recognised by the Council so they say no-**

one wants to live here. But we know at least 80 % of the current tenants do. The Councils failure as a landlord comes from their unwillingness to accept anything other than their stereotype. Because we don’t count and we’re the majority that live here, they treat us like low-life. Repairs on the Crescents have always been slower than anywhere else. Their lettings policy is stupid; they won’t employ enough staff to keep an eye on the empties.

They throw money at the place every few years and just waste it. They put in intercoms and new balcony doors, but with no consultation.

They spent thousands (we’re told) on doing up the flats, then left the doors or the windows open - then when the flats get trashed they blame us.

They say no-one wants to live here - “look at the empties” - but then when people ask for flats the housing office says there aren’t any. The housing office and Norweb are virtually driving people off the Crescents - then blaming the squatters, or the druggies, or the kids, or whoever. It makes me bloody furious. The Council is supposed to look after the place - they’ve got money to do it - but they don’t; then they blame us for not doing it. **If they want us to look after the place maybe we should take it off their hands altogether. I’m sure we could do a better job** - we certainly couldn’t do any worse.

Then we'd be in control of our own homes without these idiots shuttling us around like tiresome rubbish or something. We'd be able to set up our own repairs service with all the skills

we've got 'round here - then the right repairs could get done, and properly. We could make sure that people had places to live rather than leaving 500 flats boarded up, rotting - there is a

housing crisis in this country and the Council are thinking about knocking down another 900 odd. It's criminal.. २२



MARLINE

66 Ex Tenant, 344 William Kent Crescent.

I moved onto the Crescents in 1972 from Moss Side (this came about because of the breakdown of my parents marriage). When my mother told us (me and my sisters) that we were moving to Hulme I remember I cried. I thought it was the worse thing that could have happened to me. I suppose it was all about status symbols: we lived in a nice house, in a nice up-and-coming area in Moss Side, having to move to the slums of Hulme (as I saw it).

After moving to Hulme I found that quite a lot of my friends from school lived in the same place - all the maisonettes were occupied by families, not single people or students as they are now!

I grew to love Hulme, I had lots of good times here. I spent all my young adolescent years here. There was community spirit in Hulme then, with the families, but not now! Neighbours looked out for each other, there was always people popping in and out of each others houses, and all the children played with each other.

If you were robbed it was by a neighbour e.g. we were burgled once, all they took was the leccy meter (with over £100 in it). Turned out it was a young guy four doors away.

I left the Crescents in late 1978.

Now when I visit Hulme I am disgusted at the state of the place. It had always been left to run down but these days it's ten times worse than it was before. There are no families here, just a lot of "no-hopers" who the Council seems to have dumped in the one place. The infestation was always there - now it's worse.

All this community life and good will to your fellow man in Hulme - I don't see that now. The other thing about it is:-

In the mid-'70s the Crescents were lovingly known to its residents as the "Bull Rings". About the same time outside influences started calling it the "Concrete Jungle" because it was assumed that (and maybe rightly so) a lot of black people were living on the Crescents. Black people were from jungles, so what better place to put them back; very few black people lived in old Hulme before it was rebuilt, but the Council did seem to be re-housing a lot of black people in Hulme - and still are. ”



ANDY VAUGHAN



“Why do I live in Hulme? I originally moved into Charles Barry Crescent as a large number of people I had met from all over the country had all somehow seemed drawn towards Manchester, and particularly the Crescents. This made settling in relatively easy as I already felt at home here. Many new friends have been made since, and even though a lot of people drift through a great community spirit still survives. Everybody shares the same problems and there's always someone (or someone somebody knows)

around to help. Life is relaxed with a capital 'R'.

The only real problems I've encountered are living without electricity for three weeks when we first moved in because the housing office kept having one day strikes whenever I had an appointment to sign my tenancy, so NORWEB wouldn't connect my electricity until I'd signed it.

It took the Council another three weeks to connect my heating and hot water. The electricity and hot water seem to cost about three times as much as anywhere else I've lived, and the water rates are extortionate (which is why nobody pays for electricity or water if they can get away with it). The only time I've had trouble at night is when there's been a 'blues' on in an empty flat and hundreds of non-residents flood into the area for the night (and morning).

There are plenty of facilities nearby e.g. shops, pubs, library, phoneboxes etc. and plenty of grass to walk the dogs on. I enjoy living on the Crescents and wouldn't live anywhere else in Manchester as I'd feel well out of place.

