

**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**

**PINS REFERENCE: NPCU/CPO/A5840/74092**

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**Proof of Evidence of  
Professor Loretta Lees (FACSS, FRSA)  
BA (Hons), PhD  
For the Aylesbury Leaseholders Group**

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**January 2018**

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Since September 2013 I have been Professor of Human Geography, School of Geography, Geology and the Environment, University of Leicester. I was previously Professor of Human Geography and Chair of the Cities Research Group at King's College London. I am a social scientist and have a PhD in Human Geography (awarded 1995) from the University of Edinburgh. I am an international expert, with over 20 years of research experience, on urban regeneration, gentrification, urban sustainability, urban policy, urban communities and urban public space. I have published six books on processes of gentrification<sup>1</sup> and two books specifically on London<sup>2</sup>. All of these books are underpinned by academic research on topics of direct relevance to my witness statement. In addition, I have particular expertise on council estate regeneration/renewal/ gentrification in London, which informed the production of a booklet - The London Tenants Federation, Lees,L, Just Space and SNAG (2014) *An Anti-Gentrification Toolkit for Council Tenants in London*<sup>3</sup> and an academic paper on the Aylesbury Estate - Lees,L. (2014a) The urban injustices of New Labour's 'new urban renewal': the case of the Aylesbury Estate in London<sup>4</sup>. These two pieces of research were submitted as evidence to the London Assembly's Housing Committee Investigation into Social Housing Estate Regeneration<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Lees,L. with Phillips,M. (2018) *The Gentrification Studies Handbook*, Edward Elgar; Lees,L. et al. (2016) *Planetary Gentrification*, Polity Press: Cambridge; Lees,L. et al. (2015) (eds) *Global Gentrifications: uneven development and displacement*, Policy Press: Bristol; Bridge,G., Butler,T., and Lees,L. (eds) (2012) *Mixed Communities: gentrification by stealth?*, Policy Press: Bristol; Lees,L. et al. (2010) *The Gentrification Reader*, Routledge: London; and Lees,L. et al. (2008) *Gentrification*, Routledge: New York.

<sup>2</sup> Imrie,R. and Lees,L. (2014) (eds) *Sustainable London? The future of a global city*, Policy Press: Bristol; Imrie,R., Lees,L. and Raco,M. (2009) (eds) *Regenerating London: governance, sustainability and community in a global city*, Routledge: London.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.londontenants.org/publications/other/Staying%20Put.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Lees, L. (2014a) The urban injustices of New Labour's 'new urban renewal': the case of the Aylesbury Estate in London, *Antipode*, 46:4:921-947.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Volume%203-%20Social%20Housing%20Estate%20Regeneration%20Consultation%20Responses.pdf> (Volume 2 Sub-006, Sub-006a, Sub006b)

1.2 I am an expert urbanist and a Londoner. I was invited as an expert guest to the first meeting of the Urban Regeneration Committee at the GLA to talk about urban regeneration in London<sup>6</sup> and I have delivered numerous key note speeches in both London and around the globe on 'urban renaissance'. My current academic focus is on the future of council housing in London in terms of the future social sustainability of London as a whole (Lees, 2014b)<sup>7</sup>. To that end I am currently working on an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project 'Gentrification, Displacement, and the Impacts of Council Estate Renewal in C21st London' (2017-2020, *ES/N015053\1*, £615,341), some of this research is embedded in this witness statement.

1.3 I have previously given evidence to two public inquiries (the Heygate Public Inquiry and the first Aylesbury Public Inquiry) and provided expert reports for the GLA's draft good practice guide to estate regeneration (2017), the draft Housing and Planning Bill (2015), the GLA Planning Committee (2015) on estate regeneration, and the GLA Housing Committee (2014) on the demolition and refurbishment of London's council estates.

1.4 My evidence speaks to the following two items of the inspector's pre-inquiry meeting (PIM) list of 'Tests to be applied to the Compulsory Purchase Order':

- Whether the purpose for which the land is being acquired fits in with the adopted Local Plan for the area.
- Whether the extent to which the proposed purpose will contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area.

1.5 My evidence is contained in this main proof and a separate volume of appendices comprising:

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s26533/Regeneration%20the%20Situation%20in%20London.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Lees, L. (2014b) The death of sustainable communities in London, in Imrie, R. and Lees, L. (eds) *Sustainable London? The future of a global city*, Policy Press: Bristol, pp.149-172.

- Appendix LL1; maps showing where leaseholders decanted from the Aylesbury Estate have ended up.
- Appendix LL2; sample of interviews with displaced leaseholders and leaseholders in the process of being displaced from the Aylesbury Estate (not involved in the public inquiry) from my ESRC research.
- Appendix LL3; sample of interviews with displaced council tenants and council tenants under threat of displacement from the Aylesbury Estate (not involved in the public inquiry) from my ESRC research.
- Appendix LL4; findings from 2017 *Living on the Aylesbury Estate* ([http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content\\_54\\_1.pdf](http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content_54_1.pdf)) that support my ESRC research findings reported in appendices LL2 and LL3.

## **2. Whether the purpose for which the land is being acquired fits in with the adopted Local Plan for the area**

2.1 I gave evidence at the previous inquiry in October 2015 arguing that the existing community was being split up and displaced. My evidence was rejected largely on the grounds that 50% of residents were supposedly being re-accommodated within the estate.

*"Evidence presented to the inquiry confirms that many existing residents, not only those remaining on the Order Land, value the strong sense of community which is evident throughout the estate. They fear that this sense of community will be lost as a result of the regeneration, particularly if they need to move away from the area. Whilst the existing community will be disrupted, particularly during the early phases of regeneration, the AAP envisages that about 50% of the existing tenants will be re - accommodated within the estate. This will assist with*

*maintaining the existing sense of community.”* (Paragraph 349 of Inspector Coffey’s 29 January 2016 report)

2.2 At that time, although I had evidence of displacement numbers and postcodes from Notting Hill Trust, I did not have access to information showing exactly how many residents were being re-accommodated within the estate. I have since managed to obtain this data, via FOI (837399), which shows that only about 10% of tenanted residents decanted have been rehoused back within the estate.

2.3 The Council has to date decanted 1,310 households from the active phases of the Aylesbury Estate regeneration (Phase 1a: 53 households decanted. Site 7: 59 households decanted. Phase 1b/1c: 566 households decanted. Phase 2: 632 households decanted).

2.4 Only 112 **former secure tenanted households** have been rehoused back on the redeveloped footprint of the Aylesbury Estate, that is about 10% of the tenanted households decanted to date ([https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/aylesbury\\_estate\\_regeneration\\_de#incoming-1042220](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/aylesbury_estate_regeneration_de#incoming-1042220)). They currently live in the new L&Q developments on Phase 1a and Site 7. This means that about 1,000 tenanted households have been rehoused in existing council homes elsewhere in the borough or elsewhere. This will have had massive knock on effects, for example, 1,000 families on the Southwark Council waiting list will have been pushed down the list or pushed out of the borough altogether, as the following FOI indicates:

2.5 Southwark came top in the list of UK councils who replied to an FOI request (BBC Radio 5 Live’s afternoon edition 9<sup>th</sup> Oct 2017) with 1,143 tenanted households relocated out of the borough of Southwark over the past 5 years (see <http://metro.co.uk/2017/10/09/number-of-homeless-families-being-moved-from-local-area-doubles-in-five-years-6985737/>).

2.6 According to FOI (837399) by 10th October 2017 Southwark Council had acquired 285 **leasehold and freehold** properties on the Aylesbury Estate, of which 148 were recorded as being physically resident on the estate. The displacement of those 148 has been mapped from the council’s data (see Appendix 1). Only 16 of these have managed

to remain in SE17 on or near the footprint of the estate. That is about 11%. Only 6 have been rehoused on the redeveloped phases 1a and site 7.

2.7 The purpose for which the land is being acquired therefore fails to fit in with the adopted Local Plan for the area which requires 50% of tenants to be rehoused within the estate.

2.8 And even if council tenants are rehoused locally, eg. in the borough of Southwark, this is not the same as being rehoused on or near the footprint of the estate.

2.9 There are psychological impacts to being decanted from one's long term home and community. Fullilove (1996)<sup>8</sup> talks about the psychiatric implications of displacement: how the psychological processes of attachment, familiarity and place are threatened by displacement, and the problems of disorientation and alienation that ensue. My interviews in LL2 and LL3 demonstrate this well. Indeed, I have spoken to local GPs who have been disturbed by the public health impacts (eg. stress, anxiety, depression, suicide attempts, etc) with respect to the decanting of the Aylesbury (but they felt that they could not input to this inquiry due to patient confidentiality). Keene and Geronimus (2011)<sup>9</sup> discuss the same uprooting of low income, urban, BME communities as a result of the HOPE VI program of creating new mixed communities on the site of public housing projects in the US (the model on which British estate renewal into mixed income communities is based<sup>10</sup>), they too raise concern about the health impacts on low income communities that already shoulder significant health burdens. In my interviews, these burdens of caring for ill or disabled relatives are evident, as are the escalation of health issues during decantment (see interview in LL3).

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<sup>8</sup> Fullilove, M. (1996) Psychiatric implications of displacement: contributions from the psychology of place, *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 153:12:1516-1523.

<sup>9</sup> Keene, D. and Geronimus, A. (2011) Weathering HOPE VI: the importance of evaluating the population health impact of public housing demolition and displacement, *Journal of Urban Health*, 88:3:417-435.

<sup>10</sup> Bridge, G., Butler, T., and Lees, L. (eds) (2012) *Mixed Communities: gentrification by stealth?*, Policy Press: Bristol.

### **3. Whether the extent to which the proposed purpose will contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area.**

3.1 The scheme's failure to meet the requirement for 50% of tenants to be rehoused within the estate is having the knock-on effect of putting unforeseen pressure on the Acquiring Authority's housing waiting list. This is reducing its capacity to provide sufficient accommodation for other households in the borough in housing need.

3.2 The following article stemming from an FOI request shows that 1143 homeless families have been moved out of the borough in the last five years. This is around the same number of tenanted households decanted from the Aylesbury estate to date.

<http://metro.co.uk/2017/10/09/number-of-homeless-families-being-moved-from-local-area-doubles-in-five-years-6985737/>

3.3 Evidence of the negative social impacts on families being displaced from the Aylesbury Estate can be found in appendices 2 and 3. These negative impacts are economic, social, cultural and public health impacts.

The research<sup>11</sup> findings reported in the 2017 *Living on the Aylesbury Estate* ([http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content\\_54\\_1.pdf](http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content_54_1.pdf)) echo the findings from my independent research funded by ESRC<sup>12</sup> see appendix LL4.

3.4 NHT's focus on social sustainability is to be welcomed, but critically - displacing the Aylesbury community will not achieve this.

'The new feature of demographic change is in the social class and incomes of people living on and around the estate. The areas adjacent to the estate are

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<sup>11</sup> The fact that members of the pro-regeneration Creation Trust's Community Team carried out some of these interviews, alongside Social Life staff (paid for by the regenerator NHT) introduces bias into the research process, however, despite this the findings echo my own.

<sup>12</sup> Independent research funded by ESRC on 'Gentrification, Displacement, and the Impacts of Council Estate Renewal in C21st London' (2017-2020, *ES/N015053\1*, £615,341) PI: Loretta Lees.

becoming more affluent, and this trend will increasingly affect the estate itself as the regeneration programme rolls out and more residents pay market prices for their homes. Residents are aware of this and many voice concerns that the neighbourhood, in the future, will not be “for them” (*Living on the Aylesbury Estate*, p.38).

3.5 And NHT’s response to the findings *Listening to the Aylesbury* ([http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content\\_54\\_0.pdf](http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content_54_0.pdf)) does not, however, guarantee right of return to the footprint of the estate or like for like for either leaseholders or council tenants.

3.6 There has also been a rapid increase in the number of homelessness applications and families housed in B&B accommodation over the past 5 years. Data from [http://www.2.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/200141/housing\\_strategy](http://www.2.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/200141/housing_strategy) shows that between 2012-2014 the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation in Southwark increased from 668 to 898 households (chart 27). The number of statutorily homeless households in temporary accommodation in Southwark increased from 606 in 2012 to 782 in 2014 (chart 13); the African and Caribbean populations disproportionately affected (see chart 7).

3.7 The extra cost to the Acquiring Authority associated with B&B accommodation has led to a five-fold increase in its spend on temporary housing over the last five years: <https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/council-spend-temporary-housing-now-five-times-20112012/>

3.8 There is a causal link between the scheme’s failure to meet the AAP requirement of rehousing 50% of tenants within the estate and these negative social and economic impacts.

3.9 The scheme as implemented is therefore failing to promote or improve the economic and quality of life well-being of the area. The effect of the regeneration scheme is to displace the existing low income community, with particular impacts on the BME population.



