



# Southwark stories



These walking stories bring together the voices of 33 residents of Camberwell, Dulwich, Elephant & Castle, Old Kent Road, Peckham and Walworth.

They draw on walking interviews carried out by the Social Life team in Summer 2020 and Summer 2021.

As we walked with residents, we learnt about their perceptions of local areas. We talked as we walked around local parks, community gardens, playgrounds, cafes and pubs. We explored how people living in these six areas felt about their neighbourhoods, local change and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their daily lives.

The photographs that go with these narratives were taken during our walks and capture places that were important to the people we interviewed. These stories offer a detailed and layered snapshot of residents' lived experiences.

The walking conversations were part of a year-long research project commissioned by Southwark Council that started in April 2020 and concluded in Summer 2021. More about this research is on our website, [www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co)

December 2021.

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Notes: Names have been changed to ensure anonymity. Quotes used have been edited for clarity and were not always verbatim. Researchers were not able to audiorecord the walking interviews because of the need for social distancing, and instead relied on written notes taken during the walks.

Many thanks to all the people who gave up their time to walk with us.

# Camberwell (2020)

## Frances.

The walk began in Rust Square, passing through Addington Square, to Burgess Park and on to New Church Road. The walk then continued to the Magistrates Court Camberwell Library and Camberwell Green.

Frances enjoys living in Camberwell and especially appreciates her proximity to Burgess Park, which she describes as her sanctuary. She walks through Burgess Park every day and describes how spending time in the park was fundamental to her recovery

after a period of ill health.

Overall Frances loves the improvements that have been made to the area, however, she thinks that graffiti on the Magistrates Court should be removed. She thinks that the area would benefit from much better signage.

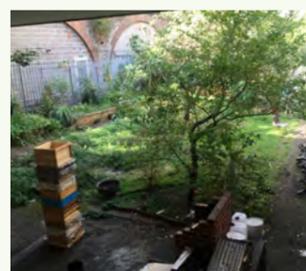
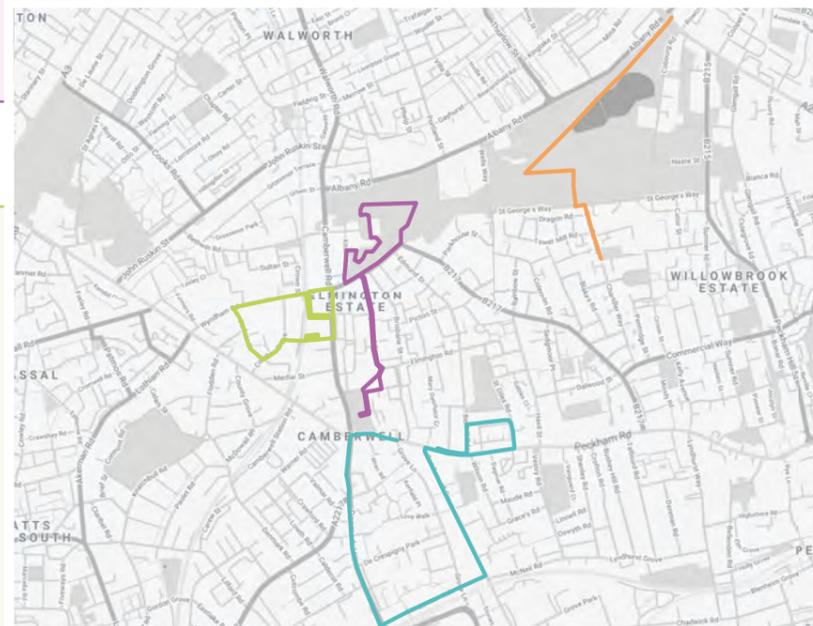
Frances is unhappy at the number of homeless people that gather on Camberwell Green.

Frances doesn't feel safe shopping after dark in Camberwell and says that there are not enough community police officers

about. She also describes concerns people drinking alcohol in the summer on Camberwell Green, without enforcement.

Frances reports not feeling heard by the council. She objects to the council being 'digital by default', which she feels makes it very difficult for those not connected digitally, to get in touch.

*"It's hard to get in touch [with the council] unless you are online."*



## George.

The walk starts at St. Giles Church, and the estates north of Peckham Road, then Camberwell Grove, Denmark Hill, back to Peckham Road again and to Sophocles Bakery.

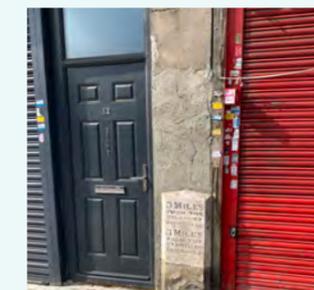


George describes Camberwell as historically diverse with ever changing demographics. He likes that different people bring their own cultures to the area. In the last 10 years he says that more people from Latin America have moved to the area. He has never witnessed animosity between different groups and he feels safe in his area.

George feels that he belongs in his neighbourhood and that it has a strong sense of community and the common good. He is very engaged with his local community and local projects and he feels that residents do have some

control over what happens in the area. He believes there is a very strong social aspect to life in Camberwell and the many green spaces encourage people to come together outside of their home. He likes to socialise with friends in local pubs, where he knows many of the regulars. George does not like the amount of traffic, which contributes to high levels of noise and pollution, jeopardising health.

*"The great diversity of people has always been a very strong point of the area."*



## Bev.

The walk began at the Castlemead estate and took in the Elmington Estate, continuing past Comber Grove School and the Wynder and Comber Estate, finishing back at the parade of shops on Castlemead.

Bev really likes living on the estate. She appreciates



being a short walk from Camberwell Green and the local shops and being close to East Street Market. She says the area is ideal for buses too.

Bev is very proud of the Elmington estate tenants' private garden, with its beehives and vegetable plots, and says that it is very popular with tenants on the estate.

Bev describes tensions in her area because repairs have not been carried out in the blocks. There are problems with leaking drains and wastewater that is smelly and runs past people's flats. Bev says this has been ongoing for two years.

Bev says she feels safe during the day in the area, however at night she feels unsafe and doesn't go out though she can't express why that is.

She feels unease with what she perceives as significant demographic changes in her immediate neighbourhood, in the 40 years she has been a resident. She says there is no longer a balance of ethnicity.

*"I love my flat and I adore where I live."*

*"We don't have the council's back up and support."*

## Cora.

The walk with Cora took in the breadth of Burgess Park, ending at the Tesco store near the Old Kent Road gate.

Burgess Park is a very important part of Cora's everyday life and she spends a lot of her time there with her children. She likes the new additions to the park, including the new playgrounds, and the BMX space. Chumleigh Gardens is her favourite spot and she often takes her children there. Cora feels she belongs in the area and that it has a rich diversity comprised of

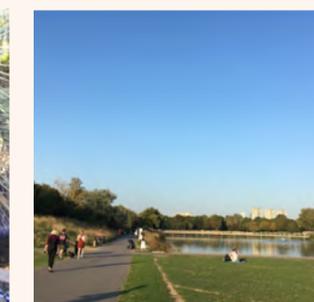
many cultures. Cora describes herself as a 'foodie' and enjoys eating with her friends at the many local ethnic restaurants.

