



# They're DEMOLISHING my home



It's 2015 and it has just been announced that my home will be demolished. Yes, you read that correctly. It was not quite proposed in this way - it never is. The Marlowe Road Regeneration Programme in Walthamstow was advertised as a community project that would eliminate crime and create better lives for current tenants, who have lived in the area for over 20 years. Fast forward to 2018, and if by that you mean alienating residents and forcing families out of their homes, then a community project it is. I instantly knew what this was; as with other areas of London, the gentrification virus had officially hit Walthamstow.


In the beginning we were promised priority bidding for local housing should we decide to leave, and priority 'choice' of new build flats if we decide to stay - promises the council could not keep. Finding a new home is stressful enough, but it is twice as stressful knowing that you must find a home in 12 months since your flats are being demolished. It was comforting knowing that we were proposed a right to return, meaning we would be able to remain within the area and

'technically' not leave our home.

To continue this horrific experience, the majority of the flats currently being built are for private renting, and the prices are through the roof, naturally. Worst of all, social housing being rebuilt for those wishing to remain is unaffordable. So, where do we go from here? My home of 11 years, my neighbours, my community, the Walthamstow culture I experienced for 11 years, all changing, slipping away.

Every Friday evening at midnight my family and many others bid for new homes, praying for anything, hoping we can be rehomed in time. Yet, we are always ninth in line for a home, or fourth, or even second, but never first. Like myself, many others feel like just another number, an obstacle for the council's end goals.

Keta Nazmiu lived at Marlowe Road for over 13 years, and is disgusted with the project. 'Marlowe Road was my home, I had so many childhood memories there and I will never forget it. This regeneration programme was



proposed to help my community, my neighbours, yet, we all feel like we have been pushed away.' Keta explains that the new homes built to replace the council flats are entirely unaffordable for the previous tenants

'They advertised the refurbishment as a beneficial project to the people living in the area... in retrospect it was the farthest thing from it. They moved away families who lived in Marlowe for over 20 years and built homes for an entirely different social class, people who can now afford these fancy brand new flats.'

How does this project benefit me when in fact, the majority of my neighbours have moved or are waiting to find a new home because they can no longer afford to live here? The 'community' is leaving, broken apart, and yet this is still labelled a 'community project.' The gentrification of Walthamstow is ongoing although perhaps a Pret-A-Manger being built next to a Costa Coffee marks the end; we've been taken over, it's finished. Upgrading commercial spaces in Walthamstow was seen as only the beginning of this whirlwind.

By gracing us with fancy, overpriced new bars and restaurants, it made me and many others feel out of place. By painting a new 'look' for Walthamstow, it also painted over the problems and the undeniably poorer members of the community. Many have labelled gentrification as 'social cleansing', as proposals like these aim to help and improve communities without the actual community in mind. Why? Because the community

they have in mind is wealthier, this is how commercial spaces will develop and how Walthamstow will become unrecognisable.

Gentrification has impacted communities all over London. Brixton felt the wrath, then Elephant and Castle and now Walthamstow, and it will not stop here. They will promise new fancy homes and later reveal big fancy prices when it's too late. They will promise new commercial spaces to boost the economy, only to reveal a chain of overpriced restaurants. They will promise they are doing it all for us, 'the community', but there will be nothing left of us when they're through.

*The Guardian* recently reported clear-cut changes in a post-gentrification Brixton. 'Jimmy Carr, sales manager in Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward's Clapham and Brixton office, says that Brixton has seen some of the biggest growth in house prices in London, particularly in the past few years. 'There's been an influx of people who want to live in this area because it's seen as cool - it's the Shoreditch effect,' he explains. 'Some people are selling flats off at nearly double the price they bought it for four years ago.'

Proposing these changes as 'beneficial' to communities is simply a lie. They will not benefit the underprivileged members of the community, who won't be able to live in new and improved areas any longer. The hunt for a new home is ongoing and I can't help but wonder how long it will take for London to completely push out the poor and alienate an entire social class.