3.10 The Council claims that it is building 11,000 new Council homes, but as the data I have collected shows this is failing to keep up with the rate at which it is demolishing council homes: <http://35percent.org/2017-10-02-council-leader-peter-john-alternative-facts/>

#### **4. The scheme fails to comply with the Area Action Plan's tenure distribution requirements**

4.1 Policy BH3 (Tenure Mix) of the Aylesbury Area Action Plan says:

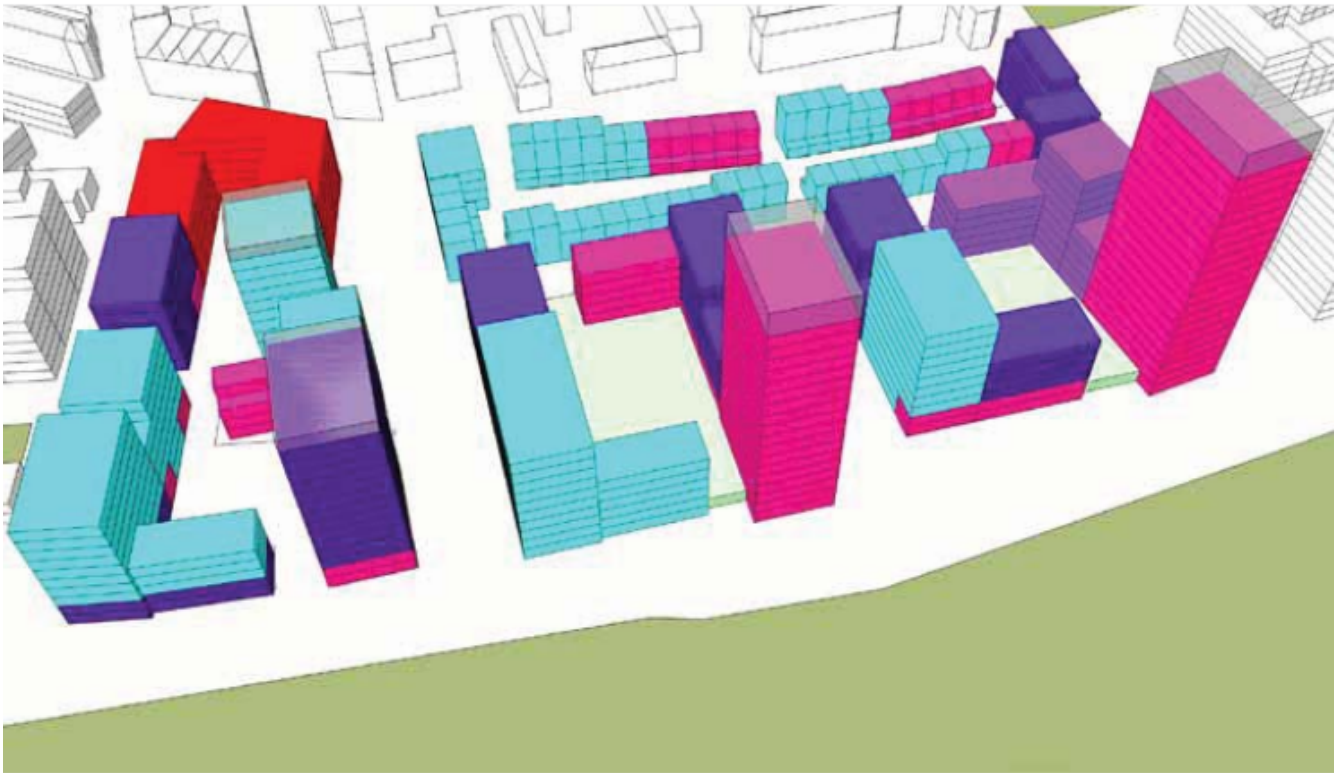
*'To help ensure that the new neighbourhood contributes to community cohesion, all new homes should be tenure blind i.e. it should not be possible to distinguish between affordable and private homes from their external appearance'* (Paragraph 3.3.7).

*'All developments blocks should seek to provide the tenure mix which is appropriate for the proposals site in which the block is located, as set out in policy BH3, unless it can be demonstrated that this is not possible through an open-book financial appraisal'* (Paragraph 3.3.8).

4.2 This accords with Policy P13, Paragraph 1.4 of the New Southwark Plan which requires development to be *'tenure blind'* and the London Plan (Housing SPG) which requires that *'schemes should be designed to maximise tenure integration'* (Paragraph 1.3.18).

4.3 I understand from the revised planning application supporting documents (Design Addendum – S73 amendments) that the development blocks in the proposed FDS application do not comply with these requirements of the AAAP. The proposed blocks are not *'tenure blind'* and that the tenures have been segregated such that two tallest blocks overlooking Burgess park (blocks 4A and 5A) are entirely private tenure, while the *'affordable'* units are located in the low-rise blocks in their shadow and away from the park. Further, the previous consented planning application proposed a third tall block

(block 6A) overlooking the park, which was to be social rented tenure. However, the proposed amendments to the planning application will see this tenure swapped for entirely private and shared ownership flats. There will now be no social rented units in any of the three tower blocks overlooking the park.



Massing Model \_ Amended

### **Phase 1a**

4.4 The same failure to comply with the AAP's tenure distribution has occurred in the adjacent completed phase 1a scheme (and in breach of the planning consent's original tenure mix requirements).

4.5 This is block D3 of the redeveloped phase 1a of the scheme comprising a total of 29 flats, all of which private - not one single affordable unit of any kind:



4.6 The

benchmarking survey commissioned by Notting Hill Trust in 2015 ([http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content\\_54\\_1.pdf](http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content_54_1.pdf)) found that residents had experienced an *'increased polarisation around class'* and that *"in the new L&Q homes, different tenures are generally grouped together within blocks. This is different to the rest of the estate, where leaseholder flats are distributed randomly as a consequence of individual tenants' decisions to exercise their right to buy. L&Q residents reported less mixing across tenures."*

4.7 I was criticised in the previous CPO inspector's report for trying to 'drive a coach and horses' through established mixed communities policy:

*'The NPPF, the London Plan and the AAAP seek to secure the creation of mixed communities. On behalf of the objectors, Professor Lees acknowledged that the mixed communities policy has long underpinned the regeneration of the Aylesbury Estate. Her position, namely that such policies produce gentrification and the displacement of public housing tenants, is one of fundamental opposition to national and regional and local planning policy.'*

*To reject a CPO on the basis of the social policy position taken by Professor Lees, one of self-avowed opposition to that planning framework, would be to drive a coach and horses through the established approach to planning CPOs' (Paragraphs 71-72).*

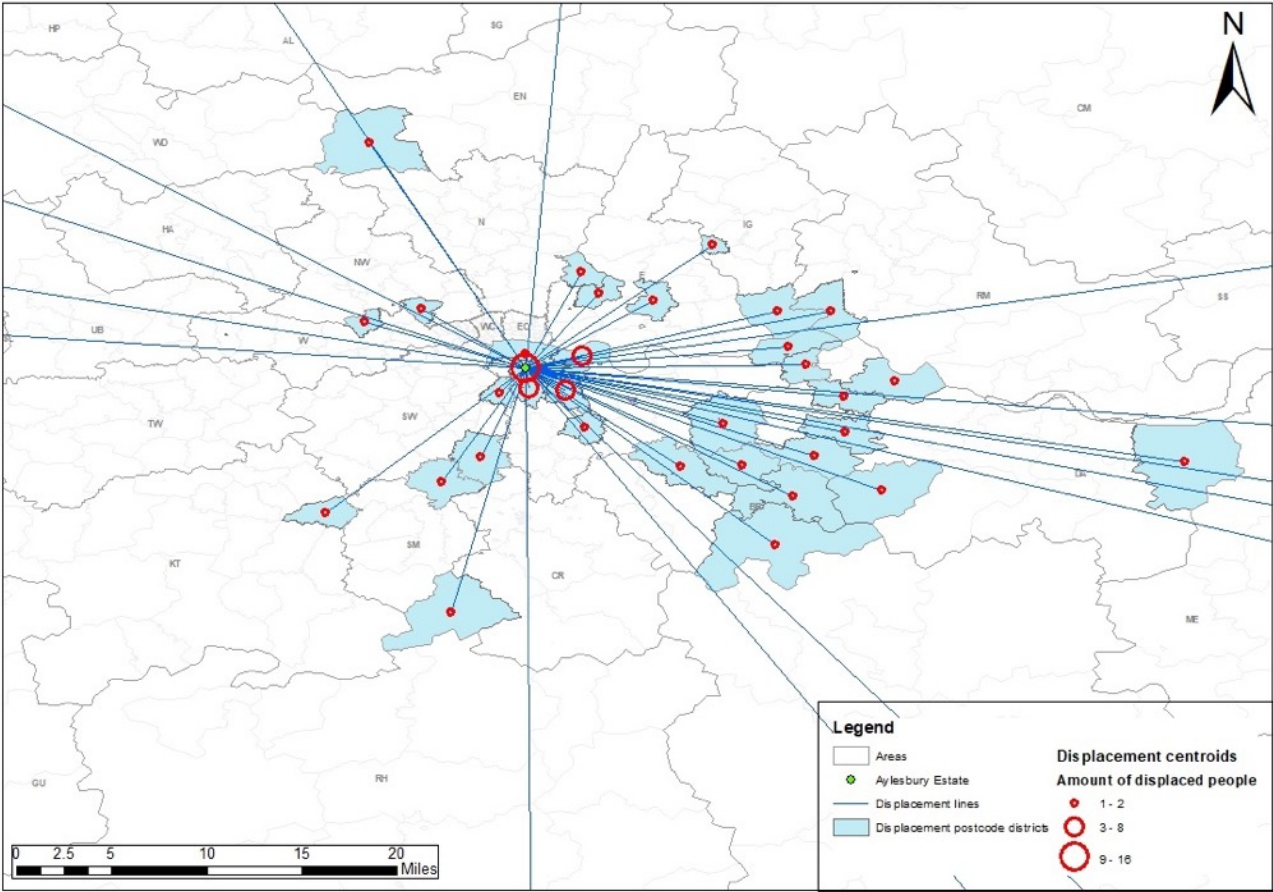
4.8 But this completely misses the point; of course social mixity/mixed communities are a good thing for society, but my whole point is that the scheme underlying the order fails to comply with mixed communities policy and objectives; i.e. an already mixed community is being broken up on the premise of creating a more mixed community but that this is failing (and creating gentrification and new forms of social segregation – 'gentrification by stealth' cr. Bridge et al, 2012) because the scheme underlying the order fails to comply with policy requirements on tenure distribution.

END

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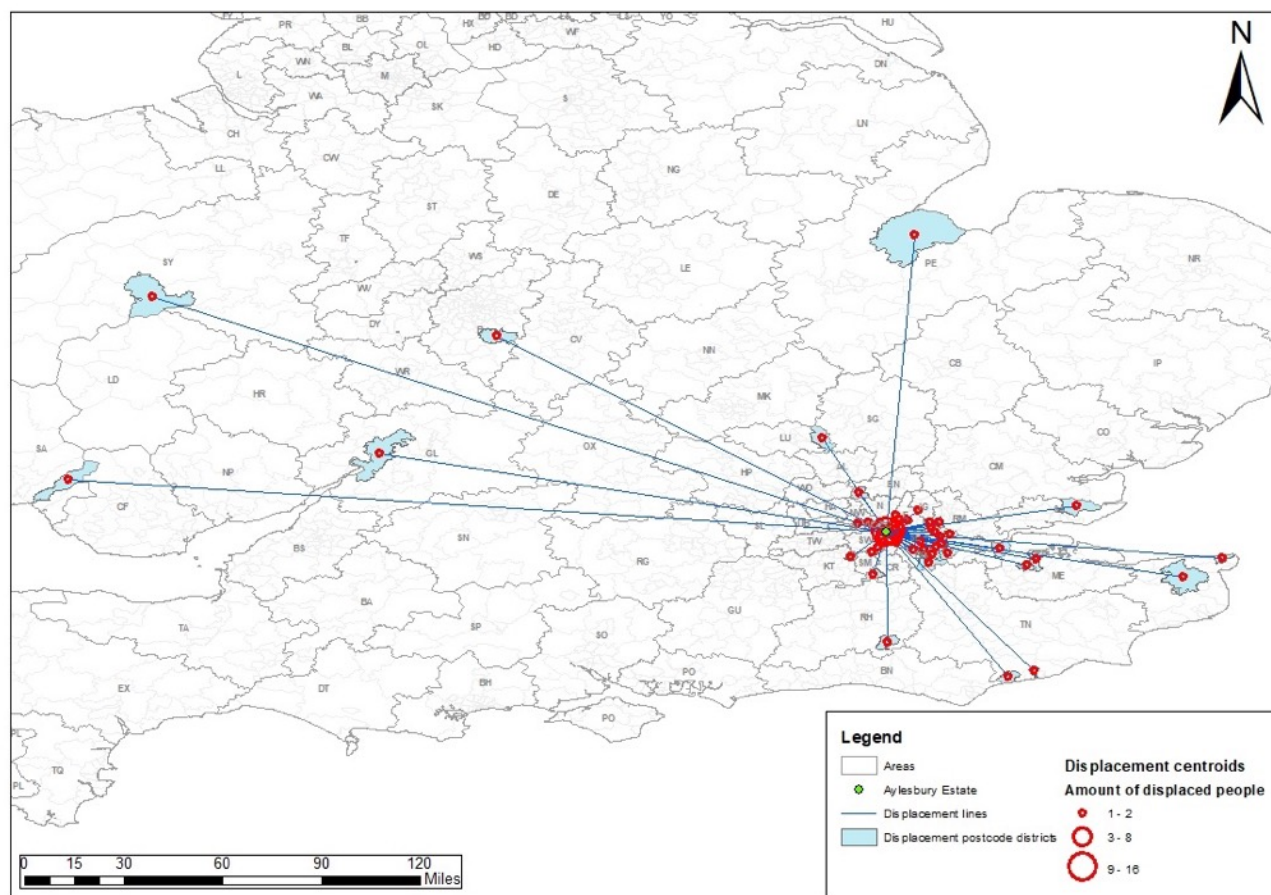
**APPENDICES**

**Appendix LL1; maps showing where leaseholders from the Aylesbury Estate have ended up. Data provided via foi from Southwark Council.**



**Displacement from the Aylesbury in Greater London**





**Displacement from the Aylesbury in and beyond Greater London**

**Appendix LL2; sample of ESRC project interviews with displaced leaseholders and leaseholders in the process of being displaced from the Aylesbury Estate (not involved in the public inquiry)**

**INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER DECANTED TO CAMBERWELL FIELDS**

*Interviewee L1, self-employed, had lived on the Aylesbury for over 20 years, 10 years as a council tenant and 10 years as a leaseholder. Took council buy out of her property. Did not want to leave the Aylesbury but was not coping with the stress of the CPO.*

**A:** To be honest, I wasn't coping.

**Q:** Can you explain a bit more about that? You weren't coping with the work?

**A:** Difficult world to live.

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** It was an accumulation. It was over so many years. I mean I'm a painter. I'm used to being self-employed and working things out for myself. I couldn't work anything out. I couldn't get off the estate. I couldn't move. The surveyor wasn't speaking to my surveyor. So, nothing was going forward...constant stress...Not knowing what to do or where to go.