Cora describes how, in the summer and at weekends, different communities come together for celebrations, including Latin American, Jamaican and African communities. Cora especially enjoys the Colombian parties and football activities. She says she feels safe walking through the park both during the day and at night.

Cora commented on the exclusive, gated housing in the neighbourhood, and how this contrasts greatly with how the majority of people in the neighbourhood live. Overall Cora thinks that change in the area is not a bad thing, except when it disrupts the community and people get driven out.

*"All my life has been around Burgess Park."*

*"So many different cultures and things to do."*



## Emerging themes

The residents we walked with reported being very invested in their local community and all feel that they belong in the area. Overwhelmingly they feel connected to their local neighbourhood with its proximity to the green spaces and plentiful local shops and restaurants. They praise Burgess Park, some spend a big part of their everyday life there. All enjoy spending time locally and value the rich variety of ethnic shops and restaurants.

There is a definite pride in the neighbourhood, its parks and its social infrastructure. Residents appreciate the improvements that have been made to date, and they care enough to make suggestions about where further improvements need to be made.

Overall residents feel safe in their area, though not all felt safe after dark. There were some worries about antisocial behaviour on Camberwell Green, including street drinking.

The rich cultural diversity of Camberwell is generally seen positively. Several residents commented that different groups of people get on well together.

Traffic noise and pollution were described as problems of everyday life in Camberwell, alongside particular issues affecting individuals such as problems getting repairs done.



**FRANCES** has lived in Camberwell, close to Burgess Park, since 2012. She lives by herself in a one bedroom flat and is currently not able to work.



**BEV** is from Wales and has lived on the Elmington Estate for nearly 40 years: "you couldn't give the flats away then". She lives alone and is self-employed.



**GEORGE** has lived in South London for over 30 years, in Camberwell for the last 19 years. George is a private tenant and lives alone. He is self-employed.



**CORA** has lived in Camberwell for over 30 years, first on the Castlemead Estate and then on Gloucester Grove. She lives with her partner and children and is self-employed.

# Dulwich (2020)

## Anne.

The walk started at Kingswood House and went past Sydenham Hill train Station, Dulwich Wood Primary School, and the Kingswood Estate Community Hall.

Anne says she likes living in the area. She describes it as quiet, clean and green, with a good mix of people. Through her daughter and volunteers on the estate, she had got to know lots of people over the years and she very much appreciates the sense of neighbourliness that this has given her.

Anne feels a sense of belonging to her area because she feels local people care about her, including teachers

at the local primary school that her daughter goes to.

The social aspect of life on



the estate matters very much to Anne and she volunteers at the local community centre, as well as taking part in activities that are run there. She says one reason she volunteers is that she wants to give back.

Walking past the shops, Anne explains how important these are for the estate. Most of them are shut because of COVID, with only a couple open for basic shopping. Anne misses meeting up with other residents at the launderette, for a natter, as these too are closed.

*“So you have a mix of people on the estate. Some people who have lived here all their lives and others who have*



*moved in more recently. In all I'd say most people get on.”*



## Danielle.

The walk began at Kingswood Community Centre, as Danielle did her food bank deliveries, then through Bowen Drive and Seeley Drive.

Danielle enjoys volunteering and feels she is giving back to the community, after she needed help from the food bank when she lost her job in March. She says she loves the area and describes it as friendly and safe, where children can play outside and neighbours look out for them. Danielle feels that

there is not enough for older teenagers on the estate. When a boy from the estate was murdered, the whole community united to search the area for weapons.

Danielle described how COVID-19 has damaged local social life as everyone is inside. She lamented the loss of the library, and feels lost without it.

Danielle relies on KETRA and the Community centre for information and without them says she wouldn't know where to turn. She thought that empty buildings, like the

Kingswood Housing Office could be used for community activities for different groups of people.

*“I felt so overwhelmed and was helped. My way of giving back is through this volunteering. I now do deliveries.”*



## Jane.

The walk began outside Dulwich Library, going through Dulwich Park into Dulwich Village, to St Barnabas Church and on to Dulwich Community Hospital, going up Lordship Lane and back to Dulwich Library.

Jane likes the amount of green, the lack of traffic and feeling safe in the area. She appreciates the accessible transport to central London.

Jane likes Dulwich Library and says it has been amazing to have it over the years. She



also likes Dulwich Picture Gallery but doesn't always feel at home there. Jane has mixed feelings about the area and feels it has become more upper middle class and gentrified since she moved in the early 80s. She says there is a lack of diversity and that there is no social housing in her immediate area anymore. She feels it more keenly recently, as she's forced to stay very local because of the pandemic.

Jane says that she “sort of” feels like she belongs, as she has lived in the area for many years. However, she says there used to be more ordinary professional people living in the area.

*“The social mix is important. We all need to benefit from the same spaces and there needs to be richness and variety.”*

Donna loves her local area and describes it as safe and very clean. She feels that she belongs as she has laid down roots and has stability and security. Donna has very good friends in the sheltered housing where she lives.

*“I do feel like I belong. I feel that I have stability and security.”*

Donna is a very active member of her local Methodist church where she regularly socialises. Donna also goes to local cafes and pubs to meet friends.

Donna finds crossing roads can sometimes be difficult and confusing as not all the crossings have the sensor for visually impaired people.

Donna hopes that that she has control over what happens in the area, but feels that the people who have influence and money and power probably decide what happens.



## Donna.

Donna described her local area on the phone, as she found navigating her local area difficult since the COVID protocols were introduced.



Donna appreciates how close she is to train stations, buses, supermarkets and parks and says she feels “very lucky and privileged”.

*“The church is very important for socialising.”*

## Emerging themes

People living in the area told us they appreciate Dulwich for its quietness, safety, green spaces, cleanliness and public transport.

Diversity is also seen as a local asset. People noted that those from different backgrounds get on well with each other.

Overall, residents said there is a real feeling of belonging in the area and that the neighbourhood is friendly and supportive, with good social networks. Volunteering provides a way of meeting new people, as well as giving back to the local support network.

Community halls and churches are valued hubs for getting information, activities and socialising. There is a feeling that young people are lacking facilities locally.

The closing of local shops in the pandemic has been a problem for people living on estates that are further away from other shops. Similarly, local libraries are very much loved and were sorely missed during the first lockdown.

Not everyone felt that they have control over what happens in their local area. Some people do not know who their local councillor is, others do not believe that the council listens to them.

One resident told us that navigating the local area is not always easy with a disability and more needs to be done to facilitate this.



**ANNE** has lived on the Kingswood Estate, in a council property, for over 30 years and brought up her daughter here. Anne is not currently working outside of the home.



