Mapping community assets, needs & networks in east Walworth

A report for Notting Hill Genesis

January 2019

SOCIAL LIFE

1 Introduction

This research sets out to explore community needs, assets and networks in the Walworth area in south London. The report was commissioned by Notting Hill Genesis who are Southwark Council's development partner for the regeneration of the Aylesbury Estate. The intention has been to understand more about the wider area the Aylesbury Estate sits within, to underpin future strategies for community development and to contribute to the evidence base for a new socio-economic charter, to be agreed between Southwark Council and public and third sector agencies working in the area.

Our focus has been on the triangular area north of Burgess Park, east of the Walworth Road and west of the Old Kent Road, up to the new Elephant Park development in the north. The area is bounded by the park and the two major roads, it falls into two Southwark Council wards, Faraday and North Walworth. Its area includes the Aylesbury Estate, several smaller council estates and an area of mixed tenure housing. It is only one part of Walworth, the other extends west of the Walworth Road.

This is an area of south London with a strong local identity and history. It is a complex neighbourhood where new and longstanding populations live side by side. Some Walworth residents can trace their local roots back for generations. Others have made the area their home more recently, as waves of international migration have brought new populations to the parts of London that have (until recently) offered both cheaper housing, and communities supportive of diversity.

Comprehensive demographic detail is unreliable because the 2011 census is now outdated. Although much is known about the area's tangible and "official" social assets – the libraries, schools, faith organisations and community groups - less is known about smaller and less formalised groups, and about the social networks that are providing support and information to residents.

Social Life is based in Walworth, although on the other side of the Walworth Road to the east Walworth area that has been the focus for this project. In 2014 we researched the experience of traders in the Elephant & Castle shopping centre, we carried out a study of everyday life on the Aylesbury Estate in 2015 for Notting Hill Housing; in 2017 we explored the value of green space and experimented with psycho-geographic mapping in our local area in 2017. [1234] This local experience has given us our starting point for this work.

What we found

The research reveals an area coping with the cumulative effect of public sector austerity, increasing poverty and rapid change. A key question is what factors and issues are shared by similar parts of inner London, and how can we separate out what is local and particular to this neighbourhood?

Walworth has long been home to both a stable population, and rapid population churn, as people move in and out of private rented tenancies and unofficial housing arrangements. These two trends have operated in parallel, and a strong sense of place identity has emerged, particularly among longstanding residents. Comfort with diversity and difference has been

central to this. Diversity comes from ethnic, national and religious identities as well as, to a more limited extent, differences of income and social class.

Now Walworth is experiencing an increase in the number of people from more affluent backgrounds moving into both older and new homes, at the same time as poverty and multiple deprivation grow for others. In the south of the area on the Aylesbury Estate, a new group of residents in high need with few resources are moving into the area on temporary tenancies, as longer-term residents move away in preparation for redevelopment. New residents on higher incomes are yet to move onto the Aylesbury Estate in significant numbers, but this will happen in the future when new housing is built. The consequence across the area is rising inequality.

It is easy to become mesmerised by the two extremes within the new populations - the new affluent residents and the people in temporary accommodation. However, many Walworth residents lead stable lives, in the neighbourhood they have lived in for a long time, getting by against this backdrop of change. Although the people we interviewed believe that social supports and networks and the sense of place are still strong, they also maintain that these are under threat from change. Stakeholders described how residents are managing complex fears of what the future holds, questioning whether they and their families will feel they belong in the future.

A key task for community development in the area is therefore to support existing residents to cope with their concerns and anxieties about change, and to support the development of a different sort of diversity, one that, where possible, mitigates the impacts of inequality. People interviewed in this research recognised this, and we found strong examples of agencies working creatively to meet the needs of individuals and the community. However stakeholders also spoke about how discussions of "people from different backgrounds" can be euphemistic, and how they feared that a focus on integrating groups could detract from helping those who need it most.

The specific issues facing the part of Walworth that distinguish it from the many other similar places in inner London, are the pace and extent of development and gentrification, and how this plays out in an area with high levels of disadvantage and population churn. The sheer scale of new development, particularly through estate regeneration, first of the Heygate Estate and now the Aylesbury Estate, heighten perceptions of change for residents and agencies. The anxieties this generates can mean that problems that are common to Londoners in similar areas - service shortfalls, knife crime and rising fear of crime, increasing poverty and destitution – play out particularly starkly. Residents' very real problems are amplified when their sense of belonging and future security is under threat.

Walworth benefits from strong community hub organisations - Pembroke House, Creation Trust, InSpire and Cambridge House - as well as a complex and lively eco-system of smaller third sector organisations, churches, schools, health facilities, tenants and residents associations, and traders groups (and many others) that come together to support the community. This research was commissioned to help all these stakeholders develop their future plans for joint working and for community infrastructure. It is impossible to assess gaps in services in an area where needs are so pressing across the board. The task of this research is to help agencies prioritise what to focus on, for the present and in a changing future.
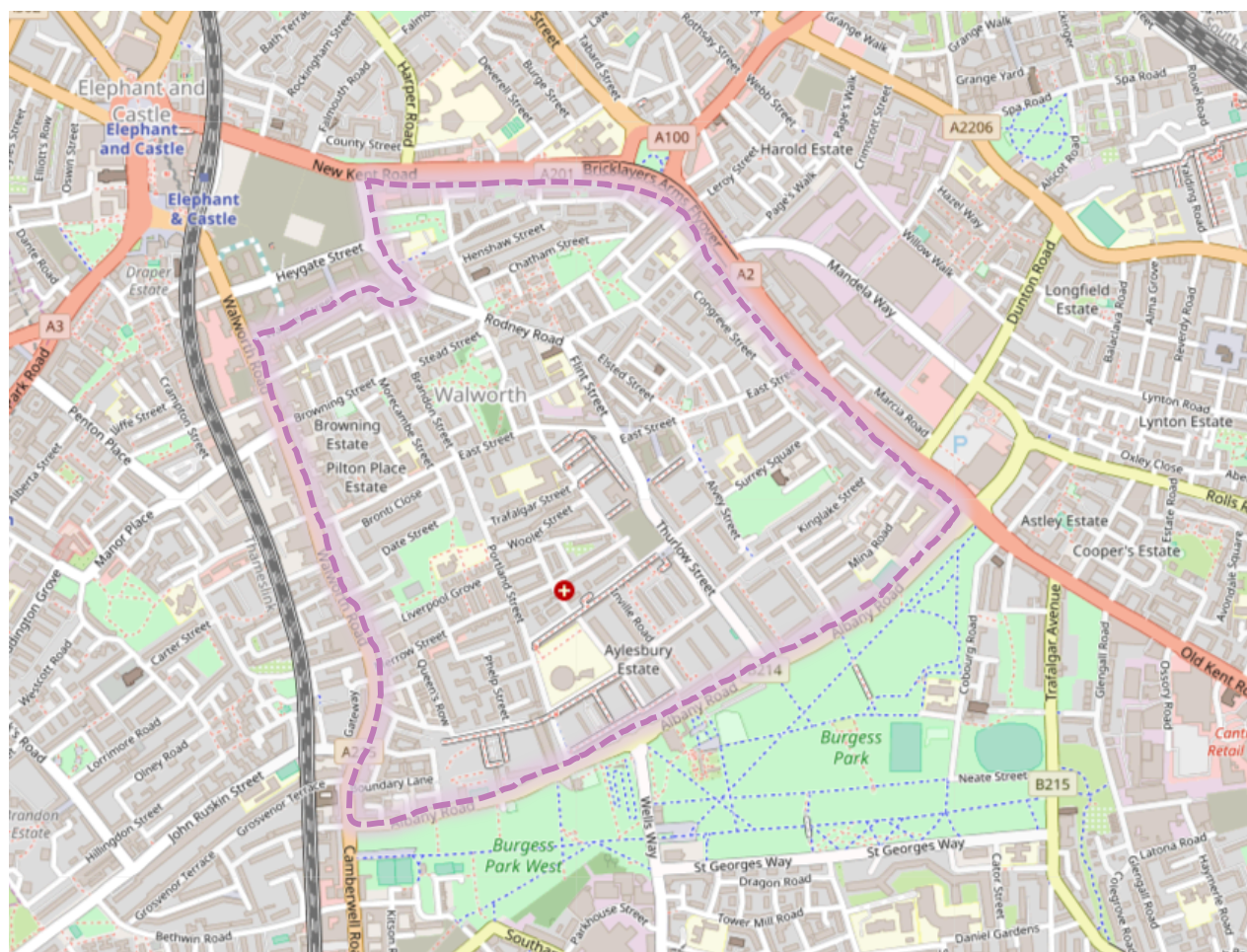
The research