**Q:** You're a self-employed painter. What kind of impacts has it had on your work?

**A:** I haven't been able to work...Yes, I've got depression unfortunately...

**Q:** Do you still go back to those doctors?

**A:** Yes, for treatment.

**Q:** What have they said about the treatment?

**A:** They're very good. They treat a lot of people in the Aylesbury suffering from these problems. It's the CBT.

**Q:** Oh dear! In terms of where you've moved to now, what do you miss from the Aylesbury?

**A:** I did enjoy living there. I could work where I lived. I can't work here...The layout is very different...It's not possible to have a working area...I didn't buy it [the flat] for an investment or anything. I just looked at it as stability.

**Q:** Can you articulate a bit more about these feelings, like these kinds of emotions around what's happened?

**A:** It's with retrospect thinking I'd bought it as a security and I was in a most insecure position and not knowing how to get out of the situation I was in...Not so much trapped, as ... I failed everything... I was approaching 60 and hadn't managed to look after myself. Then it just snowballed into this. It was like every decision you had made in your life was wrong.

**A:** I think you're just feeling like you haven't made a success of your life, you can't afford to look after yourself, and just the accumulation. It didn't matter what I did. I mean I knew everything is about perspective. It's trying to change my perspective on things and work out what to do and I couldn't work out anything. Everything I was told was just a lie that I'd be looked after and secure and ... [voice overlap].

**Q:** The council told you this verbally or by letters?

**A:** Well, I was certain ... when this became apparent in 2000 that they were going to proceed with the demolition and then they had the vote, but the council still decided they were going to proceed with the demolition. I'm very involved with the New Deal for Communities, and went to all meetings and listened to all the rhetoric. But it turned out to be nothing.

**Q:** Initially, were you supportive of the scheme?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Did you voice your concerns about the scheme?

**A:** When I was on NGC, we had the right to buy booklets which made it clearly and that changed, everything that was in there... the council go oh no, that's an old one, that doesn't count anymore. I just think it's such a mess.

**Q:** How long has that taken to feel better?

**A:** Almost 3 years since I went for help.



**Q:** That was a long time. Have you been able to talk to any of the people in the same situation?

**A:** Not really... it just brings it all back. I just feel we're not going down that again.

**Q:** I can see that. Because I was in the first public inquiry and the people who were out giving their evidence were just in tears, and I just found it incredibly upsetting.

**A:** It was awful... I sat down and looked at them, all those council stuff, and the barrister and all the ... but I thought I'm paying for them. And then for that barrister to turn around and say well, go to the high court. If we can't afford this, and we can't afford a barrister to represent ourselves, how on earth can we go to the high court. It was just unbelievable...She didn't ask any questions. She just belittled people. The council just seems to be ... like they treat people how they want. I suppose they've got away with it for so long. That's their ethos. But they could just rubbish people and get away with it.

**Q:** If you were given the option of moving back onto the estate now, you'd say no anyway, wouldn't you?

**A:** Most likely. I wouldn't want to be a council tenant again. You have no rights at all.

**Q:** But if you got to move back as a leaseholder?

**A:** In any form!

**Q:** Yes. You wouldn't want to move back.

**A:** I know housing associations have their problems. But I just hate the council so much.

She also talked of the threats that forced her to give in and leave:

**A:** I paid a parking ticket fine. They hadn't credited it to my account, but they cashed it and sent the bailiff around saying that I owed them this money. It's just one thing after another. One thing after another.

**Q:** Feeling like you're threatened basically.

**A:** All the time.

**Q:** Can you give me another example? That's interesting. Other people have said the same thing. They felt like the council was threatening them in different ways to try and push them out.

**A:** They're such a lot. I mean parking fine. We used to get sent the parking permit. One particular year, I didn't get sent it. This was at the very beginning of all the problems. I didn't get sent it. I thought oh, it must be July and not June...So, I contested this. It's a tribunal. Paid what I had to pay. Then I got this bailiff come around. Another thing was the ... I mean I don't understand how they can cash cheque and not find it anywhere. I really can't understand that.

**Q:** No, I don't get that. Normally bailiffs have access to that information as well. So, if you've paid, they kind of know.

**A:** Other people moved out. Short let tenants were moved in. I got flooded every other night at 1, 2 O'clock in the morning. The heating would go off regularly. Suddenly, they had to shut it down for maintenance checks every month. Hot water would go off, heating would go off at all times. Always went off at Christmas.

**Q:** You think that this was definitely new? So, before that, these kinds of things didn't happen?

**A:** I don't know if it went off at Christmas prior to all this because I didn't spend every Christmas there. This became a regular occurrence, the heating and the hot water stuff. One day, they came up and said that we can't do anything, we can't find the key. I mean they do this and that. It would be a load of rubbish about why something can or cannot be done. It was just hundreds of things like that on and on.

**A:** Brilliant tactics. Make you uncomfortable as possible. They're paying all this money out...I was on the phone to my sisters and I'm looking out here and they're laying new pipes. There weren't many people left in the building at that point.

**Q:** That I don't understand.

**A:** I was paying £5000 a year!

**Q:** I'm also interested in how people mentally move on from this situation? CBT has really helped?

**A:** It has helped. I mean it had a knock-on effect, which I didn't realise. I thought I've done the CBT...I have grade 2 anxiety. I never used to be like this. I have no concentration. Haven't read a book in 3 years... I've coped with lots of things. I'm out of it.

**Q:** You're out the other end. If you were to speak to the council and tell them what you feel, what do you think you would say to them?

**A:** Change their whole policy. If they want to keep on with these regeneration schemes, they've got to treat people better. People have rights. Everywhere. Not just in Southwark.

### **INTERVIEW (Aug 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A1, a black African leaseholder (age 50-59), in employment, had lived on the Aylesbury since 1994, leaseholder since 2000.*

**A:** I have been having several phone calls and an e-mail from the regeneration team. Suddenly they have become very, very active - they haven't been in the last year or two. And they're asking me about my future plans for whether I'm going to remain here or what my plans are. And I said: 'At the moment I am not happy with what the council is offering and feel like we are being robbed here and I feel like my property compared to what is going on around us which is new flats being raised just right beside us, I feel like my property is worth between £400 and £500,000'. And because my daughter has just started secondary school I'm not prepared to move now. And if anything I'm not interested because she said 'Oh we can help you purchase a council property' and I said I'm not interested. If I was to move out .... I can't afford anything in London.

**Q:** And this must be quite a problem that your neighbours face as well, am I right?

**A:** Yes, most, some of the leaseholders have just given up. One of my neighbours has just given up and in so doing the council I think they bought a property back for £140,000. Three bedrooms, £140,000 and this was about at least 4 to 5 years ago. So I decided I was going to stay put and then a few months after them buying the property back off them at that price they had an outcome of the tribunal case or whatever and immediately the properties went up to about £220,000. So they have literally robbed her of £70,000 in just a matter of months. She was on the eighth floor in my block in Wendover.

And they took us to come and have a look at some properties just behind Burgess Park because they are encouraging us to say: 'Oh you can use the money you get from the council to buy this'. What they want us to do is take all the money we get from the sale of our property to give it, use all of that to purchase one of their properties, the Notting Hill Trust properties behind Burgess Park. And we went to have a look at them and what they said to us was, 'Oh council tenants are allowed to own cars and have parking but leaseholders will have to have a car pool scheme'. There is no parking for us. We will have to have a car pool scheme whereby we pay, maybe once a week maybe you will have the car and maybe another leaseholder will have the car and I thought, this

is ridiculous. So we who are paying don't get any parking spaces but then the tenants who are just paying rents are entitled to parking? I thought this is so ridiculous. And the place was nice but apart from the outer shell which is bricks, but everything inside is partition walls. And it is not value for money for us at all. And they said 'Oh the benefit is you don't pay ground rent you just pay, but it is as if you are trying to coax us to buy... They sent us documents for Harvard Gardens a four bedroom is 700 odd thousand pounds. And you want to buy our place the two something? How much percentage? And they want to determine how much percentage we buy. So they, what are, they want us to use the maximum amount that we get from the council to invest in their properties. So the question is, what is their cut? Southwark Council are benefiting somehow from this. They're trying to get us to buy these properties which you can pay a lifetime and you won't finish paying for it. They get us out and then it is torn down and they have the developers come and have and then they sold them for almost £800,000.

**Q:** So how long ago was it that you first found out that there might be redevelopment on the Aylesbury?

**A:** I can't remember the exact date but it has been going on a while, I think it must have been about seven years ago because it started off down in the Bradman area. So they started tearing down a few flats down there... They did notify us of plans to develop the area and so they had a timetable of when the likely event would take place. So they kept shifting the date back so with us this year was supposed to be the year that we would have to move out but now it seems it's going to be 2018 / 2019. So when the regeneration team call me, called me the other day, the man I first spoke to said, 'You have to move out by the end of this year' and I said 'That is ridiculous'. Do you understand? So he's thinking he can force me so I said I am staying put I'm not going. What are they going to do if I'm the last person in? ... It is really awful. And some have literally, I think some older residents who were leaseholders have reluctantly moved out because they are panicking and they are more scared than anything about what would happen to them, and it, they put a lot of fear in people.

**Q:** So when you first found out, was there, did you know that they were going to demolish it and move you out? Did you think you might see improvement on the estate?

**A:** We thought that, I think what they did say was that initially, which felt encouraging, was that we could move off the property but then there would be an option to come back here years after once they had built and finished and refurbished the flats. But now it does not seem like that

option is available. Because initially they told us and I think that is why people I think had that in mind, 'Okay maybe I'm just moving temporarily somewhere, and they said I can come back and buy this place back', or whatever it is, if you would have maybe first pick and they would actually leave that option open. But that does not seem like that is the case anymore it really doesn't... not at all.

**Q:** And roughly when did it kind of dawn on everyone that you guys were not going to be able to move back and that you would lose your homes forever?

**A:** I think we noticed that they were- actually the prices at which they were selling the properties would make it impossible for anyone to move back. Because initially they said, 'Oh it is mixed housing, a bit of council and a bit of affordable, and now all the way from Elephant and Castle you have Lendlease, which have taken over all the way down and no one can afford- even I think there are some apartments over near the church around the corner and they are selling for- most of them have been bought by maybe Chinese families who do not even live in this country. So the prices which they are selling them, even if you wanted to you couldn't afford it.

**Q:** And you mentioned before that your daughter has just started secondary school.

**A:** Yes she will start in a few weeks time.

**Q:** And so that is another reason to stay?

**A:** That is another reason for me to stay, at least for the next few years, the reason being is that she has to get used to her community. If I decide, 'Oh well, I'm going to take the money and I'm going outside', that is extra cost in terms of travel, in terms of her journey that- me finding a new school for her. And it is just too much to think about and too much to take into account. And they are not listening - it seems as if they are just thinking, 'Oh we will help you, we will help you find a new place', and the council has properties that- what they do is they want you to go over there because they have written to me again and they told me that the dates are available and they can carry out the financial assessments we have to declare everything. All of your bank statements and everything and they will decide whether you are entitled to purchase council property back. One of our neighbours did that, he is now on Naylor Road and he is in a place where there is no lift. Because he wanted to stay in the area the flat he has got is not worth it. It is not worth it. And I think he had to use all the money he got from the council to buy it. And it is

really not worth the money. But because he wanted to be in the area he was forced to do that to keep his family and his community and schools and for continuity basically.