**DONNA** has lived in sheltered housing for visually impaired people since 2012. She has her own flat and lives alone. Donna works part time.



**JANE** has lived in her house, off Lordship Lane, for over 35 years. She moved to Dulwich from rural Essex with her husband, they brought up their children here. She is retired.



**DANIELLE** moved to the Kingswood Estate in 2018 from another area of Southwark and wanted to stay in the borough. Danielle lives with her two children and grandchildren. She is looking for work.

# Elephant & Castle (2020)

## Tom.

We started the walk close to Tom's house and made our way slowly toward the Cinema Museum. He knows the area well and values the variety of people and housing tenures. As we move through the neighbourhood, he notes that some parts of Elephant & Castle are more organic, pedestrian-friendly and better integrated than others,



he flags the area around the Osborne Water Tower House as an example. When local pubs and cafes were shut in the summer because of COVID-19 restrictions, he used to hang out with neighbours right on the street.

Besides its diversity, Tom thinks transport connectivity and walkability are the main assets of Elephant & Castle.



Our walk featured a number of local parks and gardens which he likes - St Mary's Church playground, West Square Garden and Lamplash Garden. He says cars used to be more of a problem but this is being addressed through a low traffic neighbourhood.

He is critical of regeneration when it does not consider local needs and local communities. Tom remarks how the areas we cross during our walk are cut by different visible and invisible boundaries which shape Elephant & Castle. One of them is drawn by the conservation area, which contrasts with the fast-changing area around Elephant Park.



*"There's no clear route to impact change and have your voice heard. There is no clear path even when communities get organised... market forces might still win."*



## Jeffrey.

We walked along Walworth Road and the smaller streets behind it. Jeffrey is critical of the tall buildings that are popping up all over Elephant & Castle and worries that the physical



transformation of the area is changing its character. He values the diversity of local communities and is concerned that regeneration could erase the area's heritage.

Jeffrey doesn't spend much time walking around the area and he doesn't usually socialise with friends locally. He shops in the area for cooking ingredients. He talks about the different shops in the area, he knows exactly what he likes from each one and his routines are shaped by his appreciation of what is available locally.

Jeffrey enjoys local parks and gardens and remarks how these are spaces for

socialising, giving the area a community feel. He is aware that it takes effort to maintain them and knows that many residents are involved in this.

Before the first lockdown, kids used to play around Canterbury Place, making the area feel welcoming. He describes how St Mary's Churchyard park attracts drinkers early in the day and thinks they could be a menace for families with children.

*"There's too much traffic and pollution around the pedestrian/cycling crossing next to St Mary's Church playground."*

## Mike.

The walk started at Victory Community Garden and we strolled towards West Square. On our way back, we stopped by the East Street Market and Nursery Row Park.

Mike thinks green spaces are important for the local area, and have been a lifeline for him and other residents during the first lockdown. He highlights Nursery Row Park, how it is welcoming to a variety of people and activities. Another green space he has enjoyed in recent years is the wild garden behind East Street Market,

which is maintained by local residents.

*"East Market has always been cheap and cheerful but it's not a destination for people."*

Mike says that traffic has become more manageable and street connectivity and safety have improved with redevelopment. He believes local green links have improved the walkability of the area, and he praises the maintenance of local underpasses. As we pass through East Street Market, he notes how important it is, because of its stalls and



its connection to the African community. Mike says that he would like to be able to shop locally for everything he needs but cannot.

Crossing the street in front of the shopping centre, he reflects that new developments cluster around the Elephant Park but that nothing is happening

on Walworth Road. In his opinion, East Market and Walworth Road should cater both to working and middle-class residents. He thinks there needs to be a clearer vision for the future of Walworth Road.

## Rose.

We started the walk close to St Mary's Church playground, wandered toward the former local library, then headed to Elliott's Row Pocket Park and West Square Gardens.

Rose speaks highly of local parks, and thinks St Mary's Church playground is an important local amenity. She finds it easy to stop there with her children after school and wait for them to let off energy. She recalls that in her early years in the neighbourhood there were no parks and playgrounds.

When we reach the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, Rose points out the convenience of having it close by. As a parent, the shopping centre is really helpful, offering a variety of things she needs for her family - food, clothes and shoes. Rose and her kids used to love the bowling alley, she decries the fact that it was shut down and that there is no local alternative. She talks about how the closing of the shopping centre will affect residents with reduced mobility, as they will have to drive or take the bus to shop on Walworth Road.

Rose thinks that there are

other places in London that are better but finds it convenient to live here because it's central and well connected.

*"Elephant & Castle has become a bit too built up, you can't see outside of your window. It feels a bit claustrophobic, didn't feel like this 10-15 years ago."*

She does not feel like she belongs in the local area, because her friends do not live in Elephant and Castle and because she does not feel there is a strong sense of community in the area.



## Emerging themes

The diversity of people and shops in Elephant & Castle is what makes many local residents enjoy spending time there. Residents note that local parks and shops are places where people from different walks of life and backgrounds come together. Some residents have developed strong relationships with their neighbours and have joined local initiatives to improve the area: maintaining gardens, flower beds, or advocating for safer roads.

The loss of local identity and displacement of lower-income communities are concerns shared by many regardless of their views on regeneration. A common thread is the lack of control over local change. Residents are worried that their voices are not heard even when they take the time to participate in consultations.

Many local residents are worried about the survival of small businesses. A few highlighted the negative impact that closing the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre will have on those who rely on it for shopping, socialising and support.

Transport connectivity and proximity to central London are mentioned as key local assets by longstanding residents and newcomers. Recent changes, such as low traffic neighbourhood policies and improvements in the cycling infrastructure are seen as making walking and cycling easier and safer in the area.



**TOM** has lived in Elephant & Castle for twenty years; he and his partner bought their place when prices were lower. He speaks to his neighbours regularly and enjoys socialising with a wide range of people.



**MIKE** moved to Elephant & Castles about ten years ago because he had friends in the area. He enjoys cycling. The pandemic has motivated him to start volunteering, delivering food packages to people who are shielding.



**JEFFREY** is a professional man in his 30s. He moved to the neighbourhood four years ago and enjoys its local character. His local experience has been shaped by his cycling and cooking routines.



**ROSE** moved to the area 20 years ago and has witnessed its transformation. Her experience is now shaped by the activities she enjoys doing with her children.

# Peckham (2020)

## Sarah.

We walked by the primary schools Sarah's children attended. At one of the local primary schools, her two eldest sons were the only students of colour in their year group.

Sarah recalls instances in which she felt she was treated differently at school events. Her daughter



attended a different school, which is more diverse. Sarah describes how difficult it has been to get the learning support her daughter needed.

During the walk Sarah points out several features on the streets that she likes, such as benches, a small green area, and bike racks. She is sceptical about some other

features the council has invested in, such as mosaics, street statues and 'funky' streetlamps. She is frustrated that the Peckham Rye station area has not been improved as part of the regeneration.

