

Southwark's regeneration plans branded "a miserable failure" by residents at public inquiry.

Press Release - 9th February 2013

Yesterday saw the close of the public inquiry into Southwark Council's Compulsory Purchase Order at the Elephant & Castle.

The four day inquiry was triggered when remaining residents on the Heygate estate objected to the Order, which will see them dispossessed of their homes to make way for the £1.5bn regeneration scheme being undertaken by the council and its development partner Lend Lease.

Four remaining leaseholders objected to the Order, and were supported by local residents and community groups. The objections broached a number of themes including lack of truly affordable housing, loss of trees, and claims that the [plans had been altered](#) from the [original regeneration objectives](#) to the extent that they were no longer in the public interest.

The objectors were supported by a number of former Heygate residents who [gave evidence](#) objecting to Southwark's heavy-handed approach when the [decant was brought forward](#) in 2007 ([198 eviction orders issued in total](#)¹), and its failure to honour promises to residents that they would be able to move to new homes on the estate footprint - (The new 'affordable' units will be at the new '[affordable rent](#)', which will be at least double the council rents that Heygate residents used to pay).

The objectors were also supported by academic expert witnesses who gave evidence showing the negative effects of displacement on the community, and [produced data](#) showing how the development plans - if passed - would create a far less mixed community at the Elephant & Castle (just 8% social housing in total).

Among the expert witnesses giving evidence were:

Lorretta Lees - Professor of Human Geography at King's College

Michael Edwards - Lecturer in Economics & Planning at UCL Bartlett

Dr. Mara Ferreri - Queen Mary University of London

Other witnesses giving evidence in support of the objectors included members of local groups [Better Elephant](#) and the [Elephant Amenity Network](#), Catherine Croft from the Twentieth Century Society and Tim Tinker the original Heygate architect.

Tinker who spent 7 years drawing up the Heygate scheme in the 1960s said ***"The Heygate and its design has been stigmatised and I thought it was time to set the record straight. Its notorious reputation is a farrago of half-truths and lies put together by people who should have known better."***

In [her witness statement](#), former chair of the Heygate Tenants and Residents Association Helen O'Brien described the redevelopment plans as a miserable failure - ***"What was once a thriving community has now been scattered all over Southwark. Southwark's regeneration plans are a miserable failure. Everyone who has worked on the regeneration at the Elephant should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves."***

During the inquiry objectors produced detailed statistics including a [1998 Stock Condition Survey](#) and a council-commissioned [Options Appraisal Study](#), which had made recommendations for large parts of the estate to be refurbished as part of the redevelopment.

[Crime statistics](#) were also tabled in response to [council claims](#) that the bad design of the estate led to crime and anti-social behaviour. The figures showed that the crime rate on the estate was a staggering 45% below the borough average.

A [council blunder](#) in serving its case documents for the CPO, led to the disclosure of the sum it was receiving from the developer in return for the sale of its land. Objectors pointed out that after demolition, the council will have spent more on emptying the estate than it was receiving from the sale price. Council officers retorted that they would receive half of the profits when the development was completed, but objectors pointed out that only the super profit will be shared: the developer will take a 20% priority profit slice before any other profits are shared. The objectors also pointed out that the development was recently declared unviable², and is therefore unlikely to produce any super profit.

Remaining resident and statutory objector Adrian Glasspool said ***“23 acres of public land and housing are being sold at a loss to a private developer, which stands to make at least £200m profit by building 2,500 luxury homes that are unaffordable to local people. We are simply questioning whether this is in the public interest.”***

Remaining resident and statutory objector Mojisola Ojeikere said ***“We were originally promised new homes in this redevelopment, now we are being shortchanged and priced out of the area to make way for luxury private flats. This is a misuse of compulsory purchase powers, which were not designed with the purpose of displacing communities for private gain.”***

The residents decided to represent themselves at the inquiry after being advised that legal costs could run into hundreds of thousands, and that there had been major changes to CPO law in 2004, which made it much more difficult for objections to succeed.

Inspector Wenda Fabian who resided over the inquiry will now write a report making recommendations to Secretary of State Eric Pickles, who will issue his decision on whether or not to confirm the CPO in May/June 2013.

The council's case documents submitted for the CPO can be downloaded [here](#), and a copy of the Objectors' Statement of Case is available [here](#). A short audio recording from an extract of the inquiry can be downloaded from [here](#).

A group of former Heygate residents have recently launched a website and are currently making a short film about the estate and the redevelopment plans: www.heygatewashome.com