**Q:** So you would theoretically consider leaving Southwark?

**A:** I would consider it because at the moment what can I afford a Southwark? I can't afford anything.

**Q:** So you would leave Southwark not because you want to leave Southwark, because you can't afford Southwark?

**A:** Yes, well I can't afford Southwark because I wouldn't want to go and buy a 5% or 10% worth of a £700,000 property, which I would never finish paying for and there were so many clauses of buying these properties from Notting Hill Trust or rental because what it was was that, what they were saying was that, if you want to sell you would have to sell it back to them. And your children cannot inherit, and you cannot rent it out... And so there are so many clauses so even if you did buy it from them it is as if you don't really own it. Because what if something should happen, what happens to my daughter then? Because it is a case whereby it is not necessarily passed on to your next of kin or anything like that. So how does it benefit me? It benefits the council, it benefits the developer because they get the money the council has given me which is nothing. So obviously I cannot afford a place here in Southwark. The money would have to take me elsewhere outside of Southwark or London. And ideally, yes, I wish I could remain in Southwark but with what they are offering us?

**Q:** And if the worst happens and you do lose your property what do you think would be the biggest losses in having to leave Southwark?

**A:** I think that the biggest losses would be, it would affect me greatly in terms of my day-to-day. Because I'm used to this place, I like this place, I like going to the market, I like the facilities, I like coming to this [Burgess] park. So obviously it is a disruption to my family life as well. I might not have immediate family here, but I have friends here who I consider my family as well. We have known each other for years, my daughter's friends and all of that.

So that would be a loss to us because once we move what is the likelihood of us coming back to visit? How often can we come and visit? And obviously it's going to cost money and there is a lot to think about. Now, at the moment I am on a very good mortgage whereby I am just paying a bit

- I am a variable rate, because I was on a fixed rate, because initially when I got my mortgage back in 2005 I was on a variable and basically what I'm paying now it may be just 1% above the base rate. So what it is, it has favoured me with this economic outturn we're not paying so much. But the- me having to move to take on another mortgage, I might not have that and my bank might not take- let me extend that and transfer that mortgage onto a new one. They might decide, now you have two, so how does that- so I am losing out on that as well, so there are so many things take into consideration.

**Q:** So you might not have thought about it, but hypothetically where outside of London do think you might potentially move to?

**A:** I don't even know. And that is the thing because at the moment I'm not driving so I would have to learn. I used to drive, and issues with parking and congestion charge and all of that. I would have to drive- take up driving again and I haven't really thought carefully about, because wherever I need to move to has to be- had to consider the community of my daughter myself. So there is too much for me to think about right now to want to just up and go.

## **INTERVIEW (Aug 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A2, a black African leaseholder (age 50-59), in employment, had lived on the Aylesbury since 1994, leaseholder since 2000.*

**A:** We don't want the new ones they are too expensive. A studio flat there is £428,000. And the council is offering me £255,000 for my three-bedroom, 17 x 15 living room, 70 x 12 bedroom and the other smaller ones are more than 12 ft. So yeah, so why are you giving me £255,000 and they say it is concrete. And if you want the land we have three floors there right? You want the land, you are going to be building 12 floors and we have seen all of the plans already. So the land is worth more and if my flat is £255,000 x12 that is a lot of money. And that is the barest minimum. If I had one bedroom or studio flat then we know the playground and the car park where our kids used to play is about 200 flats built there now behind the market. And a three bedroom is £850,000. By the time they knock mine down and build there let's call it a three-bedroom £1 million so 1,000,000 times 12 flats is £12 million and you want to pay me £200,000? Why?! I'm getting upset now, sorry but this is the way the council is dealing with us. You understand? So it is really upsetting.

**Q:** And so you have young children?

**A:** ... the youngest one is still at home. The fourth one, he's at Norwich University but he comes home a lot. He's going to finish next June and then obviously he's going to come home isn't it?

**Q:** Okay. And they went to school around here and everything as well?

**A:** Everybody walks to school and in 5 min. St Martin's, Surrey Square and then the secondary school is a bit further afield but, and then university they go out. But they grew up here and all of their friends are here. It is crazy isn't it. It's a real shame we don't know what to do.

**Q:** Is it more of an investment for some people, rather than for a family home?

**A:** Yeah I think, I've bought my property, I can live with my children and if there is equity in it in the future I can also enjoy that equity. But if they take me out now and they put even all of my £255,000 into a new property at my age now, I'm not going to get a mortgage because I'm 55. Who is going to give me a mortgage now? And my business is not doing lots and my account is not brilliant, because all I am doing is subsistence.

The business (in East Street Market) is suffering because our customers were here before, who were our friends, a community. They have dismantled that - they have sent some people far, far, far away. So because of that the market is dead. You cannot get these people in any more, even though most were on income support and all sorts, they spent their money here in the markets. And now the people in this area coming into this area they go outside. So the market is gone. They go to Borough Market.

**Q:** So can you explain what you mean by that, why would they go to Borough Market?

**A:** Because they are, because they are not us. They are not like us. This place was looked down upon before when we moved in and nobody wanted to come here. But people who stayed here made this place what it is today. We could have gone as well. We might not have even had the chance to go so we stayed and we made it what it is today. The sad thing is now the government and the people who are coming, the people who are making the rules they don't live



here. They have nothing to do with this area and all they want is the money from this place. It is so close to everything you see? So that is what is painful and our children grow up here. Some of our neighbours children were killed in here - they were stabbed, you name it, addiction you name it - everything happens here. But some of us we stayed here, and we were hoping for the best. And now the best is here and they want to throw us out. And I am not going, and unless they carry me in my coffin and I am not moving. My children want to stay here, so this is where we are going to stay.

**Q:** And you don't have to answer this of course but how do you think the new people, in what ways would you say the new people moving in would be different?

**A:** They have money to start with. And they come from wherever rich backgrounds or foreign abroad and majority of them are foreigners. They come from abroad have the money. The Russians are buying here, can you imagine!?

**Q:** So are they buying to live? Or just to invest?

**A:** Invest. Most of them are investments

**Q:** But what about the people who are coming to live?

**A:** The people who are coming and living here also can afford to pay the amount that they are charging, so people like us cannot.

**Q:** And, just checking you've answered a lot of my questions already. So have you had any other support from in the local area from the local MPs or councillors or anything like that?

**A:** Only Javid was on our side, the Communities Minister, when he said that the CPO should stop on humanitarian grounds. Yes Javid is a Conservative, yeah well he has a bit of sense.

They know very well that our property is not even getting half the price of the new property that they want to give us and say take your money and go to Margate or Ramsgate or go to Leeds, or Scarborough. ... They rehoused some of the tenants just to free up the good space and they took them to Ipswich or to Birmingham or to Newcastle or Yorkshire and they are all back here in temporary accommodation and they are paying for it.

**Q:** So, oh right, so they moved away from London and then have come back to London?

**A:** The ones we know they have all come back because their kids are growing up and they move you to Newcastle and you don't have no friends there. The kids are not Mancunians, they can't speak the language or whatever, the accent whatever. They stay three months, they start crying, they want to see their friends and they have no friends there and so what would you do as a mother? You start crying your eyes out and they go to school - they think it's bad here, it's worse up there - it will stop- the kids are not performing and you pack your bags and come back. \*\*\*\* and her children, Ipswich, she is back. She was coming, one month there, one month there, and up in Colchester and she's back in London.

They go, do that, and everybody came back, once they're coming back they still fall back on Southwark because they used to be Southwark tenants and so Southwark puts them in a temporary accommodation place. They found them a place and when they're in the new place all they have to do, people paying to displace them now have to put them in temporary accommodation and you pay the accommodation, and in a hotel, how much does that cost overnight? So that is the sense that Southwark has got.

## **INTERVIEW (Sept 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A3, a black African leaseholder (age 55-59), in employment, leaseholder since 2004.*

**Q:** So, you said you became a leaseholder in 2007?

**A:** Yeah... no, 2004

**Q:** Sorry, 2004. You became a leaseholder in 2004 - do you know roughly how many years after becoming a leaseholder you started to hear that you may have to leave the home that you had bought, that you had had paid for?

**A:** ...when we were going to a meeting, lots of meetings. But I can't know exactly the year, and they were telling us they are coming to regenerate here, and they said it was like-for-like. And they said, even that if we buy the house they would pay you, and they would also give you a council flat to stay in. That was what they were saying that was there at the beginning.

**Q:** I see, I see

**A:** And as time goes on, we could see that, all that they were saying, things were changing, things are changing and, to shared equity and shared ownership. Which, they said they would have to assess us, and when they assess us then the band we are in or whatever, we would be bidding for house or whatever.

And we would have to go to buy, would buy our house, and then ... either we would buy a council house, or we would have to go and buy our own house, it depends. But as we, like this place, the way when you live somewhere ... if you live there for a long time, and we have raised all the children in here... Therefore, we choose here to be our future place.

There was a time that I was thinking, all the time, what is going to happen? I cannot be bothered any more...That is what I think... So, they assess us, and when they assess us they give us £260,000, plus moving costs, and other things.

**Q:** £260,000?

**A:** Yes, plus moving costs and others. But once you take that money to go to the market you can't get anything. You can't get anything.

**Q:** Three bedrooms? So you cannot get three bedrooms with that money then?

**A:** No. You can't get, so one day they sent us that, and the other houses they offer - we didn't like it. We said like-for-like in all of this, so why this now? So, we just sat down, waiting to hear what will happen, and we hear that the first phase has taken them to court and the case is ongoing. So, they was going to get a, this... compulsory purchasing order, to move us out of the house and do what they like. So, we just, we are going to meetings upon meetings, upon meetings, then it was last week that a lady called and said, that 'Whatever it is we don't have decided before the fall', they were threatening and saying if we don't sign this that... this other lady said, 'You can come and try to fill a form and make sure that we are communicating with

you, and if anything better comes your way, you have to take it. If nothing comes your way, we are with you and that, you are registered so your application is there, so that we won't be left behind, because he has seen a lot of people, and when the regeneration comes and they are the last, it is not good.' The end is not good, and he don't want it to happen to us, so he has given us a form to fill and bring it back and see if we can get thing here and start bidding on... their system. So this is what we have got to consider now.

**Q:** Is there a price for the property that you have in your mind that you would feel you could accept from the council?

**A:** Well, at the moment... I am staying in my house, and I do not want to move. Who wants to move me? So, if you want to move me, you cannot say that 'I am moving you to this place' which is not comfortable for me. I like it here! I don't want anybody to take this from me, I don't want problems with anybody. But if you want to take it, you have to see me... don't just sit down and do everything yourself, and come and put it to me. Because I'm a human being too, and I know why I bought this house! They didn't ask me to buy the house, I went to them and I said I want to buy it. They were selling it, and I bought it. So, my opinion should count as well. Not that they sit down and plan everything they like - shared ownership, shared equity, and also they said affordable housing. Most of the affordable houses is rubbish. You go in there, a lot of people are having a lot of problems when they say affordable. And even it's not affordable. Can you tell me the price of affordable house?

When you are finished your mortgage everything should be off that no one should own a share of your house. If the house belongs to you you can do whatever with it. But shared ownership and shared equity, you cannot rent the house, you cannot do nothing with it. So if you are a pensioner and you need some money, and one room is free for somebody to rent you cannot even do that. So you sell something to me and tell me how to run it? It is not possible and I do not feel that happy at all, because my interest was to make sure that at the end of my pension I can do what I like. If I am sitting in my house, and if you're paying rent it is a lot of hell. If you're sitting in my house and I'm not paying rent then when I die my children take over.

But shared equity they said when you die, your children cannot take over until finished paying the mortgage off. Why do they go and sit down, and make these decisions without even consulting us? That is what is going to happen. So no one is happy. It is only those people who've got the money to regenerate the place, they are happy. We are not.

## **INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A5, Black-African (age 55-59), in employment, leaseholder, has lived on the Aylesbury since 1997.*

**A:** I was hurt, and it was painful to me because in the beginning they said when they move, you if you are a leaseholder, it is like-for-like. They move you to another house, and you start paying your mortgage. When they came they change their mind, and shared equity or shared ownership. And we don't like that because we are grown up already - I'm 60 something and my husband is 60 something as well, there is nowhere that we can get a mortgage. And they convince us that when we go to shared equity - you get and you won't pay nothing but it is not true. Those people who moved in, they are crying. And I don't want to cry once I'm sleeping - I want a comfortable place.

And later on, you coming to us that we have to move and the money you are giving us we cannot buy nothing. We cannot buy nothing here, even outside of London, may have to go far. And I don't want to go far because London is there, and outside of London is over there, and I choose London. And I am happy here, so I do not want to move unless they can give us what we want, not what they want.

They did not tell us anything. And coming to break this down, and you're giving us options and I think it is not right - the government is supposed to do something about it. Everybody's crying. Not me alone. My children, they do not know what is going on. Sometimes when they come home they say 'Oh mum we have to go, where are we going?' We cannot go anywhere unless they give us proper something to move on.