*"There are some funky lamp posts, a mosaic which the council chose to spend money on which is questionable, and the poo looking street decorations which I think are Anthony Gormley? That's their effort of doing up the high street."*

Sarah has used many of the local businesses in the area, most of the local shops cater to a wide variety of needs. She was grateful they were open at late hours when she needed to replace a door lock at 11pm. Although she welcomes the gentrification and the new business it brings with it, she is aware of the rising prices.

Sarah's social group, mums from various backgrounds whose children go to the same primary school, became

her support network after March. During the Clap for Carers, Sarah would get involved and had a great sense of community.

She appreciates the nightlife and the buzz that gentrification has brought to the area. She feels proud to show off the nightlife to friends and family who visit.

However, Sarah feels she does not feel at home in the area. She says does not feel at



home anywhere; she would be happy to move again.



## Gwen.

Walking past Peckham Place, Gwen talks about how important it is that new developments serve everyone in the community. She talks about how new developments are impacting local people,



giving the example of a new small playground which has been welcomed and is well used by families.

Gwen is involved in helping the community. She feels strongly about communicating and building relationships. She believes communication is more than notices and leaflets. She enjoys face-to-face conversations and talks about the way that COVID-19 restrictions have reduced physical interactions. However, Gwen is proud of how older people in her area have embraced technology to keep in touch with friends and family. She describes how local businesses have established relationships with the community, many are places where residents

socialise. Several businesses have come forward to help the community through the first lockdown. For example, a local chip shop started a payment scheme for meals to help residents.

Gwen feels a strong sense of belonging to the local area. She is deeply involved in many services in the neighbourhood, through volunteering. She feels she is a 'middle person' for many who need support.

*"What I like is the community, it's friendly and people are willing to communicate but need help. There's a mixture of progress, happiness, moving forwards. I love change."*

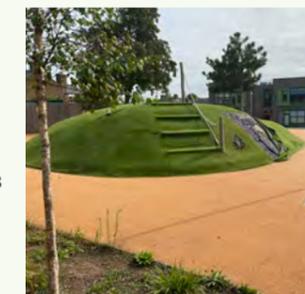
*"I think the park is in need of different amenities. People are living cheek to jowl but there are few places to encourage mixing in the park."*

The local cycling club offers a strong support network for Andy, people of many professional backgrounds use this club and share advice. He points out that the club, though open to everyone, is not ethnically diverse, which does not reflect the local area. The neighbourhood has a WhatsApp group which Andy is a part of, the group helped organise a street party that is held annually. This group later played an important role in distributing information during COVID-19 period, which gave the community a sense of belonging.

Andy does not feel he has a say in the changes in the area, mainly due to his own lack of involvement. He is aware of many of the changes that have been made in the neighbourhood are due to residents campaigning for them.

The changes to the local area are received positively, the parks, local libraries, community centre and shops have all improved, in M's opinion. Even though Andy and his wife mostly shop online the local amenities are welcomed. Future changes M would like to witness in the area are more enclosed streets, more trees and flower beds along the streets and more free sports facilities.

*"The Friends of the Park group don't want a basketball court which is ridiculous because they should be encouraging all to exercise."*



## Emerging themes

The new changes brought to the area, through regeneration, generate mixed reactions from residents. They appreciate the new businesses that are moving into the area, giving them more options. However, they are aware that this may result in rising prices.

The changes in the landscape are mostly well received. The additions to the streets and pavements, including artwork, benches, and plants and new green spaces are valued. These encourage people to use outdoor spaces more, creating opportunities for neighbours to chat and get to know each other. There is some concern whether all the new changes are necessary.

The feeling of belonging in the neighbourhood is influenced by people's lived experiences in the area. Residents who are more active in the local community have a stronger sense of belonging.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown the sense of belonging is reported to have grown. Local businesses came to the aid of their neighbours. They also became a social hub for residents during this time.

New social support systems have been set up. Some neighbourhood WhatsApp groups became crucial in distributing information. Families and local groups are using social media platforms more to keep up communication.



**SARAH** has lived in Peckham for 20 years, she and her husband are self-employed, and live with their three children. Since March Sarah has enjoyed walking her dog in the neighbourhood, embracing her interactions with passers-by.



**ANDY** is a professional man living with his wife and two children. He's lived in the neighbourhood for 29 years. He enjoys running and cycling through the green spaces in Peckham through to Lewisham.



**GWEN** moved to Peckham 25 years ago. Her relationships with other residents and local organisations have made her well connected to the fabric of Peckham.

# Old Kent Road (2020)

## Jo.

The walk started outside Ranna's café besides Burgess Park and ran the length of the Old Kent Road.

Jo points out the Pound Plus & DIY stores and how there will soon be a 15-storey hotel and 40-storey residential block in its place. Jo says the change will bring many



improvements, but there is concern whether these changes will benefit people living in the area.

Jo talks about the level of crime in the ward in the mid-2000s, and how things had improved greatly through community policing. Problems have started to rise again more recently because of budget cuts and rising



economic hardship.

*"I don't think there's enough for teens to socialise safely. There are a lack of things to do. When the Livesey Exchange is built it will help as it doesn't feel like it's on anyone's territory."*

Walking down the congested Old Kent Road, Jo mentions problems with respiratory health and high levels of asthma. Besides Burgess Park, there is not much green space, addressing this is important for the future.

The lack of opportunities and activities for young people is also a priority for him. The impact of the

pandemic and closing the community centres and clubs has worsened this. The new Livesey Exchange, currently being developed, aims to address this, and there is a lot



there needs to be more opportunities to bring people together, and to value this diversity and the benefits it brings.

## Dimitris.

The walk began outside the Links Community Centre, going north toward South Bermondsey station. The centre has been closed most the year because of COVID. This has had a huge impact



and makes it difficult for community groups to come together, however Dimitris thinks that Zoom meetings can sometimes be more accessible.

Dimitris has witnessed a huge amount of change on the Old Kent Road, particularly



the transition away from industry, as well as increased ethnic diversity. Although many groups from different backgrounds interact, there is difficulty getting everyone involved in the residents' groups.

*"I do all this voluntary work as I don't want the estate to go downhill, I want to keep it going, that's why I volunteer."*

Dimitris has many long-standing relationships in the area and often stops to chat with other local people. There is a lot of poverty in the area, and he doesn't believe the new affordable housing will be affordable for many.

Dimitris dedicates a lot of time to volunteering. He is involved in his TRA and the community centre, the South Bermondsey Partnership and the Rotherhithe Forum. He says this is necessary to communicate the priorities for the neighbourhood to the council and to have more of a voice.

## Emerging themes

In an area lacking in services and opportunities, local community groups, faith groups and the TRAs are at the heart of the Old Kent Road's communities. This was revealed during the pandemic, as groups successfully came together to provide support, making sure that few people fell through the cracks.

There is a strong sense of local identity, and a long rich history that is remembered and valued by many of the longer-standing residents.

