

**Terry Redpath – Submission for Southwark Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee
3rd Feb 2014**

My wife and I lived on the Heygate since it was first built. We brought up our children on there and were very happy with life on the estate. We had gotten to know most of our neighbours the majority of which had also lived there since the beginning. There was a very active Tenants & Residents Association, which organised regular social activities and outings for both senior residents and the youth on the estate. A Mums and babies club was formed in the mid 1970s and provided a crèche and meeting place for young mums right up to the start of the 'decanting' process. The TRA set up and provided a wide range of activities: there was a youth club and regular weekly activities in the main hall including dance classes, karate and bingo sessions for the senior residents. The TRA also involved children in the estate looking after and taking “ownership” of the garden areas. At Christmas the TRA laid on lunches for the elderly residents on the estate.

The TRA had a good working relationship with Walworth Police and an officer regularly attended our monthly committee meetings. Crime was relatively low on the estate as their monthly reports illustrated. Rather contrary to the picture painted by the media and Southwark council as part justification for pushing ahead with the demise of the estate.

My son and daughter-in-law lived on the estate and my sister lived down the road on the Aylesbury estate before she too was 'decanted' last year. Up until now the Elephant & Castle area has been home to both my family and my wife's family for more than 3 generations. Thanks to Southwark's regeneration plans we have now been scattered far and wide.

I was an active member of the TRA at the time of the initial negotiations with council members and officers concerning the future of the estate.

Back in 1998, the council conducted a survey of local people asking if they were in favour of redeveloping the area. 94% said yes and this was used as evidence of community support in the council's successful bid for £25m of govt funding. It was later found that just 6% of people had responded to the survey.

The TRA complained to the council that the survey was an area-wide postcard survey and hadn't been aimed at residents on the estate, many of whom hadn't received it. We complained that this was undemocratic and demanded that all residents be balloted on the future of their homes.

The council rejected a ballot but agreed in 1999 to a MORI poll. This was after we had been told that some of the buildings on the estate had structural defects and that the council didn't have the money to repair them, which we later found out was untrue. In fact after the council's stock condition survey was made public we found out that the buildings were above average condition compared to the rest of the council's housing stock, and a 1998 appraisal study had recommended that a large part of the estate be refurbished.

But at the time we didn't know this and the council had bought us off with the offer of brand new homes, which led to the MORI poll result showing that *“70% of Heygate residents expressed a wish to move to a new home on the site of the Heygate estate”*:

10. The development of a decant strategy for Heygate has been informed by the views of residents. In 1999 the Council commissioned a survey by MORI to follow up an option appraisal undertaken prior to establishing the Southwark Estates Initiative. The survey found that 70% of Heygate residents expressed a wish to move to a new home on the site of the Heygate estate. The MORI findings were backed up by a housing needs survey of Heygate tenants undertaken between June and December 2002 whose primary aim was to help assess the development capacity of the early sites. In the context of the Heygate proposals, tenants were also asked about their wish to be re-housed in the area. The majority of the tenants interviewed (80% of the estate) expressed a desire to remain in the Heygate/Elephant and Castle area.

Council Executive Report – 18 May 2004 'Heygate Estate Decant Arrangements'

However, the new homes were never to materialise and the promises were broken: Leaseholders were promised a 'retained equity' option on the new homes which never got written into the development agreement with Lend Lease (see my appendix). The estate's 1033 tenants fared little better: they were given the opportunity of returning to homes on the new Heygate, but there will be only 79 social rented units built on the estate to return to, and the last of these is due to be completed in 2026 – another 12 years away.

The deceit was confounded when we later found that the MORI poll results had been twisted around 180 degrees and interpreted so as to actually be used as justification for the council's decision to demolish the estate. The modified interpretation of the results can be found in several subsequent council reports including its recent application to the Secretary of State for approval of the Compulsory Purchase Order:

2.9 The Council commissioned a Market Opinion Research International survey in 1999 that reported 70% of Heygate tenants expressed a wish to move to a new home. On the basis of that survey the Housing Committee agreed a cessation of lettings on the Heygate Estate with effect from early 2001.