In Autumn 2018, 23 agencies and individual local stakeholders were interviewed in depth about their perceptions of the area, the changing population and social needs and its social supports. The research set out to:

- discover more about the detail of the services, facilities and social networks that are supporting community life in the area
- explore what services and supports are being used, and by who, and where there are gaps
- establish what social networks – including those under the radar - are supporting communities and disseminating information
- explore the implications of changing demographics.

The research focused on the two council wards north of Burgess Park and south of Elephant and Castle, up to the new Elephant Park development, which at the time of this research was still under construction. Some supports for residents are provided by agencies and networks outside this geographic area and where these appeared to be important they were included in the research.

The focus area for the research

A snowballing approach was taken to gathering information, informed by a set of assumptions about community support in the area. Our first assumption was that many important agencies and community networks are easily identifiable because they have formal status or are well established, however in every community there are also critical influencers who may not hold formal positions of authority but who are relied upon as local sources of information and knowledge. For example our 2014 research on the Aylesbury Estate discovered that a local shopkeeper was an important source of local support; on an estate in north London we found an informal mosque and women's network operating from the back rooms of a shop. Through contacting these less visible influencers we can build a fuller picture of community needs and assets, including the social networks that are supporting the residents who are the most marginal and dis-connected from services and formal supports.

Our second assumption was our knowledge that official data about the area is outdated or inaccurate. Research carried out for Southwark Council by ESRO published in 2013 found substantial census under enumeration among 18 to 24 year-olds, people who were poorly educated, non-native or poor English speakers, private tenants, people without formal legal status, people without children, those paid cash-in-hand and people who had arrived in the UK more recently. They also established that average household size for households that did not complete the census was larger than for those who did.[5]

The research design involved a three-phased snowballing research. In this report we report on the first two phases. We hope to complete the third intensive phase in the future.

- **Phase 1**: interviews with larger community organisations
- **Phase 2**: interviews with a cross section of local stakeholders: from public sector and third sector agencies, traders and local businesses, and influential individuals
- *Phase 3 (potential): interviews with informal representatives/communities who are less visible to agencies, including interviews with residents.*

Interviewees were promised anonymity. The report includes quotes from stakeholders but does not attribute them to any one individual or organisation.

Phase 1 interviews

1. Cambridge House
2. Creation Trust (by email)
3. 1st Place
4. InSpire
5. L&Q
6. Pembroke House
7. Southwark Council regeneration team

Phase 2 interviews

1. 55 East Street
2. Burgess Sports
3. Community Southwark
4. East Street Traders
5. Guys & St Thomas' charity
6. Inter-faith project
7. Latin American Cultural Centre
8. Liverpool Grove TRA
9. Notting Hill community development officers
10. Pecan (Southwark foodbank)
11. Somali Integration and Development Association
12. Southwark Council resident services team
13. Surrey Square school
14. St Peter's, Walworth
15. Villa Street Health Centre
16. Walworth Society

2 The local area

Deprivation

The Walworth area is characterised by deprivation with some of the centre of the area being assessed as within the 10 percent most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (darker red on the map below).

The area has not fared well since 2010 compared to other parts of Southwark – parts of it, especially those nearest the regeneration sites of the Aylesbury Estate and Elephant Park, have become more deprived in relative terms (pale orange on the map below).
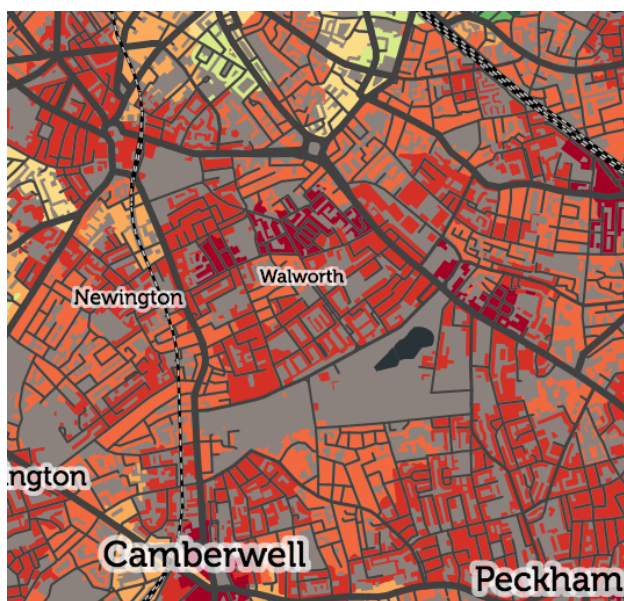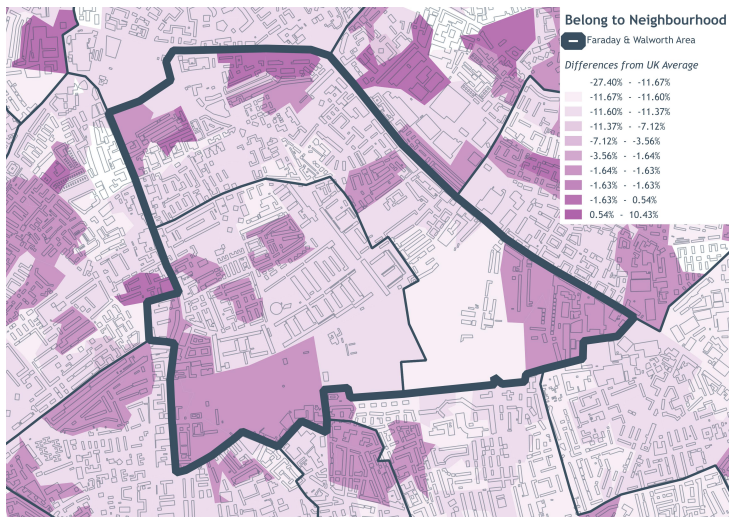

