

Heygate Residents' Testimonials



John Colfer: Heygate resident 1974 – 2008

We were one of the first young families to move onto the Heygate Estate back in 1974. Our parents, 3 siblings and myself - the eldest son - moved into no. 66 Chearsley. We were very fortunate to also have other family living on the Estate: our grandmother plus aunts, uncles and many cousins.

Right from the start life was great in our little village in the heart of the city. The people on the Estate all rallied around after each other and the camaraderie was second to none. Back then the Estate was maintained to a very high standard and the fact that there were Wardens in each block made this possible. Plus with the local beat officer who knew everyone and stood for no nonsense, you felt very safe and back then you could rely on your neighbours to watch over each other's properties and belongings.



As children we had all the open space we needed: plenty of play area's including a football pitch which was never empty. We also had a beautiful flower garden watched over by two lady statues whereby you could just chill out and relax while life's hustle and bustle continued all around you.

Schools were good in the area, and back then jobs were plenty and many of us children from the Heygate went into professional careers. Many of us in our own relationships then moved into our own first homes on the estate, keeping the family and friendship bond alive; and then went onto have children of our own who had the pleasure of growing up on the Heygate Estate and have their own personal

memories of life on the estate. My wife and I did just that and had our first child whilst living on the estate.

Sadly when Southwark Council made the decision to stop maintaining our little village in the city, this signed its demise and standards and conditions fell rapidly, making life unbearable for many. This broke up many families and friendships, and scattered everyone far and wide. Our parents never even contemplated leaving their family home, as did many other long term residents and it broke many hearts.



I have returned to the Heygate Estate to see how things are on many occasions and it is very upsetting to see what was once a thriving, busy fun filled environment is now a run down, vandalized 'Ghost Town' with its heart ripped out. I for one will be very sad when the decision is finally made to demolish our homes and an era comes to an abrupt end. They can't take away our memories and our accomplishments, and there will never ever be another special place like the Heygate Estate.

Their so called regeneration scheme has failed to even get off the ground and left many people unhappy: it has scattered families and friends far and wide, and has destroyed their idea of unity and community spirit. Yet the funny thing is that the current council leader is saying that everyone from the Heygate estate is happy with their new homes, which aren't new homes or the new builds that residents were promised!!