LBS 2012 Heygate Compulsory Purchase Order, Statement of Reasons

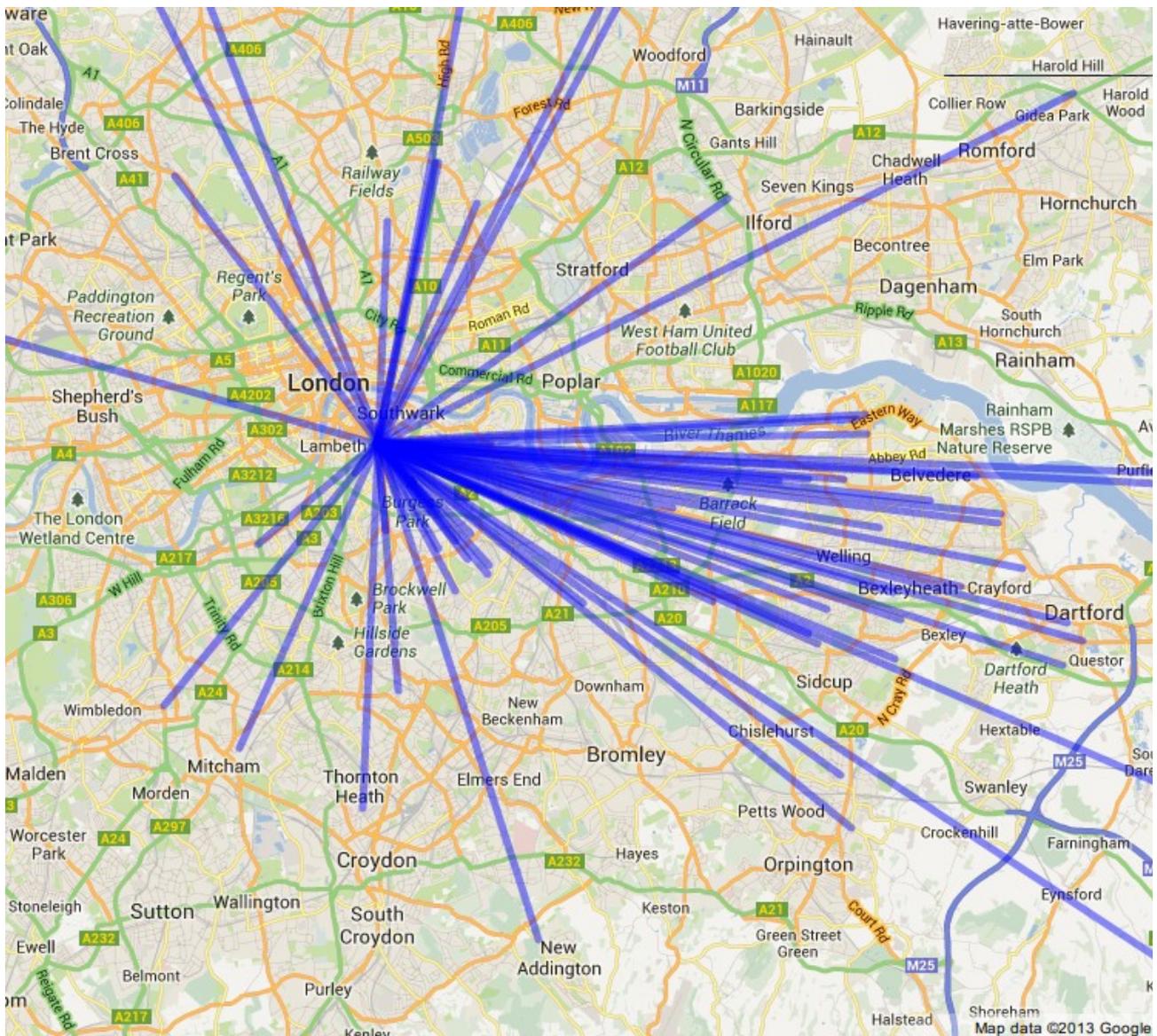
Not only did leaseholders not get the new homes we had been promised, we were short-changed and intimidated out of our homes. I instructed an independent RICS qualified surveyor to represent me in negotiations with the council. She valued my 3-bed maisonette at £220k, but the council's surveyor disagreed point-blank. The council's surveyor said he would offer just £172k basing his pitifully low valuation on values on the condemned Aylesbury estate and the condemned Ferrier Estate in Kidbrooke, which was apparently also of a similar construction type. Hardly a comparable central London location! The council said if we didn't accept its offer of £172k then we would later be served with a Compulsory Purchase Order and we would end up receiving much less. It said that after the CPO we would be able to contest the valuation at a Lands Tribunal. But there was no way we could afford to stay living on a half empty estate with the heating turned off until the CPO came. And even then there was now way we would have been able to afford the surveyor and legal costs of challenging the council's valuation at a Tribunal.

We have been short-changed and intimidated out of our homes to make way for luxury private housing. This regeneration scheme was supposed to benefit residents – not displace us. An entire community has been destroyed as a result of this regeneration.

Appendix

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| Item No. | Classification: Open | Date: February 8 2005 | MEETING NAME Executive |
| Report title: | | Elephant & Castle Leaseholder Policy | |

26. Option (c) – retained equity - would involve the transfer of the compensation into a share of the equity in a new property being built as part of the scheme. No rent would be payable on the outstanding equity, rather a charge would be put on the property so that at the time of a future sale the percentage of outstanding equity would be recovered by the housing provider.



Map of Heygate Leaseholder Displacement using data obtained during 2013 CPO public inquiry

Heygate News

The regeneration of Elephant and Castle was given the green light by Southwark Council's Executive Committee on February 19th when the planning guidance for the redevelopment was formally adopted.

This is a long awaited and important milestone for Heygate residents who have been consulted for years and are yet to see any real action. This finally gives you, the residents, a certainty that the regeneration and rehousing plans are now planning policy and that Southwark Council will work with you every step of the way from now until you move into brand new homes in a revitalised Elephant and Castle.

Copies of the planning guidance can be downloaded from our website at www.elephantandcastle.org.uk or by calling 020 7525 4922 to get a CD-ROM posted to you. There will be hard copies available for you to look through at local libraries, Rodney Road Housing Office and the offices of Elephant Angels, situated on Heygate Estate. An exhibition will also be held at the Heygate early this year.

For those of you who are tenants, the confirmation means the plans to demolish the estate and offer you a brand new Housing Association home in Elephant and Castle, or an existing council flat elsewhere in the borough are moving forward.

The situation is different for those of you who are leaseholders. You will be offered market value for your houses and a range of options to assist you to buy one of the new homes if that is what you wish to do. We have already discussed these plans at leaseholder meetings and will continue this process as set out in this newsletter.

Please read this newsletter carefully for details on how we want to work with you throughout 2004 and about the range of opportunities there will be for you to become more closely involved. ▀