Index of multiple deprivation (IMD), 2015

Source: Consumer Data Research Centre[6]
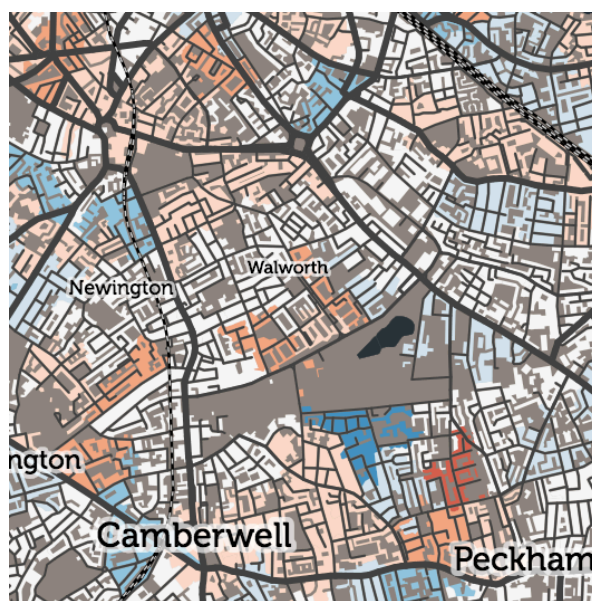
Change in IMD scores 2010-15
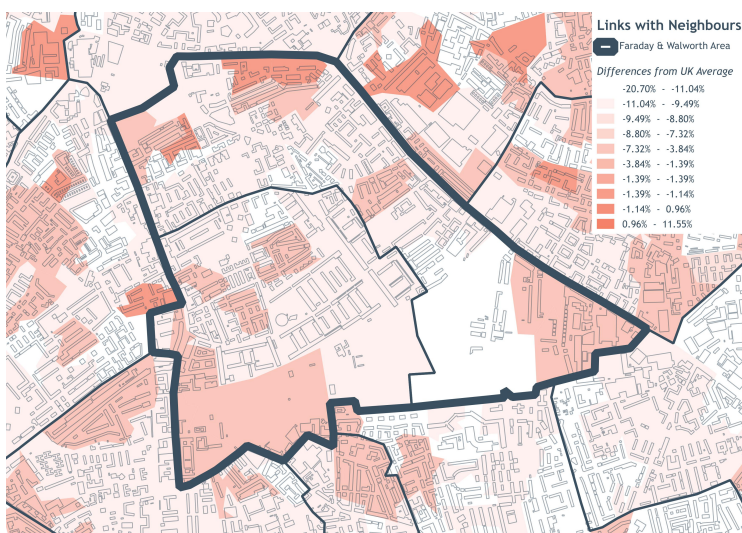
Community dynamics

Social Life have developed a method of mapping data from research councils to small areas, giving a prediction of how people are likely to be experiencing their area.[7] These maps show that people living in the Walworth area are likely to have low levels of belonging and neighbourliness, and a relatively high sense of influence. This is a benchmark for understanding the area, this shows how people are likely to feel in similar areas across London.

Actual data about our area from stakeholders suggests that neighbourliness and belonging is probably higher than the prediction, which is an asset for the neighbourhood, whereas sense of influence among residents is likely to be lower, this indicates a vulnerability.
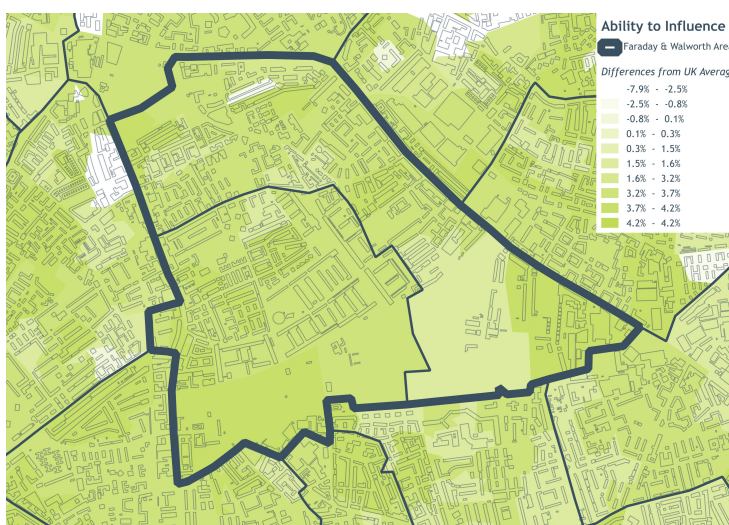
SOCIAL
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Belong to Neighbourhood

Differences from UK Average

-27.40% – -11.67%
-11.67% – -11.60%
-11.60% – -11.37%
-11.37% – -7.12%
-7.12% – -3.56%
-3.56% – -1.64%
-1.64% – -1.63%
-1.63% – -1.63%
-1.63% – 0.54%
0.54% – 10.43%

Faraday & Walworth Area

Predicted levels of belonging

Links with Neighbours

Differences from UK Average

-20.70% – -11.04%
-11.04% – -9.49%
-9.49% – -8.80%
-8.80% – -7.32%
-7.32% – -3.84%
-3.84% – -1.39%
-1.39% – -1.39%
-1.39% – -1.14%
-1.14% – 0.96%
0.96% – 11.55%

Faraday & Walworth Area

Predicted neighbourliness

Ability to Influence

Differences from UK Average

-7.9% – -2.5%
-2.5% – -0.8%
-0.8% – 0.1%
0.1% – 0.3%
0.3% – 1.5%
1.5% – 1.6%
1.6% – 3.2%
3.2% – 3.7%
3.7% – 4.2%
4.2% – 4.2%