**Q:** So, when did you find out that it might not be like-for-like?

**A:** They sent us a letter that this is what is going to be. Yes that, like-for-like does not exist. And we said 'What!?!'. In the beginning this is what he said, this is what people said. And it is there when you go to the computer, when you go to their website, it is there. So why are they changing their mind?

**Q:** And why do you think they're changing their mind?

**A:** They know that only black people bought the house. That is all I can say. Yeah, it is true, the majority of us are black. We haven't got any white person in there. When we go to meetings we don't see anybody, if they are there they are not coming, because they are not accepting it. Only my next door, two doors [down]. He finished paying his mortgage, and he said he's not moving, and he is white. His wife is disabled and he has a wheelchair. He said he is not moving. He is the only white person I know who comes to the meeting.

... sometimes the council calls a meeting, for not only the leaseholders, but for the tenants, sometimes we go there we cannot talk because everybody's shouting. The tenants are angry - most of them are white, and they do not want to go .... They close the hall, the community hall - they close it, and now they open it because ... There are homeless, all of this they are doing - there are homeless in this area. In this community there are homeless and that is where they sleep. Can you imagine? It is not fair - if you build a house for them and you move them, fine - they have not built nothing, they say they are closing it.... A lot of them are white and some of them are blacks - it is mixed. You understand? You haven't got a place for people- and now you say you're moving everybody. The moment they move you some else is coming in. What is this? It is not right. But who is going to help us to do all of this?

Everybody has gone. The church is becoming like, about 50 people in the church. Maybe not even 50 for the 11 o'clock mass. Our church was full up if you did not go early you would not get anywhere to sit. But now we are paying a lot for the church to do the electricity and everything... All of the members of the church and the church members have moved to outside.

## **INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A6, Afro-British (age 25-29) living with his leaseholder parents, unemployed, has lived on the Aylesbury since 1998.*

**A:** My parents were away for six weeks, and I was going to most of the meetings, and having sat down with them and and... they are not happy, they are not happy at all. And it is putting so much stress on them. Because as of now they do not know if, what is going to happen to them - their family, I remember one family they have been here for quite a long time - one family, and for some reason they made them... they've got... I think seven children in the house, and previously the council had decided to offer them a four-bedroom flat, but he was willing to take it.

But something happened and they change their mind again because she was very upset, and you know what? When they were offering her a four bedroom flat, they offered them money on top.. And he was willing to take it. But just then he received another letter saying no. I can't remember the exact reason that was given that, he got very upset because they were in the process of moving and packing and everything, and even though, they have unpacked they are still unsure when, and they don't know if they have to take a lawyer and people asking - someone also came around to advise them and someone from the council came to ask, advise them as well but most of the questions they were asking, though were about whether they would have to take them to court, would they have to get their own personal lawyers to do the case. They don't know what to do.

**Q:** And what effect do you think this, not only not knowing but also having to pursue the courts, and those kinds of things, what effect do think that has on your neighbours?

**A:** Most of them are stressed about it. Most of them are going through a lot mentally and mentally they are going through a lot, you could just tell from their face. Because them, working so hard and putting money down to buy the house, and then being told that they cannot live here... is... is heavy on them. It came as a shock, to some of them because they thought, you'know, they were going to live in London but now it is not going to look like it. It is not certain they do not know what's going to happen tomorrow. The uncertainty is really putting a burden on a lot of them.

## **INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A7, a black African (age 30-34) living with his leaseholder parents, in employment, has lived on the Aylesbury most of his life.*

**A:** Like I said, when the Secretary of State came forward and highlighted that it was against our human rights everybody thought, okay cool. There isn't a conspiracy to get us out without giving us what is due. But since invoking that, you ask yourself what happened behind the scenes to him to revoke that decision. Because I mean, the things which he highlighted, the council were yet to appeal and put something forward. All of a sudden he has taken statements back and he has gone back on his word, and I'm thinking, what's changed? Those things that he put forward, it was highlighted by the council that the council haven't met them, so I think the council are now

trying to speak a little bit more friendly with us to get us to a place whereby we go out without barking too loudly. But again, do you really expect us to go to the Barking or Milton Keynes, or to Manchester? It doesn't make sense. Somewhere where you have grown up and you have lived for your whole life and then getting kicked out because developers wanted to come in and make, and gentrification, that's what it is, that's what gentrification is.

My parents, took out a mortgage, to secure their future, quote-unquote. The future is never guaranteed, but it is something added to your pension, what you can look to as a means of getting by when you are in old age. This, but that has been swept from underneath their feet, in that they've been told that what he had bought, isn't worth what he thought it was worth. It will be taken from your hands and we will give you something which is not an equivalent, so now they are sitting back and worrying in terms of... well how are they going to survive the next couple of years... until, into their old age, where they thought they made a sound investment, as buying a house was supposed... said to be. So in a sense, looking into their future it, is very unsettling...

**Q:** So do you think that the regeneration is, I guess you mentioned this already, but the possibility of regeneration being a positive thing?

**A:** Could it be a positive thing? Well it wouldn't have... It wouldn't have destroyed the community I think. There is a lot of tenants who wants the redevelopment to happen because they feel that these are old houses and let's get some new ones so X-Y-Z but, the ...people are being displaced, and they have had to literally move to new locations in different areas of London, Greater London. And their circumstances, I can imagine, some have it the better, some have it turned to the worse, but gentrification is not the greatest thing, because essentially you are being displaced from somewhere that is home. If you choose to make that decision based on your own circumstances then that is different, but the whole community to be just told, look, this is no longer home to you, is that it will be for people that can pay the rents that we want to charge, that is in a sense an insult, because the whole essence of this estate was built was for social housing, but now, there are people with money that want to pay X amount, so let's see how much we can make? Redeveloping instead of regenerating. I think that is, yes.

But as it stands, if they're doing it in terms of equating value to value then it wouldn't make sense to live in a place where multimillionaires are going to stay. It would be very disjointed, do you understand? So, like I said, like-for-like is our best bet in terms of going to a region where there are similar people, and similar lives, similar backgrounds, you know? There would not be an issue with living with multimillionaires, but realistically speaking, you wouldn't feel like home, you would



always feel like 'the help'. Or just not belonging to a community. I don't have... that answer, your question?

## **INTERVIEW (Nov 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A17, a black African (age 60-64) leaseholder. This interview takes place in the living room of \*\*\*\*, and his wife \*\*\*\* who is present throughout, and contributes to the conversation but struggles through tears – she makes it clear towards the end that she is finding the discussion very upsetting, and asks for the interview to end.*

**Q:** So how long have you lived here on the Aylesbury Estate?

**A:** I have been here roughly about 26 years.

**Q:** 26 years?

**A:** Yeah. I was in Bradenham, you know the first phase, the first phase they demolished. That was where I was first, before I got married to my wife so, we moved to Taplow, and then, from there we moved down here. So we came here now, roughly, 24 years, but I live here 28 years.

**Q:** And when you came to Bradenham, you came as a Council tenants?

**A:** As a Council tenants.

**Q:** When did you make the transition to being a leaseholder?

**A:** I was a tenant in Bradenham, so we moved to Taplow, we started to buy Taplow, which was a one-bedroom. Then, our children. Then we moved to a three-bedroom....something for the children in the future.

**Q:** Of course, of course. And do all of your children still live here?

**A:** Yeah, yeah, they all did schooling here. They all went to school in Surrey Square. They all went to school there, after, university level. Yeah, the first ones went there, completed six form,

went to university, completed it, second, third, and then the fourth, and then the fifth is now in year eight. Yeah.

**Q:** Oh right, so they have all gone on and done good things. You must be very proud.

**A:** Yeah, they are all...

**Q:** And, I guess, living here so long, you must, you said you already had some friends on the estate?

**A:** Yeah, he died.

**Q:** Oh, he passed away?

**A:** He died. I need- we live here for a long time, and, we are familiar to the place. But the thing is, if they want to regenerate the place, do regeneration, I cannot stop them. You understand? That is their plan, pre-programmed, they have made for the estate. But my only simple need is, they have to treat us well. You see, we are human beings living in our homes, it is not a council flat, I got the place that we bought paying a mortgage. Living in it as a home, it's our shelter. So if they are demolishing the place, they don't just come and you know, using force, no receipt, no interview, no anything at all. 'Oh, the place is demolished, we are sorry that this thing is going on. What help can we offer with this and this?' Nothing like that. It is just a court case, a court case, they want a CPO to come and kick us out. What is that?

Initially we were about to move out, to avoid the stress. So we were looking for a place as far as Northampton. We went to Northampton, there was a time that we completely got a place, but ...I went to get the mortgage but they said because of my age.

**Q:** You said you have trouble with the mortgage because of your age, do you mind if I ask how old you are?

**A:** I am now 63. I would be 64 next year.

**Q:** And was there a particular reason for going to Northamptonshire?

**A:** No, no, because the money they are giving us, that was where we can get something, you know, and the environments there, the schools, and all of that. That is why we decided to go there.

**Q:** And how do you think it would affect your children, if you would have had to move?

**A:** Well it would affect them now, it will affect them because they are saying that jobs-wise, it would not favour them. More, they would have more advantage in London, than in Northampton. So, what the council was saying is, because they are saying we are overcrowded, it is a three-bedroom, we are about seven of us, so they say we are overcrowded. They want to split, they want to reduce the size of the family whereby they would give rooms to the elder ones, they will give them flat. The first three. They will give them a flat, and then they will reduce the size of the family, then they can give us a three bedroom. Even that three-bedroom, it is shared ownership, is a shared equity which I don't want. You see, because, that is not my plan. I have planned myself a mortgage, was up to my retirement. When I retire the mortgage is finished, and now they're coming to tell me to go for shared ownership and I will share my place with the council, for what?

So ... they want to rehouse the children, but the band, they first put them in as band four. And according to them we are the second phase, from there, this is where they are going to demolish. So, we are the second phase, if we want to move and they are putting the children in band four, and four is about five years and they will get a place. Because there are so many people in band one and two, even band three. Who, when you bid you get safe place, before you see it will be in 100 and over again. So I have to fight them again before they move them to band three. Even band three to is still too hard for them. You see? So we, they want us to move first, they put us in band one, but I say I cannot move, because I have to settle my children first. Before I will move. And they don't want to understand, so they leave them in band three.

**Q:** And, so how did you first find out, or when did you first find out that they wanted to regenerate?

**A:** Oh, when did it start?

**WIFE:** About 10 or 15 years ago.

**A:** Yeah, and they came with option of like-to-like. And they came down with a form, they ask us what do you want, do you want a house, do you want a garden? And then we filled all of that and we gave it them. So, to us it is like-to-like, they will take it and give us our money. And then, coming to a point, everything just changed, no more like-to-like, and shared equity and shared ownership, was just coming, coming.

**Q:** Oh, I see, because you said, that one of the reasons that you made the decision to look into Northamptonshire, is because of the stress. So when did it start becoming stressful, do you think?

**A:** When they started the CPO, the courts, and all of that sort of thing. That is where, so I was thinking, if they do a CPO where am I going? The money they're giving us, the money they are giving us, even Kent, you cannot get a place there. So that is where the stress started.

**Q:** And have the Council been good with keeping in touch, how did you first find out about it?

**A:** They did not get in touch, none of them, not a single one of them have turned up in this house to talk to us about the regeneration, 'Oh, we are sorry, oh this is what you want to do.' Nothing like that. They only came when the first survey. That is all, the second survey they sent their own surveyors, and that was it. Anything at all, I have to call them, for they will be telling you this, or we have to go there, and then they will be telling you, none of them is- not a single one of them turn up here, in this house, to talk to us about the regeneration, and how it is affecting us all, all, all. Not a single one of them.

**Q:** So how did you find out that the plan had changed from like-for-like to no longer being that?

**A:** You know we had the one meeting at the council. That is where they..

**Q:** I was going to say, how did people react to that news?

**WIFE:** That was the reason why I stopped going to those meetings. Because, that day, I walked out and my head was pounding.

\*WIFE begins to cry\*

\*pause\*

**WIFE:** Because we realised that we have been left. And...

\*Pause\*

**WIFE:** We thought, they were for us... When we got out of the meeting, we realised that they are not for us.

\*WIFE struggles to speak between tears\*

\*I hand WIFE a tissue, she thanks me\*

**WIFE:** We did not realise that they were not on our side. And, I decided not to go to any of their meetings because... The level of the stress, it was too much. For over how many years now our lives have been, we are just in the air, we don't know what to do.... I thought maybe they were going to give us a new house. And move us in, so that we could continue the mortgage. So, it is just too much.

\*WIFES voice reduces to a whisper as she struggles through the tears\*

**Q:** Yes, it must be the not knowing that must be the most difficult.

**A:** It is very difficult. And sometimes when you go to the, you know the meeting they had the other day, I wanted to burst out of there. But I just contained myself, because we went there, and this guy was lying, William. He stood up there and was lying, because that's the point, he sent some letters to the leaseholders on a second class, and he was saying that he sent the letters a week ago, not knowing most of us were receiving the letter the following day, and he was telling the whole meeting, the head of the council, what is his name? He was also there, the other councillors were on the meeting, and he was lying there. And they have to warn him at the meeting: 'Look, this is people's lives, why are you lying? You sent the letter second-class and you are saying you sent letters a week ago.' And the guy, they have the letters second-class. So they have to apologise to the leaseholders at the meeting there, which is wrong.