However, a lack of opportunities are seen to have deeply impacted young people, more so during the pandemic. Many are concerned about rising deprivation and crime. They want to see more funding for support services and community policing.

For some, the regeneration represents opportunity and a much-needed chance to restore local infrastructure and services. Others fear that changes will not be for them, and that many will be pushed out of the area, weakening local identity.

This is true of local traders who have been hit hard by the pandemic, as well as larger families who have been on the housing waiting lists for years, and who believe that homes that are being built will not be available to them.

## David.

The walk begins on Ossory Road, and loops through the Glengall Road Industrial Estate. David outlines the long history of his company, and speaks of his pride in it, and how he employs 12



local people. They also rent out space to other smaller businesses.

David is involved in local business networks, and encourages other businesses to get involved with cultural events and activities. David believes it is important to make visible the valuable contributions businesses make to the community, and to be involved in decisions affecting the local area.

David is pessimistic about the redevelopment of the area, and feels there will not be a place for them here in the future. Rising rents are

a problem, David feels other land-uses are taking priority.

*"We feel that we are part of the industrial economy in this area and that we are being pushed out by what is happening - the process of redevelopment of the Old Kent Road and the plans for big scale housing projects."*

David likes the diversity of the Old Kent Road, but feels there isn't often much interaction between groups, however this is slowly changing. David believes

## Alice.

The walk begins near her home. Alice is very happy with where she lives, and had planned to stay throughout her retirement. She is now worried about the size of the development which will

surround her.

Even though the area is 'rough around the edges', Alice loves the rich local history, the good transport links to central London, and the range of local shops. Having raised her kids here she feels a strong sense of belonging.

Alice notes how the clearing of industrial sites has decreased footfall and made things quieter, but she worries about the noise and pollution from the construction work that is to come. She has raised concerns with the council and developers, but has found

doing so very difficult and taxing.

Alice gets on well with her neighbours, many have lived in the area for a long time and they come together to solve problems.

*"When you've got a little neighbourhood without much turnover, and most residents have lived there for 10+ years, you feel very at home."*

Alice notices how the demographics of the area are changing with younger and wealthier people moving in, she worries lower-income people risk being pushed out.



JO has lived in the local area his entire adult-life. Jo knows the Old Kent Road well, and its rapid change over the past decade.



DAVID is the proprietor of a local business which has been in the area since 1947. Since 2013 it has been located on Ossory Road.



DIMITRIS has lived on the Bonamy Estate since he was four. He has been involved with the local residents' association and the Community Centre since the 1990s.



ALICE has lived on the Old Kent Road in social housing for 36 years, and is involved with the TRA. She is a parent and retired social worker, and has a lot of insight into the community.



# Walworth (2020)

## Rob.

The walk passed through west Walworth from the Walworth Road to the edge of the Brandon Estate, highlighting the different periods of architecture, the convenience of Walworth Road but also



the problems of fly-tipping.

Rob appreciates the quiet of the area, and the transport links. He is supportive of the recent road closures but worries how this could affect emergency services. Rob highlights the diversity, of



social class and ethnicity, and of types of housing design and tenure.

*"It's a complete mix of young families, elderly, traditional white working class who have lived in Southwark forever and lawyers ... Generally, it's a friendly vibe."*

Generally he feels safe, he spoke of how the residents' association keeps him informed and how it supported people who were struggling during the first

lockdown. He goes out in the area to meet friends and socialise, but he would go elsewhere for a "date night". He is more wary of Walworth Road, he feels it is more unruly, and worries people are less careful about social distancing.

He doesn't see the area as having gentrified significantly though notes there are several affluent people in his street who moved in after 2000.

## Senait.

The walk started near Pembroke House, an important social centre for the family, and went south to Surrey Square then Burgess Park. The park is important to Senait for socialising and activities but she described some difficult incidents that have made her worry for her son's safety.



Senait likes going to Southbank and to Mercato Metropolitano, noting how few black and Latino people go to these places.

*"I see a lot of young couples, working people and change through new cafes and shops ... I like the change. It's good for generating jobs. I can also see the negative*



*... if you have a bad income and job, it's the government's choice where they go."*

She used to go to the TRA, but thinks it isn't influential and stopped going. Senait believes there is a need for change and regeneration but worries about the impact on people on low incomes.

Senait appreciates events that bring different groups together, including the annual seaside trip organised by the TRA. Sometimes she feels isolated. This has intensified since March when she stopped being able to see her family in other parts of London.

She speaks warmly of the area's diversity, the range



of shops, often low cost. She is aware some families are struggling, financially and with their mental health. She thinks COVID has made this worse.



## Alessa.

The walk started on the Pullens Estate, and went through different community gardens, the Newington Estate, and down to Pullens Gardens. During the walk Alessa stopped often to speak to other residents. Alessa

is very involved in local community gardening and greening. This shapes her experience of the area and has enabled her to get to know other local people. In general she thinks local people get on and support each other.

During lockdown she spent a lot of time in local green spaces. She didn't feel isolated because she knows so many local people.

Alessa feels she belongs in the area. She meets other parents after school in the local park, she commented on the wide diversity of backgrounds among local families.

Alessa feels angry about how the area is being redeveloped and refuses to go to Elephant Park. She is concerned about the impact on longer term residents, and young people.

She is critical of policing, and the council's attitude to the green spaces and trees that she loves. She thinks the council values local people less than the interests of developers.

*"These developments are luxury homes, while there are hundreds of homeless people underneath."*



May describes how she enjoys the area, and taking part in local activities. May is involved in local life, goes to meetings, is an active gardener, and is knowledgeable about local changes.

May believes that by being involved in the local community she can be influential, and that the small scale activities and events she is involved with enable people to have a voice.

May likes the new buildings in Elephant Park and speaks approvingly about environmental sustainability within the buildings and planting.

May likes the new restaurants and cafes, eating out is important to her social life. She realises that these are expensive and that many local people can't afford them. She describes some tensions between "old" and "new" residents, and



between east and west Walworth, particularly where regeneration money is being spent.

*"It don't matter how long you live here, if you are not born here and if like me you have an accent, the locals always think of you a 'new'."*

May thinks that generally people from different backgrounds get on, that the main tensions are economic, about access to new facilities. She worries that many people cannot afford to benefit from change in the way she does.

## Emerging themes

The diversity, green spaces and, for many, the opportunity to be involved in community gardening are a strong elements of local life binding people to their area. People experience Walworth through their smaller local neighbourhoods.

People with more economic resources report feeling more comfortable with change, they are able to enjoy new places to socialise and eat. People from all backgrounds appreciate the access to central London, to the South Bank, and to green spaces. Transport links are appreciated, however safety causes some concerns.

TRAs are mentioned often as social supports, although there are mixed views about how influential they can be. There is disquiet about the impact of regeneration and change on people who are on lower incomes, this group is seen to include many long term residents. Opinions vary on how much the area has changed, and the value of new buildings and developments.