Faraday & Walworth Area

## Predicted sense of influence

Source for all: Social Life 2018

New developments

Data on "significant" planning permissions is available from the GLA. This shows the number of units consented that are under construction, and the number of units where planning permission is granted. This gives a visual representation of where development is happening in the area. It does not include future plans that have not yet been through the planning process.[8]
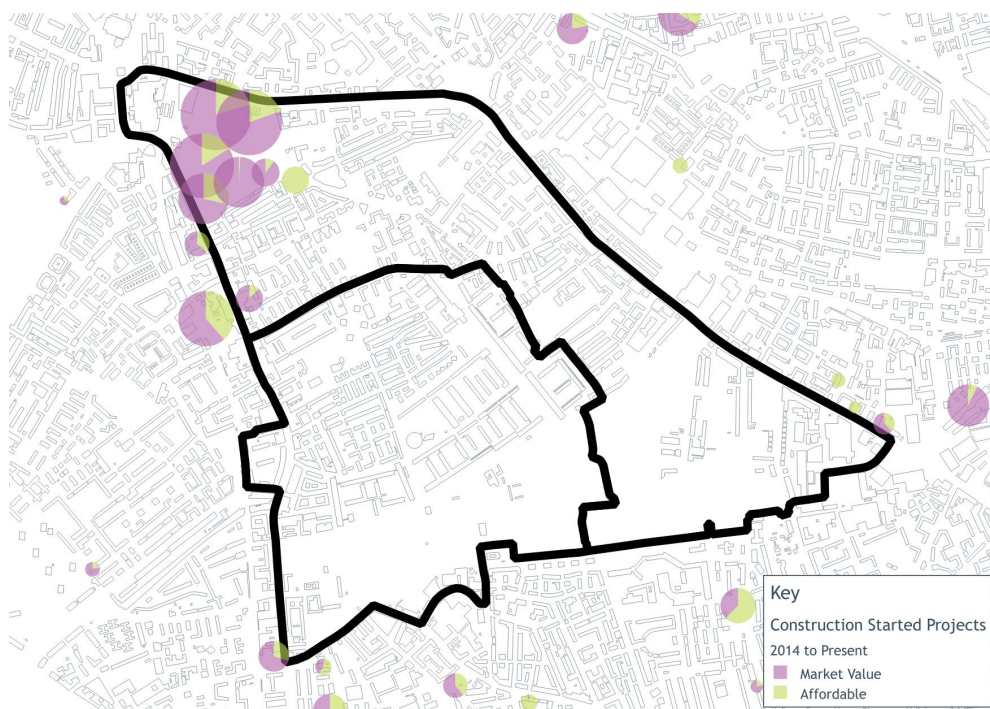
Projects where construction has started, 2014 to mid-December 2018
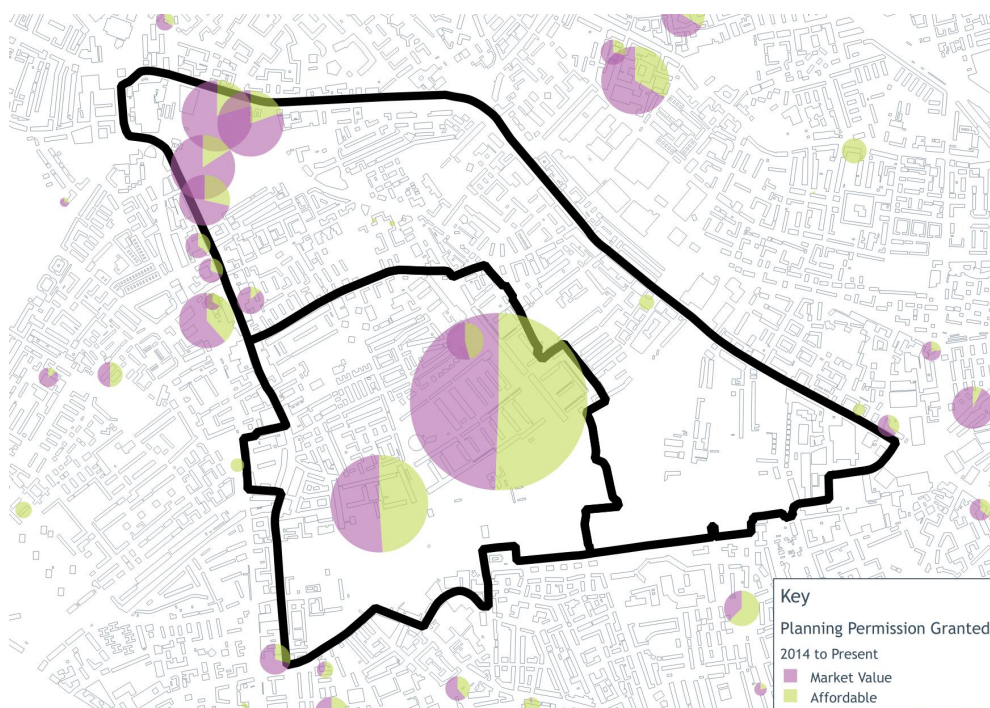
Planning permission granted 2014 to mid-December 2018

Source: London Datastore

3 Our findings

3.1 Changes in population

"The neighbourhood here is very different to what it used to be, lots of new people in the private accommodation nearby Elephant and Castle and many of the existing residents moving away – but there is still a good community here."

There is a consensus among stakeholders that the population of the area has changed substantially in recent years. There are no reliable statistics on the population profile as the 2011 census is both outdated and based on significant undercounting.[9] One GP practice reported that the churn of patients their list is now around 35 percent each year.

All interviewees reported noticeable and significant population change. This differs from type of population churn experienced historically in the area – people moving away and being replaced by people with similar characteristics. An "*influx*" of new residents was described by several stakeholders, particularly moving into newly built homes but others moving into rented properties in social housing estates and privately owned buildings.

The rise in house prices, for rent and for sale, and the increasing gentrification of the area as it becomes seen as a viable option for professional people without a former connection to the area, is probably a greater driver of this change to date than new housing development. One example of this is the change in rent levels and tenure type for what are still referred to as the "Church Commissioners homes" (part of the former Octavia Hill Estate, sold by the Church commissioners in 2007 and now owned by Dorrington plc). One stakeholder noted that the change in tenancies for these homes is more significant than just the ending of assured lettings; new homes are now let on furnished tenancies which signals the expectation that these will be rented as "*post-student housing*" to people who are not planning to stay long term and make the commitment of buying their own furniture.

Several stakeholders spoke of the increasing number of former council homes being sublet at high rents, sometimes by buy-to-let landlords, coexisting with the continued existence of the bottom end of the private rented sector, with some very poor quality housing, for example above the shops on Walworth Road. One stakeholder commented: "*the private rented sector is a nightmare*".

New residents from different demographic backgrounds are more noticeable than those who match the current social and ethnic diversity of the area. Stakeholders focused on describing more affluent residents when asking about who is moving into the area, as well as people moving into temporary tenancies on the Aylesbury Estate.

More affluent newcomers were described as younger, and more likely to be from white backgrounds (which was contrasted with people moving into secure and temporary tenancies on social housing estates who are believed to more closely reflect the demographics of the existing population). There are concerns that new residents will move away without putting down roots. This group was described as "*people who don't live anywhere"*. Some more affluent families were also reported to be moving into the area.

These new families were noted to be less likely to have children than longerstanding residents, another trend driving the fall in the number of children in the area is the Southwark-wide decline in school rolls.[10]

Stakeholder noted that many new affluent residents are from different white backgrounds, including European countries, Australia and New Zealand. However the eastern European community that has found a home in the area since 2000 is believed to be declining in number. Although many eastern Europeans are still arriving, more are leaving (this was believed to be a consequence of Brexit). Latin Americans are continuing to move into the area in noticeable numbers, many are arriving through Madrid with EU passports.

People rarely mentioned the longstanding (if small) middle class community living in the north of the area.

A new significant group within the population are people placed in temporary accommodation on the Aylesbury Estate, because they are owed a rehousing duty. Many have come through the statutory homeless route, with a substantial minority having lost their home as a result of domestic violence. Some of these residents have chosen to move temporarily from four tower blocks on the nearby Ledbury Estate, following concerns about fire safety.

It was estimated in Autumn 2018 that a third of the estate is now home to people on temporary tenancies, around 500 households, considerably more individuals. These households are concentrated in the blocks that are being decanted – currently phases 2 and 3 of the development. They were described as occupying the homes more intensively than the former residents – many will be families with several children, moving into homes that may even have been under occupied.

Agencies are seeing the impact of the changing population on their services. One school described how middle class families are coming to open days to look at the school, drawn by its reputation, however not many have yet got places, partly because of the tight catchment area. A community hub described how they are beginning to see the more affluent residents beginning to use their activities, particularly mother and babies group and the church. They have anticipating this for some time.