This is our life, we go to work, we go out and come back and sleep and rest here. And then, they just go there and be making as if we are just, you know, even the head of the council, you know, it is just something that you can get up and burst yourself, no matter whether it is a counsellor or all whatever he is, they can go and get police and arrest me, because this is my life. You don't do

anything, you buy a house, you are paying mortgage, and they're just treating us as if they can just come and kick you out of the place. Not even no negotiation. We have a family, my issue is a difficult issue for them. Because I have five kids, they don't know how, they have not come across an issue, or news like this, or how they will sort it out. Because the children, they finish university, they still want to do further study. Now they have to go and live somewhere alone, and the work they are doing as a pocket money, they have to do that work to pay their rent. How can they further their course? They cannot. They just finish university, and at least you have to support them gradually, gradually before they can start. They cannot leave university and then kick them out to go and live alone. It is impossible, you cannot do that.

**Q:** London is very expensive.

**A:** Yeah. They have just finished school and the job they are doing is not a job that, they are earning about £18,000 or £20,000. It is just something for their pockets. How can they pay rent, pay bills and pay all of those things with the job they are doing? When they have in their mind to do another course. You see? They are just kicking us completely out of our family plan, totally. But nobody wants to listen, to us. You cannot just let the children, just go just like that.

**Q:** And so how would, if you had taken this house in Northampton, how would it have affected your work?

**A:** It would affect my work because I am a taxi driver. Now the work, the car for the company, they gave me, it is a brand-new car. They ...they service it even though I pay rent for them. ... there is a problem, it breaks down, I take it to them, within 30 min they gave me another car. So I have to ... drive all of the way here, to do my work.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** ... one time I met a guy at Heathrow, from Northampton, and he was driving one of these cars, and he was for a similar company. The amount that he told me that they are taking from them, it was just too much. It was just too much. You see? So I have to travel all of the way from there, if I can get a job, if I can get a job, fine, but my age now, I cannot get a job. Even though I have a profession, they will not give it to me, because of my age. You see?

**Q:** And, if you are able to stay on the estate, because I get the impression that the new-builds are very expensive?

**A:** They are expensive... \*Sigh\*... if they want to give us four bedrooms I don't even want to go there, because the money that you pay them, that will be too much. I have a lady, you know I work for, I worked in Southwark for 10 years as a maintenance supervisor...Heygate was one of my estates...there was a lady, a Nigerian lady in one of the blocks there which, you know, I got to know her through repairs, you know regular repairs. And she was a leaseholder. And so in the process of this (regeneration), she went into shared equity and shared ownership, and she moved to one of the new buildings. One day I was walking on Walworth Road and I met her. She was dressed nicely, and I said 'Hey mama, you looking good?' She said 'Yeah, shared ownership, they gave me big money, they gave me plenty money', she is happy. And I said 'Oh that's good, give me some of that ha ha ha ha', and she said 'I am happy'. After a few years, or a few months, I met her in Albany Road. And I said 'My girl, how is it?' She said, 'I regret it. If I knew I would not even go for shared ownership, the money they are collecting from me? If I knew I would have taken the money and gone away.' The lady regretted it. So, that is shared ownership, you see?

**Q:** And so why do you think, the Council is trying to encourage you to take that?

**A:** Well if they want to, regenerate the place, they can do it. Do you understand? I won't stop them, but, they have to see our situation. To make sure that we move to our home. That is all we are asking for, if they want to give us money, they should give us the money that can buy our place back for us. They should not give us the money and be kicking us out. Where they know that the money that they are giving us is not getting us a place. This, they knew very well that the money that they are giving us we cannot get a place to move in. They knew very well. So me I am not asking, if they want to take the money, they should take the money and give us like-to-like. And I will move in, simple. You see, even that one they don't want to do it. They just want to give you the money and kick you out. What is that?

**Q:** Can I ask? Why do you think it is that the Council do not want to give you like-for-like? To give you a good price on the property?

**WIFE:** Because of the money they're going to make out of the property - the money that they are going to make is more than what they are going to give us. Because, if they want to give us about four or five bedrooms, and that is costing about what, £600 or £650,000 or more.

And us, we are paying how much mortgage? Do you understand? So, our mortgage plus the building, it is more. It makes more sense for them to sell to... you understand me? Than us.

**A:** But me I don't want, if they want the money they should take the money. And give me like-to-like. That is it. They should replace our house, so let's move in and they should take the money. Because there is just the money they're giving us. They think the money they are giving us, is a big money because we bought the property.

**WIFE:** They're giving us £200,000 and something.

\*HUSBAND AND WIFE are talking at the same time over each other\*

**A:** You see, and you know what's happened when I was buying, when we were buying this place, we arranged for the mortgage and everything, the process, to be finished at a particular time. Now we went to the solicitor, for the deal to be completed, unfortunately, the mortgage people did not turn up that day. So we lost that completion of the contract, that day, and now after a few weeks, I asked the council now, it is not my fault. It is the mortgage people that disappointed us, go, they have to give us a few weeks so that we can look for another mortgage, to finish the contract. They refused. Do you know what they did? This, they first they valued the place at £42,000, with a £38,000 given discounts. They came back, and revalued the place increased it from £78,000 to £220,000. Within six months, less than six months!

**Q:** And is this an independent valuation or is this the council's?

**A:** No, the council. Because we are naive. ....

When they have the chance to squeeze you, they will squeeze you. But the moment they realise you want to take something from them then they will start to fight you. Do you see?

**Q:** Why is it, do you think, that the council are able to get away with treating families like you, like this?

**A:** Because-

**WIFE:** I thought because, first of all, we are Africans, we don't know much about the system. And, they think that most of the people living in this estate, or this borough, are minorities. They



are not working. They are, excuse me, they are stupid. Yeah, they know that. And, you are just an individual, you are not a force, there is nothing that you can do. So they just think that these people are stupid Africans.

\*In the final sentence, WIFE'S voice descends into a whisper\*

**A:** We are just, unfortunately that, things come this way, that Grenfell Tower issue came in and then things started coming out. That is where the government realised that this is what the council, this is how the council is treating the leaseholders and tenants. Even when they were going for the CPO, the secretary of state refused. What did the man say? The man said 'Look, these leaseholders are minorities. Look at them, they are all old people, pensioners. The first thing you have to do, go to them and negotiate with them. This, just go and have a chat with them and talk with them, and then come to an agreement.' They refused. This is all, this is all these court cases it is happening. They refused.

**Q:** So, to go back to what you were saying, you mentioned Grenfell. Were you saying that in a comparable way to how the Council treated, or ignored people here, because people are African or people are ethnic minorities, in a similar way they ignored them and treat them badly perhaps because there were many Africans living in Grenfell?

**A:** Yes, yes.

**WIFE:** Yes, yes,

\*both \*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\* respond at the same time\*

...

**A:** Yeah. If we are saying that, the government say, the Secretary of State says that these are minorities, come and have a chat with them and you don't want to do that, because we are blacks. They don't want, if this area is an English people's area, they would not do that they would not do this. Because they know that the action they would take. Because, Tony Blair came here and said 'Oh these estates, the people are all on the benefits and they are not working and all of that the place should be...'. Meanwhile we live in this estate, we went to school, we got a job, people who went to university and put all, do all of the kind of professions. And they are saying

that the estate is, there is no jobs, and people are not working, and are on benefits, and all kinds of rubbish. That is one of the reasons why they are treating us like this.

**WIFE:** Yes, they should check their records, we have never been on benefits. Never. Yeah.

**Q:** So, as you mentioned, the new, the post regeneration estates, will have far more expensive properties. How do you think that will change what the community here looks like? How it is, socially?

**A:** It will look nice but the community will, the people wouldn't be, it would not be a family, it will be a strain for instance now, schools now are lacking of children.

**WIFE:** Do you know what? I said to myself, in five to ten years to come, they will make sure they get rid of all of the black people out of this place. And the few that will stay, it will become unbearable for them, and they would like to move out. I used to work in English Martyrs [School], we used to have, two or three classes in Year Six. As of last year Christmas, we had only one. The class has reduced so much from 60, some of the classes we have about 25 children left, because they were moving them, every week children were leaving, every week children were leaving.

In the nursery we usually have 60 children divided into two sections. And as they go into, reception, we have three classes, 20 in each class. As of last year, December, we have 13 children come to the nursery. Can you just imagine? Because the new people moving in, into this area, they are not families, no. So just imagine, they want the young people who are working in the city, who have the money ha ha. Yeah? And, the three, four, five bedrooms are going to, maybe they will be for rich Arab businessmen and their family. Meanwhile they're not going to be staying here, they will just come for summer holidays. With their big family, yes.

**A:** I met a gentleman from one of the new ones, and he is paying £900 and something a month. I took him to the airport, he is paying £900 and something a month. Ha ha!

**Q:** Wow.

**WIFE:** There is nothing wrong to develop the place, it is nice, but, you know, just consider us. Give us a place, move us in, and we will continue, if you want to increase the bills, the Water

Bill and things, fine, but let's just continue our mortgage until we finish paying it off. If we decide to move out, then fine, but not to just force us.

**WIFE:** I don't want to talk about this because the more you talk about it the more you just, stress yourself, and no one is listening to you, and no one is listening and there is nothing they can do. They have made up their minds. They have made up their mind. And no matter what you do, there is nothing you can do.

...

**WIFE:** ... for the past three years, I have been having headaches. And, my life it is just, in the balance. Because you're not trying to give these children anywhere to settle. And we don't know what to do, we don't know your plans. So, almost every month I need to go and get a tablet and on medication. And she was just, they don't really care. So let's just end it.

**A:** Do you see this mark here?

\*A points to mark on his head\*

**A:** It is all, one day I just wake up and I'm swollen here. It is the headache, serious headache, my neck, everywhere. Stress. You don't know where we are going, when we will get the CPO and they would come and kick you out. Where are you going? You do not know. You see, it is just, sometimes, when I go to the meeting, I am always boiling up, but I just control myself. I just, if they called police, they arrest me, they can arrest me.

## **INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH LEASEHOLDER FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A10, white (age 35-39) leaseholder, employed. Interesting case of more recent leaseholder who still sees value in the estate.*

**Q:** How long have you lived here on the Aylesbury Estate?

**A:** I have lived here about two years.

**Q:** And before we started recording you talked a little bit about the community events and stuff which I guess must have been a mixture between artists and traditional or original communities?

**A:** I think the difference is, I think what is quite important is, to engage with a community and understand the aspirations of different groups. And there is an assumption that aspirations are purely based on, upon financial sitting, security, and you know, popularity, not popularity, but within communities, success is not necessarily always based upon financial reward, power, job status etc. It is actually held within an actual community and an engagement of friendship groups and family. And I think this is something that is not fully understood by a lot of people who come to London chasing that Yankee dollar and the success story.

There are communities here who have a completely different value system, that are not fully understood by a lot of people. And it is exactly, without going too far, it is something which is understood also in other communities, up in the North of England and in places like Wales, but the South East doesn't fully get some of these value systems that are actually really held very tightly by, maybe people who are part of the black communities in the area and other groups which are, more often they are more working-class groups in the traditional sense of things. And I think that the barriers to other people believing, being able to engage, is a pride and arrogance, and also the unwillingness to invest in relationships. So I think that to plough into a community, that is a real community, you have to be committed and you have to be invested because otherwise you will get sniffed out and they will smell what is real and what is not better than anybody else. So you have got to be the real deal or otherwise you'll get rejected. I don't know if this answers your question there, I was droning on a bit.

**Q:** No, no it's very interesting.

...

**Q:** So when did you first hear that there might be changes to the Aylesbury Estate?

**A:** I mean I knew that there were going to be changes...

**Q:** Before you moved in?

**A:** I did, yeah.

**Q:** And how did you find out about it, just through word-of-mouth?

**A:** Well this has always been big news this is probably the biggest, I think isn't it, the biggest development in Europe? So, I mean, everyone kind of knew about it.

**Q:** And did this affect your decision to move to the estate, knowing that there was the chance of it being demolished?

**A:** I mean like, to be honest with you there is no other way you can afford to buy anywhere else really anywhere. You know, there is no way that I could... and so yeah, I mean, did it effect my decision? I mean, no, it's quite cool, I was up for, obviously I would prefer if it didn't go and I think that unfortunately there is no real way for you to get on the London property ladder unless you got some kind of gifting, somewhere. And I took a punter a little while ago but there is no other way to get onto the property ladder, so it just helps me to be able to live it. There is no other way, usually, to live in London. And particularly for the space that you have got, it's quite big actually here, and I have got a duplex.

