

Estate 'regeneration': why it isn't just about the money

An anonymous blog from a resident of Gascoigne Estate in Barking. Due to this anonymity, the individual's real photos will not be used.

The Gascoigne Estate in Barking and its signature high rise flats have been around since the 1960s, where my mother was one of the first tenants.



A woman posts a letter on the Gascoigne Estate development, 1965 (Pictures: LBBB Archives and Local Studies Centre)

These flats, which house families from low-income backgrounds, working class families like mine, are being demolished. Why? Not because more housing is required- logically high rise flats would accommodate for more people- but because of social cleansing. They're branding this 'affordable housing', which no one like me can afford. It's obvious who the housing is for. I have no idea what is going to happen to me and my kids with work and school places. But what do my circumstances matter when the estate agents and landlords want to line their pockets? Council housing as we know it is being sold off, and people that receive housing benefits are increasingly being blacklisted from estate agents.



The building works, where flats have been demolished to be replaced by more 'modern' builds. The sign reads 'Weaver's Quarter'.

Recently, **the local newspapers** have been helping his project, also calling it 'regeneration', and the estate is going to be called '*Weaver's Quarter*', apparently due to the history of the area. Is the new name *really* about local history- or is it just an excuse to get rid of the name 'estate'? I

remember reading comments from the local news about it on Facebook. *'Why don't you call it Criminals' Corner or Druggie Alley?'* There are words, images attached to estate life. Crime, immigration, pregnancy, benefits. I don't believe these are true, and I don't believe these labels can ever go away. What I do believe is that this estate that has provided me and my family with homes for generations is being swept from underneath me and I am hopeless. But I will be blamed and be told to tighten my purse strings, and my motherhood will come into question, 'I shouldn't have had children'. Alongside welfare cuts and austerity Britain, the housing crisis will divide families, communities, and the country's chance of collaboration- these images also inhibit any chance of this happening.

Why should sociologists listen to my story? Because this is my life, not some research that will go into a book that will be discarded eventually. This 'regeneration' project is happening to me, and it is tearing apart my family and my community. Sociologists and political activists should take note that this is happening to us- not because we don't care enough to stand up for ourselves- but because people simply aren't aware of it. The victim blaming has got to stop- people are not going to be fully aware of the Housing Act when debates and votes took place at 3 o'clock in the morning.

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