On the Aylesbury Estate, in the south of the area, the main impact on agencies services to date is the number of deprived residents with high needs moving into Aylesbury properties vacated as part of Southwark's decanting process. Stakeholders were very aware of the different circumstances and needs faced by these residents. People living in temporary accommodation often have high needs and are dealing with the aftermath of the difficult situations that led to their homelessness, including domestic violence, family breakdown, and mental health issues. Stakeholders thought that it was possible that a higher proportion of people in temporary accommodation are from Asian and Muslim backgrounds, have children, are younger and are women, however there was a reticence to overgeneralise about this. One stakeholder commented that this group is different to the *"Walworth old guard"* who are proud of their area and it diversity.

Some living in temporary accommodation were reported to be living in poor, even *"squalid"* housing conditions, moving into flats that have not been repaired since the former tenant or leaseholder moved outs. Some people living in temporary accommodation are very isolated, with very few local connections. This especially affects people with small children. Schools

described the difficulties educating children and young people whose education had been disrupted many times and who did not know how long they will be in the area.

One stakeholder commented that the implication of this is that there is *"no chance for solidarity, also no intention of solidarity."* Another described how people who identify themselves as living in temporary accommodation have a *"feeling of being lost"*. It was however noted that some temporary residents are excited about becoming part of a community, that they will come to projects and events but have to be proactively given information and encouraged to come.

Some long term Aylesbury residents are supportive of these new neighbours, others are resentful. We were told that temporary accommodation residents are sometimes even accused of being to blame for long-term residents moving away. People living in temporary accommodation are frequently associated with anti-social behaviour. A recent Safer Neighbourhoods Team meeting discussed increasing anti-social behaviour, visible drug use, dealing and drug paraphernalia, and the perceived connection to the increasing numbers of temporary residents, *"not to say in every case that they are responsible."*

Stakeholders also discussed who is leaving the area. Many referred to a dual process of voluntary movement, as people chose to move to other areas, and of people being moved by the council as a result of estate regeneration. One stakeholder commented *"the council are moving people all over the place, destroying the local community"*.

Another described change in the last ten years as *"more uncertainty and fear"*, as people move away from support systems. They spoke of how even a relatively local move can threaten social networks and how many people come back to specific activities, or to go to church, or continue to send their children some distances to school to avoid disrupting their education.

A number of distinctive minority ethnic communities were described as living in the area. The Sierra Leonean community on the Kinglake Estate, other west African communities across the area, a Somali and an Eritrean community living more towards the Old Kent Road, different Chinese communities, including people on higher incomes drawn to new developments and people on lower incomes renting in the private rented sector and social housing. A Bengali community was mentioned several times on the Aylesbury and nearby estates. The Irish community who dominated the area in the past is now much smaller than in used to be, and the eastern European community is believed to be shrinking as Brexit impacts.

The relationships between people from different backgrounds is described as having traditionally been good. We were told of many examples of social and community support between different groups and agencies working together. However, this was not always the case. One stakeholder described the relationship between the older community and the Latin American community as *"they do their thing and we do our thing"*, with very little crossover.

3.2 Social needs

"There is a lack of support across the board – Sure Start has been dismantled, there are shortages of health visitors, and endless restrictions on service eligibility."

There is a general consensus among stakeholders that levels of vulnerability have increased in the area. A housing association reported that new tenants have higher support needs now than in the past, including mental health problems, and described how caseloads for housing officers are becoming more challenging. This comes to their attention as landlords because of complaints about behaviour. They believe this is a result of the shortage of social housing, people who get to the top of waiting lists now are in higher need than in the past, often with chaotic lives and history of instability. This includes young parents who themselves have grown up in care. Their perception is that absolute needs are higher, rather than this being a symptom of lack of services.

Problems accessing services have a very significant impact and mean that presenting needs are rising. The perception shared by different stakeholders is that there are fewer support services for a range of different groups, from health visitors, to sexual health services to legal and benefits advice. If early support is not available this can escalate problems, examples given included people being evicted as a result of problems that could have been resolved with good housing advice, and young mothers presenting at GPs in mental health crises that could have been averted through earlier intervention. Cuts in English language lessons and IT support were also seen to be compounding other vulnerabilities.

Stakeholders described increasing poverty and social needs, in some cases citing extreme examples of desitition. All shared the perception that poverty and need had increased in the last few years.

> **Agencies gave different responses to the question "who is left out of services?". These included:**
>
> - isolated individuals, often with long-term health conditions, housing or debt problems, sometimes with addictions or learning difficulties
> - families and individuals with no access to public funds
> - migrant families newly arriving in the area
> - people from range of backgrounds moving into the area without social ties
> - some long term residents and families who experience generational exclusion
> - people living in temporary tenancies on the Aylesbury Estate
> - people placed in poor quality private rented housing as discharge of homelessness duty by local authorities
> - people with complex needs
> - people not speaking English as first language
> - people who do not know about existing networks
> - people who do not know what support exists
> - people with learning disabilities.

The roll out of Universal Credit is identified as a major problems, with people being threatened by eviction because of arrears caused by payments being backdated, in spite of regulations that say that eviction notices should not be issued in these situations. The impact of welfare benefits changes and the increasing cost of living is associated with increasing food poverty. An agency described how "*young people turn up at their services who simply haven't eaten, something that did not happen until recently*". And of children being sent home from school because they do not have uniform or refusing to go to school because they feel they have the wrong clothes. One school estimates that 10 percent of families either are, or have been, deemed as having no recourse to public funds.

The Southwark Foodbank describe a 30 percent increase in people using the foodbank across Southwark in 2017, and a further 15 percent increase in 2018 (up to the Autumn). They associate this with the Universal Credit rollout. They have seen an increase in use by people in temporary accommodation and by single people, often living in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). They believe that single parents living in private rented, homes and older single men, are particularly in need. There are spikes in foodbank use in the summer holidays and around Christmas.

Living costs were reported to be an issue across the board. Southwark is an expensive place to live, "*the London Living Wage is too low to support living in borough, and most jobs are at a lower rate than this*". This is an issue for agencies as employers, as well as for their service users. One stakeholder described private housing costs meant that "*working families can't afford to stay*".

For young people, increasing crime and fear of crime, particularly knife crime, is reported to be an issue by nearly all stakeholders. "*It's been an awful summer for young people*".

Stakeholders are divided about whether there is an emerging significant problem of organised criminal gangs. Some argue that issues in the area are not as severe as elsewhere, citing north of the river, Charlton, Lewisham and Peckham as having worse problems. Others see new problems emerging, describing issues on particular estates, and gang identities both connected to locality and to ethnic identity, as well as problems in Burgess Park after 6pm. All agree there is an increase in fear among young people. One stakeholder described how the situation for young people was better four or five years ago "*when young people felt they had a choice about whether to get involved or not. Now it feels that it is everywhere, especially with social media*".

Youth crime is a problem across London, however one stakeholder hypothesised that it is being fuelled by the numbers of people moving away from the area, and friendship groups being split up. Young people have a need to belong, and this fragmentation means that their sense of belonging in the neighbourhood is being challenged. Young people who move to the area because their families are in temporary tenancies face particular problems compounded by their moves.