**ROB** is a professional man in his 30s, he lives with his partner in a Victorian terrace. He has lived in the area over three years, he grew up in Sussex but his grandfather used to live in the Walworth area.



**SENAIT** lives with her son in council housing. She came to this country in 2006, first in Sheffield then moving to London. She was in temporary accommodation in the Aylesbury Estate for six months. She works part time.



**ALESSA** has lived in Walworth for 20 years, originally moving because her partner lived in the area. She lives with her husband and son in a one bed council flat. She does not work because of health issues.



**MAY** is a private tenant living with her partner, she works in the public sector. Her background is Asian-American, she has lived in the area for six years.

## May.

The walk started outside Walworth Town Hall, went up Sayer Street through Elephant Park, over Walworth Road, round the back of the Newington Estate, finishing in Manor Place.

# Camberwell and Peckham (2021)

## Giselle.

The walk began close to Giselle's home in a tree-lined residential area tucked away from the main road. Since her experience of Camberwell has mostly been through lockdown, she led us around the routes she used for her daily walks and exercise.

We stroll down Church Street, an area known for its independent food outlets and increasingly upmarket pubs. The area has seen lots of new businesses opening recently, most of them catering to a middle-class white crowd and to tourists. Giselle likes the area and feels she fits in here,

but worries about the negative impact of recent developments on its affordability.

On our walk we see several signs of community activism. We pass a squatted fire station with signs protesting police brutality. Giselle says that squatting is increasingly common in Camberwell.



Giselle feels that people have control over small decisions, giving the example of a local trader whose tenure was under threat but saved by a local campaign. However, against bigger changes like large-scale development, she thinks the impact of local voices will be very small.

Because Camberwell has relatively few transport links, it can be difficult for Giselle's friends to visit her here. They often meet in Burgess Park, or socialise in her garden to keep costs down. Although Giselle's neighbours come across as friendly, she hasn't had much chance to socialise with them during lockdowns.



*"Camberwell is quite segregated in its built environment."*



## Tanya.

Tanya took us on a walk around Kelly Avenue Park, where she is involved with a community group that is working to renovate it. They are currently installing new signage, park benches, and a canopy to provide shade. Coming together to improve



the park has created a lot of community feeling, she tells us.

Tanya is passionate about involving children in community development. Kelly Avenue Park used to be very dangerous, and young people would sometimes get robbed or attacked there. She notes that the children from

the local school have driven the changes to the park, as the local people have listened to their views on safety and access to green spaces. Tanya feels engaged in local decision-making through attending 'empowering community' meetings.

*"For me, the key is persistence, people banding together, and being stronger together."*

However, she sees a division between traditional North Peckham residents who don't feel listened to, and newer groups of middle-

class residents who are more confident. She believes that sometimes development plans might seem well-presented and nice, but there are key people excluded from

## Chioma.

We started the walk at Peckham Library and walked down Rye Lane, to Peckham Rye in the south. This is a route that Chioma takes daily, and she often comes to Rye Lane to do her shopping.



She loves the wide range of activities, green spaces, and shops available in the area, explaining that 'everything is here!'

She points out all the new shops and restaurants on the street, including a Nando's and a Co-op. These have made it easier to get the everyday things she needs. However, as we were walking, she added that the new arrivals are pricier than the stores they replaced, making the cost of living higher.

Chioma feels that she has little control over these changes, and that in Peckham, 'things just happen!' She gives the example of Rye Lane recently becoming pedestrianised, which has negatively affected her use of the street. She

would like to see a better council website available to residents, to inform them of the changes taking place in their neighbourhoods.

Over lockdown, Chioma and many of her classmates struggled with online learning and mental health issues. She found it difficult to access support from her teachers or in the local community.

*"There is no easy access to mental health support in Peckham."*

*"Southwark council website is poorly designed and difficult to use."*



to be made. He tells us that, working in local politics, 'you need to be brave if you want to get things done.'

*"The five estates program was a real success, and shows how regeneration can be done well, but you don't see many schemes with that success today."*

'iconic symbol of Peckham.'

We then moved to the regenerated estates to the north of Peckham Road. These estates used to have many problems, with long walkways that encouraged crime and anti-social behaviour. Now the streets feature houses with gardens and tree-lined streets. However, William feels that the area is still severely lacking in facilities for young people, with many involved in knife crime and postcode disputes.



## William.

The walk with William took us around the streets of North Peckham, which has been regenerated extensively. William believes that regeneration in the area has been mostly successful, but tells us that some people don't like change, and others will lose out from it.

We started at Peckham Arch, at the top of Rye Lane. William tells us about council plans to demolish the arch and replace it with apartments. However, there is an enthusiastic campaign to protect the arch, with locals seeing it as an

William thinks that residents have a lot more say these days, thanks to the internet and better information systems. However, because people are more vocal, it can take a lot of time for decisions



## Emerging themes

Affordable housing is a key concern for longstanding residents and newcomers alike in Camberwell and Peckham. The general perception is that the new residential developments in their local areas have not always met the needs of local groups.

The importance of local businesses is also highlighted, especially as residents have seen some of the shops, restaurants and cafés close down during the pandemic. Residents appreciate the range of shops in Camberwell and Peckham, talking approvingly about both the longstanding affordable supermarkets and independent food establishments and the newer shops and cafes.

Control over local change is a topic that has been highlighted multiple times during our walks in these two neighbourhoods. It has been brought up in connection to community activism, involvement in local TRAs and other resident networks, and children's voice in community development. Some residents believe the internet and better information systems are helping them make their opinions heard. Others do not feel that they have power to influence larger-scale decisions affecting their local areas, whilst they might be able to exert small-scale changes by coming together as a community. Yet others highlight that not all local groups have the needed resources (including time!) to take part in consultations and other community meetings.



**GISELLE** is a woman in her twenties. She has lived in Camberwell since 2020 in a home she rents with her flatmates. She is in full-time education and has a part-time job.



**WILLIAM** has lived in Peckham his whole life. He shares a home with his partner and has family in Lewisham and Bromley. He loves living in this area, and cares about the changes that are taking place.



**TANYA** is a longstanding resident of Peckham, and moved to the Goose Green area with her family during lockdown. She worked in youth safeguarding for many decades and is now retired.



**CHIOMA** has lived in Peckham since she was six years old. She currently lives alone in temporary accommodation, and is a carer for her brother. She is a student at a local college.

# Elephant & Castle and Walworth (2021)

## Mateo.

The walk began at Chatica café, across the street from Castle Square, and we strolled towards West Square along the backstreets behind the Elephant and Castle roundabout, following the recently built cycling lanes.

Southwark Playhouse is one of his favourite local venues; it “feeds his imagination” and it is “part of the story” of the local area. Walking past Mercato Metropolitano, Mateo mentions that he enjoys the venue. Though it started out commercially, he thinks it has grown organically into a community space for



different groups. However, he regrets the lack of free things to do in the area. “If you don’t pay, there’s nothing to do” he notes.