**Q:** How many rooms is it?

**A:** Four bed.

**Q:** Wow.

**A:** It looks quite brittle from the outside, with some amazing views, I mean it is quite functional, and maybe I'm not the tidiest, but it is okay you know, quite nice. I've got a lovely view and the location is amazing. And hopefully, you know, hopefully things will be reversed, I know there have been some interesting, as the CPO was refused, and I think rightly so, on human rights issues so, we will see what happens. It would be great see this place stay, and I think it is not even that old it's only 40 years. You know, shocking. It is not in disrepair, what has happened is there have been issues with maintenance, along the way, whereby the councils have just not maintained as they should have done. Those are the issues. And there is a great community, like even on the corridor, it is great, it might look a bit brutalist from the outside, but it is great here actually and I really love it.

...

**Q:** So ... coming to a place that is under risk of demolition, did that, was there an emotional difference in the living in those two different spaces?

**A:** Well, yeah. But, like, how long do people live in places these days, it is a house run life these days, is a job for life? You know things change. Is it a wife for life? I mean, I don't know, what kind of culture do we live in? Things change daily and I think that you know you have to sort of just... I know that people see property at something that they, they invest most of their money and for their whole life and so, there is obviously that element of value this put into it. But, you know, I personally hold things quite loosely anyway personally so... you know, I think it would be good to see me get a fair deal, I mean these views are great you know. Looking up seeing the city of London many morning not many people get to see these views. It is a great place, the location is amazing... and so the community is amazing got a real community here, I've got a church community round here as well, and I get involved in that is well, as well as other things, you know. I'm quite plumed in my little ways.

....

**A:** ... You will find most of the people here are really happy living here and love living here. And just because it, I think maybe it could do with a little bit of a refurbishment, a bit of a spruce up, but these are \*\*bangs on wall with palm of hand\*\* solid walls. You look at some of these new buildings and I will tell you I've been to a lot of them, these new buildings by these new developers they get tatty so quickly, it doesn't take long and, they are broken. These calls walls are made of solid concrete or \*\*bangs on wall with palm of hand\*\* brick, or whatever they are. You go to a newbuild, you tap the wall, you'll put your fist through it, and people do. They become very grubby, very quickly, they are made out of poor materials, yeah they are made out of poor, poor materials. And so, yeah...

**Q:** And, why do you think there is this discrepancy between how properties like this used to be built, very solid, and these new, perhaps even more expensive properties, that are being of a lesser quality?

**A:** I guess new building design and overregulation, and it is do with heat, and heating and insulation regulations. And also, buildings are given with a shelf life now. And so, yeah... they basically have a shorter shelf life, and its consumerism, it's about making money. It was about,

there are elements of... there are elements of... them, needing to, put in newer services etc. But generally speaking, they don't need to do that, I think it is about keeping money in circulation and maintaining jobs, chasing that Yankee dollar.

**A:** How many questions are left?

**Q:** Just a couple left I was going to ask you. So if the worst happens, or whatever, and the estate is demolished, have you thought about, where you might have to move to next?

**A:** No. I will probably buy somewhere cheaper if I can. I'll get a settlement here, buy something cheaper in London that is all I can do is it? But I might have to down-grade because, like, it is four bedroom here. ... I'll probably have to go further out, I will, I will have to go further out. Obviously we need to fight for the best deal, but yeah. It is not affordable. It's not affordable.

**Q:** And how do you think that might affect your work?

**A:** My work? I work from home. It will effect my work - I need to be in Central London really, for what I do, but I don't want to leave my community as well. I've got all of my friends, family, church everything here.

**Q:** Of course, yes. Do you think there could be any benefits to the Aylesbury to be demolished?

**A:** Yeah, there's benefits to everything. I'm not holding my breath with regards to, it will initially looks nicer potentially, some of the designs that, I am sceptical, about the design and I am sceptical about the build quality, you look at what has happened to the Elephant Park with regards to the newbuild that has gone up. Nobody has been allowed to move in because the builders have not been signed off, because there been poorly done so that is hilarious I don't know how that hasn't been headline yet, that is absolutely awful, it is been sitting empty for a while. They didn't even put bin-shoots in the building, they didn't design it properly. How can you do that when you got multi-million pound property developers - it is insane. I don't know where the money for that is going to come from but obviously you council have had to fork out a lot of money for that too.

**Q:** So you don't think there is a chance you could return to the estate once it's been redeveloped?

**A:** Probably not mate, unfortunately, the price is just way too much. They have not offered anything, I've tried to discuss and ask, nobody is saying anything really so... It doesn't look hopeful, I will obviously try that would be the ideal.

**Appendix LL3; sample of ESRC project interviews with displaced council tenants and council tenants under threat of displacement from the Aylesbury Estate (not involved in the public inquiry)**

**INTERVIEW (Dec 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANT WHOSE FAMILY HAS BEEN DECANTED FROM THE AYLESBURY ESTATE**

*Interviewee L2, Muslim woman (age 35-49), council tenant who had lived on the Aylesbury since 1991. Speaks for her wider family as their English is poor, they are in ill health and also have disabilities.*

**Q:** How long did you live on the Aylesbury?



**A:** Over 20 years, since 1991.

**Q:** As a council tenant?

**A:** As a council tenant.

**Q:** Who was in your household?

**A:** Myself, my two boys, young brother, eldest brother (half-brother), mum, dad, cousin and her kid. 9 people.

**Q:** How many bedrooms?

**A:** 3 but the living room was big.

**Q:** When were you told you would have to leave?

**A:** 3-4 years ago....

**Q:** Can you talk me through what happened?

**A:** We didn't hear from them for ages then all of sudden we get documents etc. 5-6 months later we got a visit. Promised they'd keep us all together, wouldn't split us up. 1 year later we got an offer of 5 bed in Camberwell area, but it wasn't finished. We thought fine. Mum was told elder brother they can't offer (ok as he old enough and not there a lot). Another 4-5 months passed and they said 'Do you want a 5 bed?' And my mum said of course! So they said when it's done (the house finished) we'll contact you. Put all our names down. Heard nothing. 17 Dec 2015 they said they'd rehouse us in 5 bed...Jan, Feb we heard nothing...we called them and asked when our 5 bed would be ready, they said 'we know nothing'. The housing officer said: 'I don't know who said that to her (that her mum was getting a 5 bed)'. I said 'Josephine \*\*\*\*', she said 'oh she left'. They said there's no 5 beds anywhere. We were told in a few weeks we would get keys to a new building....a 3-4 bed offer, they said there wasn't even a 5 bed there. I said 'what?' My mum said 'they can't do this to us'. But the woman had gone, didn't know what to do. We started digging and found out could only bid for a 3-4 bed flat. I told mum if they split us up we need to be close, as I am carer for my mum and dad and I have 2 kids. They said ok will put you close enough. The formal letter said was 'entitled to a 2 bed'. Dad was not on it. They said they'd sort it out. A few days later my mum got a letter and was told she need to get out.

**Q:** And what was the impact of this on your family?

**A:** Dad got worse (he is bed bound and has memory problems). My son had tonsilitus at the time (he had an operation [got his tonsils out] a few weeks before we got the letter). We were all over the place. They offered me a 4<sup>th</sup> floor flat, but I'm scared of heights, I can't go no further

than 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, I said I can't take it, they said you are not allowed to refuse it....so what are you supposed to do? After 45 mins I decided to take it.

The worst was one month before we moved out. My older son is asthmatic and my younger brother has arthritis...They turned the heat off, the gas off (we have gas bills to prove it), we couldn't cook, there were no lights, no hot water. No water at all.

**Q:** Which block?

**A:** Chiltern House, second floor, we were the last council tenants to leave. We were told to leave beginning 2015, we finally left June 2016. They stopped collecting the rubbish, so there were mice everywhere. When we opened our door there were homeless sleepers everywhere, one time they left a needle on our doorstep...I called the council but they ignored us. The lift wasn't working (her disabled mother relied on the lift) ...the lights were off...the workmen or whatever; my son fell over in the dark. It's disgusting, I don't understand how they can treat people like that...all they do is lie.

I never had an issue before, never been mugged, normal life, but they let it (the estate) go, there were no drugs til they let it go...it was dark, hell on earth.

**Q:** And what's your new flat like?

**A:** It's 10 mins from old one, it's so small, dad can't get in the bathroom or take a shower. He was in hospital and he's at my mum's now...he can't move here. The kids miss their grandma, they've never been in a place where grandma was not there, they will cry at night...'I want to go to Nans'. I'll say wait until the weekend son. He cries he wants to move back to the Aylesbury.

Mum's losing her marbles, she's lost so much weight, she lost her friends...one is in Cook Road, one is in Nunhead, she hasn't seen them since she moved. She hasn't seen any of them.

**Q:** How would you sum up your experience in one sentence...what lessons have you learned?

**A:** Not to trust the council, not to trust authority. The household was always together and all of a sudden we have to get used to not seeing each other every day.

**Q:** I'm sorry.

**A:** I don't want to remember!

**INTERVIEW (Nov 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANT WHO IS TO BE DECANTED FROM THE AYLESBURY ESTATE**

*Interviewee A16, white British (age 85-89), retired, council tenant, suffers from COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and angina. His daughter also there but she does not live on Aylesbury anymore.*

**Q:** Do you mind if I ask you if have you always lived in south London?

**A:** Yes... I have been living here, 30 odd years...

...

**A:** As far as I am concerned, I am quite happy living on the estate, my son died in that corner.

\*Points to the far corner of the living room\*

...We took him to hospital, and they sent him back home, there used to be a bed in that corner because he used to like, he was down syndrome, and he used to like to sit up and watch his wrestling and that with me and that, and he died in that corner. And, that was in 1994, he died in that corner. And in 1997 my wife followed him, from cancer and that. And they turn around and said to me, 'We are going to move you'. And I turned around and said, 'You can have the place back when they carry me out'. [The council asked] 'Why?' Well, I said 'My wife and my son died here, and that is where I am going to stay'. Well I'm a bit stupid because they are dead now, but, their spirits are still in that house and that is where I want to be. They think I am mad.

**Q:** I guess it is more than just the bricks and mortar, isn't it?

**DAUGHTER:** You've got him living here 30 odd years, you have got so many memories, that if you move, and go to a different place, you could die there, and you would rather die where you have got all of your memories.

**Q:** Of course, of course.

...

**Q:** So you've got a nice little family unit all around, in the local area?

**A:** Now, my grand daughter, she comes in, and she sits on the couch and she says, 'Hello old man. How are you old man?' 'Not so much of the old man if you don't mind.'

\*I laugh\*

**Q:** Mr \*\*\*\*\* you mentioned the importance of family as one of the things that you value, not just in life but also I guess about living in this area, right? Because you've got your family quite close. Which is really nice. Is there anything else that you still of value about the area, I guess you talked about the history of the area and families, is there anything else?

**A:** Oh yeah. That bloke up there.

\*Points to a portrait of a middle-aged man of South Asian Heritage which is hanging above the sofa\*

**A:** He owns the shop over the road there, and I worked for him for 13 years. He died, and we were the best of friends.

...

**A:** I always thought that, in the Victorian times, the class distinction, it was tremendous. When they brought in, when Aneurin Bevan came in, class went out of the window. Now, they are suddenly bringing class back in to the daily life of this country. And on top of that they are bringing in ideas from America.

**Q:** Can I ask you? You said something about, at the moment class is coming back into this country as a real issue. Do you think that housing plays a role in bringing back class?

**A:** Oh yeah. It definitely plays a role in the class, because, all of the houses that are being built and that, they're 90% housing associations. Housing associations help to make money. So the lower, the poorer the people are, the less chance they have of getting a home. Now you've got, up the road there, you have got the new block of flats that have gone up. Right, they, are £330,000 flats. And they are all, housing association flats. About 10% of them are Council. And the amount of money, and the way housing associations work, now, moving to a housing

association, property, you are there may be for two years say, and suddenly one day you, it is a rough patch. So, you haven't got the money to pay your rent, after two weeks, of not paying rent,  
\*He makes a slicing noise\*

**A:** You are out.

.....

**Q:** Can I ask Mr \*\*\*\*\* when did you first find out that there might be a change to the estate, like a regeneration? Can you remember?

**A:** The first time I got to hear about this was about a year and a half ago. They pulled the front part on the East Street down and that. I had friends down there and they all moved outside of London to different places. And they asked me if I wanted to move outside of London, and I said 'No thanks'. I will stay where I am, I have got the family around, although they annoy me half of the time...they are my family, and I appreciate their being around. Now if I was to move outside of London and that, within three months, I would be dead.

...

**A:** And the reason I would die is because there would be no one around, and I could not interact with the members of my family, and that.... This estate is crumbling, it is losing its humanity, and, I have been living on here 30 odd years, and when I first moved on here it was a real pleasure. Now it is a tedious task, you can't, you can't, get women walking down the stairs and that, without, complaints of somebody exposing themselves. The moral well-being of this estate has gone downhill, that's all I'm going to say... And you have got the gang mentality and that. But all of the time I have lived on this estate, I can walk up and down these passageways and don't get bothered. I turn around, and see five or six blokes together and I walk past them

\*mines salutes\*

\*I laugh\*

**Q:** Can I ask you a question about, you said that a lot of the new blocks, the majority are housing association, so they are more expensive. If all of these blocks become more expensive, how do you think that might change what the area is like?