Crime among young people affects older people. Parents, especially of boys, are very frightened. Some older people believe that rise in crime threatens their safety as well, without appreciating how targeted the threat is.

There is a consensus that support available for young people now is less than in previous years. Some projects and initiatives have closed, particularly affecting older teenagers, although the youth offer is stronger than in many areas and includes a diversity of provision. One agency described their efforts to minimise exclusions from a youth club because they want to keep the young people most involved in crime engaged. Stakeholders described how many church-going parents do not tend to want their children to go to youth clubs on the Aylesbury, preferring that their children go to after school clubs and homework clubs. Another group identified as choosing to stay away from youth provision on the Aylesbury is a group of white young people, related to longerstanding residents, who spend time on the streets around Liverpool Grove and the Church Commissioners housing.

The cumulative impact of low wages, public sector austerity and shrinking services, and for some the government's "hostile environment" immigration policy colours many people's daily life experience. Overcrowded and precariously working and living conditions are common, with families living with other families and other "aunties" and "uncles". Stakeholders point out that this is different from illegal occupation, where flats are sublet without the landlord's permission.

One of the consequences is that many people are living lives that are all, or partly, covert. People are working long hours with shifts starting at irregular times, children are often left on their own. Parents can be wary of asking for help because they fear that this could led to another area of their life being exposed. It can be difficult for youth workers to get consent from parents to let their children participate in activities because of these fears, parents can be very nervous of filling out any form, in case that information is used against them.

The combination of poor quality or precarious housing, no work or bad work, and failure to cope with systems, can create or exacerbate mental health problems. The impact of regeneration on the Aylesbury Estate is also a major driver of need, from advice and information for residents to support with anxiety and fear of displacement.

Many stakeholders mentioned increasing prevalence of poor mental health among different groups and that there is not enough low level mental health support available. It was suggested that there is a need for services that are flexible, and not too medicalised, and there were more services like this in the past.

In such a diverse area, there are different patterns of service use among different communities. This varies from service to service and agency to agency. One youth agency described how Latin American and Somali/Eritrean communities tend not to use their services. They are aware that the Latin community organises a lot for themselves, especially young people's activities, and that they are very self-sufficient. However their efforts to engage Somali youth through outreach have not been very successful.

A nursery however described how Latin American and Somali parents are using their facilities well. Their staff group include people from these backgrounds. They also see local Bengali families.

The Chinese community on the Aylesbury was also cited as a community that can be difficult for agencies reach, although one stakeholder described success in working with a Chinese activists network.

Case study: the Somali community

We heard about several small minority ethnic communities who are perceived to be somewhat isolated from services and experiencing particular problems. The Somali community is described as one of the most marginalised communities in Southwark, hard to reach and hard to integrate with the local community. *"They are at the corner of society"* and not represented in local politics.

The local Somali communities mostly live in council flats and many are in temporary accommodation, family members from abroad are joining settled families in London causing overcrowding in small flats.

The Somali community has been affected by many problems facing other communities – legal aid, universal credit, shrinking support for disabled people and rent increases. However their levels of disadvantage and isolation mean that the impact of these issues is substantial.

The Somali community are heavily affected by crime and are regularly victims of discrimination and hate crimes on local streets. Women are particularly vulnerable as their clothing makes them identifiably Muslim. This type of hate crime was very bad in 2016 and 2017 during the height of terrorist activities in western Europe and the refugee crisis however it is described as having died down somewhat in 2018. Women and young people are more likely to be victimised because they more vulnerable and easier targets. The large increase in knife crime has made people more scared of hate crime and made marginalised communities, like the Somalis, even more likely to hide. Women and young people are particularly vulnerable.

The social needs of the Somali community is very high, language is a particular issue. The lack of good English holds many back in education and employment, even though they may be highly educated or skilled back in Somalia.

Stakeholders described a small number of families with longstanding ties to the area, who have experienced generational poverty and disadvantage. Parents were often alienated from education and their children now are often poor attenders or themselves disengaged from school, particularly struggling with the transition between primary and secondary school. Some of these families are reported to be involved in criminal activities, however stakeholders were wary of stereotyping this group.

Increasing diversity in social class is also an issue for agencies. A nursery described how people who use their services for childcare and work are different to those who access their wider welfare services, especially when their children are older.

Many of the problems described are common to areas of London with high levels of deprivation. What is specific to Walworth is the amount of redevelopment in an area which has always had high levels of transience and diversity, and the shift in social class and demographic that this signals.

More affluent populations are bringing their own needs to the area. Many are isolated with few social networks and go to GPs seeking help with anxiety – some have moved from the EU, Australia and the USA. GPs describe new needs for travel inoculations and private referrals.

Some agencies are exploring the potential for volunteering – as a way of encouraging people to support others and contribute to the area, and also as a way to tackle social isolation.

One stakeholder differentiated between the experience of this eastern part of Walworth and the area to the west of the Walworth Road with its larger, more stable council estates, reported as being in a slightly better state of repair. Here there are no regeneration programmes, and major housing developments are on mainly brownfield sites. This stability and low levels development are contrasted with the instability and change in our focus area.

3.3 The impact of change

"The question for residents is 'where will I fit in?', this is in the back of people's minds, a bubbling concern."

Several stakeholders referred to fragmentation when speaking about the Walworth community, *"housing costs have killed the area and fragmented the community"*. Several also cited a level of resilience in the face of change: *"a major strength of the local area is a 'strong sense of place' even during these recent times when this has started to fragment heavily."* Another stakeholder who mentioned fragmentation also highlighted strengths: *"the local community represents lots of different culture and this is very important, as no one culture is the dominant force"*.

Different parts of the Walworth area are experiencing change in subtly different ways. For people living on the Aylesbury Estate, the stalled regeneration scheme is key to their experience, with the arrival of people on temporary tenancies, the departure of other residents, and the future prospects of people from different backgrounds moving in. Residents are observing and assessing what is happening in Elephant and Castle, which is going through fundamental change socially and in the built environment. The Latin American community is particularly concerned that they will be displaced, by new development of the shopping centre and surrounding areas. Traders in the arches by the shopping centre are already being relocated.

North of the Aylesbury Estate, up to Elephant Park, there are several pockets of development including Base17 on Stead Street. These new developments are the most visible signal of change in the area, and the increasing number of these, even though many are quite small, fuel perceptions of change. One stakeholder described how fears of demolition on the smaller social housing estates in the area have reduced but that a generalised fear of change remains among local residents. Other changes, for example rent increases in the former Church Commissioners housing, and house price increases have also impacted on changing demographics.

Another stakeholder commented on how the experience of physical change is challenging. *"For residents the ability to orientate themselves is changing. The geography is not solidified."* And how both the threat of, and actual, demolition can be experienced as a trauma.

New shops and facilities are another visible symbol of change and are often highlighted as threats. *"The largest problems in recent times have been the huge fragmentation of the local community and lot of this can be associated with the gentrification of parts of Walworth - such as places like Louie Louie on the Walworth Road, which certainly do not cater toward the older communities in the area."* Others tell of how some older residents are more comfortable with new facilities, and of a residents group regularly visiting this coffee shop each week.