Mateo has mixed feelings about regeneration. On the one hand, there is a need for housing. On the other, he feels the rate at which new

buildings are popping up is “unsustainable, and it’s not solving the problem.” He has noticed that many of the new apartments seem to be standing empty. He worries that the built environment is losing its local character, “it’ll all look like NYC”.

Mateo would like to see more LGBTQIA+ venues in the area, as many of them have been closing down over the past years. He sees Elephant & Castle as being a very diverse area with an important Latin American population and an Afro-Caribbean community. He thinks everyone mixes well at key sites like pubs and outdoor spaces.

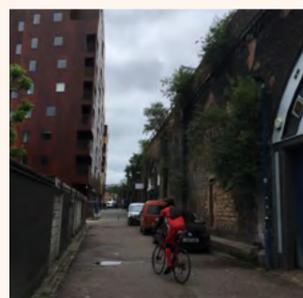


*“Having no control creates a sense of despair.”*

## Casey & Mark.

The walk started close to Casey and Mark’s home on Harper Road. They enjoy being able to walk everywhere in the borough and they frequently take long walks to local parks and the Southbank area.

As we walked, they shared stories about the area, from



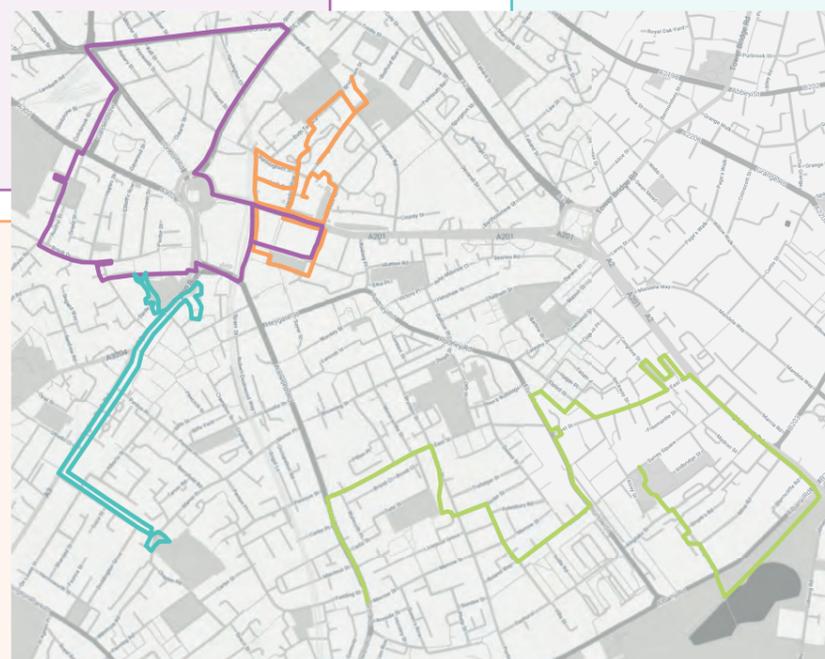
the history of Newington Gardens to the more recent stories about the local pubs lost to redevelopment and tree activism on the former Heygate Estate.

Casey and Mark are part of the Tenants and Residents Association and participate actively in consultations about the local area. As we made our way through the

neighbourhood, they pointed to rooftop extension projects and potential relocation spots for the Elephant & Castle shopping centre traders.

They don’t think they have control over the changes transforming their streets.

They dedicate time to their allotment and work to ensure that other residents have access to allotments. To Casey and Mark, the allotment is many things, a green relaxing environment, a way to keep active and get out of their flat, and an important social space where they were able to come together with others safely even during the pandemic.



*“It’s nice to have neighbours come by and check on you...this is what being part of the community is!”*

## Anna.

We met at Surrey Square Primary school and walked along Congreve Street, Elsted Street and East Street, passing through Burgess Park and the Aylesbury estate, ending the walk on Walworth Road (close to Elephant Park).

Anna enjoys the area’s sense of community and thinks the street itself is a social space. She says ‘hello’ to lots of people as she’s walking around in the neighbourhood.

On several occasions, Anna



points out poorly maintained council property, fly-tipping, graffiti, and things that just look unsightly due to lack of care from the council. She is concerned about all of the rubbish piling up outside shops on the Old Kent Road as they have nowhere else to put it.

*“People think the area is terrible. It’s not. It’s just colourful.”*

Air pollution is another concern

for Anna. She mentions it many times during the walk, bringing up either the need for more green spaces or less traffic in the local area.

Overall, traffic worries Anna and she hesitates crossing Albany Road even at a crossing, and at one point during our walk she visibly jumps back when a car speeds down East Street.

Anna thinks the area can be a bit ‘shady’ but it is not unsafe. She is fond of its diversity and worries that gentrification will change the local character of the neighbourhood in the future.

*“[The local area] was always a bit rough and ready but that’s because of lack of investment.”*



*place of education...I can’t say enough good things about this place. I’d be devastated if it ever closed.”*

## Lisa.

The walk began on Kennington Park Road and we strolled toward Pasley Park, Walworth Garden, St Mary’s Churchyard, with a final stop at Draper Estate. Lisa highlighted the importance of having accessible green spaces and other outdoor spaces for children, not just playgrounds but safe and entertaining places for older children such as adventure parks.

*“Walworth Garden is somewhere I take my daughter. It’s not just a place to relax but a*

Lisa enjoys the local area and especially appreciates the sense of community that exists among the people living in her block of flats. She also spoke highly of the community networks that allow local TRAs to host joint events (pre-COVID). Her daughter attended and loved those as well, she attended theatre and crafts there.

In Lisa’s view, TRAs are spaces where the local community comes together, which is why she thinks that keeping community halls on the big estates closed at the moment is

a big problem. She thinks this affects children particularly hard, leaving them with no activities to attend or places to make friends.

One important concern for Lisa is local traffic (from cars and bikes alike). She noted that there is a “sea of bikes” at rush hour – this makes her feel very unsafe especially when trying to cross the street with her daughter.



## Emerging themes

Similar to the views expressed by Camberwell and Peckham residents, changes in the local business landscape are also an important topic to those living in Elephant & Castle and Walworth. The demolition of the Elephant & Castle shopping centre and the relocation of the traders are recent events that have put this issue on their radar, but local residents are also aware of other issues, such as the gradual disappearance of LGBTQIA+ venues.

Affordable housing is a key concern for those living in the Elephant & Castle and Walworth areas. Just like their neighbours, residents are sceptical that the recent developments are offering a feasible solution to the ‘demand’ problem. Instead, some residents believe that the change taking place on their streets is “unsustainable, and it’s not solving the problem.” Ongoing development plans and the prices of flats in new tower blocks are compared against the existing waiting lists for social housing.