**DAUGHTER:** there will be a lot more people on the street.

**A:** Now, this is the world as it is, this is a working-class area. If they all become housing association people, then you will get the rich, and that come in. And it will become a social snobbery area where you wouldn't be allowed to drop a sweet paper on the floor without someone coming

\*mimes someone turning up their nose\*

**A:** ...housing associations are good in their own right and that, and they can be pretty good, but they are not for the poor. And never have been for the poor. They are, well, the rent for this place is £174 a week.

**A:** Estates as I see them, are family units. You have got, one family, and it is a block of flats which are just stones and bricks and that ... And it is nothing. Without the people on the estate, it is just an empty block of flats. With the people on the estate it becomes family units. And although they are all different families, it is a unit of human beings. And there are different, there are some human beings that are reasonable and that, and some that are, you get some people that are, conversational and all of that, but that is all part of life. And if, if you do not live like this, then you are an outcast, you have got nothing to make your life richer, or that. Now if you have got neighbours that are, fun to be with and that. The estate becomes more reasonable, more flexible, there are no fighting and that, and life in the estate is a happy life. Whereas you have got confrontation which is not. Things... ahh, don't give me a headache...

\*Pause\*

**Q:** Do you think there could be any benefits at all to the estate coming down?

**A:** No. There is no benefit whatsoever, in, when you have got an estate that is full of people, and that...there is no benefits in that, you disrupt the estate, you move all of the people out and throw them in all different directions. And, then, the estate becomes just a block of flats, empty, there is no life in it, no reason to be there.

....

**A:** ...I for one, turn around and said that these estates, this estate, if it had been looked after better, could have gone on to the year 2070, or 2080, it doesn't make much difference. The only

difference would have been the change in the people. And, it is my opinion, and it may be a wrong opinion, I wouldn't say that I have a knowledge enough to, but the way I see it is, the council, is in charge of a certain district. Their job is to see that that district is up and running smooth as possible. And that's the repairs on the estate, and the estates and the places, is their responsibility, so far as to be deemed reasonable. And, they should, as a council, be humane in their way of thinking, and that the council, as far as I am concerned the council is a body that is, that protects the estate and the life on the estate. It is no good, a council turning around and being close minded...This council is inhumane, as far as I am concerned.

**Q:** Mr \*\*\*\*, those are actually the end of my questions. I don't know if you have anything you would like to add?

**A:** No, what I'm saying is, if a council has got no humanity in it, it's no good for the district, most- their most important part is to keep their people - to evict a woman and her four children from a place and put them on the street is inhumane, I don't care what anyone says, it is inhumane.

... [the housing officer] got a flat for me once, and took me to walk around it and have a look at it. And it was on the top floor, and I turned around and said 'Where is the lift?' [She replied] 'Oh the lift is broken down you will have to walk upstairs.' And I said 'Excuse me but I can't.' And she said 'Why can't you?' And I said 'I suffer from COPD and angina and if I get halfway up the stairs you'll have to carry me the rest of the way, and that' and she said, 'Oh, but but but but but', and I went back and told them, the lady in the office, she just laughed. And I thought

\*Mr \*\*\*\* makes a V sign with his fingers\*

## **INTERVIEW (Oct 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANTS FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A11, white couple (age 30-34) with 2 young kids, temporary council tenants, father employed and stay at home mum. Interesting case of impacts on more recent temporary council tenants moved in.*

**Q:** So how long have you lived here on the Aylesbury Estate?

**A:** I think I have lived here a year and a half.

**Q:** Just a year and a half? Okay. And where did you live before?

**A:** In Herne Hill.

**Q:** And was there any particular reason that you moved from Herne Hill to the Aylesbury?

**A:** Because I was in a hostel in Herne Hill and it only had one room. So they moved me here.

... we only have one bedroom and there are four of us in the room. So it is not really that much more spacious because we only had one child in the other house.

**Q:** And, I guess you are both already aware of the plans to regenerate, the demolition, yeah?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** So when did you first find out about it?

**A:** I think it must have been about a month ... month after we moved in, yes.

**Q:** And was that a leaflet through the door or just word-of-mouth, or?

**A:** A leaflet.

**Q:** Oh okay, you got a leaflet.

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** And, what was your kind of initial reaction to...

**A:** I think, not really that bothered because I am a temporary accommodation...

**Q:** You're temporary accommodation here? So you kind of anticipated being moved on?



**A:** Yeah

**Q:** And has there been, kind of, building work happening?

**A:** Yeah.

...

Well today I think I just put him [*younger son*] down for the first, like 2 minutes, and as soon as I had put him down there was a big drilling in the wall, whatever they are either doing work upstairs or downstairs. And they are doing work outside.

... Oh yeah, it is noisy.... And it is noisy as hell.... They have made like, mice come.

... We can't go on the balcony no more. If I let the little one out there- They are refurbishing upstairs and it is made like rats come, on the lower floors and stuff... And it was rats first but we didn't really see any. And then as soon as they started doing the work upstairs, I think I was outside clearing up the stuff when I saw a rat and it looked to me, ha ha! And we haven't ever gone back out there, since. Ha ha!

**Q:** And have you guys contacted, like the management or anything like that about it?

**A:** We called them and they came and put rat poison. They told me that it is not an emergency for them to remove the dead rats that were on the balcony so they left them there, and then a few days later they came and one man collected it and put poison down.

**Q:** So, \*\*\*\*, for you, the prospect of the estate being demolished, do you think that it is likely to affect work or anything like that, depending where you get moved to?

**A:** Erm, yeah. Because if they do move us like, far away from the area or out of the area, that is going to be very hard for me to get to work because it takes an hour already to commute into work (he is a carer), so we kind of pray that they are going to move us somewhere closer but I can't really see, living in Southwark, them putting us anywhere unless they put us in Lambeth.

... I would like to live closer to his family (hers in Camberwell, his in Brixton) because I can get support with the kids.

**Q:** So I guess, from what you have told me, a kind of uncertainty about, ....

**A:** All they do is just, when they go, they just put like, a gate on it on the doors and that is it. So all of the time I've seen them they have just literally, just, I hear them packing up, and then you look outside and there is a steel door around their door, so... they're gone.

**Q:** You don't have to answer this question if you don't want to, it is a bit of a personal question but... can you describe for me, what it feels like to be in, a state of not knowing, kind of, where your next home might be? I know it is a difficult, and it is a bit of a horrible question, I'm sorry.

**A:** Yeahhh, when you have kids is just like, it is one of the most important things is stability. ... because this one [*older child*] is going to be starting nursery and stuff and I'm going to have to settle them into a nursery, and then move them, and we don't know where we are going, how far away from our, you know, our immediate family and stuff, and stuff like that so, it is kind of worrying.

...

To move somewhere far and have our support networks cut off, and if our support is cut off, it is going to struggle for us because, I do so much hours at work, she has to look after the kids and, each day I am gone, it takes a strain on her, because they wake up at six o'clock, five o'clock sometimes and I don't know how she does it. And she still has to go outside with them so... and it's hard, there is no way for her...

**Q:** Yeah, for sure. And I guess, it is really important to the kids as they get older, as you said to have some stability with nursery and school and that kind of stuff.

**A:** Yeah.

\*\*\*\* appears visibly uncomfortable with the questions I am asking so stop interview.

## **INTERVIEW (Nov 2017) WITH COUNCIL TENANTS FACING DECANTMENT**

*Interviewee A14, white British, age (55-59), council tenant, unemployed.*

**Q:** So how long have you lived here on the Aylesbury?

**A:** I have lived in this particular block [*Taplow*] since 2004. And I have lived over in Missenden which is the Aylesbury Estate, I lived over there for 18 years. I broke up with my wife, and then after six months they moved me in here. I was homeless for six months, and then they moved me in here.

But my thing now, as far as them getting people to move out, I am comfortable here, I know my neighbours and I'm comfortable with my surroundings. I am 56 now and I find that a very stressful situation, that I'm going to have to move away, hopefully not too far, but if it is then I am going to have to make new friends and, you know. So that is a bit stressful, and of course moving is stressful, it is one of the most stressful things isn't it?

**Q:** So, have you always lived in South London?

**A:** I was born in Camberwell.

**Q:** Oh right, so you are a lifelong-

**A:** Yes, I was in Camberwell for a bit. And then I moved up to New Cross when I was very very young, and then we moved back to Camberwell. And then I met me ex-old woman, and moved over there for years.

\*points to block across the street\*

**Q:** And, when did you first hear that there might be changes to the estate?

**A:** Well when they we first got letters to say they are knocking the surrounding, well they are knocking this and the surrounding areas down. I think that was a couple of years ago wasn't it? Probably a couple of years, two or three years ago.

**Q:** Oh right, so very recently.

**A:** Yeah. We got letters digitally, saying that we, that they are going to be doing demolition and all of that malarkey.

...

Yeah, I think they like, I think they want anyone who is on benefits, and people like that is, they want them out. So for want of a better word they are trying to yuppifie it all. The whole area.

**Q:** And, and the social difference between the, there is a kind of a class difference right? Do you think that is likely to change the sense of community in the area as well?

**A:** Yeah possibly, because, well, I think they're just going to do their best, like I say, to get people who are not working or on benefits, who are living in Council properties, to try to get them out, that is why, I think that's what they're trying to do. I think that is their sole aim.

**Q:** And where do you think people get the moved on to?

**A:** In the middle of Timbuktu somewhere. Up north or somewhere.

**Q:** Do you think there could be any benefits to knocking down an estate like this?

**A:** ... there is no point knocking up big tall one, and they are building these big tower blocks over at the Elephant [*and Castle*] now. You know, and especially what happened with the Grenfell Tower. You know, I dread to think how anyone would cope with a fire if there was one on the top floor of one of those buildings over there now. And they are carrying on building them. You know. Without even putting a sprinkler system in or something like that. I would feel very insecure in a high-rise block like that. I don't feel too good up here to be honest. I don't know what he's on the eighth floor. You know, we are lucky that these walls are solid concrete. So you have got half a chance, but I would be petrified if I lived over there. And a lot of them are private over there aren't they?

**Q:** Oh so the new-builds are not concrete are they? They are plasterboard?

**A:** Yeah there are plasterboard.

... I watched that being built. Mate, a strong wind would blow those walls over. I bet they are paper-thin, I bet you can hear every noise that goes on.

So they use plasterboard, yeah, and they will stick one there and one there and they will just fill it with a foam.

They have knocked them up too quick I think. If you look, when you go out, this block over here.

\*Points out of the front door towards the newly built states across the street\*

The end balcony, it is a slant like that.

\*Gestures with hand to demonstrate the angle of the slant\*

So they have rushed it. You can see that, you can see in the balcony that it is not level.

**Q:** So I guess, forgive me if I am wrong, what you're saying is that, these new flats, they look really nice, and they have fully fitted with carpets and kitchens and everything like that, but they might not necessarily last as long as these ones or may not be as safe potentially?

**A:** Yes, yes. All of the above there what you have just said, yeah. I think so...

But I am worried about getting, and as I said to you at the beginning, I am just anxious about where they are going to put me, am I going to be next to neighbours from hell, am I going to be the neighbour from hell? I don't know.

\*we laugh\*

.. You know, older people worry, even younger people worry. They've probably worry about that, they don't want to, you know, a shit road where there is all scumbags down it or something, you know, you don't want that. But that is, my anxiety is where are they going to put me, you know. Am I going to be forced into a situation where I have got to take it? You know. I don't think there will be a lot of choices going about, to be honest with you. And once you have put pen to paper and commit yourself, you are buggered aren't you?

**Appendix LL4; findings from 2017 *Living on the Aylesbury Estate* ([http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content\\_54\\_1.pdf](http://aylesburynow.london/web/uploads/files/content_54_1.pdf)) that support ESRC research findings reported in appendices 2 and 3.**

'there are a number of strong protective factors that support residents and help them cope with difficulties... social solidarity and tolerance between different groups; and neighbourly and often friendly relationships between people living in close proximity' (p.3).

'The social sustainability assessment, carried out using Social Life's framework, reveals that the estate scores lower than would be expected for "voice and influence"; at expected levels for "adaptability and resilience" and "amenities and social infrastructure"; and higher than expected for "social and cultural life"' (p.3).

'Council tenants have lower levels of satisfaction and wellbeing, compared to homeowners and housing association tenants, but still score above what would be expected for people living in comparable areas on most of these questions' (p.3).

'Many longer-standing residents voice regret about the loss of community ties, but most newer residents report that it is a welcoming place, and accepting of people from a wide range of backgrounds' (p.4).

'Particular groups are exposed to the stress and dislocation that change will bring, including young people who worry about loss of friendships and social networks, and those who are vulnerable because of poverty, age, illness or disability, or because they do not have strong supportive social networks' (p.4).

'Uncertainties raised by the regeneration plans can cause stress and anxiety, and certain aspects of navigating the changes are reported to be particularly bewildering' (p.37).

'The estate's strong, but low-key, social networks appear to be helping to support people on very low incomes to manage their daily life. Conversations also unearthed evidence of informal support, of loans given by churches, shopkeepers, and friends and family to tide people over. These transactions create networks of co-dependency that can help people manage circumstances that might otherwise be unbearable' (p.36).