

# 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 leaseholders 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.

There were a [total of 10 objectors](#) to the Order, including the Crossway church located on the estate, plus a number of 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, lead by the Heygate leaseholders group, pointed out that the 1034 tenanted households on the estate had not been given the opportunity to object, as those who objected had simply been evicted under the 1985 Landlord & Tenant Act. Several former tenants [gave evidence](#) at the inquiry objecting to Southwark's heavy-handed approach when the [decant was brought forward](#) in 2007 ([198 eviction orders issued in total](#)<sup>1</sup>), 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

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 Heyate 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."***

---

1 Document tabled by Project Director Jon Abbott during Public Inquiry on 8 Feb 2013

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. They also produced a [detailed analysis](#) by global architects [Gensler](#), showing how the estate could be refurbished and modernised at the current cost of just £14k per home.

[Crime statistics](#) were also tabled by objectors in response to the [council's claim](#) 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 low 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 unviable<sup>2</sup>, and is therefore unlikely to produce any super profit.

Remaining resident and statutory objector Adrian Glasspool said ***“An entire community has been forcibly displaced so that 23 acres of public land and housing can be sold at a loss to build luxury flats in a private gated enclosure. We were simply exercising our right to question whether this is in the public interest.”***

Remaining resident and statutory objector Mojisola Ojeikere said ***“We were originally promised a shared equity option, meaning we could buy a share in a new-build home on the Heygate and not pay rent on the remaining proportion owned by the developer. In the end we never got this and now we are being shortchanged: I am being offered just £150,000 for my 2 bed flat, when the new-build 2 bed Heygate flats are currently being marketed overseas for upwards of £455,000.”***[\[www.trafalgarplace.com\]](http://www.trafalgarplace.com)

The residents decided to represent themselves at the inquiry after having been 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.

Southwark Council is estimated to have spent around £3m obtaining the Compulsory Purchase Order.

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](http://www.heygatewashome.com)