New facilities are welcomed by the new more affluent community. Hej Coffee near Elephant Park caused controversy when it opened because of its use of imagery of the Heygate Estate as decoration. One stakeholder noted how it soon became full of *"people looking for a coffee shop that they can feel safe in"*.

Several stakeholder commented how, in different ways, residents are very quick to see an asset as being lost, or belonging to others. A past example was cited of a Vicar who made effort to work with the west African community and how a church which had been identified with the white and Irish community quickly became seen as a "black church".

People read symbols of gentrification and exclusion very quickly into their local environment, and display high sensitivly to social and visual cues. Londoners' ability to read their city has been noted in other research about similar areas.[11]

> **Case study: The Huntsman & Hounds**
>
> An example of how changes are interpreted was of "The Huntsman & Hounds" pub redevelopment.
>
> After the pub was closed, the Walworth Society successfully applied for it to become an asset of community value. The pub structure was saved, and is now part of a new building. The reopening was eagerly anticipated, however former customers have been unwilling to return. It was described as having a different style of decoration and *"no recognisable lagers"*.
>
> A year after reopening it has introduced Fosters and Carlsberg at lower prices and is slowly becoming busy again.

A new community space which is run by an organisation without longstanding local roots - operating a café, enterprise support and co-working model – is struggling with viability, describing problems connecting with local residents. There is some resentment from local traders and residents because of the level of funding the agency has received, and because the space it occupies was perceived to have been promised to another locally based organisation. The agency describes problems building relationships with other agencies, resources and traders.

Stakeholders report that there is a sense among longstanding population that they are losing their pubs, markets, and community spaces and that these are being replaced by things that are not for them.

East Street Market traders, especially those with long histories in the area, report that their market is being abandoned, and that there is not enough support from the council. They see this as part of a series of longer-term incremental changes in local retail, citing the closure of Kennedys butchers and Guildford's Bakery on Walworth Road, and the winkle stall on East Street. *"The Lane now has two trendy pop ups, Dave's English butcher has gone"*.

East Street traders described how the families that used to dominate the market have now moved away, and that only around a dozen are estimated to still run a stall. They were replaced by traders from different ethnic minority backgrounds who do not necessarily live in the area. The market is popular with new ethnic minority residents and brings these community members together, however it does not provide the social purpose for longer standing families that it used to.

The declining population of the Aylesbury Estate is increasing reliance on custom from outside the area. There is a new fear about the arrival of more affluent residents and that market will

change again to adapt to this market, becoming gentrified. Examples were given of east London markets where this had happened.

The longer-standing community is vocal about the loss of assets - pubs, cafes, shops and community centres - that were of value to them. The closure of Thurlow Lodge was cited as a major loss by many. Older stakeholders spoke of the energy of the East Street market in the past and how, in its heyday, it defined the area. The Church Commissioners Estate was remembered as a close knit community, where tenancies could be passed on down generations and where all the children attended St Peter's School. In the past many single bed flats were rented to key workers, however they have now moved away as they start families.

One older residents remembered the building of the Aylesbury Estate and how this introduced a new population to the area, replacing streets and shops. He described how he sees the same process repeating, with the existing community being replaced by a new community.

Stakeholders discussed the closure of community faculties and how this prevents residents accessing help. Several stakeholders mentioned that facilities and social infrastructure have closed as a result of the regeneration and are yet to be replaced, Tykes Corner was given as an example of this.

There are inevitably conflicts between what are seen as traditional uses, and new aspirations. For example one community hub have had to stop big church groups using their rooms because of complaints about noise from middle class residents. Some of the older communities are described as "*very territorial*" about the area, feeling that they are being left behind. However the same stakeholder also spoke of how this community is still open and willing to engage with other communities in the area and "*the problems only start when older residents get together and moan*".

The Aylesbury Regeneration programme is important to everyone in the area, and particularly so for residents living on the estate. The process has generated strongly held feelings and it is reported that most residents feel passionately either in support of, or against, the regeneration. This marks a change from Social Life's 2014-15 research which found that the regeneration was not highlighted by many residents when asked to comment on the area.[12]

Stakeholders report that delays in the regeneration programme have generated mistrust in the process, and that many believe that regeneration will never happen. Some of those who have relocated, and hope to be rehoused after development, are reportedly pessimistic about being able to return. Stakeholders report high levels of anxiety about the process, and the uncertainty. And how in spite of available advice, residents are still misunderstanding the rehousing process and refusing offers, making themselves intentionally homeless.

People living in phase 4 of the demolition were seen to be particularly affected by uncertainty. This is the core of the estate geographically and is home to many resident activists. It is described as being more stable than the other parts of the estate. One stakeholder described how these activists are keeping local community life going, especially through the tenants and residents associations, warning of a big impact on local life how when they move out.

Stakeholders report that some residents who have moved within the estate voice concerns that they do not know their neighbours any more. One leaseholder who had moved to an L&Q property was uncomfortable about the stark divisions between tenures in the L&Q development, before they had been an Aylesbury resident, not identified as a leaseholder.

Among young people there is reported to be a widely held view that *"regeneration isn't for us"*, and a perception that it is it for rich white people. Many feel they are not getting anything out of the process, not seeing the opportunities for work and training. Young people tell youth workers they are fed up of moving, and do not know how long they will stay in the area. Young people whose families are placed in temporary housing have usually experienced several disruptions and sometimes trauma associated with circumstances that led to the need to move.

Stakeholders also described how elderly residents from longstanding communities are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of change.

Stakeholders identified a future threat that the local community becomes more polarised, particularly after the Aylesbury redevelopment is complete, and people on lower incomes become concentrated in social housing. Design of the built environment and the provision of new shops, cafes and services threaten to entrench this divide, the example was given of new buildings having different entrances for affordable and private entrances, different to patterns of tenure mix on older social housing estates. *"Starker lines will be drawn"*.

One stakeholder commented that there are *"many discussions about 'people from different backgrounds" moving in but this becomes a euphemism for differences of social class."* That in the interests of improving social relationships there is a danger that services targeted at people in need may be lost in favour of services that promote social integration.

3.4 Social networks and assets

"We find ourselves introducing people to their own neighbours."

The research revealed many local assets that are supporting community life. Some are tangible assets, parks and squares, others are more ephemeral, such networks and relationships between people. This report focuses on these less tangible assets as physical assets, services and infrastructure have been mapped elsewhere.

Stakeholders reported that both the strength of many social networks in the area is reducing, but that many networks are still strong. Often they voiced both views, reflecting adaptability and ongoing resilience.

Some networks described are based around geography – around particular smaller estates, or blocks or landings on the Aylesbury Estate. Others are based around facilities and physical assets, including Friends of Parks Groups and church networks. Others are based around friendship groups or communities of interest, nationality, faith or ethnicity.

Stakeholders report that networks among newer residents are sometimes not obvious. More precarious residents are reported to be "*doing their best to avoid any networks to stay invisible to agencies and the state*".

Many networks and influencers cross over reflecting people's multiple identities and interests, but also the interests and commitment of key activists and influencers.