Community spaces are key local assets in Elephant & Castle and Walworth. Residents hope that the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions will mean that they will be able to use them once again. Social gathering spaces such as TRA halls, community gardens and other open spaces are valued because they allow people to come together without having to spend money on refreshments or food. Some residents would like to see more such spaces in their neighbourhood and they spoke about street closures for fairs and other community-led initiatives.



**MATEO** has been renting in the area since 2019. Though he initially chose it because it is centrally located and affordable, he wants to remain here because there is a sense of community and it ‘feels like home’.



**CASEY & MARK** have been leaseholders in the area since 2013. They moved back to London from the suburbs when their children grew up and came to the Elephant & Castle area because it was central yet affordable.



**ANNA** moved to the UK from overseas and has been living in the area for 13 years with her three sons. They live together in privately rented maisonette in Walworth. Her daily routines revolve around Surrey Square school



**LISA** has lived in the area for more than a decade and has lots of friends and family around. She used to live on the Heygate estate and was moved to a different council flat seven years ago. Community activities

# Dulwich and Old Kent Road (2021)

## Ade.

We met outside Dulwich Children & Family Centre, then Ade led the way around the estate.

Kingswood Estate is surrounded by green space, with Crystal Palace just around the corner, and buses that take you to Brixton and Croydon. Ade notes that there is a mix of ethnicities and people mostly get along. There are lots of friendly families on the estate and people tend to greet one another and stop for a chat, she adds as we cross the estate.



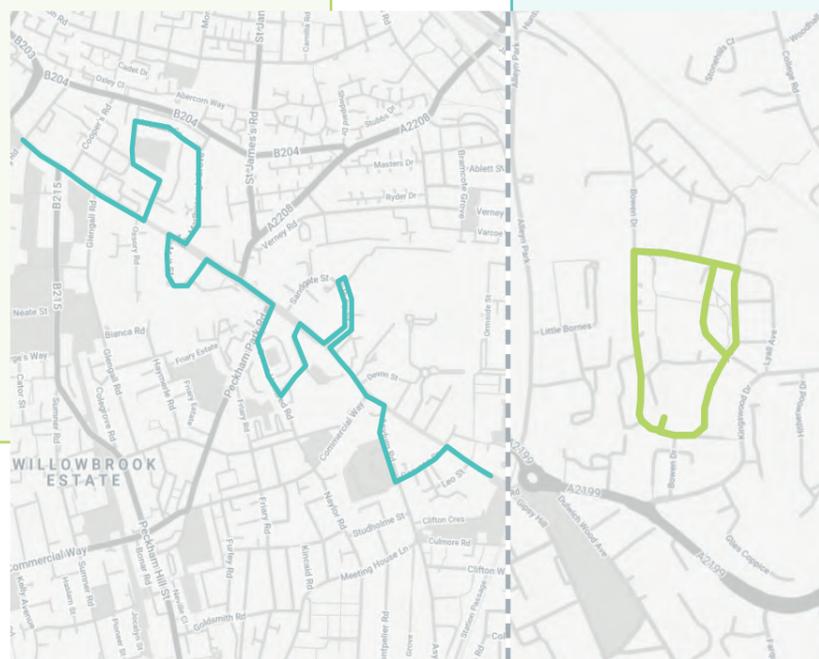
Ade mentions that two key concerns local residents have about the estate are the presence of drugs and occasional acts of violence. Ade feels that young people are especially at risk, and that there isn't enough for teenagers to do. 'They just hang around, and it's intimidating,' she says. Ade doesn't even like her children playing on the local playground as she feels it is dangerous.

*"The station entrance is less overlooked than other parts of the*

*estate...[Residents] have also asked the council for CCTV cameras in the more hidden areas of the estate."*

There have been several shop closures on Seeley Drive recently. Other facilities, closed due to COVID-19, are sorely missed. Ade is looking forward to the return of a coffee morning at her local church. She is also an active member of the Kingswood Estate Tenants and Residents Association (KETRA). Over lockdown they have been delivering food to vulnerable residents, and they also provide a meeting space and information about changes to the area.

*[About the recent easing of the COVID-19 restrictions:] "We are finally coming out again!"*



## Aaron.

Aaron led us down the Old Kent Road from Burgess Park. He is extremely knowledgeable about the area, having collaborated with community groups, architects, business owners, and artists to document local heritage. On our walk, we passed through several large-scale housing developments surrounding the park.

Aaron is wary of the development process. He speaks about the absence of public consultation,



allowed to fall into disrepair.

*"Consultation needs to be done differently, and should be a physical presence in the neighbourhood...it's a box ticking exercise."*

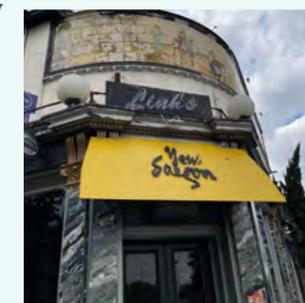
As we moved from one side of the neighbourhood to the other, Aaron noted that there is very little public art in the area. He believes works such as Adam Kossowski's mural on the former North Peckham Centre are part of the area's heritage. Aaron wonders if the mural will still be visible to the public given all the changes that are taking place in the neighbourhood.

We pass the big box stores, which once replaced smaller shops, but are now an important part of community life. Most are being demolished to make way for residential towers. Other businesses are struggling with rising rental costs.

Aaron is part of a network of residents concerned with the changes that are taking place in the local area. They have

tried to make the consultation process more democratic, and contest demolition-led housing development. However, a lack of funding available to community groups has made it difficult for them to keep going.

*"This neighbouring road was recently pedestrianised, which at first worried and angered local businesses who thought they would lose business and struggle to do deliveries. During the pandemic it became a strength though, as they were able to spill their outdoor seating out into the road."*



a negative impact on wildlife and greenery, and longstanding estates being

## Emerging themes

Like in the other four areas, the condition of the local business landscape was something mentioned on our walk on Kingswood Estate as well. A few shops and other local facilities closed down during the pandemic months, making local residents aware of the shifting economic landscape. In Old Kent Road, current development plans to have shops included on ground floors of residential blocks have made some residents wonder why these have been designed to face inwards off the street. One local resident worried that the impact of this will be to further isolate and dry up the main road of community life.

Another common thread in the stories shared by local residents is the importance of being members of local networks. Residents highlighted both the social and physical dimensions of these networks, as the reliance on online meetings during the pandemic has left many missing physical interactions and being able to greet their neighbours in person. Residents spoke about their involvement with local TRAs, activist groups or the local church. The fact that many community centres that used to host a wide range of community events have not yet reopened due to COVID-19 restrictions weighs negatively on local communities. Residents also mention other social spaces that are lacking in the area such as community centres and facilities for young people.



**ADE** has lived in her council home on the Kingswood Estate in Dulwich since 2004. She is employed full time and lives with her children. She knows many people on the estate and greets them as we go on our walk.



**AARON** is a local photographer and activist who has lived in the area for many years. His home is on the south side of Burgess Park. He fears there may come a point where he is forced to move out due to rising costs and eroding community life.