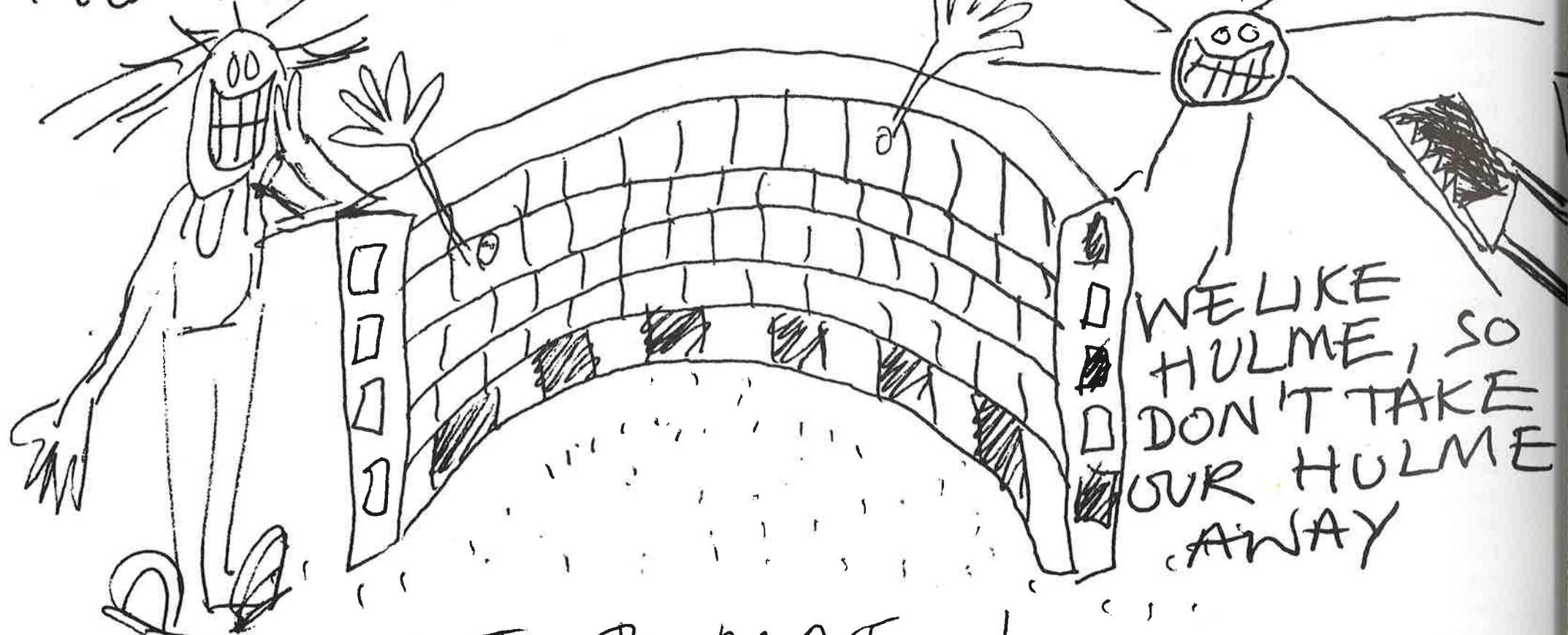
The place is perfect for single young people to live, much better than sharing a house or living in a bedsit.

Spare sofas, cookers, fridges, beds are easy to come by off people leaving the area so furnishing the flats doesn't take long and is inexpensive. If the Council actually did any repairs rather than someone knocking lightly on your door at 8.15 then bugging off before you can open it, even if you stay up all night and camp behind the door! Repairs are few and far between in the Crescents. Our caretaker keeps our landing and stairs clean, even if for a while he did blame a lot of mess on our flat, but it wasn't.

If the Council actually refurbished the empty flats and spent some money on generally tidying (and keeping tidy) the area then they would have no problems filling the Crescents with the number of students paying £30 a week a for small room, four could get together and rent a flat for a lot less, and they are probably closer to the Uni/Poly and the City Centre than anywhere else. The main reason students won't take up the Council's offer at the moment is that in general the place looks like a tip as the dustbin men let piles of rubbish build up, and furniture etc thrown over balconies hardly ever gets cleared away.

I enjoy living in the Crescents and don't want to move as I feel that this is now my home, having lived here for eighteen months. This is the longest I've lived in one place for five years. If the Council spent more money and more time over the area it could be greatly improved.”

I don't want to move and I'm not going to.



I DON'T WANT TO MOVE +
I'M NOT GOING TO.