Networks and supports focusing on geography or location

- Tenants' and residents' associations (TRAs) are important networks for longer established residents – of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds. Their leaders are seen to be influential, but it is reported that they are used less by newer residents. There are also some private TRAs such as Liverpool Grove TRA.
- While some stakeholder felt TRAs were less strong in the past, others recognised how active they still are and how they provide a base for resident activists to carry out valuable community building activities.
- The Aylesbury Forum brings together tenants representatives and is a valuable place for debate, enabling those in favour of and those against the regeneration to come together and discuss issues. The Aylesbury Forum is under pressure to amalgamate with the Walworth Forum which is meeting resistance.
- For more affluent newer residents, the gym and park run were seen to be important. Some are keen to become part of local networks through volunteering.
- Pubs are described as still being important, and a way for neighbours to keep an eye on each other.
- Some neighbours – including older residents - are supporting each other informally.
- Some shops like the Merrow Street stores provide information, support and even small loans.

Networks and supports focusing on ethnicity

Several networks and communities coalesce around ethnic identities. The narrative of the area, expressed in different ways by different stakeholders, is of acceptance of diversity and a perception that no one group is dominant.

- The Latin American community is very strong. Within this are different groups, one stakeholder differentiated between Latin Americans linked to traders and community organisations round Elephant & Castle and others living further away from the Elephant.
- Kinglake has a Sierra Leonean community. Elders in this community are seen as an asset for the school, stopping disputes and sharing information.
- The Somali community in the area is located towards the south of the area and networks with Eritrean and Ethiopian communities.
- The Nigerian and West African community is strong, stakeholders report that it transcends any Muslim-Christian differences.
- The Bangladeshi community is smaller than in the past.
- There is an eastern European community, particularly focused around Polish families.

Networks focusing on shared interests and experiences

- There are strong networks around churches but people often travel a long way – an example was given of people travelling to Kent every week to attend a church with a large Phillipino community.
- St Peter's church is described bringing together "*absolutely everybody* - including 70 somethings from Windrush generation, white working class from the Church Commissioners housing, West Africans mainly from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ghana. some Latin Americans from Columbians/Ecuadorians, and range of other European, north Americans. Around half of the congregation are children and young people.
- Parents networks around children are important. These are formed around the school gate, at play groups and out of parent support groups for all ages.
- For more affluent newer residents, the gym and park run were seen to be important. Some are keen to become part of local networks through volunteering.
- There are some networks that bring together current residents and those who have moved away, examples cited include churches, youth clubs and older people's activities such as the Pembroke House lunch club.
- Some mothers of children/young people who've been killed or victims of crime who are coming together to become more influential and louder.
- Young people have formed some strong networks, often around musicians or YouTubers, sometimes these form around gang leaders.
- Some networks bring together current residents and those who have moved away. Examples cited include churches, youth clubs and older people's activities such as the Pembroke House lunch club.

4 The implications for community development

"It is the people that are less engaged with changes in the community that are often left behind, whereas as the community groups that are well engaged with the changes and can disperse themselves quickly in to action … are more likely to be able to benefit from the local changes."

1 Build on the strength of current agencies and networks

1.1 There are strong and competent community organisations in the area, and a good network of community hubs.

1.2 There is an agreement that coordination could be strengthened, however some competition between agencies is inevitable. It is important that any new body does not become a monopoly, or excludes other agencies.

> *"It would be good if local organisations with similar interests and concerns could occasional meet-up to let people know what they are doing and how they could potentially help others"*
>
> One stakeholder discussed how they would welcome knowledge about which agencies are bidding to the same funders. Another wished to know more about potential partners and collaborators. A GP noted how difficult it is keeping up to date with services, this limits social prescribing and signposting to ESOL and other helpful services.

1.3 Strong relationships are reported between many agencies, including joint working, hosting events at each other's premises, and being represented on governance structures.

> Examples of cooperation included joint working between organisations in Giraffe House, and the good links between the different agencies working with younger children.
>
> Agencies supporting particular minority ethnic describe how people connected to other related communities are using their facilities and services. In the past there was more funding for dedicated services for each group.

2 Focus on meeting needs rather than provider interests

2.1 There is much knowledge amongst agencies about meeting local needs.

> Examples of promising practices include:
> - giving isolated people the confidence to go to new activities, and what activities (like a recent pamper day) appeal to groups who may not engage otherwise.
> - encouraging volunteering, to improve employability, tackle isolation and to enable people to make a contribution to local life
> - experimenting with new models of service delivery, some new agencies like MumsRoom and IntoUniversity have been introduced to the area and are operating successfully, while others like Hatch are facing more challenges

- using community organising models. One agency described how they realised that they "*can't just open doors and expect people to come in*", and their aim to make "*a social room for the community*". This would not necessarily be achieved through getting people into the building; lots of work, community organising, and support, needs to be outside of building.

2.2 There is no forum that hosts discussions about a comprehensive overview of the needs in the area.

The scale of needs in the area is so great that it is not possible to identify gaps in services. The task for agencies is to prioritise – individually or collectively - which needs are most urgent and what action will have most impact.

3 Sensitively meet the needs of a diverse and changing population

3.1 Different models are used by agencies to ensure that different groups feel welcomed – there is a wealth of good practice in the area.

One agency's strategy is to make sure their building is different thing to different people. For example one day's activities are Latin, another West African, another more associated with the longstanding white and Irish community, another focuses on young people.

Another agency is successfully recruiting staff among different communities and finding that this encourages a diverse range of service users to feel comfortable.

The Southwark foodbank recently set up a choir to help bring people together and exchange information more informally. They also run community cafés to provide a more discrete way for people to access help.

3.2 Some groups are less visible to some agencies, yet familiar to others.

Agencies may struggle reaching certain groups who may be familiar with other organisations, shared outreach and communications have the potential to help.

3.3 Facilities are important in different ways for different groups and they need to be accessible for all.

Community spaces are seen as very important for the elderly, traditional TRA halls are not provided in new developments. Newly created community space tends to be rented out at higher rents – nearer market value – and most local organisations cannot afford this this.

Young people need dedicated space – for many young people home life is crowded and tense, while streets and public spaces can be dangerous and stressful. Youth spaces can provide a safe space in a difficult world.

On the Aylesbury Estate, some important community assets either have been, or are due to be, demolished. In the medium term, this includes the youth club and community garden.

3.4 Advocacy and information provision is vital.

> Schools, churches, GPs, TRAs were all reported to be advocating across a range of agencies for individuals in difficult situations. Other agencies were successfully campaigning and organising for change to benefit people in the area. None of these agencies had advocacy or campaigning as part of their core remit.
>
> There is a strong need for information about what's going on. There is a lot of misinformation which can make people very scared about the future. "*The nonsense out there is amazing*".

4 Acknowledge and respond to change, recognising fears and hopes

4.1 Fear of change and displacement can be damaging to quality of life, in a similar way that fear of crime can be as damaging as actual crime.

4.2 Local assets – including cafes, shops and pubs - that are supporting locals social life need to be identified and nurtured.

4.3 Activities and services need to bring together people from different backgrounds

4.4 However supports and provision for people on lower incomes with less resources need to be preserved with care

> There are examples of agencies proactively trying to work with and support people living in temporary accommodation helping them register for school, nurseries, and benefits.

4.5 Residents "read" the style and look of services and facilities very quickly and astutely, and relate this sharply to their sense of belonging.

4.6 An issue for many agencies is how to provide services and supports for new communities from more affluent backgrounds – alongside their traditional focus on needs.

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Footnotes

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